

## EXPLORING THE DIRECTION OF ART EDUCATION IN CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NEW ERA

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### ABSTRACT

In contemporary times, art education in higher education institutions constitutes an important component, yet there exists an imbalance in educational resources and quality among different institutions. In the new era of comprehensive socialist modernization, nurturing versatile and all-rounded talents has become an urgent task. The education authorities and universities need to profoundly grasp the pulse of the times, promote the development of art education, and contribute to the construction of a socialist harmonious society and a community with a shared future for humanity. This article, therefore, delves into analyzing the current background of art education and the state of art education in higher education institutions to explore the direction of art education, providing adequate theoretical foundations for contemporary art education. The future of art education requires addressing the educational disparities among universities and ensuring fair distribution of resources. The education authorities should strengthen teacher training to enhance their professional competence and moral integrity, making them guides for students in both learning and ethical behavior. Furthermore, integrating moral and ethical education into art education is an important goal to instill correct values and perspectives on life in students.

**Keywords:** The New Era, Chinese Higher Education, Art Education, Qualitative Research.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

China is currently at a crucial stage in striving for the comprehensive establishment of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and advancing towards building a socialist modernized nation. In this new era, the role and significance of art education in universities are increasingly prominent [1]. Confronting the goal of common prosperity for all, the artistic education across various universities exhibits diverse and rich characteristics [2], yet it faces several challenges and issues. From a macro perspective, different universities have varied educational philosophies and emphases. Some emphasize nurturing students' artistic creative abilities, emphasizing individual development and innovative spirits. Others focus more on traditional skills and cultural heritage, emphasizing academic research and the cultivation of professional skills. This diversified development provides students with broader options, beneficial for meeting diverse needs and developmental tendencies [3].

However, due to factors such as educational resources and faculty, some universities, particularly those not primarily focused on arts education, do not place significant emphasis on it, leading to situations of lower educational quality [4]. This could result in students lacking in artistic cultivation and skill development, impeding their comprehensive development of abilities, contradicting the needs of the new era for well-rounded talents.

Universities bear significant responsibilities and missions in education in this new era [5]. Art education isn't solely about imparting skills but also cultivating students' aesthetic tastes, creativity, and cultural refinement. How to cultivate high-quality students within the context of comprehensive development poses a crucial challenge for university education.

To address these challenges, universities need comprehensive optimization of educational resource allocation and enhancement of the overall quality of faculty [1]. Establishing a multi-level, diversified art education system that caters to different students' needs and developmental paths is essential. Additionally, strengthening the integration of art education with other disciplines to foster interdisciplinary study and knowledge integration is necessary.

In the backdrop of the new era, universities should strive to cultivate high-quality students with comprehensive abilities [6]. This includes but is not limited to nurturing students' innovation, teamwork, and interdisciplinary thinking abilities. Art education plays a pivotal role in this process because it stimulates students' creativity and imagination, fosters problem-solving skills, and enhances their understanding and cognition across various societal, cultural, and historical aspects. Universities can facilitate interdisciplinary art education courses to promote interaction and collaboration among students from different majors, creating platforms for students to engage in various artistic and social practices, thereby enhancing their practical and innovative capabilities.

## **2. THE CURRENT STATE OF ART EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEW ERA**

### **2.1 National Policy to Enhance Higher Education Overall**

Under the impetus of national policies, there has been notable differentiation in higher education within the context of the new era. Significant disparities exist among different universities in terms of educational resources, teaching quality, and students' learning motivation and capabilities, prompting profound contemplation and reform attempts in the educational system and student attitudes.

#### **1. Disparities in Educational Resources and the Advantages of 985 Universities**

Universities differ in faculty, research conditions, teaching facilities, among other aspects. 985 universities, as a batch of institutions receiving substantial national support, generally hold a relative edge in faculty resources, boasting a group of highly qualified professors, scholars, and researchers. Their research conditions and teaching facilities are comparatively well-established, endowing them with evident advantages in educational quality and academic influence [7]. However, other universities might experience deficiencies in these aspects, leading to imbalances in educational quality due to gaps in faculty strength and research capabilities, thereby impacting to a certain extent students' learning motivation and capacity development.

#### **2. Current Changes and Issues in Students' Learning Attitudes**

The phenomenon of 'lying flat' and 'worshipping the lucky fish,' as mentioned in the People's Daily Online - Opinion Channel on November 5, 2022, reflects a shift in the attitudes of some young students towards studying. This trend has garnered widespread societal attention, with concerns that these attitudes might diminish students' learning motivation, weakening their dedication to diligent studying and proactive attitudes [8].

#### **3. Policies and Measures by Universities and Provinces in Response to Changes in Students' Learning Attitudes**

To address these trends, several provinces and universities have issued related policies and measures [9]. Taking Guangdong Province as an example, in line with the Party's principles, there

is an emphasis on art education, enhancing students' aesthetic education and humanistic literacy. This is reflected in improvements in teaching by fostering an environment supportive of art education, advocating diverse teaching methods and curriculum structures to stimulate students' learning interest and enhance their comprehensive literacy. Additionally, various universities are aligning with national policies and undertaking multiple measures [10]. These measures encompass improving teachers' conditions, attracting high-quality educators, creating favorable learning environments, organizing diverse artistic activities, clubs, festive celebrations, etc., aiming to enhance students' interest and passion for art while promoting the fusion of learning and interests, enriching students' aesthetic and cultural refinement.

#### 4. Impact on Students and Educational Outcomes

These policies and measures aim to stimulate students' learning interests, enhance their comprehensive literacy, and guide them to integrate learning with their interests. By offering diverse teaching methods, vibrant artistic activities, and opportunities for learning exchange, the goal is to bolster students' learning motivation, cultivate their aesthetic taste and humanistic literacy, enabling students to better adapt to societal demands and shoulder the responsibility of constructing a modernized nation.

## 2.2 Shortcomings in the Development of Higher Education

Despite the noble mission of higher education art programs in nurturing outstanding art teachers for the nation and its people, there are some shortcomings. These issues encompass disparities and imbalances among different institutions, as well as various factors related to students' learning abilities and motivation.

### 1. Imbalances Caused by Differences Among Universities

Compared to 985 universities, some non-art-focused institutions might lag behind in art education [11]. This often manifests in insufficient teaching resources and lower faculty standards, resulting in subpar teaching quality. Additionally, certain non-art-focused universities might not prioritize art education adequately, resulting in insufficient investment that affects teaching quality and the overall student learning experience.

### 2. Economic Pressure on Students and Barriers to Entry

Even with government support through policies like student loans, scholarships, and financial aid for impoverished students, economic constraints still force some students to abandon art majors [12]. Art majors typically involve higher tuition fees, coupled with later expenses for study and living costs, which pose significant burdens for students from less financially capable families. This economic strain leads some students to feel constrained financially, raising concerns about committing to studying an art major and the subsequent investment required.

### 3. Additional Expenses for Art Major Students

In non-specialized courses, schools might require non-art major students to participate in activities like drawing sessions or expect non-music major students to purchase instruments for coursework, increasing the overall cost of education [13]. High cafeteria fees and the necessity to buy specialized art materials add financial stress on students and their families. Moreover, some schools might mandate students to partake in non-major-related internships, either at companies or factories, adding extra challenges for students.

### 4. Solutions and Improvement Pathways

Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts from multiple stakeholders. Universities need to prioritize balanced development in art education and elevate the quality of art education in

non-art-focused institutions. Moreover, establishing more scholarships and fee waivers can assist financially struggling students, alleviating their academic burdens. Additionally, schools can explore ways to reduce extra expenses for students, such as providing necessary learning materials, reducing cafeteria charges, and moderately decreasing non-major-related internship requirements to ease students' financial pressures.

### **3. THE INTEGRATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ART EDUCATION IS A PRODUCT OF THE ERA.**

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and art education is an inevitable trend in the development of the new era [14]. As society progresses towards a moderately prosperous lifestyle and comprehensive advancements in technology and culture, the fusion of technology and art becomes pivotal in driving progress. In this integration, AI serves as a primary technological support. Narrowly, AI refers to modern devices like smartphones, computers, and robots, while broadly, it encompasses various machines and technologies made for human use amid technological advancements [15].

In the field of art education, the application of AI has become a significant component of teaching. For instance, presentations using PowerPoint with rich visuals aid in delivering course content, helping students grasp knowledge points more vividly. Moreover, leveraging virtual reality technology to create VR painting scenes or dance projection virtual teaching allows students to immerse themselves in experiencing the allure of art [16]. This teaching approach not only enhances students' understanding but also sparks their learning interest, elevating their academic performance.

This integration expands education beyond traditional chalkboard teaching, presenting more dynamic and enriching forms of instruction [17]. However, some universities remain hesitant and cautious. Some fear that while AI may attract students, excessive engagement in non-educational AI activities might diminish their interest and motivation for learning. Additionally, certain universities find it challenging to adopt such advanced teaching methods due to the high cost of AI teaching equipment or insufficient faculty expertise.

Moreover, differences in teachers' educational backgrounds and teaching abilities also influence the recognition and utilization of AI teaching methods. Yet, with technological advancement, just as initial hesitation existed when people started using new technologies like Taobao, will this observation pose a hindrance to students' better experiences with the fusion of technology and art? Could this hesitation impede art education's progress compared to other fields, potentially missing opportunities to cultivate more art talents?

The key to resolving this lies in balance. Universities need to explore innovation while guiding students to use technology correctly. Additionally, more policy support is required to ensure schools can adopt advanced teaching equipment and cultivate more art talents with technological literacy. Only then can AI truly play a positive role in art education, making it more integrated, dynamic, and offering greater possibilities for the development of the era and students' growth.

### **4. STRENGTHENING THE SUPERSTRUCTURE, FIRMLY GRASPING 'EDUCATING PEOPLE THROUGH MORAL CULTIVATION'**

Art education, as a vital component of contemporary higher education, aims to cultivate students' artistic aesthetics, spark their interest in art, and elevate their moral cultivation throughout the process. Art education is not just about shaping students' personal characters; it also aims to foster

comprehensive talents for the new socialist era—individuals with professional competence, upright character, and sound moral values, aligning with General Secretary Xi Jinping's expectations for college students. Many universities have integrated ethical and ideological education content into their curriculum, combining personal ethical cultivation with key national ideologies like Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought. This teaching method subtly guides students towards developing exemplary character traits, propagating core socialist values, encouraging an optimistic and enthusiastic attitude towards learning, and nurturing noble personal character and ethical perspectives.

However, despite ethical education in the curriculum, incidents like campus violence persist. This prompts reflection on whether solely relying on curriculum teachings is sufficient to achieve the goal of cultivating a campus filled with talented individuals. Some university teachers might lack thorough professional training and instead obtained their qualifications through self-study exams. Especially in artistic disciplines, some teachers might have hurriedly prepared for exams or entered teaching positions temporarily. These instructors may lack sufficient professional abilities and struggle to impart correct values and life perspectives to students.

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in a People's Daily article on December 8, 2021, that the primary concern of education is what kind of individuals it nurtures. This highlights the urgent national and party demands for high-quality, highly competent university students. In this era of 'everyone having a mobile device,' college students access various information through the internet, leading to the emergence of online jargon like 'township problem solvers' and 'nine-leak fish.' This demonstrates the necessity for Chinese universities to focus not only on students' professional abilities but also on cultivating outstanding character and ethical perspectives.

To reinforce the superstructure, the education department and universities must strengthen the depth and breadth of moral education. Firstly, cultivating the teaching staff should prioritize comprehensive enhancement of professional competence and moral qualities, ensuring they possess a solid professional foundation and noble moral cultivation to better guide students. Secondly, educational curricula and teaching methodologies need to incorporate more ethical and ideological education to foster students' correct life and value perspectives. Simultaneously, universities need to pay more attention to students' psychological well-being and humanistic literacy, providing a more comprehensive education to enable students to become not only knowledgeable professionals but also individuals with noble character and a sense of social responsibility.

In the path towards constructing a strong nation and a civilized society, art education plays an indispensable role. However, only by integrating ethical education into it can we genuinely cultivate outstanding talents that meet the demands of the times and shoulder social responsibilities.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the present context, art education in higher education faces numerous challenges and opportunities. Disparities in educational resources and teaching standards among various institutions affect the comprehensive development of art education. However, in the pursuit of comprehensively constructing a modern socialist country, nurturing well-rounded talents, keeping pace with the times, and advancing the development of art education become urgent priorities.



Universities need to focus not only on students' holistic growth in art education but also on enhancing the quality and roles of teachers.

In the contemporary era of higher education in the arts, the first step involves addressing the existing differences among universities, striving for educational balance. This necessitates the government's stronger coordination and planning of educational resources, providing fairer development opportunities to all institutions, ensuring broader coverage of art education across a wider demographic, and fostering an improvement in educational quality. Simultaneously, universities must enhance their internal teaching standards, elevate the overall quality of their teaching staff, and ensure education better serves students.

Furthermore, emphasizing that art education is not just about imparting skills and knowledge but also about cultivating students' character, thoughts, and moral upbringing is crucial. Education departments and universities should pay more attention to the integration of ethical education, combining art education with ideological and moral education to instill correct values and perspectives in students. This requires curricula to encompass more ethical and ideological education content, while teachers must take on the responsibility of guiding students' proper development, nurturing qualities of positivity, and fostering a love for learning.

Teachers play a crucial role in art education. They are not just transmitters of knowledge but also exemplars and guides of morality. Therefore, the quality and cultivation of teachers are particularly essential. The education department needs to strengthen the training and guidance of the teaching staff, enhancing their teaching standards and humanistic qualities to better guide students and drive the vigorous development of art education.

In conclusion, in the context of the new era, art education in universities needs to actively adapt to the demands of the times. It's crucial to not only focus on balancing educational resources but also prioritize students' holistic growth and moral development. The goal of education is not solely to cultivate professional talents but also to nurture outstanding character and ethical literacy. Through educational efforts, universities can cultivate more outstanding artistic talents and morally upright teachers for the country and its people, contributing more to building a harmonious society and achieving lasting stability for the nation.

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