

Research on the Paths of Integrating Locally Distinctive Culture into the Teaching of Research Methods in Journalism and Communication

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Abstract: “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication” is a course that emphasizes practical teaching. However, it has long been plagued by the practical challenge of being difficult for instructors to teach and for students to understand. Based on constructivist learning theory and situational teaching theory, this study integrates the teaching characteristics of the course “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication”, and analyzes the existing problems in its teaching practice. From four dimensions—structuring teaching content, innovating teaching methods, constructing practical platforms, and improving the evaluation system, this paper proposes specific pathways for integrating locally distinctive culture into the course teaching. It aims to provide reference for the teaching reform of the course “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication.”

Keywords: Locally Distinctive Culture; Research Methods In Journalism and Communication; Curriculum Integration; Teaching Reform; Path Exploration

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Introduction

In recent years, a wave of localization-oriented reform has emerged in China’s higher education sector, schools emphasize the integration of curriculum teaching with local realities to serve regional social development. As a discipline that combines theoretical and practical aspects, journalism and communication needs to considerate how to link curriculum teaching with local social development. Currently, “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication” has been designated by many universities as an important course for the training of undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students majoring. The course objective is to guide student to analyze communication phenomena and solve practical communication problems using scientific methods. However, the teaching of this course in many institutions currently faces several challenges: it is difficult for teachers to teach, and many students also have difficulties to understand the knowledge; Many teachers’ teaching methods overemphasis on theory over practice. Moreover, the teaching content is predominantly based on Western theories and general methods, which are disconnected from the actual needs of the regions where the universities are located. This disconnection results in students more difficulty to understand local culture and weak ability to apply research methods to address local communication issues.

Locally distinctive culture refers to a unique cultural system formed in a specific region during its long-term development. It

encompasses rich elements such as historical sites, folk customs, intangible cultural heritage, and regional spirit, serving as the spiritual core and cultural foundation for regional development. Integrating locally distinctive culture into the teaching of “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication” maybe can place obscure research method theories into specific and vivid application scenarios, so it can enhance the interestingness of course teaching. Meanwhile, it can help students have opportunity to understand local culture and improve their cultural confidence and cultural communication capabilities. Against this backdrop, we conducted this study to explore how to integrate local cultural characteristics into curriculum teaching, exploring effective paths for integrating locally distinctive culture into the teaching of “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication” can help address the practical problems existing in the current teaching of this course.

1.Theoretical Foundations

The first theoretical basis of this study is constructivism theory. Constructivist learning theory is an important theory, it subverts the traditional teacher-centered teaching model. this theory consider knowledge as a product actively constructed by learners, rather than conclusion unilaterally imparted by teachers. It believes that knowledge acquisition is not an isolated individual behavior but an interactive process occurring in specific sociocultural contexts. Learners need to screen, process, and reconstruct environmental information through dialogue and collaboration with other peoples, combined with their own experiences, and ultimately form a personalized cognitive system (Yang, W. D., & Jia, N., 2011). This theory posits that the learning process has the following characteristics: first, it believes learning is active, emphasizing that learners are the main body of knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of knowledge; second, it believes learning is based on certain contexts, advocating that real and specific sociocultural contexts are important carriers of knowledge construction, and knowledge learning divorced from contexts is often abstract and cannot to transfer; third, the learning process is interactive, advocating that interpersonal interaction and collaborative inquiry are important paths to deepen knowledge understanding and improve cognitive construction (Wen, P. N., & Jia, G. Y., 2002).

The second theoretical foundation is Situational Teaching Theory. The Situational Teaching Theory is Based on constructivist learning theory, it explores how to create scientific and reasonable contexts to guide learners in learning. The theory believes that the most important thing of teaching is to guide learners to realize the active construction of knowledge, and lead the learners have ability transfer and application of abilities in specific contexts. A vivid, specific teaching context that is close to learners’ lives and cognition is a key step in stimulating learning interest and awakening learning initiative. Compared with constructivist learning theory, situational teaching theory places greater emphasis on the life-orientation, concretization, and practicality of teaching contexts. It advocates that teaching should break the closed barriers of traditional classrooms, closely link abstract disciplinary knowledge with real-life scenarios and practical fields, and allow learners to complete knowledge learning and realize knowledge application through situational experience (Wang, Y., 2008; Wang, P., & Kang, T. H., 2004).

2.Existing Problems in Integrating Locally Distinctive Culture into the Teaching of “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication”

2.1 Disconnection Between Teaching Content and Locally Distinctive Culture

Currently, the teaching content of “Research Methods in Journalism and Communication” in most Chinese universities mainly draws on Western classic research theories and general research methods, such as questionnaire surveys, content analysis, and in-depth interviews, with insufficient attention paid to content related to locally distinctive culture in practical teaching. Most cases in textbooks are national or international general cases, which are quite different from local actual situations. This phenomenon makes it difficult for students to combine the learned theories with local cultural, and it will lead to unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Meanwhile, teachers lack the excavation and integration of local distinctive cultural resources in the teaching process, leading to the lack of regional pertinence in the course content and difficult to meet the local demand for journalism and communication talents.

2.2 Single Teaching Method and Lack of Situational Teaching Design

In terms of teaching methods, many teachers are accustomed to adopting traditional lecture-based teaching, dominating the classroom throughout the process, In this process, they neglect students’ learning autonomy, which lead students passively

accept knowledge. Although some teachers introduce case teaching, most cases are abstract and hardly arouse students' interest, lacking situational design related to local distinctive culture, thereby the teaching effect is not ideal.. Students cannot think about how to use reasonable and scientific research methods to consider and solve problems in real cultural contexts. Meanwhile, teachers don't have application of new teaching methods such as flipped classrooms and project-based learning, and they fail to fully mobilize students' learning initiative and creativity.

2.3 Insufficient Practical Teaching Platforms

The course "Research Methods in Journalism and Communication" is highly practical and requires sound practical teaching platforms as support. However, the construction of practical teaching platforms in some universities is lagging behind at present. These universities one-sidedly pursue cooperation with "high-end" media and cultural institutions, while neglecting cooperation with local sub-districts, communities, cultural stations and other units, failing to provide students with practical venues and resources for conducting research on local distinctive cultural communication. Meanwhile, the school-enterprise collaborative education mechanism is imperfect, and enterprises have low enthusiasm for participating in teaching. As a result, the actual needs of local cultural communication cannot be integrated into the course teaching, leading to the disconnection between students' practical research and local actual needs and poor results in practical ability training.

2.4 Single Teaching Evaluation System and Neglect of Assessment on Practical Ability and Cultural Literacy

Currently, the teaching evaluation of "Research Methods in Journalism and Communication" mainly relies on final examinations, focusing on the assessment of students' theoretical knowledge while neglecting the evaluation of their practical ability and cultural literacy. In terms of evaluation content, the existing assessment mostly centers on the memory and understanding of general theories such as questionnaire survey and content analysis. It fails to take students' practical achievements in conducting local distinctive cultural communication research using these methods as the core of assessment, nor does it pay attention to the cultivation effects of students' in-depth understanding of local culture, cultural identity, and cultural communication awareness. In terms of evaluation forms, it mainly adopts static assessments such as closed-book exams and written answers, lacking follow-up evaluation of dynamic practical links including students' research process, project operation, and achievement transformation. A single evaluation system not only fails to accurately measure the effectiveness of integrated teaching, but also leads students into the learning misunderstandings of "valuing theoretical memory over practical application" and "valuing general knowledge over local culture", which is not conducive to the improvement of students' practical abilities.

3. Specific Paths for Integrating Locally Distinctive Culture into the Teaching of "Research Methods in Journalism and Communication"

Based on constructivist learning theory and situational teaching theory, this study will carry out teaching reforms from four dimensions: restructuring teaching content, innovating teaching methods, constructing practical platforms, and improving the evaluation system. It will specifically elaborate on the practical paths for integrating locally distinctive culture into course teaching and form a scientific and complete teaching reform plan.

3.1 Restructure Teaching Content and Integrate Elements of Locally Distinctive Culture

3.1.1 Explore Locally Distinctive Cultural Resources and Enrich the Teaching Case Library

Teachers need to conduct in-depth exploration of locally distinctive cultural resources, such as local historical and cultural celebrities, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects, folk activities, and local media communication practices, and take all possible measures to transform these case into course teaching. For instance, when explaining "content analysis", local media reports on local ICH can be choosed as analysis objects, guiding students to use content analysis to examine the quantity, themes, and lengths of the news reports; when teaching "in-depth interview method", teachers can organize students to interview ICH inheritors, so they can understand the current status of ICH inheritance. Meanwhile, a dynamic teaching case library should be established, with cases updated in a timely manner according to changes in local cultural development and communication practices, so as to ensure the timeliness and pertinence of the teaching content.

3.1.2 Align with Local Needs and Optimize Curriculum Module Settings

Curriculum theme design is the core of delivering teaching content, and it links with teaching objectives. Tailoring these themes to local cultural communication needs is a key step in deeply integrating locally distinctive culture with the course Research Methods in Journalism and Communication. This study attempts to integrate local cultural communication into course teaching. To this end, teachers need to focus on the practical issues of regional cultural development and design teaching content based on local cultural resource endowments and communication needs. For example, in areas abundant in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) resources, teaching themes such as Research on the Communication of Local ICH can be developed, course instruction can focus on specific issues, such as the media representation of ICH inheritors, new media communication paths of ICH, and branding communication strategies of ICH IPs; in county-level regions under the backdrop of the rural revitalization strategy, teaching themes like Research on Local Rural Cultural Communication can be established to explore practical topics including the construction and communication of rural cultural symbols, media promotion of rural tourism culture, and communication mechanisms in urban-rural cultural integration; in urban areas, teachers may consider focusing their instructional content on the following aspects, such as research on Local Urban Image Communication can be set up to analyze content including the role of local media in shaping urban images, communication strategies of urban cultural landmarks, and international communication paths of urban brands. This teaching design may help to stimulate students' interest in learning, enhances their ability to apply theoretical methods to solve practical problems, and thus connect course teaching and the demands of local cultural development.

3.1.3 Compile Localized Teaching Materials and Strengthen the Regional Characteristics of the Course

Teachers need to collaborate more with local media experts and cultural scholars, and they can compile course handouts or supplementary materials that integrate locally distinctive culture, so teachers can make up for the deficiencies of existing textbooks. Combined with local cultural communication practices, the handouts need to provide localized interpretations of the theories and applications of journalism and communication research methods, add content such as local case analysis and local research project design, and guide students to think deeply how to integrate theoretical knowledge with local realities. For example, when explaining the questionnaire survey method, a questionnaire survey plan on rural residents' cultural information acquisition channels can be designed in conjunction with the current situation of local rural cultural communication. This process might allow students more easy to master the design and implementation process of the questionnaire survey method.

3.2 Innovate Teaching Methods and Construct a Situational Teaching Model

3.2.1 Adopt the Situational Teaching Method and Create Local Cultural Communication Scenarios

Integrate locally distinctive cultural resources to create authentic teaching scenarios is very important, it can allow students to apply research methods to solve practical problems in these scenarios. Teachers can simulate the media coverage planning of local cultural festival activities, where students maybe divided into groups to use research methods such as questionnaire surveys and interview methods to investigate the public's awareness and expectations of the cultural festival, and formulate coverage plans based on the findings; Teachers can also create scenarios of local intangible cultural heritage (ICH) communication dilemmas, guiding students to use content analysis, case analysis and other methods to analyze the problems existing in the current communication models and put forward more good suggestions. Situational teaching can enhances students' sense of engagement and improves their ability to apply research methods to solve practical problems.

3.2.2 Promote project-based learning and launch local cultural communication research projects

Guided by the practical problems of local cultural communication, teachers can design project-based learning tasks and allow students to carry out research projects in groups. For example, focusing on the research project of new media communication strategies for locally distinctive culture, guide students to use journalism and communication research methods throughout the entire process, including topic selection, plan design, data collection and analysis, and report writing. During the project implementation, teachers provide guidance to help students solve problems encountered in the research. After the project is completed, organize students to display and exchange their achievements to improve their teamwork and research capabilities. Meanwhile, encourage students to transform their research results into practical suggestions and submit them to local cultural

departments or media, so as to enhance the practical value of the research (Yang, P. P., Jiang, Y. F., & Yang, C. C., 2023).

3.2.3 Adopt flipped classroom to enhance students' independent learning ability.

Design flipped classroom teaching sessions in combination with teaching content related to locally distinctive culture. Before class, teachers upload relevant theoretical knowledge, local cultural cases and other materials to the online learning platform to guide students' independent learning; during class, organize students to discuss and exchange views on issues related to local cultural communication research and carry out practical operations. For example, when explaining the case analysis method, ask students to independently learn the theoretical knowledge of the case analysis method and read relevant cases of local cultural communication before class; during class, organize students to analyze the cases in groups, share their analysis ideas and conclusions, and teachers provide comments and summaries. The flipped classroom fully mobilizes students' learning initiative and improves their independent learning ability and critical thinking ability.

3.3 Build practical platforms and improve the collaborative education mechanism with local entities.

Further attach importance to exchanges and cooperation with local media, cultural departments, sub-districts, communities and other grass-roots units, so as to provide students with practical venues and resources for conducting research on local distinctive cultural communication. For example, organize students to participate in the planning and implementation of local cultural special reports in local media, and participate in the investigation and communication of local cultural activities in community cultural centers. In addition, local media journalists, editors, heads of cultural departments, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors, and folk artists can be invited to enter the classroom to carry out special lectures, case sharing, practical guidance and other activities for students. At the same time, these experts and folk artists can also be invited to participate in the guidance and evaluation of students' practical projects to improve the quality of practical teaching.

3.4 Improve the Evaluation System and Strengthen the Assessment of Practical Ability and Cultural Literacy

Improve the evaluation system and strengthen the assessment of practical ability and cultural literacy. Change the traditional single evaluation model and construct a multi-dimensional evaluation index system covering theoretical knowledge, practical ability, cultural literacy, etc. The assessment of theoretical knowledge focuses on examining students' mastery of the core theories of journalism and communication research methods; the assessment of practical ability focuses on evaluating students' ability to use research methods to carry out local cultural communication research, such as project plan design, data collection and analysis, and report writing; the assessment of cultural literacy focuses on investigating students' understanding of locally distinctive culture, cultural identity, and cultural communication awareness. Through diversified evaluation indicators, comprehensively assess students' learning effects. At the same time, strengthen process assessment. Teachers need to include students' classroom performance, case analysis reports, practical project progress, and group discussion participation into the evaluation scope, timely feedback students' learning status, and help them adjust learning strategies; summative evaluation can adopt forms such as practical project achievement display and research report defense, focusing on examining students' comprehensive application abilities. The ratio of process assessment to summative evaluation can be adjusted according to the characteristics of the course, and it is recommended that the proportion of process assessment not be less than 50% to ensure the comprehensiveness and objectivity of the evaluation.

4. Conclusion

Integrating locally distinctive culture into the teaching of "Research Methods in Journalism and Communication" is a worthy path to improve teaching quality and cultivate journalism and communication talents with local cultural literacy. Currently, the integration of the two faces problems such as disconnected teaching content, single teaching methods, insufficient practical platforms, and imperfect evaluation systems. This paper aims to effectively solve the existing difficulties in course teaching through specific paths including restructuring teaching content, innovating teaching methods, building practical platforms, and improving the evaluation system, so as to realize the in-depth integration of course teaching and locally distinctive culture, enhance students' comprehensive abilities, and provide intellectual support for the inheritance and communication of local culture. In the future, this integration requires the collaborative efforts of universities, teachers, and various local entities to help cultivate more high-quality journalism and communication talents who meet the needs of local

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Conflict of Interests

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