

A Comparative Study on Clothing Majors in Higher Education: between China and the United States

Xiangling Meng^{1,2,a}, Kan Liu^{1,b*}, Tianqi Yang^{1,c}

¹Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts, Shanghai, 201620, China

²College of Design, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul, 55108, Usa

Email: ^amxldream@163.com, ^bIamkanliu@126.com, ^c78457280@qq.com

*Corresponding Author

Keywords: Higher education, Clothing majors, Degree, Undergraduate

Abstract: To compare the clothing majors in higher education between China and the United States, this paper discusses the establishment of clothing majors in modern higher education compares the major types and degree types between China and the United States and those in different college of clothing majors. Furthermore, the paper compares the performance of clothing undergraduate education among different universities and analyzes pre-education background of students majored in clothing between those two countries. Analysis shows that both countries attach great importance to the development of clothing majors. They have established clothing majors or disciplines at different times although China started later than the United States. The professional name and the degree of clothing majors are basically similar in those two countries, except that the United States has an additional associate degree and a relative certificate. Results of the paper show that the students majored in clothing in the universities of the United States are more international and diversified than that in China. In addition, the educational background of students before entering colleges is partly different between two countries.

1. Introduction

Clothing, Food, shelter and transportation are the basic needs of human life. Clothing is ranked first, not only because clothing covers the body to keep out the cold, but more importantly because clothing has the moral and spiritual connotation of human beings. In other words, clothing distinguishes human beings from animals. Clothing is not only the basic need of human life, but also the carrier of human culture.

With the advancement of history, the continuous development of social industrial civilization, and the changing social needs, educators and professionals at home and abroad have realized the necessity of setting up professional education in clothing. Therefore, as a subject, clothing has become a part of higher education in different countries at different times. Experts in the field of education and design or colleges and universities have created a major related to clothing and started the educational exploration of this subject.

This paper mainly analyzes the colleges and universities in the United States and China, from the perspectives of the establishment of major, the types of disciplines, the types of degrees, curriculum, enrollment and educational background. It aims to discuss the characteristics of clothing education in modern higher education at home and abroad to better promote the development of the subject. In the United States, community colleges and higher vocational education in China are theoretically also belong to modern higher education. However, due to the different talent training objectives, they are not included in this study. And the costume design also is not discussed in this paper.

2. Establishment of Clothing Majors in Modern Higher Education

The teacher-apprentice system was once the main learning mode of the clothing profession [1]. After thousands of years of inheritance, this model has proved to be an effective vocational training

method in both China and foreign countries [2]. With the development of society, the rapid advancement of industrialization has brought new demands to talents, and the development of modern education models. The rapid dissemination of clothing knowledge and skills has become necessary. Therefore, clothing majors were established at China and other countries and it entered the modern education mode.

Modern clothing education dates back to the 1840s. In 1841, French fashion master Alexis LAVIGNE founded the world's first fashion school, the French high fashion school named Esmode, whose Fashion business was founded in 1989 [3]. In the United States, in 1896, the Parsons School of Design was founded [4], marking the first fashion school in the United States, becoming the beginning of modern education in the United States. Since then, in the twentieth century, colleges and universities with clothing in the United States have appeared in large numbers. Today, the famous art colleges such as Fashion Institute of Technology and Savannah College of Art and Design [5] both appeared in the 20th century.

Modern higher clothing education appeared relatively late in China. However in the 1980s, the education sector also set up clothing majors or disciplines. The former Central Academy of Fine Arts established the clothing major in 1980, and the first students enrolled in 1982. Donghua University, Zhejiang Sci-tech University and Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology set up the relative majors separately in the 1980s.

3. Analysis of Clothing Majors in Higher Education

3.1 Majors and Degree

In China, majors of clothing disciplines include: Fashion Design and Engineering, Fashion Art Design, Fashion Design, Fashion Design and Performance, Fashion Design and Marketing, Fashion Design and Making, Knitting Design, Textile Design and so on. In the United States clothing majors include Fashion Design, Fashion Merchandising or Retail Merchandising, Commercial and Advertising Art, Fashion Design and Society, Fashion Management, Fashion Marketing and Communication, Marketing Research and so on. In China fashion and clothing engineering is separated with the fashion design. However it is not the case in the United States.

In China academic education include diploma and degree education. Diploma education include college certificate program, undergraduate, postgraduate. Certificate program often needs two years study and students will get the certificate or diploma when they complete the program. Undergraduate program needs four years study and students will receive the diploma and bachelor degree if they can reach the requirement. And for postgraduate there are two types degree named master and doctoral. The students need two and a half years to attain their masters and 3 to 8 years to get their doctorates.

In the United States academic education is similar to in China. The difference is among the type of degrees. Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science or Associate in Applied Science (AAS) will be awarded qualified students. And the types of bachelor include Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and Bachelor of Science (BS). The types of master include Master of Arts (MA), Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Master of Science (MS) and Master of Professional Studies (MPS). In china the students often receive six types of degree. They are Bachelor of Engineering (BE), Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA). It accords to the same rule for master degree. In the United States for doctorate program the degree is named Doctor of Philosophy (PH.D.) such as the Human Factors and Ergonomics PH.D. Program in the University of Minnesota. It is similar for doctorate both in China and the United States.

3.2 Undergraduate Education Distribution of Clothing Majors

Undergraduate education of clothing majors in American colleges and universities is mainly distributed in two types of institutions. One is an independent or specialized art school, such as Parsons School of Design at the New School and Fashion Institute of Technology. Both are independent art school. However Parsons School of Design at the New School is private university

and Fashion Institute of Technology is public university which is a state of University. The other is the comprehensive university. Clothing majors located in different department in different university, such as the Department of Art under the California State of University, the College of Design at the University of Minnesota under the School of Design. Comprehensive universities are also divided into public and private, such as the University of Minnesota is public university and Cornell University which also has a clothing professional education is private.

China's clothing undergraduate education is similar to the United States in this respect. One type is independent or specialized art colleges, such as Nanjing Art College, Shandong Arts and Crafts Institute, Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts etc. The other is the comprehensive university. These universities are mostly public universities such as Donghua University, Zhejiang Sci-tech University and Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. Due to the school merger policy of previous years, such as the merger of the former Central Academy of Fine University and Tsinghua University, the proportion of clothing professions in comprehensive colleges has been relatively improved.

3.3 The Performance of Clothing Majors in Undergraduate Education

The clothing professions under most private art colleges in the United States are outstanding. In some art schools, such as Fashion Design in Parsons School of Design at the New School is the first in the United States even in the world. The private university and the public has their own advantages such as the Parsons School of Design at the New School and Fashion Institute of Technology. Clothing undergraduate education has excellent performance both in the independent university and the comprehensive university. The representative of independent universities is Parsons School of Design, Fashion Institute of Technology, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Savannah College of Art and Design. Cornell University (NY), University of Wisconsin – Madison, University of California - Davis, University of Florida all are excellent American comprehensive universities on clothing undergraduate education.

In comparison, the clothing graduate education of private universities in China is weaker than in the comprehensive universities due to various reasons such as capital, student source and history. The relatively strong clothing professions in China are often located in comprehensive and public universities. The famous Tsinghua University, Donghua University, Zhejiang Sci-tech University and Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology are all public universities. And the first three universities are comprehensive university and only the last one is independent university. In China it is difficult to have excellent performance of clothing major in an art school or a private college comparable to the public Universities.

3.4 Analysis of Pr-Education Background of Students Majoring in Clothing

In the United States the enrollment systems of colleges and universities are open to the whole world. Students who want to study clothing majors especially fashion design often mainly provide language scores, high school grades and portfolios to those universities which they preferred with. In China the enrollment is currently mainly open to Chinese students. Students are required to take the Chinese university entrance exam. The main classification is two types of students, who are awarded the engineering bachelor's degree to participate in the Chinese university entrance exam. The majors awarded to the arts or literature majors, in addition to participating in the Chinese university entrance exam, also need to participate in the national art examination or the school's independent examination.

In the United States undergraduate students who majored in Clothing are more diverse and international. Undergraduate students of Chinese colleges and universities are relatively single. Especially for the majors who will be awarded bachelor of art or fine are, the United States values students' creativity, and China's universities values the students' artistic foundation.

The corresponding high school education is also different. Both countries have art high schools for art, which can be used as a student source for clothing majors. The difference is that in ordinary high schools, China will have classes for art students who want to choose the clothing majors especially for Bachelor of Arts or Fine Arts. In the United States high schools has the art classes

and they often offer after-school interest classes of art, and they are for all students not just for students who want to study arts.

Therefore, there are differences between the two countries for this part of the students. And more seriously, in China the current prevailing situation in primary and secondary schools is that most schools' art courses will more or less give way to the entrance examination or college entrance examination subjects, ignoring the cultivation of artistic humanities quality [6]. At the same time, the teaching methods of art courses are not scientific, such as art classes, which mainly teach painting techniques, ignore the understanding, comprehension and discussion of the works; attach importance to the teaching results, and neglect the teaching process. It is suggested that the developers and implementers of art education policies in primary and secondary schools should attach great importance to the importance of art education in cultivating high-quality talents, innovative talents and sustainable talents, and establish scientific and rational training standards, evaluation systems and guarantee mechanisms for art education. Every student will have the opportunity to receive better artistic quality and quality training before entering the university, laying a good foundation for the future development of life

However in the United States since 2003, both the University of California and California State University have developed a new admission policy that includes the student's level of artistic education in the new entry requirements. Students who require entry must have a year of art education. The admission policy guarantees that most middle school students have already possessed a good artistic quality when they graduate, and have laid a good humanistic foundation for further study in different fields. The United States also pays attention to the function of art as a general education in ordinary universities.

China is relatively weaker than the United States in art education as a general education.

4. Conclusion

Analysis shows that both China and the US attach great importance to the development of clothing majors, and they have established clothing majors or disciplines at different times. China started to do this was later than the United States. The professional name and the degree of clothing majors are basically similar between the United States and China, except that the United States has an additional associate degree and relative certificate.

The students of clothing majors have different education background between two contrasting countries. The students of the United States are more international and diversified. In addition, the educational background of students before entering colleges is partly different between two countries.

The differences among the design, teaching contents and methods of professional courses in those two countries will be studied further.

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