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The Development and Issues in China's Art Education System and Training Model for Fine Arts Majors

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Abstract:

With the continuous advancement of short videos, AI-generated art, and virtual reality, the demand for artistic talent in the cultural and creative industries has garnered widespread attention. However, current higher education in fine arts still faces shortcomings in curriculum design, assessment methods, and practical training. This paper examines China's fine arts education system, tracing its historical evolution and current training objectives while analyzing key issues in teaching practice. Research reveals a disconnect between university curricula and industry demands; evaluation methods remain overly narrow, limiting students' multifaceted development; and university-industry collaborations mostly remain superficial, failing to enhance students' practical experience. Based on these findings, this paper proposes several improvement recommendations: First, update educational objectives to better align with societal development and technological progress; second, optimize the curriculum system by strengthening practicality and interdisciplinary integration; third, establish a diversified evaluation mechanism that equally emphasizes innovation and competency; fourth, promote deep university-industry collaboration to provide students with authentic practical environments.

Keywords: Art Education; Talent Development; Curriculum Reform; School-Enterprise Collaboration

1. Introduction

In contemporary China, short videos, AI-generated art, and virtual reality exhibitions are ubiquitous, with the cultural and creative industries emerging as a new arena for urban competition. Consequently, society now demands more high-caliber artistic talent--individuals who master both traditional arts and technological innovation. Yet university curricula have failed to keep pace: despite a surge in art students, coursework remains dominated by still-life drawing and thesis evaluations. The Central Acade-

my of Fine Arts Undergraduate Teaching Quality Report (2023-2024 Academic Year) reveals the reality through a series of data points: Although the school implements a "broad foundation--specialized foundation--specialized studio/interdisciplinary" training model, students commonly report "abundant creativity but difficulty in implementation." Coursework is misaligned with societal demands, and opportunities for industry-academia collaboration are scarce. These issues have become obstacles in talent cultivation [1].

The current limitations of traditional teaching models have created a mismatch between the capabilities of fine arts graduates and the demands of societal talent. On one hand, outdated curricula struggle to meet the diverse skill requirements of the cultural and creative industries. On the other hand, students' practical abilities fall short, leaving enterprises unable to secure personnel aligned with job specifications. To address this issue, this paper analyzes the gap between existing training models and societal needs while proposing improvement pathways. This will not only enhance the teaching systems of higher education institutions but also optimize students' career trajectories, improving the alignment between talent cultivation and industry needs to support the sustainable development of the cultural and creative industries.

This paper examines the development and challenges of China's art education system and training models for fine arts majors. Employing a combination of literature review and real-world case studies, it integrates international art education strategies to propose more comprehensive training objectives and curriculum frameworks.

2. Talent Development System and Objectives

2.1 Historical Evolution

Chinese art education traces its origins to ancient labor practices, initially relying primarily on apprenticeship-based transmission. Instruction typically involved verbal expression and classroom demonstration. During this period, art education primarily fell into three categories: Court painting academies served the imperial family, emphasizing standardized painting techniques and solemn subject matter; Folk painter training focused on practical artistic creation, aligning with the needs of folk art; Scholar-painter education prioritized aesthetic appreciation and artistic conception, stressing literary cultivation. All three forms centered on foundational techniques, valued the transmission of master-disciple relationships, and featured nature as a primary theme—characteristics defining traditional Chinese art education at the time [2].

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the introduction of Western art spurred educational transformation. China established specialized art education institutions, incorporating Western drawing and color theory courses. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, higher art education was integrated into the national education system, with disciplines diversifying into painting, sculpture, art design, and other specializations. A curriculum framework emerged encompassing three core areas: foundational theory, professional skills, and art history and theory. Teaching methods became diverse, and art education gradually expanded into primary and secondary schools [2].

By the 21st century, rapid advancements in digital technology had reshaped teaching content and training objectives. Shi Gang noted in "Research on Innovation in Teaching Systems and Operational Mechanisms of Art Colleges Under Digital Art" that Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts' Film and Animation Department adjusted its specializations, incorporating digital painting and 3D animation into its curriculum. It pioneered a "fusion of traditional techniques and digital technology" model to enhance students' adaptability to the animation and gaming industries [3].

2.2 Current Objectives

Art education in compulsory education should focus on cultivating students' aesthetic perception, artistic expression, creative practice, and cultural understanding as core objectives. This requires the curriculum to organically integrate knowledge, skills, learning methods, and emotional values, thereby promoting students' comprehensive development in artistic learning [4]. Currently, the core objectives of art programs in Chinese universities revolve around specialized positioning and diversified development. Top art institutions place greater emphasis on advanced training and internationalization. The Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) states that its core mission is to cultivate art professionals with an international perspective, national spirit, and innovative capabilities. The academy facilitates students' understanding of global art through international exchange programs and foreign curricula. Moreover, it emphasizes preserving traditional Chinese art and culture, encouraging the integration of national artistic elements into contemporary creations. Regarding artistic talent, the institution seeks students with leadership capabilities to spearhead high-quality development in Chinese art [1]. The China Academy of Art focuses on cultivating versatile artistic talents aligned with societal transformation. Through undergraduate admissions

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reforms, it selects outstanding students with innovative thinking and cross-disciplinary integration skills while advancing the innovative development of art education [5]. This demonstrates that China's art education increasingly emphasizes core competency-oriented development. It values both the integration of international perspectives with local culture and the promotion of interdisciplinary convergence and practical innovation.

3. Issues in Teaching Practice

3.1 Mismatch Between Curriculum and Social Demand

Fine arts students face a significant gap between creative transformation and industrial application, with some works struggling to meet market demands. This issue stems from the slow pace of curriculum updates in higher education institutions, which have become disconnected from the practical requirements of the cultural and creative industries. The cultural and creative sector has seen the emergence of numerous new forms, such as visual effects in short videos, AI-generated artworks, and virtual reality (VR). These emerging art forms demand new skills from professionals. However, art academies' curricula update too slowly to keep pace with current demands. Students lack exposure to relevant specialized knowledge during their studies, making it difficult for them to find suitable employment after graduation.

Diversified competencies represent the core demand of the cultural and creative industries for fine arts graduates. Through research, He Yayi identified four key areas of demand for artistic talent in China's cultural and creative sector: First, traditional artistic techniques, requiring practitioners to possess solid foundational skills in painting, sculpture, and other disciplines; second, digital creation capabilities, encompassing the application of technologies such as Photoshop and AI design software; third, project collaboration skills, enabling individuals to work with professionals from diverse fields to complete creative projects; Fourth, cultural IP development capabilities [6]. However, contemporary traditional art education tends to overemphasize theoretical knowledge transmission while neglecting the cultivation of practical skills and innovative thinking, failing to meet society's current demand for new types of artistic talent [5].

3.2 One-Dimensional Evaluation

The current evaluation methods for art students in universities are overly simplistic, which limits the cultivation of their innovative and comprehensive abilities. Most institutions assess art students primarily based on their portfolio grades and theoretical exams, neglecting artistic innovation, practical skills, and collaborative abilities. They fail to focus on students' cultural understanding. For instance, evaluating paintings solely on the accuracy of form and the appropriateness of color usage—this formulaic training hinders the development of domestic art.

In studio courses at many international art institutions, students frequently undertake design projects through group collaboration. During discussions and practical work, they exchange ideas, listen to each other's perspectives, and collectively seek solutions when encountering challenges. This interaction not only deepens the learning experience but also cultivates teamwork and communication skills [7]. Consequently, numerous renowned international art schools are increasingly emphasizing diverse educational models. The SAI organization notes in "A Comprehensive Analysis of Art and Design Education Pedagogy" that such teaching models help students develop a mindset for sustainable development, understand social responsibility, and, crucially, learn within an inclusive environment [7]. Through this approach, students gain insight into the current state of their work and understand market demands.

Not only that, students can choose different painting styles and subjects based on their interests and feelings, fully unleashing their imagination and creativity to develop a unique artistic language [7]. However, feedback from teachers in domestic schools still suffers from a lack of diversity. For instance, they might simply say, "The colors in this painting are not good," without addressing substantive issues related to social and market demands. As a result, students remain unclear about their abilities and positioning. Moreover, this narrow aesthetic and evaluation framework impacts student performance. Scholars like Hua Xiaobing argue that art education assessment should serve diagnostic and developmental purposes [8]. Some students excel in digital art but struggle with traditional techniques. Yet evaluations that prioritize traditional skills may deem them inadequate, undermining motivation and reinforcing aesthetic uniformity.

3.3 Scarcity of Industry-Academia Practical Opportunities

Industry-academia collaboration offers an effective pathway for students to enhance practical skills. However, the current internship mechanism remains imperfect, plagued by multiple issues. These primarily manifest in two areas: low alignment of cooperation and foundational internship content. Regarding cooperation alignment, current industry-academia partnerships largely remain at the level of "formalized agreements." 82% of universities

only sign "internship-based agreements" with enterprises, with agreement content primarily focused on basic terms like "providing a certain number of internship positions," without covering substantive content such as joint guidance on course projects [6]. Research indicates that the main reasons are that enterprises struggle to achieve immediate benefits in the short term. If they invest in designers to participate in course guidance for student projects, it requires additional time and effort without quick returns. Furthermore, the fixed teaching rhythm of universities is difficult to coordinate with the flexible project cycles of enterprises [6].

The second issue is that the practical content is too basic. Even when students secure internships at companies, the work they perform is mostly simple, foundational tasks that offer little opportunity for skill development. He Yayi's research found that 65% of cultural and creative enterprises assign interns tasks like image processing (e.g., brightening photos, cropping dimensions) and organizing materials—tasks requiring minimal technical skill. Only 15% of interns participate in core activities such as creative work or project planning [6]. Some students also expressed in the survey that "internships feel more like 'running errands'--we do not learn the industry's actual workflows. Even if we've studied relevant subjects at school, we still cannot apply that knowledge to real-world practice. It ends up wasting valuable time we could be spending on specialized studies" [6].

4. Recommendations for Improvement

4.1 Updated Objectives

Fine arts programs need to establish educational targets that go beyond conventional teaching approaches. The relevant documents state that art education in compulsory schools should focus on aesthetic perception and creative practice, and cultural understanding, while moving away from the previous knowledge-based approach. Reformed policies emphasize integrating three key dimensions in art education: emotion, technique, and values. This approach aims to equip students not only with foundational art theory and practical skills but also with effective learning methods, fostering sound aesthetic and cultural attitudes to cultivate well-rounded competencies. Concepts such as "integrated·exploratory" art practices and unit-based curriculum instruction reflect this shift from "teaching knowledge" to "cultivating competencies" [4].

In the field of teacher education, Fang Yijie and Fan Yaoqiao note in their research that under the new curriculum standards, middle school art teachers must not only possess interdisciplinary integration skills but also be proficient in utilizing digital teaching tools. In middle school art education, if learning remains confined to the classroom, students' gains will be limited. Incorporating innovative activities enhances learning through practice, as students' learning outcomes often depend on the artistic practice experience they accumulate in the classroom [9].

Educators need to understand the different levels of AI technology experience students bring to the classroom when creating instructional objectives. Educational programs exist to teach students how to adapt to new technologies. Wang Changsheng recommends that teachers teach AI painting theories as part of their curriculum content. The teaching process requires educators to recognize different student views about AI-generated art while teaching them about copyright and ethical matters. The method enables students to build independent thinking abilities while teaching them artistic responsibility through copyright and ethical education. Teachers should use differentiated teaching methods to support students who need different levels of technical support during their learning process. The method prevents learning deviations that result from using unclear objectives [10].

4.2 Improve the Curriculum

Academic researchers now focus on pedagogical innovation as the main priority for modern art education reform. Research shows that interdisciplinary learning methods allow students to move past conventional subject divisions so they can explore knowledge from science and technology and literature, and social sciences. The method enables students to explore new subjects while learning how different ideas relate to each other, which develops their ability to think creatively. The academic community stresses the need for practical assistance at the same time. Studio-based teaching combines theoretical knowledge with practical creation, so students can study art history and art theory, and cultural contexts while making their art. The method helps students develop better comprehension and artistic expression in their creations [11].

The introduction of emerging technologies has opened new avenues for art and design education. Applications of artificial intelligence and machine learning provide students with enhanced creative support, such as generating ideas and receiving personalized feedback, thereby improving learning methodologies. The use of virtual reality and augmented reality has also transformed classroom structures. These immersive tools deliver virtual studio experiences, enabling students to participate in interactive exhibitions and collaborate on designs within virtual environments [11].

Moreover, with the rapid development of society, the de-

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mand trends in the art industry are also constantly evolving. Art education must continually adjust its curriculum structure to cultivate suitable talent. While traditional disciplines like Chinese painting and oil painting require continued consolidation and enhancement, courses must also incorporate contemporary art and technology relevant to modern society. Simultaneously, the development of emerging fields such as digital art or art and technology holds equal importance. To achieve these objectives, institutions should recruit faculty with interdisciplinary backgrounds and upgrade teaching facilities to create superior learning environments for students [1].

4.3 Diversified Evaluation Methods

In the evaluation process, multiple methods should be used as much as possible. For example, colleges and universities should arrange for school leaders, experts, and teacher representatives to enter classrooms to listen to lectures and provide opinions and suggestions. What is more important is students' feedback and evaluation. Students' opinions can directly reflect the deficiencies and needs in the classroom, and are more directly valuable for teachers to adjust their teaching methods. Therefore, teachers can get feedback from these different perspectives, thereby discovering problems in teaching and making improvements. The multi-party evaluation model can not only remind teachers to pay attention to the classroom, but also motivate them to continuously improve their teaching. As this method became institutionalized, a complete evaluation and feedback mechanism was gradually formed, which effectively improved the teaching quality [1]. When teachers' level is improved, they can also provide students with more effective evaluation and guidance, ultimately forming a virtuous circle of mutual promotion between teachers and students.

In the international art studio course, instructors will provide feedback based on students' individual differences through "one-on-one guidance" and "practical observation", answer specific questions, and help students improve faster. After students make adjustments, instructors provide further evaluations, forming a cycle that gradually promotes growth [7]. In collaborative projects, students also need to accept constructive criticism from their peers, gain opinions from different perspectives, and improve their work.

4.4 School-Enterprise Synergy

School-enterprise collaboration must evolve from superficial partnerships to deep synergy, establishing joint training mechanisms. First, establish school-enterprise joint training centers. Drawing on the practical recommendations of the SAI Organization, leverage data to deliver personalized student development, crafting more precise training programs based on corporate needs and student characteristics. Simultaneously, strengthen global collaboration with enterprises to broaden the scope and depth of cooperation, enhancing students' global perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills. This prepares students to better adapt to the evolving demands of the cultural and creative industries [7].

For student practical projects, institutions and enterprises should initiate tasks linked to social activities. For instance, when a company requests cultural and creative design for rural tourism, student teams can develop solutions integrating local culture. A Jiangsu high school partnered with a cultural tourism company on "Ancient Town Illustration Design," transforming collaborative outcomes into socially valuable works [12].

5. Conclusion

The evaluation of China's fine arts education development reveals ongoing problems with curriculum updates and assessment systems, and industry-university partnerships. The current educational system restricts students from developing practical abilities and innovative thinking skills. The difference between education programs and industry needs creates difficulties for new graduates to adjust to their first jobs. Educational institutions need to establish core competencies and technological adaptability as their main learning objectives to enhance current educational outcomes. Educational programs need to combine traditional artistic subjects with digital art education while creating stronger connections between different academic fields. The assessment system needs multiple evaluation methods to focus on individual student growth. The practical implementation of enhanced enterprise collaboration will help students understand actual workplace settings. The implemented strategies will connect art education to cultural and creative industry requirements so students can acquire diverse competencies. The development of artistic talent requires China to maintain traditional artistic elements while implementing contemporary approaches and uniting international standards with domestic cultural growth. The development of artistic talents who excel in creativity and competition will result from this approach.

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