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Research on the Talent Cultivation Mode of Colleges and
Universities Specializing in Japanese Language in the Context
of “New Arts”

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Abstract

In the context of the "New Liberal Arts," the talent cultivation model for Japanese language programs in higher education faces both new challenges and opportunities. The "New Liberal Arts" promotes core principles such as interdisciplinary integration, innovation and practice orientation, and the cultivation of comprehensive qualities, driving profound transformations in the education sector. As a language discipline, Japanese studies must innovate upon traditional foundations to meet the contemporary demand for multifaceted and application-oriented talent. This paper analyzes the current state of Japanese language talent cultivation, reveals existing issues, and proposes corresponding optimization strategies. The research finds that curriculum design needs to enhance interdisciplinary content integration, teaching methods should focus on interaction and practical application, faculty development requires urgent improvement, and practical training and internships must be reinforced. Additionally, the enhancement of students' comprehensive abilities should be woven throughout the entire educational process. By exploring these aspects, this study aims to provide references for the reform of Japanese language education in higher education, supporting the development of high-quality Japanese professionals with an international perspective, innovative capability, and practical skills.

Keywords

New Liberal Arts, Japanese Language Program, Talent Cultivation Model

1. Introduction

In the context of the "New Liberal Arts," educational reform has emerged as a crucial issue for higher education institutions. The Japanese language major, as a linguistic discipline, holds a distinctive advantage in cultivating internationalized and versatile talents. However, the traditional model of Japanese language education reveals certain limitations in areas such as curriculum design, teaching methods, and faculty development, making it challenging to fully meet the demands for high-quality talent in the new era. The "New Liberal Arts" advocates for interdisciplinary integration, emphasizing innovation and practical application, and proposes new educational philosophies and goals. The Japanese language major must actively respond to this trend by innovating its educational model to cultivate talents who possess not only solid linguistic skills but also cross-cultural communication abilities, innovative spirit, and practical competence. This paper aims to explore effective pathways for optimizing talent cultivation models through an in-depth analysis of the "New Liberal Arts" concept, combined with the actual situation of Japanese language education, providing theoretical support and practical references for the reform of Japanese language teaching in higher education institutions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 "Core Concept of "New Liberal Arts"

The core principle of the "New Humanities" is to advance the profound integration of disciplines, fostering high-level talents with innovative capabilities and comprehensive qualities. It emphasizes the openness and diversity of education, necessitating the transcendence of traditional disciplinary boundaries and the promotion of interdisciplinary interactions between the humanities and the sciences, as well as technology. This philosophy demands that students not only acquire specialized knowledge but also develop critical thinking, cross-cultural communication skills, and practical abilities. In the context of Japanese studies, this implies that curriculum design should incorporate multidisciplinary elements such as culture, history, and economics, to cultivate a holistic understanding of Japanese society. Moreover, the application of innovative teaching methods and technologies, such as interactive instruction, case analysis, and online learning platforms, represents a crucial manifestation of this principle, enhancing students' learning experiences and practical skills. The diversification of the teaching staff is also pivotal, requiring the inclusion of educators with interdisciplinary backgrounds to elevate teaching quality. The "New Humanities" concept aims to nurture versatile talents capable of addressing complex societal issues, possessing a global perspective and innovative spirit, thereby laying a solid foundation for talent development in the new era (Qi, 2018).

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of Japanese Language Professional Training

The theoretical foundation for cultivating talent in Japanese studies lies in the integration of linguistics, education theory, and intercultural communication theory. Linguistic theory offers a profound understanding of language structure, pragmatics, and semantics, forming the bedrock of language skills for students specializing in Japanese. Education theory emphasizes pedagogical methods and learning

processes, advocating for interactive and experiential teaching approaches that focus on active student participation and practical skill development. Intercultural communication theory underscores the significance of understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering students' abilities to communicate and collaborate effectively in cross-cultural contexts. These theories collectively underpin the educational objectives of Japanese studies, aiming not only for students to master language knowledge but also to develop intercultural communication skills and critical thinking. This theoretical foundation necessitates that curriculum design incorporates multidisciplinary content, enhancing students' practical application abilities and global perspectives through case studies, simulated scenarios, and field research. Within the "new liberal arts" framework, the innovation and development of this theoretical foundation will drive profound transformations in Japanese studies education, providing robust support for cultivating high-quality talent suited to the demands of the new era.

3. Analysis of the Current Situation of Japanese Language Professional Training

3.1 Curriculum and Content

The current curriculum for Japanese language studies predominantly adheres to traditional teaching methods, emphasizing grammar, vocabulary, and translation as foundational elements. However, this singular approach falls short of addressing the contemporary demand for well-rounded talent. Many university Japanese programs lack diversity and innovation in their content, with weak connections between courses, leaving students with noticeable gaps in practical application and interdisciplinary integration. Although some institutions have begun to incorporate content from related fields such as culture, history, and economics, they still face the challenge of bridging theory with practice. Additionally, the slow pace of curriculum updates fails to reflect the latest trends in Japanese society and culture, resulting in a learning experience that lacks a contemporary perspective (Jia & Zhang, 2020). The breadth and depth of course content require significant enhancement to better develop students' cross-cultural communication skills and overall competence. This situation indicates an urgent need for a comprehensive reevaluation and adjustment of Japanese language programs under the new liberal arts framework to truly optimize and elevate talent development goals.

3.2 Teaching Methods and Means

The current pedagogical approaches and methods for Japanese language studies remain fraught with limitations, failing to fully align with the "New Liberal Arts" philosophy's demands for cultivating multifaceted talents. Traditional teaching methods predominantly rely on lectures by instructors, with students passively absorbing information and lacking opportunities for active participation and interaction, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes. This approach emphasizes memorization and repetitive practice, yet falls short in fostering students' critical thinking and practical application skills. Although the integration of multimedia and information technology has increased, it remains auxiliary and has not been fully integrated into the teaching process, thereby failing to fully harness the potential

of modern technology to enhance teaching effectiveness and enrich the student learning experience. Interactive teaching methods, such as case analysis and situational simulations, are rarely employed in classroom settings, depriving students of opportunities to practice and utilize the language in authentic contexts. Furthermore, the assessment system is relatively monolithic, overly focused on final exam results, and neglects the comprehensive performance and developmental progress of students throughout the learning process. Some educators overly depend on textbooks, resulting in content that lacks novelty and practical relevance, failing to effectively stimulate students' interest and initiative. Although certain universities have attempted to implement student-centered teaching models, the overall effectiveness remains unsatisfactory due to insufficient internalization of the new educational philosophy and the need for enhancement in teaching capabilities and methods. Additionally, unequal distribution of teaching resources, particularly in regional universities with insufficient faculty and facilities, further restricts innovation and development in teaching methods.

3.3 Teaching Staff

The current state of the Japanese language faculty is less than satisfactory, directly impacting the quality of talent cultivation. Many universities face structural issues within their Japanese language teaching staff, including insufficient numbers and a homogeneous academic background. While some educators possess solid language knowledge and teaching experience, they struggle with cross-cultural communication and the application of modern educational technologies. This narrow knowledge structure falls short of meeting the increasingly complex teaching demands, particularly in nurturing students' comprehensive skills and interdisciplinary abilities. Furthermore, the career development pathways for teachers are unclear, and there is a lack of systematic professional training and advancement opportunities, leading to outdated teaching concepts and methods. Some educators, burdened by heavy teaching and research responsibilities, find it challenging to dedicate sufficient energy to teaching research and innovation, thus impacting teaching quality. The absence of effective incentive mechanisms within universities fails to fully engage and inspire faculty, making it difficult to enhance teaching outcomes and student satisfaction. Additionally, the uneven distribution of faculty is a notable issue. Regional universities, constrained by geographic and resource limitations, struggle to attract and retain outstanding teachers, resulting in relatively weak faculty strength. In contrast, some prominent institutions, despite having a more robust faculty, still face shortcomings in faculty training and internationalization, failing to fully demonstrate and lead by example. Moreover, insufficient interaction between teachers and students remains a significant problem. In traditional teaching models, teachers predominantly play the role of knowledge transmitters, resulting in low student engagement and interaction in the classroom, which adversely affects teaching effectiveness. Some educators lack attention to individual student differences and fail to adopt tailored teaching approaches, impacting students' learning experiences and outcomes (Oxford R, Park - Oh Y, It S, et al., 1993).

4. “Optimization Strategy of Cultivation Mode under the Background of “New Liberal Arts

4.1 *Innovation and Adjustment of Curriculum System*

In the context of the "New Liberal Arts," the curriculum for Japanese studies requires a comprehensive overhaul to meet the modern demands for versatile talents. The current curriculum is excessively focused on imparting language knowledge, while neglecting the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge and the development of practical application skills. Thus, the innovation of the curriculum should emphasize multidisciplinary intersections and integration, creating a course structure with both breadth and depth. Firstly, the proportion of humanities courses should be increased to deepen students' understanding of Japanese culture, history, and society. This not only enhances language learning but also cultivates students' cross-cultural communication skills, better preparing them for international environments. Concurrently, courses related to Japan's economy, politics, and technology should be introduced to provide students with a broader knowledge base and perspective beyond mere language proficiency. Secondly, the course content must remain current, reflecting the latest developments in Japanese society and technology. This requires curriculum designers to stay attuned to both domestic and international changes in Japan, continually updating the teaching materials to expose students to cutting-edge information and technologies. Additionally, practical courses such as field research, corporate internships, and cultural experiences should be increased to bolster students' practical application and adaptability. Regarding curriculum design, a modular approach could be adopted, integrating foundational language courses, specialized knowledge courses, and practical application courses into a coherent and flexible curriculum system. Students would have the autonomy to select different modules based on their interests and career plans, maximizing their personal potential. This approach not only enhances learning motivation and initiative but also fosters a more diverse range of talents. The assessment system also needs to be revised to focus on process-oriented and diversified evaluation methods, comprehensively examining students' overall competencies and practical abilities. By employing a variety of evaluation forms such as extracurricular activities, project research, and team collaboration, students' learning outcomes can be thoroughly assessed, encouraging continuous improvement and refinement in practical settings. In the implementation phase, universities should actively adopt advanced educational philosophies and teaching methods from both domestic and international sources, strengthening exchanges and collaborations with international institutions. By hiring foreign faculty and conducting international exchange programs, the internationalization and quality of the curriculum can be significantly enhanced.

4.2 *Reform of Teaching Methods*

Reforming teaching methods within the context of the "New Liberal Arts" is of paramount significance. It effectively enhances the comprehensive qualities and innovative capabilities of students majoring in Japanese, thus better aligning with society's demand for highly skilled, versatile talents. This represents not only a significant breakthrough from traditional pedagogical approaches but also a profound reflection and reconfiguration of educational philosophies. At present, the conventional lecture-based

teaching model is akin to a stagnant pool, failing to ignite students' interest and curiosity. To remedy this stagnant situation, reform in teaching methods must be grounded in students' actual needs, emphasizing inspiration and inquiry, and guiding students to actively engage in the learning process. Teachers can stimulate thought and discussion by posing open-ended questions, akin to igniting a flame that illuminates students' quest for knowledge. For instance, when explaining Japanese history and culture, guiding students to discuss the impact of the Meiji Restoration and encouraging them to relate it to modern society can stimulate their enthusiasm for learning and innovative thinking. The application of multimedia and information technology offers vast opportunities for innovation in teaching methods. Utilizing virtual reality technology for immersive Japanese cultural experiences allows students to feel as if they are in the streets of Japan, personally experiencing local customs and practices. This immersive learning experience not only enhances students' interest in learning but also deepens their cultural understanding (Grainger, 1997). Online learning platforms provide an abundance of educational resources and interactive opportunities, resembling a treasure trove of knowledge where students can explore and learn according to their interests and pace. Interactive and experiential teaching also hold crucial positions in pedagogical reform. Through role-playing and scenario simulation, students can practice and apply their acquired knowledge in real-life language contexts. For example, in Japanese business courses, simulating business negotiations and market research allows students to master language application and business skills through practical exercises, thereby enhancing their practical abilities. Such teaching methods resemble a splendid performance where students are both audience and actors, experiencing the joy and sense of achievement through active participation. Furthermore, teaching method reform necessitates a transformation in the role of educators. Teachers are no longer mere dispensers of knowledge but rather guides and collaborators in students' learning journeys. They must actively engage in the learning process, providing timely feedback and guidance, much like a gardener nurturing each seedling's growth. Teachers' professional qualities and teaching abilities must also be continually enhanced, maintaining sensitivity to new knowledge and technological advancements to foster ongoing innovation and progress in teaching. For instance, when teaching Japanese grammar, adopting a flipped classroom model where students self-study foundational knowledge before class and engage in interactive discussion and practical application during class can significantly improve student engagement and develop their autonomous learning abilities and critical thinking skills.

4.3 Reinforcement of Practice and Internship

Currently, Japanese language instruction often emphasizes theory over practice, resulting in students struggling to adapt quickly in real-world situations. Therefore, by enhancing practical training and internship opportunities, students can apply the knowledge gained in the classroom to real-life contexts, effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice. This approach transforms the written word into vibrant, living experience, allowing students to learn and grow through hands-on activities. For instance, in Japanese translation courses, students could be placed in companies for internships,

engaging in actual translation projects and gaining insight into the specific processes and requirements of the profession. This not only sharpens their translation skills but also bolsters their professional demeanor and teamwork abilities. Additionally, schools could establish partnerships with Japanese companies and institutions, facilitating student exchanges and internships in Japan. Such international experiences resemble a cultural voyage, immersing students in Japanese workplace culture and methodologies, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills. For example, during an internship at a Japanese company, students might participate in business meetings and market research, gaining firsthand experience of Japan's work environment and professional ethos, thus deepening their understanding of Japanese society. These experiences not only enrich the content of their internships but also provide invaluable insights for their future career development. Extracurricular practical activities are equally crucial. By participating in Japanese-related competitions, cultural festivals, and volunteer events, students can hone their language skills and overall competencies in authentic contexts. For instance, involving students in the planning and organization of a Japanese cultural festival allows them to practice and apply their Japanese language skills while enhancing their organizational and practical abilities (Yamashita, 2018).

4.4 Faculty Development

The development of a faculty team is of paramount importance in the context of the "new liberal arts," directly influencing the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of student cultivation. A high-caliber faculty acts as a beacon, guiding students toward their goals and igniting their potential and innovative thinking. To forge an exceptional faculty, it is essential to prioritize the professional development and training of teachers. Regularly organizing domestic and international academic exchanges and seminars allows educators to stay abreast of the latest educational concepts and teaching methodologies, thereby integrating global educational advancements into their practice. For instance, sending teachers to Japan for training to acquire advanced pedagogical techniques and cultural knowledge can enrich their expertise and broaden their international perspective. Additionally, practical experience is a crucial factor in enhancing teaching quality. Encouraging teachers to engage in social practice, such as immersing themselves in enterprises and cultural institutions, provides insight into actual needs and industry trends. Such experiences act as a vital boost, enabling teachers to bridge theory with practice and offer more practical guidance to students. For example, Japanese language instructors participating in Sino-Japanese business activities can experience firsthand the nuances of business negotiations and cross-cultural communication, thereby providing more practical instruction in their teaching. Moreover, diversity within the faculty is a significant means of enhancing teaching effectiveness. Introducing teachers with varied backgrounds and specializations forms a multifaceted teaching team. For example, employing Japanese nationals or those with extensive experience living in Japan can offer firsthand language and cultural insights, bringing diverse teaching perspectives and methods. This diversity injects fresh vitality into the classroom, making it more dynamic and enriching. Team collaboration and pedagogical research are also pivotal in faculty development. By forming teaching teams, engaging in

collaborative lesson planning, and conducting teaching discussions, educators can learn from one another and continuously improve their teaching quality. For instance, when preparing Japanese language speaking courses, team members can jointly discuss and design teaching activities, share their teaching experiences and techniques, and complement each other's strengths, thereby enhancing the overall teaching effectiveness.

4.5 Enhancement of Students' Comprehensive Ability

Through diversified course design, students' comprehensive abilities can be significantly enhanced. Offering interdisciplinary elective courses, such as Comparative Studies of Chinese and Japanese Cultures or East Asian Economic Development, allows students to understand and apply knowledge from various perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach acts as a key, unlocking the door to a vast realm of knowledge. For instance, by exploring the relationship between Japanese literature and its social culture, students not only acquire language skills but also gain a profound understanding of cultural contexts, fostering a more well-rounded knowledge base. Encouraging participation in international exchange programs is also a vital means of enhancing comprehensive abilities. Through exchange student programs and overseas internships, students can personally experience the allure of different cultures and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills. This experiential learning is akin to an adventure, with students growing continuously through encounters with diverse cultures. For example, participating in an internship at a Japanese company allows students to understand Japanese workplace culture and work habits, thereby improving their language application skills and workplace adaptability. In the educational process, fostering students' critical thinking and innovation abilities is also crucial for enhancing comprehensive capabilities. Through Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Project-Based Learning (PJBL), students are guided to develop critical thinking and innovation skills while solving real-world problems. This learning approach resembles a laboratory where students find optimal solutions through continuous experimentation and exploration. For example, in a Japanese news course, students can simulate news reporting and analyze actual news events, honing their analytical and judgment skills. Extracurricular activities are also essential channels for enhancing students' comprehensive abilities. By organizing activities such as Japanese debate competitions, speech contests, and cultural festivals, students can practice language skills and overall qualities in real-world settings. These activities are like competitive arenas, where students continuously improve through self-challenge. For example, in a Japanese speech contest, students not only need to articulate their viewpoints fluently in Japanese but also demonstrate logical thinking and oratory skills, thus comprehensively enhancing their capabilities.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the "New Humanities," the optimization of talent cultivation models for Japanese language majors in higher education constitutes a systematic endeavor, necessitating comprehensive reforms across various dimensions such as curriculum framework, teaching methodologies, faculty

development, practical engagement, and the enhancement of students' holistic competencies. The curriculum design should emphasize the integration of interdisciplinary content, while teaching methods must innovate by combining interactive and practical approaches. Furthermore, the cultivation of the faculty should focus on enhancing training programs and attracting educators with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The components of practice and internships require substantial reinforcement, and the elevation of students' comprehensive abilities should pervade the entire educational process. These initiatives will not only augment the overall quality of Japanese language students but also bolster their competitive edge in international communication and collaboration. Through systematic reform and optimization, the Japanese language program can achieve high-caliber talent cultivation objectives within the framework of the "New Humanities," thereby contributing to the society by nurturing high-quality Japanese language professionals endowed with an international perspective, innovative capacity, and practical skills, ultimately advancing cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Japan.

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