
Exploration of the Implementation Path of the Characteristic Curriculum System of the Design Specialty in the Private Vocational Undergraduate and the Research on the Educational Effect

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Abstract: The distinctive curriculum system serves as the core vehicle for private vocational undergraduate design programs to demonstrate their educational strengths and enhance talent cultivation quality. However, some programs currently face challenges such as unclear implementation pathways, insufficient support mechanisms, and overly simplistic evaluation methods for educational outcomes, which hinder the realization of specialized educational goals. This study focuses on private vocational undergraduate design programs to define the connotation and implementation principles of distinctive curriculum systems. It explores implementation strategies across five dimensions: curriculum implementation, teaching reform, practical support, faculty resources, and evaluation optimization. By analyzing educational effectiveness through three dimensions—student competencies, professional development, and social service contributions—this research proposes strategies for enhancing outcomes. The findings provide theoretical references and practical paradigms for the effective implementation of distinctive curriculum systems and the improvement of educational quality in private vocational undergraduate design programs.

Keywords: private vocational undergraduate; design major; distinctive curriculum system; implementation pathway; educational outcomes

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1. Introduction

As a vital component of the modern vocational education system, private vocational undergraduate education is dedicated to cultivating high-level technical and skilled professionals. Distinctive development serves as the key strategy to break through homogeneous competition and achieve high-quality growth. The design discipline, being highly practical, innovative, and application-oriented, requires the establishment and implementation of specialized curriculum systems. This not only aligns with the demands of regional cultural and creative industries and smart manufacturing sectors, but also represents a core initiative for private vocational universities to leverage their unique resources and build professional brand recognition^[1].

In recent years, private vocational undergraduate design programs have established distinctive curriculum systems

by leveraging institutional resources, regional characteristics, and industry demands. However, implementation still faces multiple challenges: First, the implementation path of specialized courses remains unclear, with theoretical and practical disconnection, and institutional features and industrial elements failing to be effectively integrated into the entire teaching process. Second, traditional teaching models such as “theory-practice integration” and “project-based teaching” remain superficial, failing to fully realize the educational value of specialized courses. Third, the practical support system is incomplete, with lagging development of on-campus training bases and off-campus internship bases, making it difficult to meet the practical teaching needs of specialized courses. Fourth, the faculty lacks dual-qualified teachers with both specialized teaching capabilities and industrial practical experience. Fifth, the evaluation system for educational outcomes remains singular, overemphasizing results over processes and skills over literacy, failing to comprehensively reflect the educational effectiveness of specialized course systems^[2].

Based on this, this paper focuses on the implementation path and educational effectiveness of the characteristic curriculum system of private vocational undergraduate design specialty, systematically explores the effective path from “construction” to “implementation” of characteristic courses, scientifically analyzes its educational effectiveness and puts forward optimization strategies, in order to promote the effective implementation of the characteristic curriculum system of private vocational undergraduate design specialty, and achieve the goal of “cultivating characteristic talents with characteristic courses”.

2. The Connotation and Implementation Principles of the Characteristic Curriculum System for Private Vocational Undergraduate Design Specialty

2.1. Core Connotation

The distinctive curriculum system for vocational undergraduate design programs is developed by institutions leveraging their educational positioning, faculty strengths, and industry-academia collaboration resources. By integrating regional cultural characteristics and design industry demands, it breaks the homogeneity of traditional curricula to establish a modular framework centered on “vocational orientation, undergraduate standards, distinctive features, and practical application.” This system incorporates institutional characteristics, industrial elements, and regional culture. Its core objective is to cultivate high-level technical and skilled design professionals through specialized courses, equipping them with undergraduate-level theoretical knowledge, refined design skills, innovative practical abilities, and institutional-specific competencies. This approach ensures precise alignment between talent development and industrial needs as well as regional growth^[3].

2.2. Implementation Principles

With distinctive orientation and implementation as the foundation, the program focuses on school-specific, industry-specific, and region-specific characteristics to ensure that the implementation of the distinctive curriculum system remains aligned with the goal of cultivating distinctive talents. It integrates distinctive elements throughout the entire process of curriculum teaching, practical training, and evaluation, avoiding the formalistic issue of “emphasizing reconstruction over implementation.”

The curriculum integrates theory with practice, emphasizing hands-on learning. It aligns with the professional attributes of design disciplines by incorporating industry competency standards and real corporate projects into specialized courses. This approach strengthens practical teaching components, establishing a “learning by doing, doing by learning” pedagogical model to enhance students’ job readiness^[4].

Collaborative linkage and systematic advancement, coordinating core elements such as curriculum, teaching, faculty, practice, and evaluation, breaking down barriers between each link, achieving synergy between in-school teaching and corporate practice, theoretical teaching and practical teaching, as well as specialized courses and foundational courses, to systematically advance the implementation of the specialized curriculum system.

With the effectiveness of education as the core evaluation standard, we establish a dynamic monitoring and feedback mechanism for the implementation effects of characteristic courses, and adjust the implementation path and optimize the course content in time according to the problems in the practice of education, so as to continuously improve the educational value of characteristic courses.

3. Implementation Path of Characteristic Curriculum System for Private Vocational Undergraduate Design Specialty

3.1. Course Implementation: Establishing a “Hierarchical Progression and Characteristic Integration” Framework

The effective implementation of a distinctive curriculum system requires establishing a logically structured, progressive framework that integrates unique elements throughout the entire talent development process, ensuring continuity between specialized courses and foundational/practical components. This approach follows a tiered implementation strategy: “Foundation Level – Core Level – Distinctive Level – Practical Level”. The Foundation Level (Freshman Year) focuses on design fundamentals and cultural awareness, offering courses like Design Sketching, Design Color Theory, and Introduction to Regional Culture to build students’ core design skills while fostering understanding of institutional and regional characteristics. The Core Level (Sophomore Year) emphasizes integrating professional expertise with distinctive features, incorporating specialized elements into core courses such as Brand Design and Product Form Design to achieve “professional + distinctive” blended teaching. The Distinctive Level (Junior Year) deepens institutional uniqueness through courses like Intangible Cultural Heritage Design Applications, Cultural and Creative Product Development, and Corporate Custom Design, enhancing students’ specialized design capabilities. The Practical Level (Senior Year) focuses on comprehensive application through internships and graduation projects centered on distinctive themes, enabling students to fully utilize and refine their specialized skills^[5].

Distinctive features are seamlessly integrated: The school’s unique characteristics, industrial traits, and regional identity are woven into every aspect of curriculum design—from objectives and content to teaching methods and assessment systems. For instance, the Visual Communication Design course incorporates regional intangible cultural heritage motifs, while the Product Design course features local specialty product development. These distinctive elements become the ‘soul’ of the curriculum, rather than isolated ‘add-ons.’

3.2. Teaching Reform: Innovating the “Integration of Theory and Practice, Project-Driven” Teaching Model

The educational value of specialized courses must be realized through innovative teaching models, moving beyond the traditional lecture-dominated approach to establish a teaching system tailored to design disciplines. By implementing “theory-practice integration,” classrooms are transformed into on-campus design workshops and training bases, achieving seamless integration of teaching, learning, and hands-on practice. Instructors teach theoretical knowledge and design methodologies, while industry mentors guide practical skills and project development, enabling students to grasp theories and master techniques through real-world application. For instance, in the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Design Applications” course, students learn traditional craftsmanship in heritage workshops while applying design software for creative projects, thus bridging tradition and modernity, theory and practice.

The project-driven teaching approach utilizes real-world corporate design projects, school-based research initiatives, and regional cultural innovation projects as platforms. It transforms specialized course content into project-based tasks, where students work in teams to complete the entire process—from design research and conceptualization to model creation and final presentation. For instance, by collaborating with local cultural and creative enterprises, the “Local Cultural Tourism IP Design” project is integrated into the “Cultural and Creative Product Design” curriculum, enabling students to enhance their distinctive design skills and teamwork abilities through hands-on project practice.

We explore blended online-offline teaching models by leveraging institutional digital platforms to develop distinctive resources including micro-lectures, instructional videos, curated case libraries, and hands-on training manuals. These resources are integrated with in-person classroom instruction, workshop sessions, and corporate internships to create a synergistic approach that combines self-directed online learning with practical offline training. This approach extends the scope of teaching and enhances instructional efficiency. For instance, regional cultural resources and corporate project cases are uploaded to the platform for students' pre-class preparation and post-class review, while offline sessions focus on hands-on project implementation and problem-solving discussions.

3.3. Practice Support: Building a Tripartite Practice Platform of “In-school + Out-of-school + School-Local”

Practical teaching serves as the cornerstone of implementing distinctive curriculum systems, requiring the establishment of comprehensive, multi-tiered practical platforms to provide hardware support for these courses. This involves developing campus-based specialized training bases, increasing investment in on-campus practical training, and creating school-specific facilities tailored to distinctive courses. Examples include intangible cultural heritage design workshops, cultural and creative product design laboratories, and digital media design training centers, all equipped with advanced design tools and unique teaching resources to meet the practical teaching demands of these courses. For instance, the “Li and Miao Cultural Design Workshop” is equipped with traditional brocade weaving and batik equipment, along with digital design software, to support the practical teaching of the distinctive course “Li and Miao Cultural and Creative Design.”

We will expand off-campus industry-academia collaboration networks by deepening partnerships with top-tier design firms, cultural innovation enterprises, and smart manufacturing companies in the region. Jointly establishing specialized off-campus internship bases will clarify corporate roles in practical teaching of distinctive courses, enabling students to engage in authentic project design within enterprises and gain firsthand exposure to frontline industry demands and professional standards. For instance, through collaboration with local cultural tourism enterprises, we will create a “Cultural Tourism Design Internship Base” where students participate in product design and brand strategy projects, applying their specialized course knowledge to real-world industrial practice.

Establish a collaborative practice platform between schools and local communities, connecting them with local governments, cultural institutions, and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection centers. This platform organizes students to participate in distinctive activities such as local cultural and creative projects, rural revitalization design, and ICH inheritance and innovation, achieving resource sharing and mutual benefits in education. For instance, schools may collaborate with local cultural and tourism bureaus to host the “Regional Cultural and Creative Design Competition,” transforming competition outcomes into teaching cases for specialized courses while providing design support for the development of local cultural industries.

3.4. Faculty Support: Building a “Dual-qualified + Specialized” Composite Teaching Team

The faculty team serves as the cornerstone for implementing the distinctive curriculum system, requiring the development of a multidisciplinary teaching team that combines dual-qualification expertise with specialized instructional capabilities. A dual-track approach is adopted to enhance dual-qualification competencies: On one hand, industry veterans, corporate technical experts, and intangible cultural heritage inheritors are recruited as adjunct faculty to strengthen practical teaching in specialized courses, integrating real-world industry experience and unique craftsmanship into classroom instruction. On the other hand, on-campus faculty development is intensified through internships at partner enterprises and participation in specialized project design, thereby enhancing their industry practice skills. Additionally, faculty members are organized to engage in school-based curriculum development and specialized teaching method training, further refining their distinctive instructional abilities.

To establish interdisciplinary teaching teams, we break down disciplinary and departmental barriers by assembling a cross-disciplinary team comprising university faculty, industry practitioners, and intangible cultural heritage specialists.

This collaborative approach enables joint development of specialized courses, instructional design, and student mentoring, maximizing faculty synergy. A prime example is the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Design Teaching Team,” where university design instructors, heritage inheritors, and corporate cultural designers jointly deliver the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Design Applications” course with hands-on guidance.

The incentive mechanism should be improved, and the development of characteristic courses, the reform of characteristic teaching, and the guidance of characteristic practice should be included in the teacher assessment system, and the corresponding performance rewards and professional title evaluation and appointment should be given to stimulate the enthusiasm and initiative of teachers to participate in the implementation of the characteristic course system.

3.5. Evaluation Optimization: Constructing a “Multi-dimensional, Character-oriented” Evaluation System

A scientific evaluation system is crucial for implementing distinctive curriculum programs. It requires moving beyond traditional single-evaluation models to establish a diversified framework aligned with the program’s unique educational objectives. The evaluation process should involve multiple stakeholders, replacing the conventional “in-house teacher-only assessment” with a collaborative model that includes “in-house teachers, industry mentors, professional experts, and peer evaluations.” This approach comprehensively assesses students’ specialized design capabilities, practical skills, professional ethics, and innovative thinking. For instance, in graduation project evaluations, industry designers, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and field experts should jointly participate in the review to ensure the outcomes meet both industry demands and the program’s distinctive educational goals.

The evaluation framework emphasizes distinctive features by incorporating school-based competency development, regional cultural application skills, and industry project implementation capabilities. It prioritizes assessing students’ understanding and application of unique elements, as well as the quality and innovation of their projects, thereby avoiding the bias of “overemphasizing skills while neglecting uniqueness.” For instance, in the “Cultural and Creative Product Design” course evaluation, the focus is on students’ ability to extract and creatively apply local cultural elements, as well as the market adaptability and distinctive recognition of their products. The evaluation adopts a process-oriented approach, combining formative and summative assessments. Formative evaluation covers classroom performance, project progress, practical operations, and group collaboration, while summative evaluation includes design works, project outcomes, and graduation projects. This comprehensive tracking of students’ distinctive ability development allows for timely identification of issues and adjustment of teaching strategies.

4. Analysis of the Educational Effectiveness of the Characteristic Curriculum System for Private Vocational Undergraduate Design Programs

4.1. Student Level: Significant Improvement in Distinctive Abilities and Career Competitiveness

Through the effective implementation of a distinctive curriculum system, students’ design skills, innovative capabilities, and professional competencies have been comprehensively enhanced, significantly boosting their career competitiveness. Firstly, students demonstrate outstanding specialized design abilities, skillfully integrating school-based characteristics and regional cultural elements into their works, achieving consistent success in various design competitions. For instance, their award-winning records in national events like the National College Students’ Cultural and Creative Design Competition and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Innovation Design Competition have shown year-on-year growth. Secondly, students’ practical skills and job adaptability have improved. Through real-world project experiences in enterprises, graduates can quickly meet industry demands, with both employment rates and quality markedly enhanced. Some students have joined renowned design firms and cultural institutions to pursue specialized design careers. Thirdly, students’ professional ethics and innovative thinking have been strengthened. The project-based teaching and collaborative practices in specialized courses cultivate communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and innovative awareness, laying a solid foundation for

their long-term career development.

4.2. Professional Level: The Distinctive Brand and Educational Influence Gradually Emerge

The implementation of the distinctive curriculum system has propelled the specialized development of private vocational undergraduate design programs, with the program's brand and institutional influence steadily growing. Firstly, the program's unique characteristics have become more pronounced, establishing a development model centered on institutional and regional features, distinguishing it from the homogeneous development of other institutions. For instance, programs like "Intangible Cultural Heritage Design" and "Cultural Tourism and Creative Design" developed by some institutions have become benchmarks for vocational undergraduate design programs in their regions. Secondly, the teaching reforms have yielded significant results, with achievements in developing distinctive courses and innovating teaching models earning provincial and institutional teaching awards. The continuous improvement of institution-specific textbooks and teaching cases provides solid support for the program's sustainable development. Thirdly, the faculty development has achieved remarkable progress, with the number of "dual-qualified + specialized" composite teachers increasing steadily. Both teaching and research capabilities of faculty members have been enhanced, fostering coordinated development between teaching and research in the program.

4.3. Social Level: Effective Enhancement of Talent Supply and Industrial Service Capacity

The implementation of the distinctive curriculum system has achieved precise alignment between talent cultivation and regional industrial demands, providing robust talent support and design services for the development of regional cultural and creative industries and intelligent manufacturing. Firstly, it has supplied a large number of specialized design talents to regional industries, with graduates working in design roles at local cultural and creative enterprises, cultural tourism institutions, and manufacturing companies, thereby driving the innovative development of regional characteristic industries. Secondly, the collaboration between schools and local communities, as well as between schools and enterprises, has deepened, with students' distinctive design achievements being transformed into local cultural tourism products and intangible cultural heritage innovation products, injecting new vitality into the development of local cultural industries. Thirdly, the professional social service capabilities have been enhanced, as faculty and student teams participate in local cultural and creative projects, rural revitalization design, and intangible cultural heritage inheritance and innovation, earning recognition from local governments and enterprises, and elevating the institution's social service image.

5. Strategies for Enhancing Educational Outcomes

5.1. Deepening the Connotation of Characteristic Courses and Strengthening the Integration of Industry and Education

We will continue to explore school-specific, regional, and industry-specific resources, optimize the content of specialized courses, and integrate the latest industry technologies and cutting-edge demands into these courses to prevent the ossification of distinctive content. By deepening the integration of industry and education, we will promote joint development of specialized courses, collaborative formulation of teaching plans, and shared evaluation of educational outcomes between schools and enterprises, thereby achieving resonance between specialized courses and industrial needs.

5.2. Improving the Practical Teaching System to Enhance the Quality of Practical Education

Enhance investment in practical education by upgrading specialized on-campus training facilities, expanding both the quantity and quality of off-campus industry-academia collaboration bases, and establishing a dynamic management system to ensure effective implementation of practical teaching components. Diversify practical teaching formats through on-the-job internships, school-local collaborative projects, and specialized R&D initiatives, thereby boosting students' practical application and innovation capabilities.

5.3. Strengthening Faculty Development to Consolidate the Support for Characteristic Teaching

We will continue to advance the “Dual-qualified + Specialized” composite teacher training program, refining mechanisms for faculty corporate internships, specialized training, and project-based practice. By recruiting industry leaders and inheritors of distinctive skills, we will strengthen our teaching team. Furthermore, we will establish teaching exchange and research mechanisms to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of specialized teaching practices, thereby enhancing the overall specialized teaching capabilities of our faculty.

5.4. Improve the evaluation feedback mechanism to optimize implementation pathways

We have established a dynamic monitoring platform to evaluate the implementation outcomes and educational impact of specialized courses. This system collects feedback from employers, students, and faculty to promptly identify challenges during execution. Based on these insights, we optimize implementation strategies, refine course content, and innovate teaching methodologies, thereby creating a closed-loop mechanism of “implementation-evaluation-feedback-optimization” to continuously enhance the educational effectiveness of our specialized curriculum system.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of a distinctive curriculum system for vocational undergraduate design programs constitutes a systematic endeavor. Its core lies in translating the conceptual framework of specialized courses into tangible educational outcomes through scientifically designed methodologies. The process must adhere to five guiding principles: distinctive orientation, integration of curriculum and professional practice, collaborative coordination, and outcome-driven evaluation. Systematic advancement should be achieved across five dimensions—curriculum implementation, pedagogical innovation, practical support, faculty development, and assessment optimization—to ensure that distinctive elements permeate the entire talent cultivation process.

From the perspective of educational outcomes, the effective implementation of a distinctive curriculum system has not only enhanced students’ specialized design capabilities and professional competitiveness, but also highlighted the unique brand and influence of the program. Moreover, it has strengthened the institution’s talent supply and social service capacity, achieving a win-win situation for students, the program, and society. However, the implementation of a distinctive curriculum system and the improvement of educational outcomes are continuous optimization processes. Private vocational undergraduate design programs must continuously deepen industry-education integration, refine practical systems, strengthen faculty development, and improve evaluation mechanisms. Only by persistently optimizing implementation approaches can they truly achieve the goal of “cultivating distinctive talents through distinctive courses,” promoting high-quality and specialized development of private vocational undergraduate design programs, and providing stronger talent support for regional industrial development and cultural heritage innovation.

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