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Research on Teaching Reform of Animation Major in Higher Vocational Colleges under the Applied Talent Training Mode

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Abstract: With the vigorous development of the digital culture industry, the market demand for applied talents in animation major is growing increasingly. As an important position for cultivating applied talents, higher vocational colleges are facing problems in their animation teaching mode, such as disconnection from industry needs and weak practical teaching. Based on the concept of applied talent training, this paper analyzes the current problems in the teaching of animation major in higher vocational colleges, and puts forward reform strategies from the aspects of curriculum system, teaching methods, practical platforms, and teaching staff, aiming to provide references for cultivating high-quality applied animation talents that meet industry needs.

Keywords: Applied talents; Higher vocational colleges; Animation major; Teaching reform

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

In recent years, China's animation industry has entered a period of rapid development. From animated films to online animations and game animations, the market scale has been expanding continuously, and the demand for animation professionals has shifted from "quantity-oriented" to "quality-oriented" and "application-oriented". Higher vocational colleges aim to cultivate applied talents for the frontline of production, construction, and service, playing an irreplaceable role in cultivating animation professionals. However, at present, the teaching of animation major in some higher vocational colleges still adopts the traditional mode, with prominent problems such as emphasizing theory over practice and disconnecting curriculum content from industry technologies. As a result, graduates find it difficult to quickly adapt to job requirements, and there is a significant gap between talent training and market demand.

1.2. Research significance

This study focuses on the teaching reform of animation major in higher vocational colleges under the applied talent training mode, which has important theoretical and practical significance. At the theoretical level, it helps to enrich the

application of applied talent training theory in the field of art design and provide theoretical support for the teaching reform of animation major. At the practical level, by exploring feasible paths for teaching reform, it can improve the quality of talent training in the animation major of higher vocational colleges, enhance graduates' adaptability to positions and industry competitiveness, and deliver more high-quality applied talents for the development of the animation industry.

1.3. Research status at home and abroad

Foreign Research: In developed countries with advanced animation industries such as Europe, America, and Japan, the teaching of animation major in higher vocational colleges focuses on "project-driven" and "school-enterprise collaboration", emphasizing the cultivation of practical abilities. For example, the California Institute of the Arts in the United States introduces real industry projects into the classroom, where students complete the entire animation production process under the guidance of teachers and corporate mentors. Many vocational colleges in Japan have established an "order-based" training model with animation companies, customizing curriculum content according to enterprise needs.

Domestic Research: In recent years, domestic scholars have conducted research on the teaching reform of animation major, mostly focusing on curriculum system optimization and practical teaching mode innovation. For instance, some scholars have proposed building a "curriculum-project-competition" trinity practical teaching system, and others have emphasized strengthening school-enterprise cooperation and establishing off-campus practice bases. However, on the whole, systematic research on teaching reform for applied talent training in higher vocational colleges still needs to be deepened.

2. Connotation and requirements of the applied talent training model

2.1. Definition of applied talents

Applied talents refer to high-quality professionals who possess solid basic professional knowledge, master essential skills and practical abilities in relevant industries, and can solve practical problems in front-line positions such as production, management, and services. Compared with research-oriented talents, applied talents focus more on the cultivation of practical abilities, post adaptability, and innovative capabilities [1].

2.2. Core elements of the applied talent training model

2.2.1. Market demand-oriented

Set talent training objectives based on industry development trends and job requirements to ensure that the trained talents are accurately aligned with market needs [2].

2.2.2. Strengthen practical teaching

Increase the proportion of practical teaching, and improve students' hands-on ability and ability to solve practical problems through links such as project training and enterprise internships.

2.2.3. Focus on ability cultivation

Cultivate students' comprehensive qualities such as professional skills, communication and collaboration abilities, and innovative abilities, rather than merely imparting theoretical knowledge.

2.2.4. School-enterprise collaborative education

Integrate educational resources of schools and enterprises through school-enterprise cooperation, and form an integrated talent training mechanism of "production, education, research, and application" [3].

2.3. Special requirements for animation majors in higher vocational colleges

The animation major is highly practical and technical, and the applied talent training model puts forward special requirements for animation majors in higher vocational colleges:

2.3.1. Master the full-process skills of animation production, including original painting design, 3D modeling, animation rigging, rendering and compositing, etc.

2.3.2. Be familiar with mainstream industry software and technologies, such as Flash, Maya, Blender, AfterEffects, etc.

2.3.3. Possess certain creative design capabilities and project management skills, and be able to participate in team collaboration to complete animation projects.

2.3.4. Understand the market operation rules and industrial development trends of the animation industry [4].

3. Analysis of the current situation and problems in animation teaching in higher vocational colleges

3.1. Survey on the current teaching situation

To understand the current situation of animation teaching in higher vocational colleges, this paper conducted a survey on the animation majors of 10 domestic higher vocational colleges. The results are as follows:

3.1.1. Curriculum setup

Theoretical courses account for an average of 45%, and practical courses account for 55%. Some institutions have a relatively high proportion of theoretical courses.

3.1.2. Teaching methods

They mainly focus on classroom lectures and software operation, while project-based teaching, case teaching and other methods are rarely applied.

3.1.3. Practice platforms

60% of the institutions have built on-campus training rooms, but the equipment is updated slowly, which lags behind the mainstream technologies in the industry.

3.1.4. School-enterprise cooperation

80% of the institutions have established cooperative relations with enterprises, but most of them are “shallow cooperation” such as enterprise visits and lectures, and there is little in-depth participation in the teaching process.

3.2. Main existing problems

3.2.1. Disconnection between curriculum system and industry needs

The update of curriculum content is lagging behind. Some institutions still use textbooks from 5 years ago, and rarely involve emerging fields such as online animation and virtual digital humans. The curriculum setup lacks systematicness, with loose connections between theoretical and practical courses, and fragmented skill training, making it difficult for students to form a complete knowledge system and project experience [5].

3.2.2. Weakness in practical teaching links

Practical teaching is mostly based on simulated projects, lacking support from real industry projects, so students can hardly get access to the problems and challenges in actual work. The equipment in on-campus training rooms is outdated, unable to meet the teaching needs of the latest animation production technologies, such as motion capture and real-time rendering, which have a low popularity rate [6].

3.2.3. Unreasonable structure of the teaching staff

Most teachers are theoretical talents graduated from universities, lacking industry work experience and insufficient understanding of front-line animation production technologies and processes. The proportion of enterprise tutors participating in teaching is low, making it difficult to integrate the latest industry trends and job requirements into classroom teaching [7].

3.2.4. Imperfect evaluation system

Course evaluation still mainly relies on theoretical exams and homework submission, with insufficient assessment of students' practical ability and innovative ability. There is a lack of a follow-up evaluation mechanism for talent training quality, making it impossible to optimize teaching content based on the employment feedback of graduates [8].

4. Strategies for teaching reform in animation major in higher vocational colleges under the applied talent training model

4.1. Constructing a "Post-Oriented" curriculum system

4.1.1. Principles for reconstructing the curriculum system

Based on the competency requirements of typical positions in the animation industry (such as original artists, modelers, animators, compositors, etc.), the curriculum content is designed in a reverse manner, forming a three-tier curriculum structure of "basic courses - core skill courses - post training courses" [9,10].

4.1.2. Specific curriculum settings

Basic courses: Fundamentals of Fine Arts, Principles of Animation, Design Composition, etc., to cultivate students' artistic literacy and professional foundation.

Core skill courses: 2D Animation Production, 3D Modeling and Animation, Special Effects Composition, Animation Script Creation, etc., focusing on core post skills.

Post-training courses: Position-specific project training, comprehensive project production, enterprise internship, etc., to improve students' adaptability to positions.

4.1.3. Incorporating new industry technologies

Timely integrate emerging technologies such as web animation, interactive animation, and virtual digital human production into the curriculum, and offer elective courses like Short Video Animation Production and Virtual Character Design to expand students' skill range.

4.2. Innovating a "Project-Driven" practical teaching model

4.2.1. Introducing real projects

Cooperate with animation companies, game enterprises, and new media platforms to bring real enterprise projects into the classroom. Students participate in the entire process of project planning, production, and post-production in teams, with guidance from both teachers and enterprise mentors to ensure project results meet industry standards [11].

4.2.2. Carrying out competition-driven teaching

Organize students to participate in competitions such as the National College Student Animation Competition and China International Cartoon & Animation Festival. Using competition projects as carriers, it stimulates students' innovative awareness and practical enthusiasm, and improves the quality of works and professional skills [12].

4.2.3. Building a "curriculum-competition integration" practice platform

Combine curriculum content with competition requirements, set up "competition studios", and professional teachers lead students in special training for competition projects, achieving seamless connection between curriculum learning and competition practice.

4.3. Building a "Dual-Qualification and Dual-Capability" teaching team

4.3.1. Strengthening the practical ability of in-school teachers

Formulate a teacher industry practice plan, requiring professional teachers to have at least 6 months of on-the-job training in animation enterprises every 3 years, participate in actual project production, and accumulate industry experience; encourage teachers to obtain industry-related qualification certificates (such as Autodesk Certified Animator).

4.3.2. Introducing enterprise technical backbones as part-time teachers

Employ senior original artists, animation directors, technical directors, etc., from animation companies as part-time teachers to undertake practical course teaching or offer special lectures, bringing the latest industry technologies and project experience into the classroom.

4.3.3. Establishing a long-term mechanism for teacher training

Regularly organize teachers to participate in industry technical seminars and teaching reform training courses, and carry out exchanges and cooperation with well-known domestic and foreign institutions and enterprises to improve teachers' teaching ability and professional quality [13].

4.4. Building a "School-Enterprise Collaboration" practical education platform

4.4.1. Constructing on-campus productive training bases

Jointly build on-campus training bases with enterprises, introduce enterprise production equipment, technical standards, and management models, simulate real animation production environments, and allow students to complete project training in the bases to achieve "integration of teaching, learning, and doing" [14].

4.4.2. Expanding off-campus practice bases

Establish in-depth cooperation with key regional animation enterprises to build off-campus practice bases, arrange students to conduct 3-6 months of internship in the second semester of their junior year, and familiarize them with enterprise work processes and post requirements.

4.4.3. Implementing "modern apprenticeship" training

Select outstanding students to sign "mentorship agreements" with enterprise mentors, allowing students to learn one-on-one under the guidance of enterprise mentors, participate in core project production, and be prioritized for employment in enterprises after graduation, realizing "admission is employment, graduation is employment".

4.5. Improving the "Multi-Dimensional and Three-Dimensional" teaching evaluation system

4.5.1. Reforming curriculum evaluation methods

Combine process evaluation and result evaluation. Process evaluation includes classroom performance, project

participation, team collaboration, etc.; result evaluation focuses on the quality of project results and the mastery of skills, reducing the proportion of theoretical examinations.

4.5.2. Introducing enterprise evaluation standards

In project training and internship, enterprise mentors evaluate students' performance according to post requirements, and the evaluation results are included in the total curriculum score to ensure that the evaluation standards are consistent with industry needs.

4.5.3. Establishing a graduate tracking evaluation mechanism

Conduct follow-up surveys on graduates' employment status, collect feedback from employers on graduates' professional abilities and professional qualities, and optimize the curriculum system and teaching content based on feedback, forming a closed loop of "training - evaluation - improvement"[15].

5. Case analysis: teaching reform practice of animation major in a higher vocational college

5.1. Overview of the college

The animation major of a higher vocational college was established in 2010, with more than 300 current students, 12 full-time teachers, and 8 part-time teachers (mostly technical backbones from animation enterprises). In recent years, the major has carried out a series of teaching reform practices with the goal of cultivating applied talents.

5.2. Reform measures

5.2.1. Optimization of curriculum system

Cooperating with 5 local animation enterprises, it analyzed the ability requirements of positions such as original painters and modelers, reconstructed the curriculum system, increased the proportion of practical courses to 60%, and added courses such as 3D Motion Capture Technology and Short Video Animation Operation.

5.2.2. Innovation in practical teaching

Introduced online animation projects from an animation company. Student teams completed script creation, storyboard design, animation production and other work under the guidance of enterprise tutors. The project results have been launched on short video platforms, with a playback volume of over 5 million.

5.2.3. School-enterprise collaborative education

Co-built an "Animation Industry College" with enterprises. Enterprises invested in equipment to build on-campus training bases, provided real projects and technical support. Teachers and enterprise tutors jointly compiled teaching materials and formulated talent training plans. Students who passed the internship can directly sign employment agreements.

5.3. Reform effects

5.3.1. Student achievements

In the past three years, students of this major have won more than 30 awards in various animation competitions. The employment rate of graduates has remained above 95%, and the satisfaction rate of employers has reached 90%.

5.3.2. Teacher development6 full-time teachers obtained industry qualification certificates through enterprise practice, 3 teachers participated in enterprise project research and development, and their teaching ability and industry experience have been significantly improved.

5.3.3. Social recognition

The major has become an important base for regional animation talent training, established long-term cooperative relations with more than 10 enterprises, and provided talent support for the development of local animation industry.

6. Conclusion and prospect

6.1. Research conclusions

Through the research on the teaching reform of animation major in higher vocational colleges under the applied talent training mode, this paper draws the following conclusions:

The applied talent training mode requires animation majors in higher vocational colleges to be market-oriented, strengthen practical teaching, and focus on cultivating students' post ability and innovative ability.

At present, the teaching of animation major in higher vocational colleges has problems such as disconnection between curriculum system and industry, weak practical teaching, and unreasonable teacher structure;

The quality of animation talent training can be effectively improved by reform measures such as building a post-oriented curriculum system, innovating project-driven practical teaching mode, building a "double-qualified" teaching team, establishing a school-enterprise collaborative education platform, and improving the multi-evaluation system.

6.2. Deficiencies and prospects

This research still has certain deficiencies, such as not tracking and analyzing the long-term effects of reform measures, and the number of sample colleges is limited. Future research can expand the sample scope and conduct in-depth discussions on the long-term mechanism of teaching reform; at the same time, with the application of meta-universe, artificial intelligence and other technologies in the animation field, it is necessary to further study the impact of new technologies on animation teaching, continuously optimize the talent training mode, and cultivate more high-quality applied talents adapting to the development of the times for the animation industry.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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