ABSTRACT

Developing Chinese Design Education (CDE) with Chinese characteristics is an old but unending topic that has been discussed in the field of design education in P. R. China for many years. The debate has been constrained by different attitudes towards the nature of design, diverse interpretations of the Chinese cultural tradition and varied perceptions of the role of education. The future development of CDE is eager for new attitude, thinking and approach to rebuild its culture and value system. This article develops a comprehensive framework through redefining the meanings of CDE, applying the principles of spatio-temporal measurement and ADAL model of Integral Theory. This integral approach based on the newly established framework provides a pragmatic and collective method for CDE, not only from a strategic height to simultaneously understand multiple, competing theories and ideas, but also from tactical operational level to holistically manage different perspectives and practical solutions.
INTRODUCTION

Accompanying the enormous development in the economic field in mainland China, Chinese design education (CDE) has made great progress over the past few decades, in response to the increasing demand for more designers from the quickly expanding design and manufacturing industries. Since 1998, under the state’s education reforms, the guiding ideology of art and design education has shifted from elite education to mass training; from comprehensive art instruction to more job-oriented preparation (Chen & Ma 2011). It led the great leap forward of CDE in the late 1990s. Today China, with approximately two million students studying design or design related courses (Vision Union, 2015), has almost two thousand institutes and universities that can offer art and design programs (China Education Daily, 2016). Many of them are equipped with updated hardware such as new buildings or campuses, large size studios, advanced computer labs and full-scale workshops. Every year, approximately one hundred thousand students graduate with basic skills and knowledge, which helped to ease the staff shortages in many newly emerging design institutions and enterprises. Meanwhile, in response to changes in the practices of design and manufacturing industries, many universities and colleges explore new ways to improve the quality of their courses by seeking co-operation with overseas institutions, pursuing collaboration with enterprises, reforming course content, as well as changing modes of delivery. These efforts have greatly improved the competency level of CDE in such a short period of time.

However, in a modern sense, CDE as an independent discipline in China’s higher education system has a very short history. Its approach shifting from art, crafts, pattern, decoration, art design to design has experienced a tortuous process, in order to develop CDE with Chinese characteristics (Hang & Cao, 2009). A dilemma that has been limiting a thorough discussion for CDE is the ambiguous perception and misinterpretation of design (Jin, 2007). It comes from the different types of education missions that reflected different attitudes towards the nature of design, diverse interpretations of the Chinese cultural tradition and varied perceptions of the role of education. Hence, the discussion the development of CDE with Chinese characteristics becomes a very challenging task.

The past debates have mainly concentrated on both tactical and strategic aspects: one relates to the operational level, the other connects to the ideological level. On the operational level, it mainly relates to the aspects of the course structures and contents (Zheng & Gao, 2015), teaching staff development, practical ability (Su & Huang, 2012), general management, education mode (Qing, 2008; Zheng, 2009), talent-training method (Li, 2010) and the impact of design (Tong 2010). The criti-
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