

Tradition and Contemporary: The Ecological Construction of Art Education in Higher Institutions

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Abstract: *This paper examines the ecological environment of traditional and contemporary university art education through a comparative analysis of their historical evolution, characteristics, values and limitations, as well as challenges and opportunities. It aims to discuss the reform and development of university art education from the perspective of constructing an ecological environment. Traditional art education in colleges and universities has accumulated a wealth of teaching experience and artistic heritage throughout history. Through a comparison of the ecological environments of traditional and contemporary art education, this paper identifies significant differences in their educational concepts, content, and methods. In order to effectively construct the ecological environment of college art education, this paper proposes a theoretical basis for ecological environment construction and explores various approaches and practical cases in the construction of such an environment.*

Keywords: *traditional and contemporary; art education in colleges and universities; ecological environment; construction.*

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I. Introduction

Art education reform is an important part of quality education in China (Zhang, 2020). Elaborated the meaning and content of ecological culture in art design teaching (Liang, 2024), eco-culture education is a kind of growth mode based on emotion, the concrete teaching should be carried out by means of situation experience. The construction of ecological environment also helps to cultivate students' comprehensive quality (Zhang, et al, 2022). Art education is not only teaching painting skills, but also to cultivate students' comprehensive quality, such as observation, imagination, expression ability, cooperation ability, etc.

Contemporary art education, on the other hand, is characterized by the renewal of educational concepts, the diversification of educational content, and the modernization of teaching methods. It places greater emphasis on student subjectivity, practice and innovation, and interdisciplinary integration. Despite these advancements, contemporary art education faces its own set of challenges and opportunities, particularly in terms of social awareness, educational resources, and evaluation systems. The unified art education emphasizes the imparting of knowledge and the training of skills (Laura, 2022), emphasizing the normative and traditional nature of art, while the contemporary art education emphasizes the student-centered approach and the cultivation of students innovative and practical abilities, pay more attention to the development of students; personality and the improvement of their overall quality. The construction of ecological environment is of crucial significance for art education (Yang, et al, 2023).

II. The Ecological Environment of the Traditional University Art Education

2.1 The historical evolution of traditional art education

With a profound historical background, the traditional art has evolved from being just an art form to becoming a distinctive cultural symbol deeply rooted in the social, historical, and cultural fabric. It represents a comprehensive fusion of the intrinsic principles of plastic arts and the humanistic spirit of the time, and serves as an indispensable cultural resource for social and public education in any era. However, as university art education in our country deepens, we must confront the growing problem of college students' lack of traditional aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic quality. Fundamentally, this deficiency is the negative consequence of an excessive emphasis on cultivating practical talents during the reform process of art colleges and universities in China, in order to adapt to societal transformations. While human material living standards have continuously improved, attention to people's spiritual needs has not kept pace. Consequently, the positive influence of the general public on traditional culture has increasingly diminished, leading individuals to often lose their sense of direction. In this

scenario, the public's aesthetic tendencies tend to favor shallow forms of entertainment or advertising, leading to a trend of simplification and vulgarization. Moreover, the neglect of traditional culture and its visual aesthetics further exacerbates the disconnect between ordinary people and traditional culture. In today's prevailing market economy, under the influence of media "guidance," consumer culture not only stifles human beings' capacity for independent judgment and rational thinking, but also progressively encroaches upon the living space of traditional culture and aesthetics.

2.2 The main characteristics of traditional art education

Danner explores the painter's emotions and creative process, proposing the notion that when something occurs before the artist, they must experience their own unique emotions (Qiu et al., 2023). The nature of the object inspires the artist to cultivate powerful and distinct emotions within their mind. These mental images serve as sources of inspiration and the starting point for artistic creation. Although we have moved beyond the traditional concept of painting and even surpassed modern notions of art, Danner's ideas delve deep into the essence of art. Their understanding of artistic principles and concepts is worthy of our consideration and inheritance.

Modern artistic creation, built upon the foundations of previous fine artistic traditions (Du et al., 2023), possesses a broader connotation. Literature, drama, painting, calligraphy, architecture, sculpture, and other facets each hold their own value, injecting new vitality into the development of contemporary art education. By studying and learning from the essence of traditional art, we can gain a better understanding of art history and culture, and subsequently create new artworks that align with contemporary aesthetic appreciation and the spirit of the times. This innovation not only enriches our artistic perspective, but also facilitates interaction between art and society, enabling art to better serve society and its people, thereby promoting the sustainable development and prosperity of the arts.

III. Ecological environment of fine arts education in contemporary colleges and universities

3.1 Art education reform under the contemporary social background

In Chinese modern art education, there exists a significant issue referred to as "materialization," which has resulted in the marginalization of overall quality among college students. Consequently, students find themselves in a marginalized position within the realms of humanities and aesthetics. Chinese art colleges and universities have long relied on Western aesthetic concepts as their guiding principles in cultivating professional talents. As a result, ancient Chinese traditional art has become the object of study for Europe and the United States, while Chinese art education remains ignorant of its own aesthetic principles, modes of aesthetics, and cognitive processes. This disconnection has severed the link with traditional formal concepts.

3.2 The main characteristics of contemporary art education

The crisis in Chinese contemporary art education has resulted in the marginalization of our culture and aesthetics. However, by deepening our understanding of traditional Chinese aesthetic art principles, aesthetic approaches, and ways of perceiving the world, we can regain our cultural confidence. By incorporating modern design ideas into our work, while maintaining distinct national characteristics, we can create art products that both reflect contemporary sensibilities and showcase our rich cultural heritage. It is important to recognize that Chinese traditional art is not merely a historical legacy, but a dynamic cultural resource that can greatly enrich modern art education. Through rigorous research and practical application, the essence of traditional art can be seamlessly integrated with modern design concepts, cultivating artists who possess both a global perspective and a strong national identity. Ultimately, this will enable us to display the unique allure of Chinese culture on the global art stage.

3.3 Challenges and Opportunities of contemporary Art Education

Our pedagogical approach ought to embrace a more open-minded outlook, embracing the richness of Chinese cultural heritage. In doing so, we should not only nurture students' appreciation of their national cultural spirit, but also emphasize the cultivation of their creative abilities and research-oriented mindset. This comprehensive approach will elevate their humanistic qualities and facilitate holistic personal growth. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to consider a variety of perspectives. One approach is to critically evaluate and revise the fundamental curriculum of modern art education, with particular emphasis on incorporating Chinese traditional art to underscore the significance of basic forms.

In the current context, cultivating creative art professionals remains an essential issue. Exploring modern art education in relation to traditional art presents an ongoing challenge. During this process, it is crucial to reflect on the contradictions and grow through this process of reflection. The limited advancements made in this field are a result of the relentless exploration and practice conducted by university art educators. It is only through firmly establishing art education within the local context that the talents we cultivate embody the cultural essence of the

Chinese nation and possess exceptional traditional art qualities. Such an education not only facilitates students in developing a deep understanding and recognition of local culture, but also stimulates their potential for innovation, enabling them to become innovative art talents who represent the spirit of national culture. These educational concepts and practices hold immeasurable value and significance in promoting the development of art education in China and improving the overall cultural and artistic standards of society.

IV. Comparison of the ecological environment between traditional and contemporary art education

4.1 Differences in educational concepts

According to the statistical data and analysis from Table 1, over 70 percent of parents prioritize art courses when selecting high-quality educational programs for their children. Within these art courses, art education holds a significant proportion, accounting for 44.72 percent. Music education follows closely at 50.63 percent, making art education the second most popular choice among parents. This data indicates that parents generally recognize the importance of art education in fostering comprehensive development and providing quality education for their children. Furthermore, the art education market in China has experienced notable growth in recent years. The market size has reached 100.26 billion yuan, a substantial increase of 55.21 billion yuan compared to the 2015 market size. This growth not only reflects the significance parents place on their children's art education but also underscores the prominent position and extensive development prospects of art education within the broader education industry.

Table 1: Parents' Preferences for Quality Education Courses

Course Type	Selection Ratio	Market Size (Hundred Million RMB)	Year	Market Size Growth (Hundred Million RMB)
Art course	More than 70%	-	2021	-
art education	44.72%	1002.6	2021	-
Art education market	33.6%	-	2015	552.1
Art education market	34.69%	-	2021	961.3

4.2 Changes in educational content

According to the research report released by the Chinese Art Industry Development Trend Analysis and Future Investment Research Report (2030), green children's art education encompasses preschool art education and K12 art training. The core user groups for this education are primarily children aged 3-6 and primary and middle school students aged 7-18. The role of green children's art education is twofold: aesthetic enlightenment for preschoolers and exam-oriented education for K12 students. Preschool art education aims to enhance children's aesthetic ability through education, while K12 art training provides professional guidance to help students prepare for entrance exams. The demand for young children's art education is mainly driven by the competition for higher education. As the number of art schools grows and the difficulty of art exams increases each year, the market for young children's art education can expand further. Data shows that from 2015 to 2020, the market size of young children's fine arts education grew from 37.45 billion yuan to 72.43 billion yuan, reaching 82.32 billion yuan. Within this market, children's art education holds a significant share, amounting to 49.85 billion yuan and accounting for 60.6% of the total market.

Adult art education comprises three main directions: art study consultation and training, art vocational skills training, and adult interest art training. The core user groups for these forms of education are high school and college students aged 16-22, pre-working professionals aged 18-30, and adults over 25 years old. Each direction caters to different needs, including exam-oriented preparation, career development, and personal interest cultivation. The core market demand for adult art education is driven by employment prospects. From 2015 to 2020, the market size of China's adult art education increased from 7.60 billion yuan to 16.27 billion yuan, and by 2021, it further increased to 17.94 billion yuan. The detailed analysis of the Chinese art education market is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of the Chinese Art Education Market

Education sector	Core user group	User expectations	Market demand drivers	Market size (in billion yuan)
Art education for young children	Children aged 3-6 years old and primary and middle school students aged 7-18 years old	Aesthetic enlightenment and exam-oriented education	College competition	2021:823.2
Preschool age art education	Children aged 3-6	Improve aesthetic ability	College competition	2021:483.2
K12 Art training	Primary and middle school students aged 7-18 years old	Professional guidance should be entrance examination	vocational development	Year of 2021:630.2
Children's art education	9-16 year old adolescents	Examination-taking, employment, and interest training	vocational development	2021:498.5 (60.6% of the total market)

(follow the previous table)

Adult art education	High school and college students aged 16-22, pre-professional and professionals aged 18-30, and adults over 25	Examination-taking, employment, and interest training	vocational development	2015:76.0 2020:162.7 2021:179.4
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4.3 Analysis of Teaching Effect

A total of 102 students were selected for this study, the comparison of teaching satisfaction between the two groups of students is shown in Table 3. They were randomly assigned to either the control group or the experimental group, with each group consisting of 51 students. No significant differences were observed between the two groups in terms of gender, age, and educational background, ensuring the objectivity and accuracy of the experimental results. Students in the control group received traditional art education, focusing primarily on painting skills, art history, and art theory. Conversely, students in the experimental group received contemporary art education, which included not only the foundational content of traditional art education but also modern art practices, creative expression, and multimedia art. Throughout the research process, both groups of students engaged in regular art creation, art theory knowledge assessments, and art skills evaluations. These activities aimed to compare the impact of the two educational approaches on students' art literacy. Furthermore, surveys were conducted to assess students' learning interest, creativity, and aesthetic abilities, providing insight into the psychological changes experienced by students under different educational modes. By comparing and analyzing the performance of the two groups in various aspects, a comprehensive examination of the ecological environment of traditional and contemporary art education can be conducted.

Table 3: Comparison of student teaching satisfaction between the two groups [n (%)]

group	Example number	Very satisfied	satisfied	discontent	Satisfaction rate
control group	51	20	18	13	38 (74.51)
observation group	51	34	16	1	50 (98.04)
χ^2 price					3.559
P price					<0.05

According to the research findings, it is evident that the observation group stands out in the assessment of teaching satisfaction. Specifically, the overall teaching satisfaction rate of the observation group reached an impressive 98.04%, which was significantly higher than the control group's rate of 74.51%. Statistical analysis confirmed the statistically significant difference in satisfaction rates between the two groups, with a P-value below 0.05, thus further affirming the advantage of the observation group in terms of teaching satisfaction. In the control group, a total of 38 students expressed a satisfactory attitude towards the teaching, with 20 students being very satisfied and the remaining 18 students being satisfied. Conversely, 13 students expressed dissatisfaction with the teaching approach. In contrast, the performance of the observation group was even more encouraging, with 34 students expressing great satisfaction with the teaching, 16 students expressing satisfaction, and only 1 student

expressing reservations about the teaching. Table 1 data analysis clearly illustrates that the observation group outperformed the control group in all three indicators of very satisfied, satisfied, and total satisfaction rate. This outcome can be attributed to the incorporation of new teaching content such as modern art practice, creative expression, and multimedia art into the instructional process. Students in the observation group generally reported that contemporary art education better aligns with their individualized needs and aids in cultivating their aesthetic appreciation and innovative thinking. This shift in educational approach allows students to feel more freedom and enjoyment in the learning process, empowering them to confidently express their artistic ideas and creativity. Consequently, it can be concluded that through continuous exploration and implementation, in conjunction with modern educational concepts and students' actual needs, teaching quality and the learning experience of students can be significantly improved.

V. Reform and development of art education in colleges and universities from the perspective of ecological environment construction

5.1 Theoretical basis of ecological environment construction

Before delving into a comprehensive examination and discussion of the construction process of the ecological environment of art education in higher education institutions, it is imperative to establish a robust theoretical framework. This theoretical foundation serves as the cornerstone and initial point for the development of the entire educational ecosystem. The theoretical basis primarily encompasses three crucial areas: ecology, pedagogy, and art education theory. Ecology provides a profound understanding of ecosystem equilibrium and interaction, elucidating the intricate interdependence and interaction among various components of the ecosystem, as well as the mechanisms for maintaining this balance. Pedagogy offers a systematic approach to educational practice, emphasizing the necessity of aligning educational strategies with the principles governing human physical and mental development, while fostering students' practical and innovative abilities.

Incorporating ecological theory into the realm of art education in higher education institutions implies a commitment to creating a diverse educational environment that accommodates different teaching philosophies and methods, encourages student-teacher interactions, and fosters strong connections between the curriculum and the real world. Such an educational environment promotes holistic student development, stimulates creativity and imagination, and cultivates a profound understanding and appreciation of art.

The application of pedagogical theory in art education emphasizes the need for education to align with the principles guiding human development, and emphasizes the value of practice and innovation. In the context of art education, this entails encouraging students to learn and explore through practical engagement, continuously improving their artistic skills and aesthetic sensibilities through ongoing experimentation and innovation. Simultaneously, educators should provide an open and inclusive learning environment that enables students to freely express their ideas and emotions while exploring the realm of art.

The guiding principles of art education theory lie in prioritizing the construction of personal knowledge and valuing the originality and replication of art. In the sphere of art education in higher education institutions, students should be empowered to develop their own artistic styles and modes of expression, while respecting the unique abilities and creativity of each individual.

5.2 Exploration of the path of the ecological environment construction of art education in colleges and universities

After conducting an in-depth study and acquiring a thorough understanding of the relevant theoretical foundations, it is possible to delve into and implement the establishment of an ecological environment for art education in tertiary institutions from various perspectives. In the context of art education at colleges and universities, it is essential to achieve a delicate balance between the imparting of professional knowledge and the fostering of students' personal creative development. This necessitates an educational approach that embraces a wide range of content, while simultaneously respecting the unique personalities and creative abilities of each student. By doing so, a comprehensive educational environment can be provided for the students.

To facilitate interaction and collaboration in the educational process, it is important to encourage positive engagement and cooperation between teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves. The establishment of studios, project teams, and other collective learning platforms can foster the exchange of knowledge and promote the sharing of skills, thereby enhancing the efficiency and quality of learning. The design of teaching content should be closely aligned with the demands of the real world, guiding students to place emphasis on societal, cultural, and environmental issues. Through this pedagogical approach, students can cultivate a sense of social responsibility and become valuable contributors to society.

Moreover, an emphasis should be placed on the cultivation of practical teaching and an innovative spirit, encouraging students to explore novel forms of artistic expression and language through practical application, experimentation, and creative endeavors. Such a teaching methodology can stimulate students' innovative thinking

and enhance their practical abilities. The evaluation system must be reformed to comprehensively assess students' capabilities and establish a comprehensive evaluation framework. This framework should not only evaluate students' technical skills but also assess their innovative capacity, critical thinking skills, and artistic appreciation. Such an evaluation system can more comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes and potential.

VI. Conclusion

By conducting an analysis of the distinguishing characteristics between traditional and contemporary art education, as well as examining the significance of ecological environment construction and the strategies to achieve such construction, it becomes evident that the establishment of an ecological environment in art education is crucial for its development. Traditional art education primarily focuses on cultivating technical skills, placing emphasis on imitation and perpetuation. Conversely, contemporary art education places greater emphasis on innovation and individual expression, highlighting interdisciplinary integration and communication. This shift in emphasis has transformed art education from a mere skills-oriented approach to an essential means of nurturing students' holistic development. The significance of ecological environment construction lies in its potential to provide a conducive setting for the advancement of art education, fostering innovation and progress. Through the creation of an inclusive, diverse educational environment, students' creativity, aesthetic prowess, and critical thinking can be better nurtured.

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