

Research on the Modular Course Development Path of the Yellow River Culture Study Tour for Higher Vocational Tourism Management Major under the Background of Cultural Tourism Integration

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Abstract: The deepening of the cultural tourism integration strategy and the construction of the Yellow River National Cultural Park have provided new opportunities for the development of study tour courses in higher vocational tourism management majors. At present, the study tour courses in higher vocational colleges are faced with dilemmas such as vague positioning, scattered modules, outdated content, single teaching methods, and weak teaching staff, which make it difficult to meet the urgent demand of the industry for “culture + skills” study tour talents. Based on experiential learning, professional competence-oriented and modular teaching theories, this study puts forward a course development path guided by the principles of “culture-led, competence-oriented, module-integrated and experience-oriented”. It aims to solve the current difficulties in course development and realize the in-depth integration of Yellow River culture inheritance and tourism talent training.

Keywords: Cultural tourism integration; Higher vocational tourism management; Yellow River culture; Study tour; Modular course

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1. Introduction

In recent years, with the comprehensive advancement of the cultural tourism integration strategy, “culture + tourism” has become the core engine driving the high-quality development of the tourism industry. As an important carrier of cultural tourism integration, the study tour has been incorporated into the national education system, shouldering the dual mission of cultural inheritance and moral education. “Outline of the Plan for Ecological Protection and High-Quality Development of the Yellow River Basin” clearly proposes to build a Yellow River cultural tourism belt with international influence, which provides abundant curriculum

resources and epochal topics for higher vocational tourism education^[1]. However, when developing the Yellow River culture study tour courses, the current higher vocational tourism management majors are generally faced with practical dilemmas such as the “separation” between cultural connotation and professional skills, a scattered curriculum system, and formalistic practical teaching. Under the background of cultural tourism integration, how to systematically develop a set of modular study tour courses that not only conform to the laws of vocational education but also deeply embed the core of Yellow River culture has become a key proposition to improve the quality of talent training and serve the development of the regional cultural tourism industry.

2. Existing difficulties in the development of the Yellow River culture study tour courses for higher vocational tourism management majors under the background of cultural tourism integration

2.1. Vague course positioning and insufficient integration of culture and major

Some higher vocational colleges have deviations in the goal positioning of the Yellow River culture study tour courses, failing to clarify the collaborative logic between “cultural inheritance” and “professional training”. On the one hand, they overemphasize the instillation of cultural knowledge, narrowing the course to “Yellow River culture explanation”, ignoring the embedding of professional abilities such as tour commentary creation, study tour activity organization and emergency handling, resulting in the disconnection between courses and post needs. On the other hand, they simply emphasize service skill training without in-depth analysis of cultural connotations such as the Yellow River spirit, folk wisdom and ecological ethics. Although students can complete basic reception tasks, they cannot convey cultural value in explanation and service. This either-or positioning makes the courses unable to achieve the educational goal of cultivating people through culture, nor meet the industry’s demand for compound talents who “can tell the story of the Yellow River well”^[2-4].

2.2. Scattered course modules and imperfect system construction

The existing courses lack a systematic modular design in content organization, and the phenomenon of “knowledge point platter” is common. The logical connection between teaching units is weak. For example, contents such as “General Survey of Yellow River Geography”, “Sanmenxia Scenic Spot Training” and “Brief Introduction to Yangshao Culture” are simply piled up, lacking the ability to advance design from cultural cognition to skill application and then to innovative practice. Meanwhile, the module setting is seriously homogenized, failing to develop differentiated elective modules for different career directions such as scenic spot management, study tour tutors and travel agency schedulers, resulting in identical learning contents for all students^[5]. In addition, the module function is single, mostly based on theoretical explanation and on-site visits, lacking innovative modules such as project-based, inquiry-based, and service learning, which makes it difficult to stimulate students’ in-depth participation and creative transformation ability.

2.3. Outdated course content and inadequate resource exploration

The course content has dual problems of “superficialization” and “homogenization”. In terms of resource exploration, most of them focus on the common sense introduction of landmark historical sites such as the Hometown of Yellow Emperor and Longmen Grottoes, while the development of deep cultural resources in the Yellow River Basin is insufficient, such as water control culture (the collectivist spirit contained in “Yu the

Great tames the flood”), farming folklore (the Twenty-Four Solar Terms and Yellow River farming wisdom), red culture (the anti-Japanese stories along the ancient Yellow Road) and ecological wisdom (terrace system and ecological ethics). In terms of content update, it fails to timely connect with the new vocational standards of study tour tutors, the application of new smart tourism technologies and the demand for new forms of cultural tourism integration, and the course content lags behind industrial changes. In addition, the course content of various colleges is identical, lacking the differentiated presentation of regional characteristics such as grassland culture in the upper reaches of the Yellow River, root-progenitor culture in the middle reaches and Qilu culture in the lower reaches, reducing the attractiveness and application value of the courses^[6].

2.4. Single teaching method and weak practice orientation

The teaching is mainly based on traditional classroom teaching + off-campus visits, with a few practical, inquiry-based, and project-based teaching methods applied. Most of them adopt PPT lecturing, in which students passively receive the instillation of Yellow River culture knowledge with few communication opportunities between teachers and students. Therefore, it is difficult to have a strong cultural impact. In practical operation, students only visit several scenic spots in a cursory way, acting as audiences without any real service scenarios such as explanation, activity arrangement and emergency handling. Due to funding constraints or safety considerations, some schools can only visit local free scenic spots and cannot carry out cross-regional and multi-type study tour activities, resulting in students’ insufficient understanding of the Yellow River Basin culture and the whole basin, as well as the lack of practical ability, which makes it difficult to adapt to the complex situations in actual work.

2.5. Weak teaching staff and imperfect evaluation system

There is a serious imbalance between cultural literacy and professional skills in the teaching team. On the one hand, some teachers majoring in tourism management have skilled professional skills but lack sufficient cognition of Yellow River history and culture, archaeology, folklore and ecology^[7]. On the other hand, some liberal arts or history teachers lack front-line tourism experience, so their course design is divorced from actual scenarios. Moreover, there is little special training for study tour courses, leading to the slow update of teachers’ professional level and knowledge reserve. In terms of assessment, it is mainly conducted by teachers, which overemphasizes written examinations and report writing and ignores the assessment of practical abilities such as planning, explanation, cooperation and innovative solutions in the study tour process. In addition, most adopt a one-time evaluation, lacking continuity and feedback in students’ learning process, and failing to effectively use the evaluation results to optimize the course design, making it difficult to achieve continuous improvement of education quality^[8–10].

3. Modular course development path of the Yellow River culture study tour for higher vocational tourism management majors under the background of cultural tourism integration

3.1. Establish integrated course objectives of “culture as the soul and ability as the foundation”

To solve the problem of vague positioning, it is necessary to clarify and integrate course objectives. Firstly, adhere to the “people (culture + soul)-oriented” principle, take the Yellow River culture carrying the spiritual

power, ecological cognition and red genes of the Chinese nation as the fundamental value pursuit of moral education, and cultivate students' firm cultural confidence and professional ethics. In addition, adhere to the "skill-first" principle, and transform cultural literacy into quantifiable and trainable technical abilities around the requirements of different positions such as study tour interpreters, cultural lecturers and scenic spot administrators, setting three-level objectives: The first level is the knowledge dimension, aiming to enable students to master the knowledge framework of the Yellow River Basin culture, the policies and guidelines for cultural tourism integration, and the basic concepts for developing study tours; the second level is in terms of skills and abilities: capable of designing and implementing specialized study tour projects on Yellow River culture, providing interpretation services, leading and coordinating teams, and conducting digital marketing; the third level is in terms of qualities: having a sense of mission and social responsibility for protecting and inheriting Yellow River culture, as well as a spirit of continuous improvement in professional conduct^[11]. These teaching objectives should be gradually improved to support students' transformation from beginners to proficiency in their careers.

3.2. Design a four-level modular course system of "basic - specialized - comprehensive - innovative"

In view of the scattered course modules, a four-level module system is constructed according to the principle of "from shallow to deep and from small to large". The first-level module "Basic Perception of Yellow River Culture" includes the geography and history of the Yellow River, cultural relics, folk culture and environmental protection, carrying out general cultural education through online micro-lectures or special lectures. The second module, "Study Tour Skills," mainly includes research plan design, commentary writing, risk control, and digital tool application, cultivating students' abilities in practice. The third module, "Comprehensive Practice," relies on the Yellow River Culture Research Institute, jointly built by schools and enterprises, to organize comprehensive practical activities themed on "Yellow River Ecological Tour," "Historical Exploration Tour," and "Retrace the Red Road", allowing students to practice knowledge and skills in real environments. The last module, "Expansion and Innovation," offers elective courses such as creative product design, new teaching aid development, and new media promotion, aiming to inspire students' creative thinking and apply learning content to local special resources to achieve self-development^[12].

The above four modules are relatively independent and complementary, allowing students to select and combine according to their own interests, specialties and employment directions to form personalized paths.

3.3. Develop "theory + practice + digital" trinitarian loose-leaf teaching content

In view of the outdated materials, the course materials are optimized in a timely manner. Establish a "Yellow River Culture Database" to sort out cultural relics systematically, intangible cultural heritage, revolutionary sites and ecological projects in nine provinces and regions of the Yellow River Basin, and conduct teaching design according to the idea of "cultural connotation - location - educational function - employment orientation", extracting thematic modules such as "river control culture", "smart agricultural technology", "national gene" and "ecological environmental protection". Develop loose-leaf or post manual textbooks, introduce the latest industry standards and technologies (such as VR/AR navigation, study tour data analysis), and produce pluggable learning cards and case bases^[13]. In addition, establish a digital resource library including a panoramic digital museum of Yellow River culture, online virtual study tour routes and intangible cultural heritage short videos, facilitating the development of online and offline mixed courses. Each module

is carried out according to the process of “case introduction - theoretical explanation - practical drills - task clearance”, so as to achieve the goal of applying what has been learned.

3.4. Implement a three-dimensional teaching model of “PBL + situational experience + digital empowerment”

In view of the single teaching mode, a student-centered teaching system should be constructed. Firstly, the project-based learning (PBL) method is widely applied to assign real tasks such as “Plan a Yellow River Intangible Cultural Heritage Study Tour” and “Plan a historical-themed festival event for a scenic spot related to the Yellow River”, allowing students to complete a series of processes including research analysis, scheme planning, marketing promotion, etc. in groups, thereby enhancing their comprehensive abilities. Second, enhance immersive education by establishing a Yellow River Culture Smart Exploration and Training Laboratory on campus, which simulates regional landscapes such as the Loess Plateau topography, ancient ferry terminals, and cave-dwelling villages, allowing students to immerse themselves in these environments and participate in role-playing exercises as tour guides and first responders. Off-campus, collaborations with tourist attractions along the Yellow River region facilitate “mobile classrooms,” offering practical teaching activities including field research, visits to intangible cultural heritage inheritors, and environmental monitoring.^[14] Thirdly, advanced technological means are utilized. VR or AR technologies are employed to enable students to visit ancient sites that they cannot physically visit without leaving their homes. AI technology is relied upon to help design exclusive study routes. In addition, students are encouraged to creatively promote Yellow River Basin culture through forms such as TikTok and WeChat mini-programs, converting information receivers into producers.

3.5. Build a teaching staff and evaluation system of “full-time & part-time combination, internal & external linkage”

To solve the dual problems of teaching staff and evaluation, a collaborative mechanism should be established. For teacher development, adopt the two-way flow mode of “going out and inviting in”. First, regular specialized seminars on the Yellow River culture and research-based study tour course design workshops will be held. Second, support will be provided for teachers to conduct a six-month work practice at advanced study tour bases and scenic spots.

Secondly, employ personnel from cultural and museum systems, intangible cultural heritage inheritors and senior study tour tutors as part-time teachers or project tutors, forming a teaching team of “double-qualified teachers + enterprise tutors + cultural and history professors”.

In terms of the evaluation mechanism, construct a dynamic and diversified evaluation system of “process evaluation + result evaluation + industry evaluation”. Among them, process evaluation accounts for no less than 50%, examining students’ learning depth from aspects such as learning logs, project progress and mutual evaluation. Summative evaluation adopts the method of “work presentation + performance + oral presentation”, such as submitting a detailed study tour plan and conducting on-site promotion. In addition, enterprise tutors are set up to conduct industrial evaluation on students’ practical ability, and the evaluation index system is linked to the qualification certificate of study tour tutors. Meanwhile, an electronic portfolio is established to regularly summarize evaluation information and provide a basis for course revision^[15].

4. Conclusion

Under the dual background of the in-depth advancement of cultural tourism integration and the high-quality development of vocational education, developing modular courses of the Yellow River culture study tour is an inevitable choice for higher vocational tourism management majors to respond to the mission of the times and enhance core competitiveness. Facing the practical dilemmas such as vague course positioning, scattered system, outdated content, single teaching method, and weak teaching staff evaluation, this study systematically constructs a development path with “accurate positioning, systematic construction, content reconstruction, teaching method innovation, and mechanism guarantee” as the core. This path emphasizes taking Yellow River culture as the core, professional ability as the traction, modularization as the starting point, and experience and digital technology as the support, striving to break the barrier between cultural inheritance and skill training and achieve the educational effect of “shaping tourism through culture and highlighting culture through skills”. Future research can further focus on the empirical test of course development effectiveness, the design of module dynamic adjustment mechanism and the construction of cross-school course resource sharing platform in the Yellow River Basin, so as to form a paradigm with more promotion value and continuously deliver high-quality technical and skilled talents who “understand the Yellow River, love cultural tourism and master skills” for the ecological protection and high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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