Thinking and Suggestions of Font Design Course Teaching

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Abstract. This paper would focus on analyzing and summarizing the problems of traditional font design course teaching, and how to optimize and improve it from four aspects of contents: teaching method, assessment and demonstration. Besides, I would also present my opinions towards the effectiveness of mutually complementary teaching online and offline.

Introduction

Font design course is the basic course of art design major. It is "one of the key courses of design major in college, thus the teaching quality will directly influence the future employment competitiveness of students." [1] After learning basic theoretical knowledge of font design, the students would understand and master its creation and development, and also the methods and design theories of basic form, composition and structure, and innovative design. This paper will analyze and summarize the problems of traditional font design course teaching, and also optimize and improve it from four aspects of contents: teaching method, assessment and demonstration. Besides, I would also present my opinions towards the effectiveness of mutually complementary teaching online and offline.

The Current Status and Issues of Font Design Course Teaching

The Phenomenon of “Too much in middle, but little in sides”. It means the students attach too much importance to font design itself, while lack of thinking for pre-investigation, and paying enough attention to post-demonstration. Font design process is composed of three stages: pre-investigation, font design and post-demonstration. Pre-investigation is the foundation, font design is core and post-demonstration is also a key element. In such case, we need to guide students to understand font design process cycle correctly, to analyze further and grasp the emphasis in each stage. With such repeated deliberation, they will finally grasp the essence of font design.

The Phenomenon of “Grand plans but little skills and wrongly expression of thoughts”. “Innovative thinking not only is the key determining factor of artistic effect of font works and depth of cultural connotation, but also the core of font design." [2] Students are capable of everything when trace on computer. However, once shut down the computer, their minds go blank, without any scheme of innovative or effective thinking, or to organize various design elements. In order to attain instant results, students usually put more attention on the transformation of form, while sometimes they would weaken or even ignore the innovation and symbolic meaning of the font. Thus, we need to guide the students to consolidate the basic theory of font design, apply the methods and skills flexibly, and explore symbolic meaning the font conveys.

The Phenomenon of “Too much classes in a week and too close of classes are”. In traditional teaching, it mainly sets totally 48 class hours for font design course, 16 class hours and 4 times for one week, which means there would be one class for almost day by day and the course would be completed in only three weeks. Although it would include both theoretical teaching and practical teaching, the teaching effectiveness remains questionable. First of all, classes are too close. Students don’t have enough time to absorb and master the knowledge just learned yesterday when there comes the new course too soon. On one hand, the students haven’t thoroughly understood the theoretical knowledge; on the other hand, they need to rush to put it into practice immediately. Let
alone to say that the practice would often share much class time. All of these results in no time for thinking, which makes the teaching become cram teaching, with worrying effectiveness.

**Optimization and Innovation of Font Design Course Teaching**

**Modularization and Iteration of Course Contents.** We will divide the teaching font design into three modules: pre-investigation, font design itself and post-demonstration. Each of them has their own segmental modules too. Pre-investigation module can be subdivided into three segmental parts: topic demands analysis, brainstorm collection and key word extraction. Font design module can be subdivided into four segmental parts as materials collection and sort, design elements extraction, design points analysis and details perfection. Last but not least, post-demonstration consists of two parts: proposal and practical application of font design. It should also be noted that there are no strict boundaries between these modules. They mutually iterative and improve, which will eventually guide the students to complete the whole design project.

![Picture 1. Modularization and Iteration of Course Contents.](image)

**Diversification and Enrichment of Teaching Models.** “Under the teacher-centered education model, there is a lack of opportunities for students to show their talents. Even, it would reduce the innovative thoughts of subjective initiative and independent thinking of students; needless to say to develop innovative and distinctive artistic design talents.” [3] This is applicable to font design course teaching. Traditional teaching is mainly about to give a lecture or to demonstrate, in which teachers talking and students listening. Such passive learning is usually bad for learn and master some knowledge. To cultivate independent thinking of students, team-work and arouse their initiatives, we will apply following teaching methods: group discussion, task-driven and project-driven. These methods focus on students, offering much room for students to think, to discovery, to develop and create. Teachers turn to the role as a guide instead of lecturer, who guide and encourage their students to achieve the goal of learning with their own efforts.

**Group Discussion.** Students will discuss in group. Under the guidance of teacher, students will be separated into several groups to discuss and learn. It will fully motivate them and enhance their ability to understand and master.

**Task-Driven.** Teachers propose tasks, students implement it and analyze it, during which they are required to think up methods and procedures. In such way, teacher is no longer a lecturer, but an organizer to helps guide the students to think and fulfill the task.

**Project-Driven.** To combine the learning activity with the actual or virtual font design project, the teacher and students will cooperate to implement a complete project. Step by step, they will go deeply and fully into the teaching activity. It would increase the learning interest of students to encourage them to investigate a problem and solve it, which will also help them establish the confidence and cultivate the abilities.
Procedural and Integration of Assessment. Traditionally, course assessment mainly relies on two parts: closure assignment and regular performance. Regular performance usually refers to attendance. And closure assignment mostly refers to a design report after the course is completed. What’s worse, sometimes it would only be some font design homework. It’s far from the aim to promote learning and teaching by test. Commonly, after the course is completed, the filling and sorting out of documentation is not that concerned. The printing quality varies much. After year round bagging and stacking, eventually they will all become a pile of waste paper. For such case, firstly we need to reduce the paper being bagged through picking over the excellent ones and put them in bags. Secondly, we need to save the assignments on computer and upload them to college website. At the same time, we will screen the outstanding works in paper and keep them to organize course exhibitions timely, making the assessment more open and fair to public. These all will motivate the students to learn and improve the quality of teaching.

Normalization and Network of Course Presentation. “By case study of project, students can experience an integrated creation process from theory to practice.”[4] After the completion of font course, students not only need to submit a complete report as closure assignment, but also to show course teaching achievement on exhibition timely and upload it to the internet. Course teaching exhibition is much like the last kick in football match, both of which have great importance. Firstly, students can gain new knowledge by reviewing old one. When they personally participate in the entire process of exhibition, it can help them deepen the understanding, and effectively consolidate the knowledge learned in class. Secondly, extensive communication would be necessary. They can not only exchange and learn with classmates, but also with senior schoolmates, or even with students from peer colleges. Finally, it would be beneficial to show the justice and fair of grade assessment through publicizing coursework, which can withstand the test of time and public. Course teaching exhibition can more fully record and display students' learning and thinking process, which would effectively improve classroom learning efficiency and knowledge persistence.

Thinking and Suggestions of Mutually Complementary Teaching Online and Offline

Analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of online education. Online teaching, also called E-learning or online education or distant education or internet education, is a kind of web-based learning. Offline education, also known as classroom teaching, is the way teachers and students learn face to face in a real classroom.

With the development of Internet and video communication, online education develops rapidly. Research shows that online education of colleges and universities continues to maintain a stable development trend, especially in terms of curriculum size, quality, number of students, online platforms and social recognition. The biggest advantage of online education is that teachers and learners can break through the limitations of time and space, teaching and learning more freely and independently. The disadvantage of online education is that it has certain requirements for hardware and teachers may need more time to prepare the teaching resources, while learners are required to have especially strong self-discipline. Thus, the learning effect and efficiency would be slightly lower.
Suggestions for Online Teaching of Font Design Course. While teaching a font design course, teacher should pay more attention to and think about how to integrate online teaching into classroom teaching to effectively optimize the classroom teaching results.

I believe it can be carried out in the following three aspects. **Firstly**, understand the relationship between online teaching and classroom teaching correctly. They have prior one between them and their purpose is same, but method is slightly different. They are complementary but cannot be replaced by each other. For higher education of colleges or university, classroom teaching is major way, supplemented by online teaching. Online teaching is only the supplement and perfection of classroom teaching. It’s an extension of classroom teaching in time and space. **Secondly**, make full use of the online education platform for teaching and learning activities. Teachers can upload videos, texts, and other teaching resources on the platform. Students can watch and learn freely on it, anytime and anywhere; they use online tools for instant interactive discussion and easily save and demonstrate coursework online; they photograph and upload their homework and closure assignments to the online education platform in a timely manner, so teachers could comment and correct. Afterwards, they can review and modify. With the help of network resources, students could preview, review and practice at any time. They could also communicate with teachers at any time, including learn and communicate during fragmented time. **Finally**, we need to make good use of existing online education platforms to create online courses, such as Superstar MOOC, China University MOOC and other more mature online education platforms. We could complete the course construction on its platform to assist offline teaching.

Summary

"The function of font design is to convey information and visual aesthetics. The designed font should not only conform to visual aesthetic rules, but also to have a distinctive visual image." [5] With the development of times and improvement of people's aesthetic standard, more attention would be paid to the innovation and artistry of font design. It is an important topic for educators to find out how font design can give full play to its advantages and demonstrate its own style in such a modern environment. In the practice of font design course teaching, to improve the teaching contents, methods and exploring an effective integration of online and offline teaching requires more educators to think, to pay attention to and to practice.

References


