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CHALLENGES OF ART AND PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

ВИКЛИКИ МИСТЕЦЬКО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНОЇ ОСВІТИ В КИТАЇ

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Art and pedagogical education in China has become a strategic priority in the context of rapid socio-cultural and technological changes. National policies emphasise the role of aesthetic education in shaping personality, creativity, and cultural identity, yet numerous systemic difficulties remain.

Aim. The aim of this article is to identify and analyse the key challenges that hinder the effective development of art and pedagogical education in contemporary China.

Methodology. To address the research aim, this study employed a set of methods commonly used in general and comparative pedagogy. These included analytical and synthetic approaches, historical-pedagogical analysis, comparative methodology, and the interpretation of official policy documents and scholarly literature.

Results. An analysis of scholarly literature and policy documents revealed one of the

Вступ. Мистецько-педагогічна освіта в Китаї набула статусу стратегічного пріоритету в умовах стрімких соціокультурних і технологічних змін. Національна політика підкреслює роль естетичного виховання у формуванні особистості, творчих здібностей та культурної ідентичності, однак водночас зберігається низка системних труднощів.

Мета. Метою статті є визначення та аналіз ключових викликів, які перешкоджають ефективному розвитку мистецько-педагогічної освіти в сучасному Китаї.

Методологія. Для досягнення мети дослідження використано комплекс методів, що традиційно застосовуються у загальній та порівняльній педагогіці. До них належать аналітичний і синтетичний підходи, історико-педагогічний аналіз, порівняльна методологія, а також інтерпретація офіційних політичних документів і наукової літератури.

Результати. Аналіз наукової літератури свідчить, що однією з головних проблем є

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major problems to be a tension between preserving traditional forms of art education and introducing modern innovative practices. While dance, music, and visual arts have strong cultural roots, the integration of digital technologies, new liberal arts concepts, and global educational trends often create methodological uncertainties. Another significant challenge lies in the policy-practice gap: although government programmes set ambitious goals for comprehensive aesthetic development, in practice, art subjects are often marginalised in favour of exam-oriented disciplines, especially in secondary education.

Teacher training was identified as a particularly weak link. Studies demonstrate that future art educators receive insufficient methodological preparation, contend with a lack of professional versatility, and have limited opportunities for continuous development. Teachers face difficulties in adapting to diversified curricula, while higher education institutions still struggle to update pedagogical models in line with contemporary needs. At the same time, attempts to incorporate local cultural traditions, such as opera and folk art, enrich curricula but risk causing fissures without a coherent methodological basis. Additional problems include unequal access to resources between urban and rural schools and the need to balance globalisation with the preservation of national identity.

Conclusions. The conclusions confirm that the sustainable reform of art and pedagogical education in China would require a coordinated effort in curriculum design, the professionalization of teaching, the integration of technology and a careful balance of innovation with tradition. This study thus contributes to an understanding of the systemic barriers that need to be overcome to ensure the effectiveness and cultural relevance of art education in the modern era.

Keywords: China, PRC, university, high educational institution, art and pedagogical education, art disciplines teachers, professional education.

напруження між збереженням традиційних форм мистецької освіти та впровадженням сучасних інновацій. Попри глибоке культурне підґрунтя танцю, музики та візуальних мистецтв, їхня інтеграція з цифровими технологіями, новими концепціями ліберальних мистецтв і глобальними освітніми тенденціями часто спричиняє методологічні невизначеності. Іншим суттєвим викликом є розрив між політикою та практикою: хоча державні програми декларують амбітні цілі всебічного естетичного розвитку, на практиці мистецькі дисципліни часто маргіналізуються на користь предметів, орієнтованих на стандартизоване оцінювання, особливо в середній школі.

Слабкою ланкою виявилася система підготовки вчителів. Дослідження показують недостатній рівень методичної підготовки майбутніх педагогів мистецьких дисциплін, обмежену професійну гнучкість і брак можливостей для безперервного розвитку. Вчителі стикаються зі складнощами адаптації до диверсифікованих навчальних планів, тоді як заклади вищої освіти відстають в оновленні педагогічних моделей відповідно до сучасних потреб. Паралельно спостерігаються спроби інтегрувати місцеві культурні традиції, зокрема оперу та народне мистецтво, що збагачує зміст навчальних програм, але без цілісної методологічної основи існує ризик їх фрагментації. Додаткові труднощі пов'язані з нерівним доступом до ресурсів між міськими та сільськими школами, а також необхідністю збалансувати глобалізаційні впливи зі збереженням національної ідентичності.

Висновки. Отримані висновки підтверджують, що сталу реформу мистецької та педагогічної освіти в Китаї можна забезпечити лише шляхом скоординованих зусиль у проєктуванні навчальних програм, якісної підготовки вчителів, інтеграції технологій та гармонійному поєднанні інновацій із традиціями. Дослідження робить внесок у розуміння системних бар'єрів, які необхідно подолати для забезпечення ефективності та культурної релевантності мистецької освіти в сучасну епоху.

Ключові слова: Китай, КНР, університет, заклад вищої освіти, художньо-педагогічна освіта, вчителі мистецьких дисциплін, професійна освіта.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid political and economic development of China has made it a world leader in several key aspects of life. These outstanding accomplishments are largely due to the

continuous renovation of every aspect of national education. Meanwhile, the more far-sighted of China's leadership are fully aware that major economic and political changes need to be accompanied by cultural and intellectual advances. Broadly speaking, the educational apparatus shapes cultural consciousness. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, both Party and state have paid more attention to aesthetic education in schools. Intended officially for school leaders of all levels, as well as government officials, the official policy document *'Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era'* was released by the PRC central government on October 2020 (Wu & Batu, 2021). The goal of this document was to build a high-quality, diversified and wide-ranging modern aesthetic education system with Chinese characteristics by 2035.

Aesthetic education, understood as the crystallization of human sensitivity to beauty, aims to cultivate the capacity to experience and create beauty through multidimensional teaching methods. Recent government initiatives increasingly frame educational objectives in terms of developing students' independent aesthetic sensibilities in the context of a rapidly changing society. Art education, therefore, must advance from simple classroom instruction to comprehensive aesthetic formation in which the values of 'virtue' and 'beauty' are integrated into all dimensions of teaching. The primary task of aesthetic education in schools is thus the harmonious development of students' talents through the balanced cultivation of morality, intellect, physical abilities, creativity, and industriousness.

Art education consequently provides the necessary pedagogical tools and direction for achieving high-quality education in China. Through its varied forms and approaches, it enables students to engage with more diverse educational ideas and practices. Regardless of the particular artistic domain, whether it be dance, painting, or theater, art education should promote the idea of nurturing individuals through virtue. Teachers must treat their profession with responsibility, aiming both to instruct and to guide learners, as well as holding a leading role in the classroom.

An analysis of literature reveals that art and pedagogical education in China has been widely studied, and scientists consistently point to a series of challenges that define its current stage of development. Foundational works, such as those by Li (2012), outline the historical roots of dance education, whereas later analyses stress the necessity of moving beyond traditional, technique-centered instruction towards a more holistic and value-oriented approach (Jin & Lu, 2021; Lu, 2019). This tension between tradition and innovation is also observed in studies of contemporary Chinese dance, where the interweaving of historical heritage with modern artistic expression reveals both creative opportunities and pedagogical dilemmas (Jin & Martin, 2019; Zhu, 2018). Scholars highlight that art education is increasingly perceived not merely as technical training but as an essential means of cultivating morality, creativity, and cultural identity, yet this expanded vision poses new demands on curricula, teaching methods, and institutional frameworks (Yang, 2019).

At policy level, the Chinese government has introduced ambitious plans to strengthen aesthetic education in schools. While such initiatives demonstrate strong state commitment, researchers note difficulties in translating policy into practice. Zheng (2020) identifies inconsistencies in the construction of art curricula across primary and secondary schools, and Li, Li, and Wang (2022) point to dilemmas in reconciling theoretical ideals with limited practical resources. The recent 'Double Reduction' policy has had a disruptive impact on aesthetic education, with Yu and Zhang (2023)

documenting the dislocation and recombination of programs, while Xiao (2023) notes persistent conceptual confusion in art education at school level. Moreover, attempts to integrate local cultural forms into classroom instruction, such as regional opera or folk traditions (Li, 2023; Shu et al., 2013), illustrate the opportunity for contextualisation, but also create a risk of causing fissures if not carefully systematised. These studies reveal that a major challenge lies in balancing top-down policy imperatives with diverse local realities.

Teacher education emerges as another critical area in which challenges become evident. Li (2012) provides a historical perspective on teacher training in China, showing structural legacies that complicate rapid adaptation to new demands. Current research underscores deficiencies in the preparation of art teachers: Shi (2023) highlights the lack of systematic training for drama educators, Yang (2023) stresses the need for music teachers to develop a wide range of competencies, and Li (2018) critiques methodological weaknesses in higher dance education. Together, these works demonstrate that while curricula and policies evolve, teacher training has not kept up with them, thereby limiting the effectiveness of reforms. The gap between the desired multifaceted role of the art teacher and existing training mechanisms constitutes a central challenge for China's pedagogical education system.

Collectively, the reviewed literature indicates that the challenges of art and pedagogical education in China are multidimensional. They include the difficulty of balancing tradition with innovation, the gap between policy frameworks and classroom realities, the need to contextualise curricula whilst avoiding division, the inadequacy of current teacher preparation to meet increasing professional demands, and the tension between adopting new technologies and preserving pedagogical integrity. In addition, the pressures of globalisation and cultural comparison introduce further complexity to the reform agenda. These challenges do not negate the achievements of China's educational system but rather point to the areas where sustained research, policy refinement, and institutional innovation are required.

The **aim** of this research is to analyze and interpret the major challenges and strategic directions of art and pedagogical education in modern China, focusing on their cultural and institutional dimensions.

METHODOLOGY

To address the research aim, this study employed a set of **methods** commonly used in general and comparative pedagogy. These included the following:

- *analytical and synthetic methods* were used to examine scholarly sources and identify key concepts, trends, and patterns in the development of art and pedagogical education in China. The analytical method enabled a detailed exploration of specific aspects of the problem, while the synthetic method helped integrate the findings into a coherent scientific framework;
- *historical and pedagogical analysis* made it possible to trace the evolution of art and pedagogical education in China, as well as to identify the sociocultural and political factors that have influenced its development;
- *interpretation of official policy documents and academic literature* provided a deeper understanding of contemporary strategies, reforms, and educational development concepts in China. The analysis of legislative acts and political

programs made it possible to identify the key challenges and barriers hindering the effective development of the discipline.

RESULTS

Chinese art, as an inseparable component of the world's cultural heritage, functions not only as a medium of artistic reflection but also as a powerful mechanism for shaping collective cultural identity. For this reason, aesthetic education has been introduced as an integral part of art education in primary schools in the People's Republic of China. Courses at primary school generally encompass several artistic domains, such as music, fine arts, calligraphy, dance, drama, opera, film, and television. The overall aim of such curricular integration is to cultivate pupils' aesthetic perception, encourage artistic self-expression, develop creative practice, and enhance cultural awareness (Implementation plan on..., 2022; Jin & Martin, 2019; Zheng, 2022).

The present analysis of art education in the People's Republic of China found both successes and unresolved difficulties. The ongoing reform of the Chinese educational system increasingly emphasizes the necessity of strengthening aesthetic education and art pedagogy. At the same time, it highlights the limitations of current practices, particularly with respect to the training of art teachers, the equitable distribution of educational resources, and the content of the curricula.

Thus, the effective realization of these goals requires the establishment of a coherent and comprehensive system of teacher preparation. At present, this is still in the formative stage and remains a challenging area of the Chinese educational system. The situation is aggravated by the fact that art education traditionally occupies a relatively marginal position compared to other school subjects: it is often included as a recreational or extracurricular activity only. In addition, the content of art classes is largely limited to traditional, fixed elements, which fail to respond to the needs of contemporary learners (Jin & Lu, 2021; Li et al., 2022).

Scientists assert that this conventional pedagogical approach prioritizes the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, but neglects creativity, critical thinking, and the independent cognitive activity of students. This reduces the capacity of learners to fully develop their abilities. Furthermore, schools rarely demand rigorous qualifications of art teachers, while the issue of equitable distribution of art educators across different regions remains unresolved.

In prosperous regions of China, students have access to highly qualified art teachers, modern equipment, and well-designed curricula. Conversely, in rural and less developed regions, the shortage of professionals reduces the overall effectiveness of aesthetic education. This imbalance not only perpetuates social inequality but also undermines the mission of education as a means of ensuring equal opportunities for all students (Li, 2012; Li, 2018; Shi, 2022).

This study also revealed that attitudes amongst parents and students towards art posed an additional problem. In the context of intense competition for entry into higher education institutions, art is often regarded as a secondary subject or even as a distraction from more 'serious' disciplines. This perception acts as a demotivating force towards authentic artistic engagement. Moreover, the exam-oriented system encourages students to focus primarily on technical skills, whilst neglecting the creative and emotional aspects of art. Consequently, aesthetic education is being gradually transformed into a set of mechanical exercises, rather than a process of cultivating individuality.

The development of art education is also marked by the phenomenon of dislocation. Many students are unable to participate independently or to demonstrate innovative capacities, treating art not as a subjective and personal engagement but as an imposed requirement. Parents and schools concentrate excessively on assessing measurable abilities, whilst failing to take into account the diversity of their children's modes of thinking. Teachers, in turn, often prove unable to nurture aesthetic sensitivity among their pupils, which discourages an aspiration towards the higher values of art amongst students. Consequently, one of the significant problems in training art educators in Chinese schools is the lack of cognitive and practical aesthetic abilities among students. This gradually transforms the highest form of free self-expression in aesthetic education to the more impoverished practice of technical skills and instrumental proficiency, resulting in a decline of self-perception and personal expression.

A further challenge is the lack of professional knowledge, which is often evident when teachers are communicating with students. Art educators should be engaged not only with their narrow area of specialization but also with related domains of artistic knowledge. In some schools, teachers at lower levels hold several positions simultaneously, which allows them to address students' artistic needs more thoroughly (Xiao, 2023; Yang, 2023; Yu & Zhang, 2023).

Nevertheless, by combining multiple responsibilities, teachers often need to divide their attention across different curricular areas. Consequently, their teaching becomes broad but superficial, and the needs of students who wish to focus intensively on a single discipline are not adequately met. Compared with the relative flexibility of aesthetic education in universities, primary and secondary schools emphasize technical mastery at the expense of intellectual and emotional depth. For example, music and visual art classes at these levels provide only a narrow range of artistic thinking and aesthetic development (Cheng & Guan, 2012; Li, 2023; Lu, 2019).

DISCUSSIONS

An essential condition of progress is recognizing that the personal qualities and professional competences of teachers must improve (Holubnycha et al., 2025). Basic skills form the cornerstone of education and upbringing (Kostikova & Liu, 2024). Professional and theoretical knowledge, personal and integrated competences, as well as the ability to manage classrooms and control teaching strategies, are all required elements (Shu, 2023; Xiao, 2023).

An equally important development would be to eradicate utilitarianism within the art education industry. Teachers should radiate positive energy, avoid negative emotions, and integrate the notion of virtue into their teaching methods, thereby helping students to develop resilience and determination (Liu et al., 2025). At the same time, the psychological education of students is of critical importance. The traditional lecture system, accompanied by disciplinary measures do not reduce students' psychological stress sufficiently. Teachers must therefore provide individual opportunities for self-expression and personal development, enabling students to fully realize their autonomy (Yang, 2019).

Particular attention should be paid to the professional competences of art teachers. The findings of this study confirm that teachers often demonstrate insufficient mastery of both theoretical and practical knowledge. Moreover, their interpersonal and communicative abilities are not sufficiently developed. Yet in modern pedagogy, it is precisely the teacher's personality, openness, and ability to inspire that constitute a

decisive factor in student engagement. Thus, professional development must encompass not only subject knowledge but also the cultivation of soft skills, empathy, and the ability to motivate learners.

It should be noted that steps have already been taken by some Chinese universities in this regard. For example, to master psychological and pedagogical subjects at these universities, students are expected to become familiar with the foundations of basic pedagogy and psychology, as well as elements of sociology and philosophy. Mastering these disciplines not only ensures the formation of a broad worldview amongst future teachers but also contributes to their preparation for further professional practice, since art teachers are called upon to instill in children love for artistic values and a sense of beauty.

Mastering general education subjects is organized in stages. In particular, in their first year, students become acquainted with basic ideas and guiding principles in three key areas of knowledge: art, humanities, and social sciences. In their second year of study, students deepen and widen their prior knowledge. At this stage, students study specialized topics in philosophy, literary and art studies, the development of society, pedagogy, psychology, and history. At the same time, if all the students master a common program in their first year, in the second they need to choose one of the listed areas.

In the third year, a discipline called 'Consolidation' is offered, the purpose of which is to systematize the knowledge gained during the mastery of psychological and pedagogical subjects during the first two years of study. Within the framework of this course, students are united in working groups and perform tasks under the guidance of a teacher (Lu, 2019; Zhu, 2018).

It is found that in such courses a lot of attention is centred on the development of pedagogical competencies. Students' attention is focused on the fact that the nature of a teacher's activity is also determined by the requirements that the state and society place on the education system, the reforms that are being carried out in the country, and the introduction of innovative technologies into the educational process. Pedagogical activity requires constant improvement, adaptation to current conditions, creative growth and self-improvement (Zhu, 2018).

For the formation of teachers' pedagogical competence, it is also important to create an innovative environment, because the development of professional competence is a dynamic process of assimilation and modernization of professional experience, which contributes to the formation of individual professional qualities and self-improvement.

Teachers who strive for self-perception and self-expression prefer to achieve positive results in their own work, which is a prerequisite for self-esteem and self-management.

There are several notable stages in the formation of pedagogical competence:

- self-analysis and awareness of the need for pedagogical self-improvement;
- self-development planning;
- self-expression, self-analysis and self-correction.

When planning activities, the most important issues need to be considered, as well as ways to resolve them and an effective means of achieving the goal. Coordination of the activities of the teaching staff in this process is of particular importance.

Therefore, when forming pedagogical competence and choosing ways to implement it, each teacher should consider his/her own worldview, ideas and concepts, personal and social demands and interests. In order to follow a scientifically-based pedagogical

process, manage it and create an effective educational environment, the teacher must master modern teaching and management methods, follow the best practices and achievements of the methodology of teaching choreography and then implement these developments in his/her own pedagogical activity (Jin & Martin, 2029; Jin & Lu, 2021).

In the global educational context, the development of art education reflects broader social transformations. The rapid advance of digital technologies, the internationalization of culture, and the expansion of intercultural communication have transformed both the forms of artistic expression and the expectations of learners. Therefore, the preparation of teachers must take into account not only traditional didactic approaches but also innovative pedagogical technologies, interdisciplinary methods, and modern digital resources.

Such steps are already being undertaken in China. For example, in the music schools of the Central China Normal University, augmented reality products are increasingly being used in the process of training future music teachers. Augmented reality is understood as an interactive environment that combines elements of the real and virtual worlds, synchronizing three-dimensional objects in real time and aligning them with each other. Thanks to such technology, it is possible to perceive and experience music in a new way. Conventionally, these products can be grouped into three types:

- augmented reality that works on the basis of markers (for example, QR codes);
- augmented reality built on sensors (in particular, geolocation sensors);
- augmented reality that functions through models (for example, optical character recognition systems).

Currently, these technologies are at the implementation stage of the educational process. Previously, they were mainly used in English teaching, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, but there is a recent trend to more widely apply augmented reality in the field of music education.

Teachers at universities in the PRC agree that such programs significantly increase student engagement. In addition, the combination of audio and visual feedback provided by the program stimulates several channels of perception at once, which, in turn, has a positive effect on the development of students' visual memory.

One example of the integration of such technologies into music pedagogy is the Simply Piano program. Working on the basis of the acoustic sensor of a mobile device, the application recognizes the sound of someone playing the piano or keyboard and instantly displays a visual response on the screen.

In this way, real sound is combined with elements of augmented reality, and the student receives spontaneous feedback on pitch accuracy and timing. Additionally, users are offered beginner to advanced piano courses making it possible to adapt the musical repertoire to specific learning goals.

Most students express positive feelings about using this application. They emphasize that Simply Piano successfully integrates a mobile device into the process of playing the instrument, which promotes their learning in two separate ways: firstly, it provides instantaneous feedback between teacher and student, and secondly, it provides access to a significant number of practical materials.

Among the main advantages of the program, users mention the ability to automatically select the correct notes from the visual guidance on the screen, which helps students

improve their reading musical notation skills. The application is especially useful for first-year students, as it saves them time searching for the pieces of music they need. In addition, the program's repertoire includes compositions of various genres, which can be selected according to the applicant's level of training. Among the weaknesses of Simply Piano, researchers mention a certain delay: when someone is playing quickly, the program does not always react fast enough to reproduce information on the screen sufficiently quickly (Mei & Yang, 2021).

Awareness of interdisciplinarity is extremely important in the process of organizing the teaching of art disciplines, because art education combines both the actual artistic and pedagogical components. Therefore, the construction of educational programs should be based on the ontological value of art, whilst adhering to the general laws of research into the processes of teaching and learning.

Within the framework of disciplinary integration, components from the fields of art and pedagogy do not exist in isolation or statically, but belong to the broader context of the humanities. As scientists note, it is impossible to fully investigate or resolve the challenges associated with art education without addressing modern economic trends, political culture and global educational processes. That is why the training of future teachers of art disciplines should include the development of such components as pedagogy, sociology, psychology and anthropology (Lu, 2019; Lu, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the current state of art and pedagogical education in China reveals both significant successes and a number of systemic problems. On one hand, the state pays close attention to the development of aesthetic education by integrating artistic disciplines into the school curriculum and implementing reforms in teacher training. On the other hand, in practice, there is an unequal distribution of educational resources between regions, insufficient levels of professional teacher training, limited curricular content, and the prevalence of traditional approaches focused mainly on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

Among the key challenges are the marginalization of art subjects within the school environment, the shortage of qualified teachers in rural and remote areas, and the dominance of an exam-oriented model that limits the role of creativity, emotional development, and students' self-expression. Another important factor is the attitude of parents and students towards art at secondary school, which negatively affects motivation for deep artistic engagement.

Overcoming these problems requires the establishment of a coherent system of teacher training that combines subject knowledge, methodological competence, communication skills, and the ability to inspire students. It is necessary to modernize curricular content, ensure equal access to quality art education, create an innovative educational environment, and promote the art as an essential and worthy component of personal development.

The development of teachers' pedagogical competence should take place gradually and continuously, involving self-reflection, planning for professional growth, and the implementation of modern teaching methods. Only a comprehensive, systemic approach can transform art education in China from a supplementary element of the school curriculum into a powerful tool for shaping creative, culturally aware, and harmoniously developed individuals.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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