The Application of the PLRITL Model to the
Wedding Planning and Organization Course

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Abstract—This paper explores how the study of the teaching reform of a university course focused on the planning and organization of a wedding helps to promote innovation within the existing teaching mode within the academic discipline of professional convention and exhibition courses. It will be demonstrated that this kind of study does not just improve student interest in learning, but also enhances their sense of innovation, and thereby creates favorable conditions for the cultivation of high-quality professionals. The Practical Training-Learning-Research Integrated Teaching Mode (PLRITL) that this paper discusses seeks to enrich the planning and organization of wedding activities by promoting student learning through practice or research, and looks to build a "three-in-one" training opportunity for "practical training, learning and research". The PLRITL simultaneously helps to cultivate the practical application and innovation ability of university students who major in the discipline of Professional Convention and Exhibition, and this teaching mode therefore has an important part to play in cultivating the innovative and practical application ability of university students.

Keywords—practical training-learning-research, project-based teaching, targeted teaching; wedding planning and organization

I. INTRODUCTION

The wedding industry, as a by-product and branch of the convention and exhibition industry, has experienced rapid development in recent years, with the consequence that the planning and organization of weddings has been increasingly acknowledged by institutions of higher learning and related industries. As a result of government-level emphasis on the convention and exhibition industry and the diversification of consumer demands for the wedding industry to be part of society, new requirements have been proposed for the university course Wedding Planning and Organization, which falls within the discipline of Convention and Exhibition.

In fact, the traditional teaching mode by which the teacher lectures while the students listen before undertaking homework-based assignments, has been found to be insufficiently conducive to the cultivation of students’ creativity, enthusiasm and initiative, and this has hindered the improvement of students’ comprehensive quality, and their innovative ability in particular. This has in turn created a disconnect between the university curriculum and practical work and divorced students’ professional skills from social needs.

From 2014 onwards we have, during the course of classes, sought to explore and instruct a new teaching approach known as the Practical training-Learning-Research Integrated Teaching Mode (PLRITL). It has two purposes: first, to cultivate students’ comprehensive professional quality, and their innovative skills in their future profession in particular, with the intention of improving their entrepreneurial skills and employment competitiveness. This has been done in the expectation it will enable them to meet society’s needs after graduation [1]. After emerging in the 1980s, the teaching mode of integrating practical training, learning and research has been widely recognized and accepted by Chinese universities for the reason that it aims to adopt a flexible and diversified teaching model that mobilizes students’ enthusiasm to learn, enhances their learning interests and promotes their professionalization, while ensuring that they will become active learners of new knowledge rather than passive recipients of crammed information. This teaching mode has proven to be useful in encouraging students to be more innovative in integrating theory and practice and has improved their ability to compete in the future jobs market [2].

In short, this integrated teaching mode does not only enrich the teaching content of wedding planning and organizing courses, but also promotes teaching through research and learning through practice. It is an important means through which to cultivate the practical application and innovation ability of university students who major in convention and exhibition. This three-in-one teaching mode therefore has an important role to play in cultivating students’ innovative and practical application ability within the wider context of institutions of higher learning. This paper introduces practical experience and innovative measures associated with the application of this mode during the teaching of the Wedding Planning and Organization course that is provided

A. Teaching Curriculum Content that Comprehensively Cultivates Students’ Professional Qualities

1) Combination of project-based teaching and targeted teaching.

For a substantial period of time, the assessment system within Chinese universities has prioritized the traditional standardized testing system, which privileges the teaching of theory over the development of practically applied skills. With
the intention of transforming teacher-based training into guidance-based instruction, we have sought to explore a project-based teaching that is combined with targeted teaching. So-called project-based teaching refers to teaching activities where the teacher and students jointly complete a “work project” with the intention of appropriately integrating the teaching of theory with practical learning [3]. This brings a number of students’ innovation potentials into play and improves their practical problem-solving skills. In enabling students to set a specific goal at each stage of their project completion process, this so-called ‘targeted teaching’ helps students to set a specific goal at each stage of their project completion process and this enables them to feel a sense of achievement at each stage of the process, and this further stimulates their interest in learning and enhances their capacity for self-improvement [4].

During this course, theory teaching and practical application are simultaneously implemented. The teaching focuses on helping students to complete a wedding plan, which includes knowledge of wedding details, wedding etiquette, wedding hosting and the negotiation of wedding orders. The survival skills and management of wedding companies are also touched upon during the teaching of theory. When students learn theory, they are encouraged to refer to practical problems. They are also encouraged to consult relevant literature and to complete a comprehensive PowerPoint training, which means that the course’s learning goal is achieved once the course’s content knowledge is mastered. The course’s main purpose is to help students experience the complete process of wedding planning and organization. This kind of teaching and learning can help to fully realize students’ initiative during the planning and organization of a wedding ceremony. The course’s “wedding project” includes the running of a wedding simulation [5]. This project seeks to improve students’ ability to combine theory with practice, and also seeks to improve teaching quality and reduce homework-related burdens [6].

2) Instruction reform for changes in class assessment.

Assessment is the main means through which teachers come to understand students’ learning outcomes. The traditional means through which to evaluate students' comprehensive performance is to base the assessment outcome on the final examination. Here it is assumed that students’ practical skills and their classroom question answers will demonstrate in overcoming difficulties further strengthen. This further enhances students’ innovative ability teaching stage, and reduces the proportion of final examination within their final assessment scores. The design concept of this assessment is intended to comprehensively guide student learning, and it also endeavors to ensure that students' attitudes and abilities are objectively and fairly reflected in the course. Three years of instruction practice indicate that this diversified assessment mode has proven to be more comprehensive, fairer and objective in the assessment of students' specific abilities, their learning performances and their final learning outcomes. It is also consistent with the requirements for cultivating high-quality professionals in the discipline of Convention and Exhibition with Chinese characteristics.

B. Practical Teaching Based on Comprehensive Professional Quality Training

The PLRITM seeks to gradually change the content of traditional teaching and introduce new teaching concepts that are consistent with a curriculum in which the core content of wedding planning and organization curriculum centers upon the planning and organization of wedding ceremonies. The wedding industry is China's emerging sunrise industry and is part of the convention and exhibition industry that is developing very fast and has a strong social applicability. In instituting the “wedding project” as the main teaching mode, we have already implemented the PLRITM in 2014, 2015 and 2016 classes conducted as part of the wedding planning and organization course in 2014, 2015 and 2016 classes. The specific application of the PLRITM is as follows:

(1) Group division: each group consists of 3-5 students and individual members are tasked with their own project to carry out. The group leader is responsible for the project.

(2) Topic selection: the sixth week of the class begins with topic selection. The group selects the topic in accordance with members’ interests and project feasibility.

(3) Goal setting: the goal for each project stage is established and the specific point when each stage goal will be achieved is clarified in advance.

(4) Implementation: the students complete the “Wedding Planning Case” with the teacher’s guidance. This includes choosing topics, the drafting of a literature review, the conducting of a feasibility study, the visiting of a wedding fair, the contacting of wedding companies to participate in actual wedding ceremonies, the preparation of wedding materials, and the completion of wedding planning paperwork and so on.

Each group produces a separate PPT that is then reported back to the whole class and each student participates in the review of the PPT and expresses his/her own opinions. The teacher then reviews each group's project and points out shortcomings that students need to address and resolve. The teachers and students jointly determine the wedding plan for the “simulated wedding”. The wedding project has enabled boring course learning to become an active, challenging and interesting learning task. Students’ enthusiasm to learn reaches unprecedented heights and the courage and teamwork that students demonstrate in overcoming difficulties further strengthens. This further enhances students’ innovative ability
in practical training and scientific research, and also promotes the overall development of the discipline of Convention and Exhibition at the university level.

C. Linking Theory to Practice

The Practical Learning-Research Integrated Teaching Mode (PLRITM) promotes students’ extracurricular innovation abilities and their practice of social skills [5]. The amount of time that students spend in the classroom is usually limited by pre-specified class hours. Participation in project-based activities and various competitions enables students to transfer their learning orientation from classroom learning to after-school learning. This kind of learning orientation is more active and requires students to engage in deeper learning, and can be said to establish a true connection between theory and practice. For example, in working in accordance with the selected wedding plan, students have to work together in a prepared and orderly manner, and tasks are divided between each group member. Each student has a clear goal and is required to conduct his/her duties accordingly, which may involve contacting the wedding company or issuing wedding invitations. The course teachers also encourage students to participate in preparatory work conducted before weddings in the community, observe various wedding ceremonies that possess distinctive characteristics, visit wedding fairs, complete the preparatory work of simulated weddings in the college’s wedding laboratory of the college, post forecasts for simulated wedding ceremony on the school bulletin board and invite other university teachers and students to participate in the simulated wedding that will held in the school’s lecture hall. It is usually the case that each simulated wedding will attract about 200 students. The success of the simulated wedding also provides the best publicity for the course. The number of students enrolled on the course increases every year, and this greatly increases student enthusiasm for wedding planning and organization courses. Students are also encouraged to actively participate in various college competitions, whether at the municipal, provincial or national level. For example, the themed presentation “Talk on the teaching mode of wedding planning and organizing courses” took third prize at the 2018 annual event that the Zhejiang Convention and Exhibition Society holds to celebrate scientific research achievement.

II. CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The Practical training-Learning-Research Integrated Teaching Mode is practical and feasible in the planning and organization of wedding ceremonies because it closely integrates the teaching of theory and practical learning and helps students to engage in a learning process that make ideas a reality. In engaging with the wedding planning and organization course, students can apply what they have learned to practice, while teachers can integrate problems that students have encountered into their teaching with the intention of optimizing their teaching theory in a way that will help to solve students’ problems – this will in turn mean that both teachers and students benefit from this teaching mode. In short, research on wedding planning and organization courses that is stimulated by the principle of instruction reform will promote the innovation of the existing teaching mode in the professional discipline of Convention and Exhibition. This mode will not just enhance students' interest in learning, but will also promote their sense of innovation in a way that helps to create favorable conditions for the training of high-quality professionals.

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