

Construction of the Curriculum System for Tourism Specialty Students in Higher Vocational Colleges Based on the “Innovation and Entrepreneurship” Education

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Abstract: The “innovation and entrepreneurship” education aims to cultivate students’ innovative thinking ability and entrepreneurship spirit. According to the particularity of vocational education on tourism, this paper analyses the value of integrating the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education into the curriculum system for tourism specialty students, and makes a systematic analysis on the curriculum system of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education. The organic integration of the explicit “innovation and entrepreneurship” curriculum and the implicit “innovation and entrepreneurship” curriculum can facilitate the training of “innovative and entrepreneurial” tourism talents in higher vocational colleges.

1. Introduction

The “innovation and entrepreneurship” in this paper means the education aiming at cultivating students’ ability of “innovation and entrepreneurship” in institutions of higher learning. As early as 1947, Harvard Business School pioneered the innovation and entrepreneurship education. By the 1980s, entrepreneurship education developed rapidly in American colleges and universities. Many schools set up special educational research institutes.^[1] They conducted in-depth research on the curriculum system of innovation and entrepreneurship. The Timmons entrepreneurship education model was the most representative one. The curriculum system was established based on the experience-centered curriculum theory, taking both the subject-centered curriculum theory and the humanistic curriculum theory into account. It combined the advantages of the three curriculum theories and achieved good results.^[2] In the Asia-Pacific region, entrepreneurship education was carried out earlier in Japan, Singapore and other countries and achieved good results. Among them, universities in Japan have formed a complete curriculum system of innovation and entrepreneurship.^[3] Innovation and entrepreneurship education in China started relatively late. In 1999, the state promulgated the Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Quality Education in an All-round Way. It proposed that the comprehensive quality of college students should be improved through “innovation and entrepreneurship” education, so as to cultivate their innovative consciousness and ability to meet the needs of social development. In 2002, the Ministry of Education identified 9 universities such as Tsinghua University as pilot colleges of entrepreneurship education, which indicates that in China, the entrepreneurship education has officially obtained the support from the government.^[4] However, through searching and referring data from the authoritative database, the author finds that at present in China, the policy on “innovation and entrepreneurship” education is not ideally implemented in higher vocational colleges. Problems are mainly manifested in the lack of integration of theoretical research and specific practice, as well as the separated professional education with innovation and entrepreneurship education. The actual effects of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education are unsatisfactory in China’s higher vocational colleges. Researches on the “innovation and entrepreneurship” curriculum for tourism specialty students in higher vocational colleges are hardly seen.

2. Analysis on the Characteristics of Tourism Education

2.1 Special attributes of tourism

Compared with engineering vocational colleges which usually focus on cultivating students' "one-dimensional ability", tourism colleges must cultivate students' "dual abilities". Besides grasping professional skills, tourism students should also be able to express their skills effectively. When communicate or interact with customers, any details and expression changes can directly affect the service objects, and determine the final service quality. Compared with many other industries, the tourism industry usually has more management levels. It emphasizes the ability of organization, coordination and communication. Therefore, while imparting basic professional knowledge and training necessary skills, tourism vocational colleges should also provide a series of theoretical and practical courses such as communication skills, so as to cultivate students' communication abilities, cooperation abilities, understanding abilities, endurance abilities, as well as self-discipline and self-care abilities.

2.2 Flexibility of skills

In the tourism industry, employees' understanding ability is very important. This kind of understanding is not fixed. In different situations, the development of skills can change. For example, tour guides' explanations of the same scenic spot can be different for visitors with different culture backgrounds, ages and experiences. The differences are mainly reflected in the contents of explanation, the methods of narration, as well as their body language. Flexibility and adaptability of skills are particularly important for tourists at different levels and from different countries. For example, services and explanations should match with the knowledge and cultural backgrounds of target audiences.

2.3 Higher probability of independent entrepreneurship

Tourism is an important branch of the service industry. Except for large tourism groups, most operators are small and micro enterprises. Compared with the former, the threshold of the latter is relatively low. It can be a bar, a restaurant, a small travel agency, an economic hotel, or a rural tourist spot. The founding of these enterprises requires less capital and conditions, but investors should have strong entrepreneurship and innovation spirit. Therefore, in the process of tourism vocational education, we should carry out the education of entrepreneurship and innovative ideas from beginning to end, so as to cultivate the innovative consciousness of future practitioners in the tourism industry.

3. The Significance of Integrating "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" Education into the Curriculum System for Tourism Major Students

3.1 The cultivation of "innovative and entrepreneurial" talents is the inherent need of the development of tourism industry.

3.1.1 Tourism professionals with innovative abilities and entrepreneurial spirit are needed in the era of mass tourism

Tourism is a comprehensive industry. The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development issued by the State Council defines the overall train of thought, the main tasks and as well as the safeguard measures for tourism development during the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan" period, and makes it clear that during the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan" period, China should have a basically powerful tourism industry. Now China has entered the era of mass tourism. Tourism development presents the trends of mass consumption, global development, increasing demands for high quality products and services, internationalized competition and industrial modernization. It urgently needs a large number of qualified personnel with good technical skills, international visions, cultural backgrounds, strong creative abilities and strong sense of services.

3.1.2 The new normal of tourism economy calls for practitioners' ability and quality of "innovation and entrepreneurship"

Traditional tourism enterprises are facing the transformation and upgrading. Tourism is becoming more and more individualized, personalized and diversified; the individualized demands for tourism services are also increasing. Tourist destinations are becoming increasingly diversified. Tourism is no longer limited to scenic spots. Leisure tourism in characteristic towns with folk customs becomes the new trend. On one hand, the new normal of economy has caused tremendous impacts on traditional tourism enterprises. On the other hand, it also puts forward higher requirements for tourism practitioners. Higher vocational colleges on tourism should actively respond to the new focuses, new patterns and new requirements of tourism economy. Higher vocational colleges on tourism should constantly strengthen the cultivation of students' innovation and entrepreneurship abilities on the basis of paying attention to imparting basic theoretical knowledge and training professional skills. With proper education, graduates will be able to integrate into the industry as soon as possible, actively respond to new changes of the industry, and promote the prosperity and development of tourism.

3.2 "Innovation and entrepreneurship" education is the realistic demand of perfecting the training of tourism talents

3.2.1 The curriculum lays particular stress on knowledge and skills; higher vocational education pays insufficient attention to the "innovation and entrepreneurship" education

Tourism vocational colleges mainly focus on professional knowledge and skills when training tourism talents; they do not pay enough attention to the "innovation and entrepreneurship" education. From the perspective of curriculum design, many professional courses still follow the relatively old standards. The teaching contents are obviously disconnected from the reality of the industry; the trained talents cannot meet the requirements of the current tourism industry. In the past two years, innovation and entrepreneurship education has become the focus of social discussion. The state pays great attention and provides strong support. Therefore, tourism vocational colleges have gradually realized the importance of "innovation and entrepreneurship" education in the training of tourism talents. Some colleges have attached importance to cultivating students' innovation and creation abilities in their professional training programs and training objectives. However, at present, many vocational colleges only attach great importance to "innovation and entrepreneurship" education in ideology; there are still shortcomings in the specific implementation.^[5]

3.2.2 The teaching means are too traditional and single; the cultivation on "innovation and entrepreneurship" qualities is ignored.

Most vocational colleges of tourism still use traditional classroom teaching as the main education method. Traditional teaching methods are still widely used; teaching methods are backward. The main teaching method is classroom teaching, which puts students in the situation of passive learning. Although there are practical courses, the skill requirements are limited; the training methods are single and lagging behind; the operation training is insufficient. Schools pay too much attention to the imparting of theoretical knowledge, but ignore the main role of students. In addition, at present, the skill training module only focuses on the training of single and repetitive skills. Teachers do not pay enough attention to cultivating students' innovative and entrepreneurship abilities, as well as their independent thinking and creative abilities. Practical projects are simple; they lack diversity and complexity. These projects cannot meet the actual requirements of "innovation and entrepreneurship" education. Therefore, the "innovation and entrepreneurship" quality training cannot be effectively implemented.

3.2.3 Students do not have enough innovation and entrepreneurship awareness; educational activities of "innovation and entrepreneurship" are insufficient.

Innovation and entrepreneurship consciousness is one of the main factors affecting the

effectiveness of innovation and entrepreneurship. Through interviews and investigations, it is found that some tourism vocational colleges still have many problems in the innovation and entrepreneurship consciousness, which is mainly manifested in following aspects: the inadequate awareness of innovation, the inadequate innovation ability, the “fear of difficulty”, and the cognitive bias towards the value of innovation and entrepreneurship activities. They do not have enough enthusiasm of participating in “innovation and entrepreneurship” activities. From the school level, these colleges rarely carry out “innovation and entrepreneurship” activities, which greatly affects students’ participation. It is not conducive to the cultivation of “innovation and entrepreneurship” consciousness. Though some “innovation and entrepreneurship” activities are carried out, the missing of school supports and incentive mechanisms, as well as teachers’ ineffective guidance usually lead to the weak atmosphere for innovation and entrepreneurship. The effectiveness of “innovation and entrepreneurship” activities is not obvious, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students’ creation and entrepreneurship consciousness.

3.3 Constructing the curriculum system of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education is the key to realize “innovation and entrepreneurship” education.

Relevant studies have shown that, “among many factors affecting the effect of innovation and entrepreneurship, education has innate advantages and natural links with entrepreneurship and innovation abilities.” For tourism vocational colleges, the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education mainly focuses on the innovative and entrepreneurial qualities of future tourism professionals. In the specific implementation process, the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education and professional education are integrated. Students can learn and experience the innovation and entrepreneurship in the process of learning professional courses, and gradually internalize these skills into their own professional knowledge structure. Through this process, innovation and entrepreneurship can truly become their own ability and quality reserve; the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education can achieve the desired goal of personnel training. In order to achieve this goal, we must integrate the connotation and requirements of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education into the training objectives and programs for tourism students, integrate the quality training of “innovation and entrepreneurship” into the main line of cultivating tourism professionals, construct the curriculum system of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education for tourism professionals, and truly match the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education with professional education. Therefore, the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education concept and consciousness training can be integrated into the daily professional teaching, so that students can experience innovation and entrepreneurship activities in professional learning, generate the “innovation and entrepreneurship” spirit and culture, and gradually form the awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship. The “innovation and entrepreneurship” education can truly take effects.

4. Constructing the “Innovation and Entrepreneurship” Curriculum System for Tourism Major Students

Innovation is the premise and foundation of entrepreneurship. It is one of the important goals of colleges and universities to cultivate “innovative and entrepreneurial” talents. As a diversified and changeable industry, tourism objectively requires practitioners to have the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. In order to meet this requirement, the training of “innovation and entrepreneurship” talents in tourism specialty should be carried out based on the characteristics of “innovative and entrepreneurial” talents, follow the rule of “structure-function”, establish the guiding principles of overall design with focuses, strengthen curriculum reorganization and integration, and emphasize the logic and structure of curriculum. With the reorganization and optimization, a more scientific and systematic “innovation and entrepreneurship” education curriculum system can be provided for tourism majors.

4.1 The explicit “innovation and entrepreneurship” courses with reasonable structure

In order to integrate “innovation and entrepreneurship” education into the curriculum system of tourism specialty, teachers should focus on specific explicit courses as the carrier, and offer corresponding compulsory courses and elective courses. These courses can not only urge students to accumulate basic “innovation and entrepreneurship” knowledge and ability, but also meet the needs of learners at different levels, and continuously cultivate students’ innovative and entrepreneurial ability.

For compulsory courses, the school needs to construct a series of innovative and entrepreneurship education curriculum system with organic linkages and scientific allocation, regard innovative and entrepreneurship theory and practice as compulsory courses for students from all specialties, and lay emphasis on the cultivation of the innovation and entrepreneurship knowledge and ability.

For elective courses, the school should enlarge the scope of independent course selection for students, strive to provide support for students’ independent choices, so as to cultivate students’ abilities of independent thinking, independent learning and innovative thinking, meet their individualized growth needs, and focus on the training of decision-making abilities.

4.2 The implicit “innovation and entrepreneurship” courses which strengthened quality

The construction of the implicit curriculum system should run through the concept of “innovation and entrepreneurship” in an all-round way and in the whole process. Strengthening the practical activities of course teaching, and arranging in-depth visits and investigations to some courses teaching, can help students to have more direct experience and understanding of the course. Schools can also conduct investigations and training in enterprises of the industry, so as to stimulate students’ willingness of entrepreneurship after graduation. These courses can encourage students to take the initiative to combine the learning contents with innovation and entrepreneurship practices, and cultivate the awareness of practical action. After graduation, they will be willing to search the opportunity of starting their own businesses.

First, the moral and quality courses of innovation and entrepreneurship should be integrated into the general education courses. The orientation courses, tourism professional quality courses, lessons on humanities and the society, lessons on literature and art, as well as courses on innovation and the comprehensive cultural quality should be provided to improve students’ ideological qualities, including their pioneering spirit, striving spirit and dedication spirit, their career ambition, ideals and aspirations, as well as their psychological qualities, including psychological endurance, will and perseverance, self-confidence, interests and hobbies.

Second, innovation and entrepreneurship knowledge and ability courses should be integrated into professional basic courses. Schools need to integrate the innovation and entrepreneurship education into the whole process of personnel training, strengthen “innovation and entrepreneurship” education in the process of imparting professional knowledge, and promote the organic integration of professional education with innovation and entrepreneurship education. Specific contents include management knowledge and ability, as well as knowledge and ability of social activities. Through these arrangements, students can acquire professional knowledge and form research ability, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship ability in the process of attending professional courses.

Third, cases of entrepreneurship can be integrated into the vocational skills curriculum. As far as the curriculum of talent training is concerned, vocational skills courses are the most useful courses for enterprises. The integration of specific cases of innovation and entrepreneurship into the vocational skills curriculum is conducive to the concretization of Abstract theory. On one hand, students can truly feel the process, methods and laws of entrepreneurs, and learn the quality and dedication of entrepreneurs, so as to open their thinking and widen their horizons. The educational effect is more intuitive, vivid and lasting. Cultivating students’ craftsmanship as well as the quality of innovation and entrepreneurship is also helpful to further cultivate talents with the sense of historical mission and the responsibility of era for the tourism industry.

4.3 Diversified “innovation and entrepreneurship” practices through the “second classroom”

The “second classroom” combines both theory and practice. They have less time and space constraints and more flexible forms. Through combining theory and practice, and enriching the environment of implementing “innovation and entrepreneurship” education, students can learn through participating in specific diversified practical activities. They will internalize the learning, experience and perception in the “second classroom” into their own knowledge structure through summary and reflection, and gradually form their own “entrepreneurship and innovation” knowledge and ability system.

First, schools can carry out “innovation and entrepreneurship forums” to stimulate students’ entrepreneurial awareness and urge students to start their own businesses. Colleges can make full use of resources inside and outside the school. Enterprises of the industry and social forces can also help to organize “innovation and entrepreneurship forums”, which can impart innovative and entrepreneurial knowledge. Teachers can organize targeted researches and simulated training. Psychological training which can temper students’ will is also needed.

Second, schools can carry out “innovative entrepreneurship practices” to cultivate students’ practice ability on entrepreneurship. Through fully opening up and tapping the entrepreneurship market inside and outside the school, activities like work-study programs, community services, in-depth industry and enterprise practices, as well as market-oriented operation of community activities and project-based operation and management of social practice activities can be organized, so as to provide a real entrepreneurial environment for college students.

Third, schools can carry out “innovation and entrepreneurship competitions” and other activities to show the strength and achievements of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship contests, innovative practice projects and topics, skills contest and innovative entrepreneurship activities can be organized. Students can feel the practice and activity results of innovative entrepreneurship. These activities can promote communication and the exchange of experiences, which is conducive to solidifying the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education achievements.

5. Conclusion

Higher vocational colleges should construct a “innovation and entrepreneurship” education system suitable for tourism majors, form a suitable, effective and operable “innovation and entrepreneurship” curriculum system under the new normal of tourism industry, and gradually promote the implementation of “innovation and entrepreneurship” education in tourism at different levels and with focuses, so as to integrate the “innovation and entrepreneurship” education into the existing professional education, promote the achievement of education and teaching effects, and truly cultivate high-quality tourism talents with “innovation and entrepreneurship” abilities.

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