

# Practice-oriented Teaching Reform of Landscape Architecture Curriculum Design in Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** *The discipline of landscape architecture has dual attributes of engineering technology and arts and humanities, and practical ability is its core objective of talent development. At present, in the teaching of landscape architecture curriculum design in higher education institutions, there exist problems such as the disconnection between the curriculum system and industry demand, rigid teaching methods, and weak practical components, which are difficult to meet the societal demand for high-quality application-oriented talents. This study takes applied practice as its core guiding principle, aligns with the development characteristics of the landscape architecture discipline, analyzes the existing problems in the teaching of curriculum design, and explores the specific pathways for teaching reform from four dimensions: the reconstruction of the curriculum system, the innovation of teaching methods, the construction of practice platforms, and the improvement of assessment mechanisms, aiming to enhance students' practical ability in design and comprehensive quality, and provide actionable frameworks for the cultivation of landscape architecture professionals in higher education institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Landscape Architecture; Curriculum Design; Applied Practice; Teaching Reform; Talent Development*

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## 1. Introduction

As urbanization accelerates and ecological civilization construction advances in China, the role of landscape architecture has become increasingly important in improving the living environment, inheriting regional culture, and maintaining ecological balance. The industry has put forward higher requirements for the practical ability and innovative thinking of professionals. As the main position for cultivating landscape architecture professionals, the curriculum design teaching of higher education institutions directly determines their talent development quality. However, at present, in most higher education institutions, landscape architecture curriculum design still mainly focuses on theoretical instruction, and overemphasize the artistic expression of design schemes while neglecting the implementation feasibility, technical compliance and site adaptability of the schemes. As a result, students find it difficult to quickly adapt to the job requirements of the industry after graduation, leading to “discrepancy of theory and practice” [1]. Based on this, it has become an inevitable choice for the development of landscape architecture in higher education institutions, and the key to improving the quality of talent development to take applied practice as the guiding principle to systematically reform the teaching of landscape architecture curriculum design, break down the limitations of the traditional teaching model, and build a teaching framework where theories deeply integrate with practice.

## 2. Problems in the Teaching of Landscape Architecture Curriculum Design in Higher Education Institutions

### 2.1 The Curriculum System Is Illogical and Disconnected from Industry Demand

At present, there is a significant logical gap in the landscape architecture curriculum system of some institutions. The curriculum design mostly centers on the progressive development of theoretical knowledge, while neglecting the continuity of practical ability cultivation. For instance, the design foundation courses for lower grades overly focus on hand-drawing skills and training on formal aesthetics, disjointing with upper-grade courses such as site planning and plant configuration. As a result, students struggle to transform their basic skills into the ability to solve practical problems. Meanwhile, the update of course content lags behind the development of the industry, involving relatively little emerging fields such as sponge city, ecological restoration, and smart gardens, resulting in a significant gap between the theoretical knowledge mastered by students and the actual needs of the industry [2]. In addition, there is a

prominent phenomenon of overlapping and repetitive content among courses. For instance, in the courses of landscape ecology and urban landscape planning, redundant instruction of certain ecological principles coexists with cursory coverage of applied practice modules, resulting in inefficient resource allocation and the absence of practice teaching.

### ***2.2 Rigid and Monolithic Teaching Methods Suppress Students' Innovative Thinking***

The traditional teaching model of “teacher lecturing → student imitation → teacher assessment” still dominates in the teaching of landscape architecture curriculum design. In the teaching process, teachers often center on their own experience to clearly stipulate the design themes, styles and forms of expression. Students can only fulfil the design tasks within a fixed framework and lack the space for independent thinking and innovation. This teaching method severely restrains students' innovative thinking, resulting in that their design works follow the same pattern, struggling to embody personalized thinking about site characteristics, user needs, and ecological environment [3]. Meanwhile, in the teaching process, there are insufficient explanations of technology practice. Most teachers focus on design scheme conceptualization and drawing production, while the explanations of practical components, such as construction techniques, material selection, and cost accounting, remain superficial. Students lack a basic understanding of the implementation feasibility of design schemes, leading to a cognitive error of “emphasizing design over implementation”.

### ***2.3 Practice Teaching Components Are Weak, and Ability Cultivation Is Merely a Formality***

Practice teaching is the core component to enhance the application ability of students majoring in landscape architecture. However, there are still many deficiencies in the practice teaching of most institutions at present. On the one hand, practice teaching accounts for relatively fewer class hours. In landscape architecture curriculum design in most higher education institutions, the proportion of class hours for theory teaching accounts for over 60%, while the class hours for practical components, such as field research, scheme deepening, and model making, are severely compressed. As a result, students find it difficult to enhance their ability through sufficient practical training. On the other hand, practice teaching is monotonous in its forms, mainly focusing on design exercises in the classroom. Field research is often just a formality. Students usually complete site analysis through online materials or literature data, lacking a thorough understanding of the actual conditions of the sites such as topography, vegetation, and hydrology. In addition, school-enterprise cooperation practice platforms are not perfect. Most of the cooperation only remains at the level of occasional lectures of enterprise experts. Students find it difficult to participate in real engineering projects and cannot experience the whole process from scheme design to construction implementation, which greatly reduces the effect of practical ability cultivation [4].

### ***2.4 Unscientific Assessment Mechanisms Result in Misaligned Guiding Role***

Teaching assessment mechanisms play an important guiding role in teaching activities. However, there are obvious deficiencies in the current assessment mechanisms of landscape architecture curriculum design in higher education institutions. The assessment entities are monolithic, with teacher assessment as the sole criterion, and without industry experts, front-line designers and user groups engaging in. The assessment perspectives are limited to the mastery of theoretical knowledge and the aesthetic degree of design drawings, while neglecting the implementation feasibility and innovation of schemes. The assessment content focuses on outcomes while neglecting processes. Teachers mostly take the final design drawings and reports as the core basis for assessment, paying insufficient attention to students' performance in the research and analysis, scheme modification, teamwork and other components during the design process. This leads students to overemphasize the external forms of final results and neglect the improvement of their ability during the design process. Meanwhile, the assessment criteria are ambiguous and lack quantizable assessment indicators for practical ability. It is difficult to objectively assess students' site analysis ability, problem-solving ability, and technology implementation ability, further weakening the guiding role of the assessment mechanisms in practice teaching.

### **3. Pathways for Practice-oriented Teaching Reform of Landscape Architecture Curriculum Design**

#### ***3.1 Restructuring the Curriculum System to Enhance the Continuity of Practical Ability Cultivation***

To restructure the curriculum system with applied practice as the guiding principle, it is necessary to break down the disciplinary barriers of traditional courses and build a progressive curriculum structure of “basic competencies → core competencies → comprehensive competencies”. When offering design foundation courses for lower grades, simple site investigation practice can be integrated into them to enable students to master basic skills, such as hand drawing and software operation, while learning to collect and analyze basic site data. The core courses for middle grades should be designed in accordance with the logic of “site analysis → scheme design → technology implementation”, organically integrate course content such as landscape planning, plant configuration, and engineering technology, and add cutting-edge course modules such as sponge city design and ecological restoration technology. In senior grades, comprehensive practice courses should be offered with real engineering projects as the vessel to cultivate students’ comprehensive design and implementation capabilities [5]. At the same time, it is necessary to establish a dynamic update mechanism for course content, invite industry experts regularly to participate in course discussions, and adjust the course content according to the development trends of the industry to ensure that the course system is in line with industry demand. In addition, it is also necessary to rationalize course content, eliminate redundancies and strengthen the sequential integration of practice teaching modules, thereby establishing a closed-loop curriculum system structured as “theoretical foundation → applied practice → competency advancement”.

#### ***3.2 Innovating Teaching Methods to Arouse Students’ Initiative and Creativity***

Higher education institutions should discard the rigid traditional teaching model and adopt diversified teaching methods to enhance teaching efficacy, and use the project-based learning, take real landscape architecture projects as the vessel, and integrate the teaching process with the project design process, enabling students to master theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the process of completing projects. For instance, teachers can take the design of pocket parks in urban communities as the project theme to guide students to complete the whole process from site investigation, user demand analysis, scheme design, technical deepening to cost accounting. During the process, teachers only play the role of facilitator and answerers, fully leveraging students’ agency in the learning process. Meanwhile, they should use case-based teaching, and select typical landscape architecture project cases to analyze in depth from project background, design ideas, technical difficulties, implementation effect, and other aspects, enabling students to learn the design experience and practical skills of excellent cases. In addition, they should leverage technologies such as virtual reality and 3D modeling to establish a virtual practice teaching platform, enabling students to simulate the implementation process of schemes in virtual environment, intuitively experience the spatial effect and technical feasibility of the design schemes, and enhance students’ practical ability in innovation.

#### ***3.3 Strengthening the Practical Components and Building a Multi-Level Practice Teaching Platform***

Higher education institutions should increase the proportion and improve the quality of practice teaching, and build a multi-level practice teaching platform featuring “classroom practice—campus practice—enterprise practice”, and increase the proportion of the class hours for practice teaching to over 50% in the landscape architecture curriculum design, and clearly stipulate the specific class hour requirements for field research, scheme deepening, model making, construction internship and other components. The classroom practice component focuses on the training of basic skills to enhance students’ basic practical ability through exercises such as design sketch drawing, software operation, and small model making. Campus practice relies on the landscape sites within the campus to set up small-scale renovation projects, enabling students to complete the entire process of practice from design to implementation in familiar environment. Enterprise practice can be achieved by deepening school-enterprise

cooperation. Higher education institutions should build long-term and stable cooperative relationships with landscape architecture design enterprises and construction units, arrange students to enter enterprises to participate in real projects, and undertake specific tasks, such as scheme design, drawing deepening, and construction site supervision under the guidance of enterprise mentors to accumulate practical experience. In addition, they should regularly organize field investigation and visiting activities to industry exhibitions and other practical activities to broaden students' professional perspectives and enhance their understanding of industry practice.

### ***3.4 Refining the Assessment Mechanism to Give Full Play to the Guiding and Incentive Role of Assessment***

Higher education institutions should establish a scientific and complete teaching assessment mechanism, adjust the assessment content and criterion with practical ability as the core, build diversified assessment entities, introduce industry experts, enterprise mentors and user representatives to participate in the assessment in addition to teacher assessment, and conduct a comprehensive assessment of students from multiple dimensions such as theoretical knowledge, practical skills, innovative thinking and professional quality. For instance, industry experts can focus on assessing the technical feasibility and industry adaptability of the schemes, and enterprise mentors can emphasize the teamwork skills and executive capability of students, while user representatives can pay attention to the practicality and user experience of the schemes. They should optimize the assessment content to achieve a combination of "process-oriented assessment and outcome-oriented assessment", with the proportion of process-oriented assessment increasing to 60%, place emphasis on students' performance in research and analysis, scheme modification, team discussions and other components, and conduct quantitative assessment through classroom questioning, practice records, phase reports, and other methods. The outcome-oriented assessment focuses on the completeness, innovation and feasibility of design schemes, and comprehensively considers the quality of the drawings, the application of technology, and other factors. At the same time, they should make clear quantitative assessment indicators, and divide practical ability, such as site analysis ability, problem-solving ability, and technology implementation ability into specific assessment points to ensure the objectivity and fairness of the assessment results and give full play to the guiding role of the assessment mechanism in practice teaching.

## **4. Safeguard Measures for the Teaching Reform**

### ***4.1 Strengthening the Construction of Faculty Team to Enhance Teachers' Practice Teaching Competence***

Practice teaching competence of teachers is the key to ensuring the smooth implementation of teaching reform. Higher education institutions should establish a sound teacher training mechanism. On the one hand, they should encourage teachers to go deep into the front line of the industry to participate in actual landscape architecture projects through secondment, project cooperation and other methods, accumulate practical experience, and integrate the latest technologies and philosophy of the industry into the teaching process. On the other hand, they should regularly organize teachers to participate in practice teaching training, industry seminars and other activities to learn advanced teaching methods and practice teaching experience, and improve their practice teaching level. In addition, they should employ front-line designers with rich industry experience to serve as part-time teachers to replenish teaching resources, optimize the structure of the faculty team, and provide professional support for practice teaching.

### ***4.2 Increasing Investment in Teaching Resources to Improve the Conditions for Practice Teaching***

Adequate teaching resources are the material safeguards for teaching reform. Higher education institutions should increase their investment in the landscape architecture program. They should improve the on-campus practice teaching facilities, build landscape design studios, model-making laboratories, herbarium museums, etc., and equip them with advanced design software, modeling equipment and experimental apparatus to provide students with good on-campus practice environment. At the same time, they should increase investment in the construction of off-campus practice bases, jointly build stable off-campus practice bases with enterprises, clearly define the responsibilities and obligations of both sides in the practical training of students, and provide students with sufficient off-campus practice positions. In addition, they should purchase cutting-edge teaching materials, case collections and

database resources in the industry to provide rich data support for teachers' teaching and students' learning.

### **4.3 Establishing and Improving Management Systems to Ensure the Orderly Advancement of the Teaching Reform**

Higher education institutions should establish and improve relevant management systems to provide institutional safeguards for the orderly advancement of teaching reform, make management measures for practice teaching to clearly define the objectives, content, processes and criteria of assessment of practice teaching, and standardize the management of each component in practice teaching, and establish a school-enterprise cooperative management system to define clearly the rights and duties of both parties, and ensure the safety and rights of students during their practice process in enterprises. At the same time, they should establish a teaching reform assessment and feedback mechanism to regularly assess the implementation effect of teaching reform, collect feedback from teachers, students and enterprises, and adjust the reform scheme in time based on the assessment results to ensure that teaching reform always centers on applied practice and continuously improve the quality of talent development.

## **5. Conclusion**

Practice-oriented teaching reform of landscape architecture curriculum design is an inevitable measure to adapt to the development needs of the industry and improve the quality of talent development. The current problems in the teaching of landscape architecture curriculum design in higher education institutions, such as unbalanced curriculum system, rigid teaching methods, weak practical components, and unscientific assessment mechanisms, seriously restrict the cultivation of students' practical ability. By restructuring the progressive curriculum system, innovating diversified teaching methods, building multi-level practice platforms, refining the all-round assessment mechanism, and supplemented by safeguard measures such as the construction of the faculty team, the investment in teaching resources and the improvement of management systems, higher education institutions can effectively break down the limitations of the traditional teaching model and achieve the deep integration of theory teaching and practice teaching. This reform not only enhances students' practical ability in design and comprehensive quality, enabling them to quickly adapt to the job requirements after graduation, but also promotes the sustainable development of landscape architecture in higher education institutions, providing more high-quality application-oriented talents for China's landscape architecture industry.

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