



New Reflection on Undergraduate Teaching System Construction of Landscape in Art Colleges

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Abstract

By the end of 2012, the undergraduate course catalog in colleges and universities has expressly stipulated that landscape architecture majors can be granted Bachelor of Arts. The promulgation of this provision not only laid the academic foundation of landscape profession (landscape architecture) but pointed out the future direction of landscape architecture for art colleges. According to the unique academic characteristics of art colleges, the authors in this paper put forward three suggestions on constructing undergraduate teaching of landscape architecture in art colleges, in hope that people with lofty ideals would pay more attention to exploring the construction of characteristic landscape architecture for art colleges under the new situation.

Key words: Landscape design; Art college; Landscape architecture; Undergraduate education

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1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Landscape profession is an applied cross-disciplinary course, widely based on natural sciences as well as arts

and humanities. Landscape is such a practical profession towards the construction of living environments in modern society that the social needs and engineering practices develop rather rapidly. Whether in academic circle, design industries or public life, landscape science, landscape design and landscape concept draw great attention due to its rapid development. Ministry of Labor and Social Security announced landscape architecture as one of the nine new occupations in late 2004.

Just as colleges and universities in western countries where landscape architecture enjoys a hundred years' history since its establishment, institutions of higher education in China hold different backgrounds when they first set up this profession. Most of them were agricultural colleges or schools of horticulture and landscape architecture in forestry colleges, offering lectures preferred to construction of traditional gardening and granting degree in agronomy or engineering. Over the past decade, the professional education and practice in landscape has experienced reconstruction and transition. Based on its own assessment of academic resources, colleges and universities specialized in architecture, forestry, agriculture and arts all have set up landscape profession. Although landscape professions are defined as different names with various contents and present unclarified relationships due of different academic contexts, this diversified school system has obtained consensus from all levels. In the National College Landscape Architecture (LA) Teaching Seminar in December, 2012, College Landscape Architecture (tentative name) Teaching Steering Committee (in preparation) has mentioned that, "The current educational background composes of four aspects, including architecture, agriculture and forestry, geography and arts. We should adhere to the consequent diversity and strengthen each school's educational characteristics". We should also recognize that training multilevel experts in landscape architecture is quite beneficial to the development of the landscape profession in China.

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14, 2012, “University Undergraduate Course Catalog (2012)” officially listed Landscape Architecture Profession as one of 110 primary disciplines and noted that it could be granted the bachelor degree of engineering or arts.

The promulgation of the directory has ended the embarrassing phenomenon of no official name for landscape profession, established its disciplinary status and meanwhile unified it with the internationally accepted professional name: Landscape Architecture.

Table 1
Catalog of University Undergraduate Architecture Course (Segment)

0828	Architectonics
082801	Architecture
082802	Urban and rural planning
082803	Landscape Architecture (Note: A bachelor’s degree in engineering or art can be granted)

2. PASSION TOWARD LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN ART COLLEGES

In 1969, the American landscape architect Lewis P. put forward the “4E” method in landscape construction, i.e. educational, ecological, esthetic and environmental.

Table 2
Settings of Landscape Architecture in Some Domestic Art Colleges (Undergraduate)

Category	College	School	Major	School system
	China Central Academy of Fine Arts	School of Architecture	Landscape Gardening Design	Engineering (five-year)
	China Academy of Art	School of Architectural Art	Landscape Design	Arts
	Tsinghua University	School of Architecture	Environmental Art Design (Landscape Design Major)	Arts
	Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts	Arts Design School	Environmental Design (Landscape Design Major)	Arts
Art Colleges	East China University of Science and Technology	School of Art-Designing & Mass media	Landscape	Arts
	Nanjing Forestry University	College of Art Design	Environmental Design (Urban Landscape Design)	Arts
	Huaqiao University	School of Architecture	Art Design (Architecture and urban environmental art design)	Arts
	Shenyang Jianzhu University	School of Design & Art	Environmental Art Design Landscape Art Design	Arts

3. CONSTRUCTION AND SUGGESTIONS ON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN ART COLLEGES

3.1 Taking Art Design as a Core and Balancing All-Round Disciplinary Education

Landscape architecture has such a rich and wide range of professional disciplines that it is difficult for a single college to offer all kinds of undergraduate teaching in

The art of aesthetic and educational landscape architecture is the cornerstone of gardening development. And in the modern landscape architecture, art still constitutes an indispensable part. Aesthetic beauty conveys to the public the information of beauty mainly through the composed elements including color, form, contents and so on.

When comparing resource conservation, planning & design and construction & management—the three basic fields of landscape architecture, planning & design, especially form design of physical space, has the most demanding requirement on students’ aesthetic ability, where also lies the advantage of art colleges. In recent years, with the fast pace of urbanization, talents in landscape design has been the emerging market demand and art colleges have responded appropriately to this. Either setting up landscape architecture or gradually increasing the weights of landscape courses in the existing environmental designs, art colleges have impressed us that it is tilting the balance of professional educations on landscape. Since the undergraduate course catalog in colleges and universities has expressly stipulated that landscape architecture majors can be granted Bachelor of Arts, art colleges could justifiably establish landscape architecture on the basis of the existing related disciplines.

merely four to five years. Colleges generally take the solution of evaluating their own professional advantages and giving priority to core courses under the context of different disciplines. Like universities in the UK focus its undergraduate landscape teaching on the following three subjects: design studies and humanity, land science and technology, and professional studies. Tsinghua University lays stress on category design with design-related courses accounting for up to 20% of the whole. Meanwhile, when setting up the elective courses, quite a number of

colleges would take the approach of considering various suggestions and offering interdisciplinary curricula. Huazhong Agricultural University serves as a good example by opening six major categories of professional electives: culture, art, skill, nature, planning & design, and economics & management. The teaching group of School of Landscape Architecture of Versailles even recruits about 20 professors from different disciplines with various theoretical and practical directions.

The disciplines in art colleges are greatly characterized by a variety of media techniques, creative ideas and inspiration. By taking the “image space” as a breakthrough from the nine key branches of the landscape profession, art colleges adhere to the teaching principles of “taking art design as a core, balancing all disciplinary education” in order to realize the construction and development of landscape profession.

Table 3
Three Basic Fields and Nine Key Branches in Practical Landscape Architecture

Three basic fields		Nine key branches	
Resource conservation	1. Natural environment	2. Urban and town environment	3. History and culture
Planning and design	4. Space image	5. Environmental ecology	6. Daily use
Construction and management	7. Construction	8. Maintenance management	9. Organizations and activities

Among them, the "core" refers to the fundamental and compulsory courses, which take category design as the main and are allocated by a certain proportion in design theory, plant configuration, and so on. “All-round education” is embodied in the setting of elective courses. The multi-disciplinary courses would offer students an

opportunity of choosing curricula based on their hobbies. The implementation of such teaching principle will not only preserve the characteristics of art colleges, but ensure the full range of subjects covered, all contributing to the training of complex landscape talents of “precise, dedicated and broad” features.

Table 4
Suggested Curriculum of Landscape Profession in Art Colleges

Classifications	Subjects
Fundamental courses	Basic design (Plane Formation, color constitution and three-dimensional formation), drawing & perspective, use of computer softwares (CAD and 3DMAX), design management and regulations, concept of design, landscape design principles, urban planning principles, ergonomics, history of architecture and garden, creative thought and mode of space, history of architecture
Core professional courses	Landscape design principles, urban planning principles, plant configurations and applications, applications of plant Landscape, landscape design (a) (b) (c) (d) (e), landscape design, public facilities design, public art and design
Professional optical courses	Landscape lighting design, design and layout, text and layout, landscape engineering, landscape engineering and technology, landscape policies and regulations, landscape ecology, environmental psychology

3.2 Balancing the Layout and Making Breakthrough on the Key Courses

From a more detailed professional perspective, landscape architecture actually includes two directions: Landscape Planning and Landscape Design. The former is defined as a process of coordinating the relationship between man and nature based on people’s knowledge on nature and human culture from a wide range of views. Specifically speaking, it is for arranging the most appropriate place for certain uses and making appropriate use of land at specific places. And the latter is the design of the particular place. Dr. Tang Jun once commented on the different scales in landscape design and he believed that “in practice, pursuit of art is more often reflected in small-scale projects while the systematized design is more plausible in large-scale landscape design”.

From the investigation of landscape architecture course in domestic colleges, the authors find that schools and colleges with backgrounds of geographical courses and urban planning more stress on how to evaluate and

protect landscape design since the geographic information technology and computer processing technology they possess would make possible the large-scale landscape planning and design. But the courses in art colleges mostly are set up for small- and medium-scale figurative design entities, such as city parks, residential areas, urban roads and so on. Therefore, objects at different scale design depend on various methods and meanwhile determine the distinct curriculum under the context of different disciplines.

In the suggested curriculum for landscape architecture in art colleges, the 5 classifications could be regarded as a landscape tour, consecutive and scale-related. Firstly, the 5 curricula all restrain the subject in small and medium scale. Secondly, with its scale ranging gradually from garden landscape--the smallest and closest to interior spatial scales to landscape architecture of park and waterfront, it has become a two-and-a half year landscape tour through the whole academic year.

**Table 5
Curriculum for Landscape Architecture**

Course	Time	Content
Landscape Architecture Design A	First half of Sophomore Year	Landscape architecture of gardens Landscape architecture of villas
Landscape Architecture Design B	Second half of Sophomore Year	Landscape architecture of squares Landscape architecture of gardens
Landscape Architecture Design C	First half of Junior Year	Landscape architecture of streets
Landscape Architecture Design D	Second half of Junior Year	Planning and design of residence
Landscape Architecture Design E	First half of Senior Year	Landscape architecture of parks and waterfront

Therefore, the setting priorities in art colleges lie in core courses, which are based on small-scale landscape design, balancing the layout of curriculum, making breakthrough on specific design and developing characterized courses. At the same time, large-scale landscape planning and design should be taken into consideration when arranging elective courses so as to meet the integrity of academic construction.

3.3 Docking Postgraduate Education in Landscape Architecture

During the specialized research in landscape architecture, we discovered an interesting phenomenon, that is quite a number of prestigious domestic and foreign institutions of higher education don't provide undergraduate teaching of landscape architecture but only to recruit postgraduates, such as Harvard University, School of Landscape Architecture of Versailles, Department of

Landscape Architecture of University of Pennsylvania as well as Tsinghua University, Peking University and Tianjin University. They pose high admission threshold in the annual enrollment, but have no demanding requirements toward undergraduates and even assume a posture of recruiting more talented students. For example, every year in France there're around 400 candidates participating in three-month-long landscape college entrance exam, whose admission quota is 100. And the enrolling majors encompass not only designed-related majors such as architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, engineering, fine arts, applied arts, industrial design and space design, but geography, history, botany, social science, philosophy and even mass media and medicine as well. This best describes the interdisciplinary characteristic of landscape profession in natural sciences and human arts.

**Table 6
Introduction of Postgraduate Landscape Architecture in Some Oversea Universities**

University	Name of Degree	Enrollment target	Learning Cycle
Harvard University	MLA I	Undergraduate of non-landscape architecture	Three years
	MLA II	Undergraduate of landscape architecture	Two years
School of Landscape Architecture of Versailles	DPLG	No limited Profession	Four years
Department of Landscape Architecture of University of Pennsylvania	MLA	Undergraduates with a bachelor's degree in non-landscape or non-architecture fields	Three years
		Undergraduates with a bachelor's degree in landscape or architecture	Two years

When looking at the postgraduates' curriculum system in these institutions of higher education, the authors find that it's highly consistent with that of domestic art colleges, all basically consisting of courses on design, technique, theory or performance skills. The following training program will be worth exploring and promoting: we convert into the perspective of discipline construction,

liberate the application-oriented disciplines of landscape architecture from the master or doctoral degree and aim at fostering excellent undergraduates with solid basics and professional skills, meanwhile dock students with higher institutions that have set up classical postgraduate curriculum system in landscape architecture and provide more talented candidates for them.

**Table 7
Postgraduate Curriculum System in Landscape Architecture in the Following Three Colleges**

Colleges	Curriculum system
Pennsylvania University	Studio, workshop, theory and media
Harvard University	Studio, lectures and seminars, and individual study
School of Landscape Architecture of Versailles	Taking program design as the core and providing ecological science, humanities, design arts, engineering, computer-aided design, etc.

CONCLUSION

With the accelerating urbanization nowadays, landscape architects need to share weal and woe with the urban development in the future for a long period of time. Whether our city would roughly or splendidly change in the rapid development has inextricable link with the quality of landscape professionals and the thought of institutions of higher education which have set up landscape architecture.

The three exploratory suggestions “Taking art design as a core and balancing all-round disciplinary education”, “Balancing the layout and making breakthrough on the key courses” and “Docking postgraduate education in Landscape Architecture” are based on the artistic discipline group, and delicately combine with the unique characteristics of landscape architecture. The authors sincerely hope that people with lofty ideals would pay more attention to exploring the construction and thought of landscape architecture for art colleges and contribute wisdom to the fostering to multi-level landscape talents.

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