



## The Implementation of Art Appreciation Courses in Chinese University General Education: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

This research critically evaluates and assesses the current status of Art Appreciation Courses (AAC) within the General Education (GE) curriculum in Chinese universities. The investigation is focused on delineating the strengths, pinpointing the weaknesses, and identifying potential areas for improvement. The research methodology encompasses a thorough review of relevant literature and the implementation of a qualitative case study approach. Interviews were conducted with four AAC instructors, selected through purposive sampling, and their documents were subjected to analysis. The primary findings suggest that the instructors are committed to enhancing students' humanities knowledge, aesthetic education, and artistic abilities by developing appreciation skills. However, they encounter several challenges, including a limited knowledge base among students, inadequate course duration, insufficient facilities, and a tenuous connection between the course and the major. The instructors adhere to a teaching philosophy integrating aesthetic education using a situational model, cultivating positive attitudes and distinctive courses. Our study recommends several enhancements for Art Appreciation Courses (AAC) in Chinese universities. We suggest diversifying AAC topics and facilitating cross-cultural comparisons. Active learning should be promoted through interactive methods and participation in art activities. Interdisciplinary integration can be bolstered by collaborating with other disciplines. Lastly, resources should be augmented, and assessments should be diversified to foster creativity, and student engagement should be enhanced.

### KEYWORDS

Art Appreciation Courses (AAC); University General Education (UGE); Chinese Universities.

## INTRODUCTION

General Education (GE) is a comprehensive college program that enhances various skills and knowledge, preparing students for lifelong learning and societal contributions (Jiang, 2019; Sihol & Sihol Nababan, 2014). In the global era, the U.S.-originated University General Education (UGE) nurtures global perspectives and cross-cultural skills, fostering educational transformation (Mello, 2007; Shih, 2019). Chinese universities, rich in cultural heritage, preserve and promote traditional culture through GE, enhancing students' cultural identity and humanistic literacy (Meng & Huang, 2018; Su, 2020). As China's economy evolves, GE aims to enhance students' literacy, innovation, and teamwork skills, improving job market competitiveness. However, a gap exists between GE practices and employers' needs, highlighting the importance of career development and employment guidance in GE education (Meng & Huang, 2018; Shih, 2019; Sihol & Sihol Nababan, 2014; Su, 2020; Zhu & Tao, 2021).

China values education reform and innovation, with General Education (GE) playing a crucial role in higher education (Zhu & Tao, 2021). Chinese universities are actively implementing GE, undertaking curriculum reform, and using innovative teaching methods. Despite challenges, GE is essential for aligning Chinese universities with international standards and enhancing global competitiveness (Meng & Huang, 2018). In Chinese universities' GE, mandatory art appreciation courses for art design students face challenges such as a singular training model and limited resources. However, these courses serve several purposes: promoting China's rich artistic heritage, introducing global artworks and cultures, providing basic knowledge and theoretical support for art design students, and enhancing students' aesthetic ability and appreciation (Meng & Huang, 2018; Shih, 2019).

AAC provides a theoretical foundation and broadens art vision, cultivates aesthetic ability, influences design ability, and enhances cultural literacy (Wenqing, 2020). This course assists art design students in understanding the professional knowledge structure and designing more soulful works. Establishing effective teaching for Art Appreciation Courses (AAC) in General Education (GE) at Chinese universities is challenging (Dou, 2015; Su, 2020). Teachers greatly influence the quality of student training, teaching objectives, education concepts, and curriculum design. A thorough analysis of AAC in University General Education (UGE) is needed to outline the vision and inspire further development. The background of AAC in GE is diverse, encompassing traditional Chinese art inheritance and global art integration (Bai & Lu, 2018; S. Li et al., 2023; Wenqing, 2020; Q. Zhang, 2021).

However, there are issues. Despite many universities recognizing the importance of GE, the current teacher knowledge improvement mechanism is imperfect, limiting teachers' interdisciplinary teaching and education methods. This lack of comprehensive teacher quality may affect GE implementation. Students often view these courses as not directly beneficial to their professional development, hindering GE's progress. As a public course for art design students, AAC requires broad thinking and integration skills and should stimulate student interest (Jenkins, 1998; Meng & Huang, 2018; G. Yang, 2021). This study proposes to research

the Chinese UGE AAC case from the teachers' and students' perspectives to address the challenges faced by implementing AAC in Chinese general education.

This research attempts to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Explore the current state of AAC in Chinese university general education, including course concept, design, teaching methods, and approaches based on the cases studied.
- 2) Examine educators' predicament in implementing AAC in Chinese universities and the underlying causes based on the analyzed cases.
- 3) Present the prospects for enhancing the effectiveness of AAC in Chinese University General Education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### General Education

General Education (GE) is designed to cultivate student proficiency in six realms of meaning: symbolics, empirics, aesthetics, ethics, synoetics, and synoptic (Meng & Huang, 2018; Zhu & Tao, 2021). These realms constitute the foundation of GE, offering a comprehensive knowledge framework and fundamental concepts for students to comprehend life's significance.

Contrarily, contemporary education frequently fails to achieve these objectives, producing proficient scientists and technocrats but deficient in personality and integrity. GE programs function as conduits for students to comprehend life navigation (Jiang, 2019; Shih, 2019). They equip students for civic life, facilitate cultural roots comprehension, enable critical responses to changes, and foster ethical dimensions of understanding (Bittman & Russell, 2016).

GE is a contemporary manifestation of an ancient concept - the notion of a well-educated, cultured, and liberated individual (Shih, 2019; Tsai & Liu, 2020). It counters the excessive individualism, specialization, and rigid bureaucracy inherent in academic education. Those who comprehend GE can think and write lucidly, appreciate methods of knowledge acquisition, possess extensive cultural knowledge, think systematically about morals and ethics, and have profound knowledge in certain fields (Sihol & Sihol Nababan, 2014).

In practice, GE entails collecting, interpreting, and presenting knowledge. It emphasizes communication, writing, and research processes across diverse fields, contrasting with other programs focusing on knowledge presentation. Consequently, GE strives to genuinely educate individuals, preparing them for the realities of human existence, both past and present (Meyer & Norman, 2020; Shih, 2019; Sihol & Sihol Nababan, 2014).

GE programs foster critical thinking, effective communication, and research skills. They enhance students' understanding of various knowledge domains, preparing them for community and environmental interactions (Faludi et al., 2023; Jiang, 2019; Meyer & Norman, 2020; Shih, 2019; Sihol & Sihol Nababan, 2014; Siphukhanyo & Olawale, 2024). GE programs cultivate students' personality, cultural understanding, and intellectual growth. They promote adaptability to change, understanding past, present, and future, and handling social, ethical, and philosophical issues. GE programs appreciate human diversity and cultural heritage,

improve ethical co-existence in a diverse, complex world, and nurture a curious, analytical mindset for lifelong learning (Okwara & Henrik Pretorius, 2023; Tarman & Eminanc, 2023). These capabilities, developed across various GE fields, empower students to apply knowledge in life and solve daily problems.

### **Art Education in China**

Arts Education in China serves three fundamental roles: augmenting aesthetic quality, fostering innovation, and nurturing moral sentiments (Feng, 2023; Jane & Lai, 2010; Meng & Huang, 2018).

Aesthetic quality pertains to the discernment and appraisal of beauty. In an environment where students face employment pressures and are driven by material interests, the notion of materialization in vocational colleges intensifies (Dou, 2015; Hohr, 2002). Arts education aids students in acquiring fundamental artistic qualities and skills, establishing appropriate aesthetic standards, nurturing refined artistic tastes and accomplishments, and enhancing their humanistic quality through the profound cultural connotations of artworks.

Innovation necessitates abandoning antiquated ideas and continuously creating novel ones (Bai & Lu, 2018; Dou, 2015; Faludi et al., 2023; Meyer & Norman, 2020). Students should embody transcendental consciousness, eschew superstition towards books and authority, and courageously break original restrictions based on facts and reasoning. This consciousness enables them to seek new knowledge and explore novel laws and methods. Arts courses stimulate students to think and conceive from diverse perspectives, fostering imagination and observation, which are integral to innovative activities (Lindström, 2011). As articulated in *Learning to Survive*, "In the process of innovating the form of art and the sense of beauty, we gain aesthetic experience. This aesthetic and scientific experience are two ways to perceive this eternal world."

The moral education function of arts education is indispensable (Lin, 2021; L. Zhang, 2021). Its objective is cultivating students' ability to discover, permeate noble thoughts, and exhibit beautiful things. Arts education can enhance social individuals' personality (B. Wang, 2020). Aesthetic education supplants religion, underscoring its significance in cultivating moral integrity, mental equilibrium, and comprehensive personality (Calvera, 2017). As a professional arts education, it embodies both instrumentalism and humanism values. Instrumentalism involves implementing arts education with utilitarian objectives to learn practical art skills, targeting students' ability in sketching and creation, and bolstering their work analysis ability through arts education.

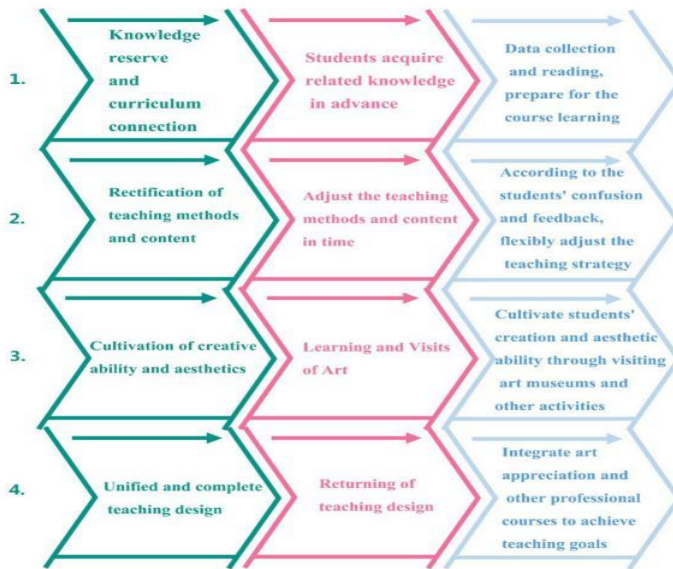
### **Conceptual framework**

Since 2000, General Education (GE) in Chinese universities has been thriving, taking various forms (Su, 2020; Sun et al., 2017; Yuan, 2017a, 2017b). Establishing a general curriculum system that aligns with the institution's talent development concept and quality has become crucial for effective GE development (Lin, 2021; Lou, 2018; Wenqing, 2020; Q. Zhang, 2021). It's fair to say that GE teachers are pivotal to successful university education (Aguirre, 2004; Duncum, 1999;

Felix & Ali, 2023; Jiang, 2019; S. Li et al., 2023; Su, 2020; Wenqing, 2020). In terms of understanding General Education AAC, the course design primarily focuses on four steps and aspects, thereby achieving the course's educational objectives.

**Figure 1.**

*Conceptual Framework of the study*(Jane & Lai, 2010; M. Li, 2021; Wenqing, 2020)



## METHODOLOGY

### Methods and Tools for Collecting Data

The study utilized two synergistic research methodologies: text mining and interviews. Text mining was employed to scrutinize the current state of General Education of AAC in China, while interviews were conducted to identify potential issues and proposed solutions. With the advancement of information technology, text mining and information visualization technology have been utilized in intelligence analysis. This review uses Excel and ITG Insight, a literature analysis tool, for bibliometric analysis. ITG-Insight, also known as "General Science and Technology Text Visual Mining System" or "Scientific Research Relationship Construction and Visualization System", is a sophisticated tool for text mining and visual analysis developed by Beijing Zhengyi Technology Co., Ltd. It can visually analyze and mine various texts, including academic papers, reports, newspapers, and internet data like Weibo and WeChat posts. Its visual mining methods include co-authorship visualization, co-occurrence visualization, visualization of coupling relationships, association relationships, citation relationships, and evolution analysis. The visualization output includes network diagrams, heat maps, world maps, matrix diagrams, evolution diagrams, and cluster diagrams. This tool enhances large-scale data processing and integrates cluster analysis, technical heat map, technical topographic map, and technical weather map into the system.

This study, conducted in Jiangxi Province, China, focuses on General Education (GE) Art Appreciation Course (AAC) teachers across four universities. To maintain confidentiality,

pseudonyms are used. Four representative teachers were selected for comprehensive interviews and analysis. By adopting a case study approach, the research explored art education appreciation through literature, teaching design, curriculum planning, and interviews. After discussing the findings and related theories, the study concludes with a summary and recommendations.

### **Respondents**

General education has become a prominent and somewhat contentious concept in Chinese university education. Despite its high costs, slow returns, and challenges, it has not been sidelined but instead reinforced by practitioners and theorists. The growth of general education in Chinese universities is remarkable, with the University Consortium for General Studies, founded by four top universities in 2015, expanding to 44 member universities by 2017. The involvement and competition of various universities in general education practices reflect its positive development in China. Chief of this study, a Jiangxi University of Technology and Nanchang University graduate and a teacher at the Nanchang University of Aviation and Nanchang Institute of Technology, conducted a case study analysis of multiple cases and schools. The four interviewed teachers of different genders had over ten years of teaching experience in public and private universities and university AAC. The researcher explained the interview's purpose and obtained the interviewees' consent before conducting the interview and collecting relevant documents, adhering to research ethics.

This study involved four university art and design professors, all of whom had ties to the researcher and relevance to the subject matter. Comprehensive data was gathered through thorough interviews and analysis, offering valuable insights into the topic. The collected data allows for a comparative analysis to understand the educational philosophy, curriculum planning, implementation challenges, and vision of the Chinese university general education AAC exams. The primary data under consideration comprises four selected art instructors: Ms. Zhou, a 57-year-old female; Mr. Wu, a 60-year-old male; Mr. Hu, a 62-year-old male; and Ms. Zou, a 60-year-old female.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Results from literature review**

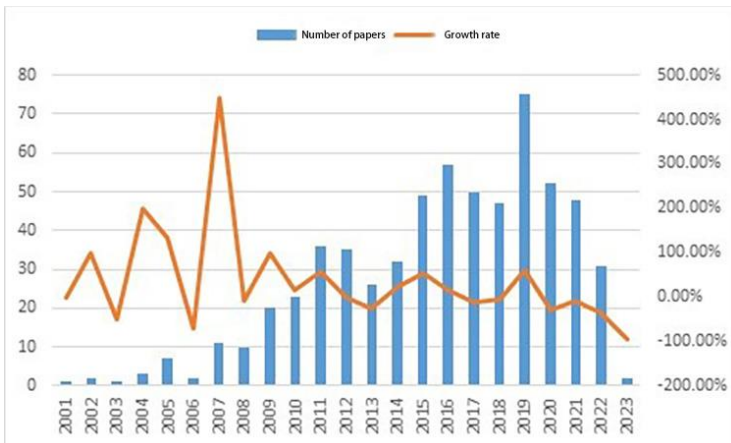
This result of the literature review is based on the CNKI paper database, which now includes Web of Science documentation. As the art appreciation course falls under art education courses, researchers conducted parallel searches and analyses for "general education" and "art education courses." This approach allowed them to examine the development history, technological hotspots, evolution trends, co-authorship, competition, and technical focus among countries, institutions, and researchers in both "GE" and "art education courses". This information helps infer future technology development trends. The research method and content are summarized accordingly.

### ***Paper Volume and Trend Analysis***

The number of papers published can somewhat reflect a research field's status, popularity, and trends. Statistics on the number of papers and their growth rates over the years on "General Education (GE)" and "Art Education Courses (AEC)" show an overall increasing trend. There was a significant increase in the number of papers in 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009, reaching a peak of 75 papers in 2019. There are 620 papers on the theme of "GE" and "art education courses."

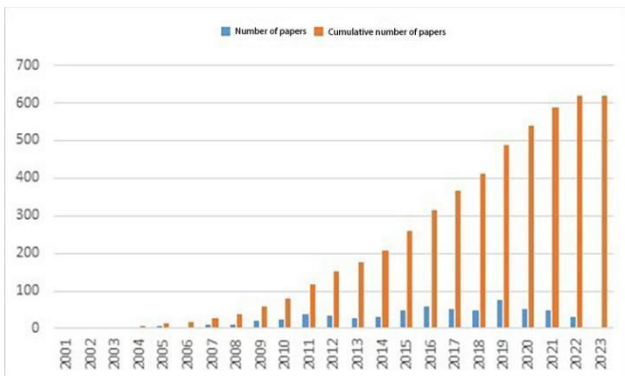
**Figure 2.**

*Trend chart of papers quantity and its growth rate*



**Figure 3.**

*The trend chart of papers quantity and its cumulative quantity*



***Distribution and Analysis of Journals***

The table below shows the total number of journals and their proportions related to "General Education" and "Art Education Curriculum." The top five journals are Art Education, Research, Popular Literature and Art, Aesthetic Education Journal, and Art Observation, with 43, 16, 15, 11, and 9 entries, respectively. This Art Education indicates that art classes comprise many art education courses.

**Table 1.***Number of major journal papers*

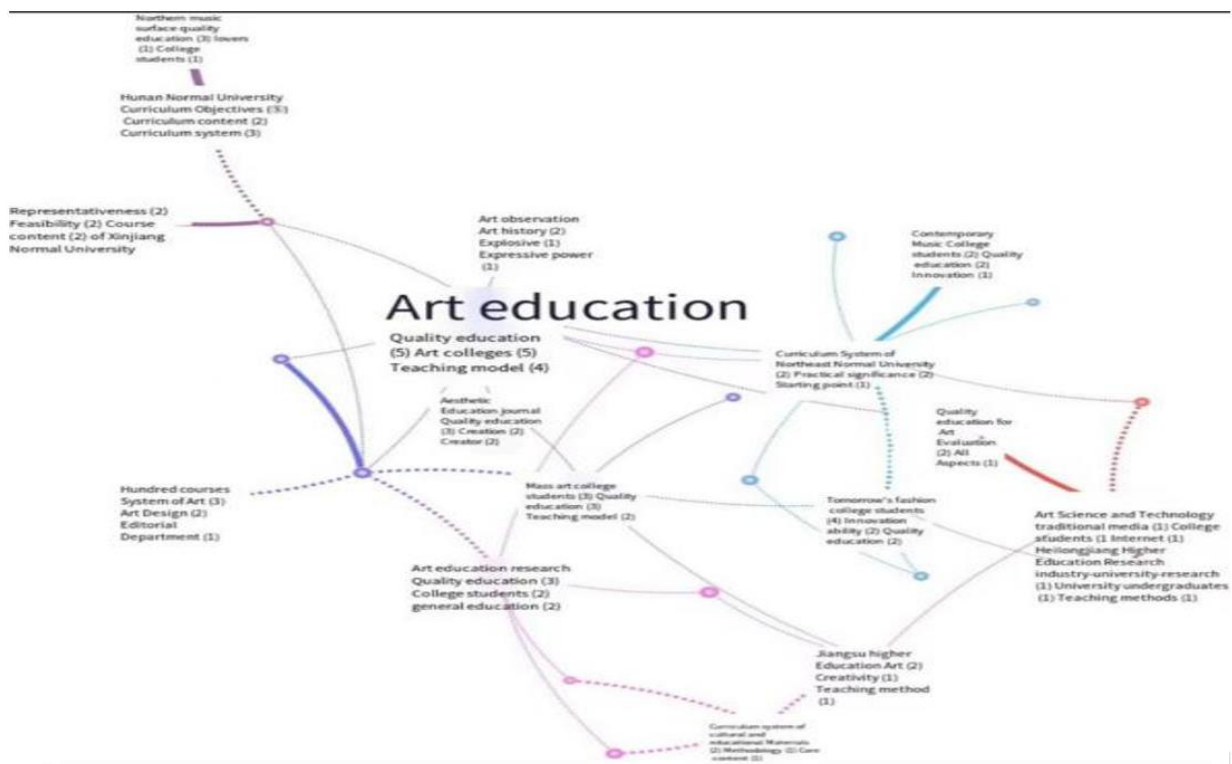
No.	Periodicals	No of papers	Proportion
1	Art Education	43	6.935%
2	Art Education Research	16	2.581%
3	Popular literature and art	15	2.419%
4	Journal of Aesthetic Education	11	1.774%
5	Art Observation	9	1.452%
6	Northern Music	9	1.452%
7	Hunan Normal University	8	1.290%
8	Drama House	6	0.968%
9	Grand View (Forum)	6	0.968%
10	Nanjing Arts Institute	6	0.968%
11	Tomorrow's Style	6	0.968%
12	Cultural and Educational Materials	6	0.968%
13	Art Hundred	6	0.968%
14	Chinese University Teaching	5	0.806%
15	Contemporary Music	5	0.806%
16	Art Appraisal	5	0.806%
17	Voice of the Yellow River	5	0.806%
18	Art Appreciation	5	0.806%
19	Heilongjiang Higher Education Research	5	0.806%
20	Big Stage	5	0.806%
21	Xinjiang Normal University	4	0.645%
22	Jiangsu Higher Education	4	0.645%
23	East China Normal University	4	0.645%
24	Education Modernization	4	0.645%
25	Art Technology	4	0.645%
26	Northeast Normal University	4	0.645%
27	Capital Normal University	4	0.645%
28	Journal of Guangdong University of Technology (Social Science Edition)	4	0.645%
29	GE Review	3	0.484%
30	Sichuan Drama	3	0.484%



As shown in Figure 5 below, papers on the topic of "art education" make up the most significant proportion, followed by "public literature and art" and "art observation." The visualization of these keywords suggests that in the field of art education curriculum, most scholars focus on popular viewpoints such as "art education," "popular literature and art," and "art observation." They aim to unearth innovative accomplishments in art education courses. This study innovates by using these aspects as entry points based on the wealth of existing research and continuously explores previously unexplored vital points.

**Figure 4.**

*Journal association diagram (marked with subject words)*



### Interview Results and Discussions

This study's findings are presented and examined in four key areas: the teaching philosophy of the general education art appreciation course's instructor at the Chinese university under investigation, the course content planning by the instructor in question, the difficulties and challenges faced by the instructor while conducting the art appreciation course, and the curricular assumptions held by the instructor for the execution of the art appreciation course.

#### ***Teaching Philosophy and Objectives of Case Teachers Teaching Art Appreciation Courses in General Education in Chinese Universities***

The teaching philosophy for art appreciation courses in Chinese universities, taught by case teachers, encompasses the established teaching philosophy and the teacher's objectives, content, methods, management, and evaluation. This includes the teaching philosophy and objectives of case teachers in general education programs.

#### **Teaching Philosophy of Art Appreciation Lecturers in Chinese University General Studies**

Art appreciation teaching philosophies in Chinese universities focus on nurturing individuality, fostering diverse thinking, and broadening humanities understanding through general arts education. Mr. Hu emphasizes personality development as a goal of higher education, while Ms. Zou advocates for accessible art courses. The Harvard University Committee and Mr. Wu highlight the cultivation of multi-perspective thinking. Ms. Zhu promotes a holistic approach to education, addressing Chinese university students' observed deficiency in humanities knowledge.

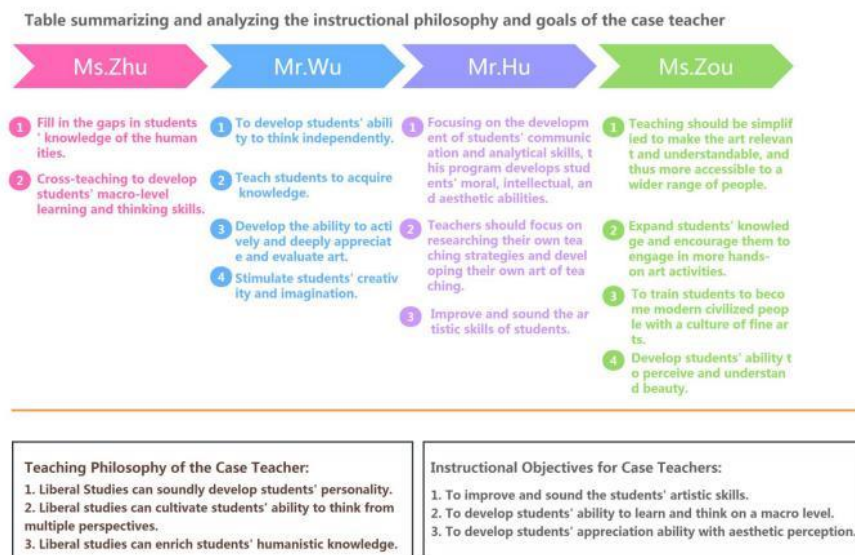
### Teaching Objectives of Art Appreciation Lecturers in Chinese University General Studies

The researcher's study of Chinese university education reveals that teaching objectives include enhancing students' artistic skills, broadening their learning abilities, and developing their aesthetic appreciation. Modern teaching focuses on student growth, fostering a positive attitude, active participation, essential literacy, creativity, and practical skills. Mr. Hu emphasizes that general education aims to refine and amplify students' artistic cultivation. The researcher identifies four key benefits of general education in enhancing artistic cultivation: fostering aesthetic sensibility, amplifying emotional experience, nurturing creativity, and enhancing cultural understanding.

Arts programs in general studies enrich students' education, foster personal growth, and enhance career prospects and societal engagement (Faludi et al., 2023; Jiang, 2019; Y. Yang, 2018).

**Figure 5.**

### *Summary Analysis on Instructional Philosophy and Goals*



The research accentuates the pivotal role of self-directed learning and critical thinking in general education, enabling students to acclimate to societal transformations. This aligns with the pedagogical philosophy of Yale University's President, Richard Levin, who advocates for educating students on 'how to think' rather than 'what to think' (Jenkins, 1998; Lima, 2021).

The research underscores the significance of art appreciation in augmenting aesthetic competencies and cultural heritage understanding, highlights the pedagogical approaches of Chinese universities aimed at cultivating holistic personalities, and emphasizes the crucial role of general education in enhancing humanistic literacy and beauty appreciation, which are indispensable for nurturing diverse artistic talents in contemporary Chinese society.

### ***Planning Program of Art Appreciation Courses for General Education in Chinese Universities***

This section scrutinizes the content and pedagogical approaches of art appreciation courses in Chinese universities' general education, revealing that lecturers factor in the relevance of professional courses during planning, focusing on the case teacher's course content planning and teaching methods.

#### The lecturer's planning of the content of the general art appreciation course

This section discusses art appreciation course planning in Chinese universities. The focus is on skill development and key content.

1. **Art Appreciation Skills:** The aim is to improve students' visual and aesthetic abilities. Ms. Zhu's course promotes understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese arts. Ms. Zou's course enhances students' appreciation of beauty and creativity.
2. **Course Content Planning:** Mr. Hu's course uses a point-based approach for clear art understanding. Mr. Wu's course includes fine arts understanding, interpretations, appreciation theories, and criticism. It also discusses changes in fine arts sensibility. Relevant art cases are used to engage students.

#### Teaching methods of the lecturer for the general education art appreciation course

This section examines art appreciation course pedagogies in Chinese universities, encompassing illustrated lectures, art case integration, and multimedia tools.

Ms. Zhu employs visual aids and textual content in lectures to augment students' visual sensibility and understanding. Mr. Zhu utilizes graphics and text to facilitate students' comprehension and interpretation of artworks' narratives and significances. Mr. Wu adopts a context-led approach, conducting classes at art venues. Mr. Hu employs art cases for elucidation, considering the temporal context and background of an artwork's creation. He contextualizes art within the era or the author's perspective and prompts students to document their impressions and generate their own creations. The study proposes that Mr. Hu could modify his pedagogical strategies to accommodate students' art appreciation aspirations.

The study also discusses the importance of multimedia-assisted instruction in art appreciation courses. An art, as a visual aesthetic experience, can cultivate students' aesthetic sentiment (Jane & Lai, 2010; Shih, 2019; Vanherwegen & Lievens, 2014; Z. Wang, 2023). Teachers utilize multimedia tools to engage students. Ms. Zou emphasizes using school resources, especially multimedia, for quality teaching.

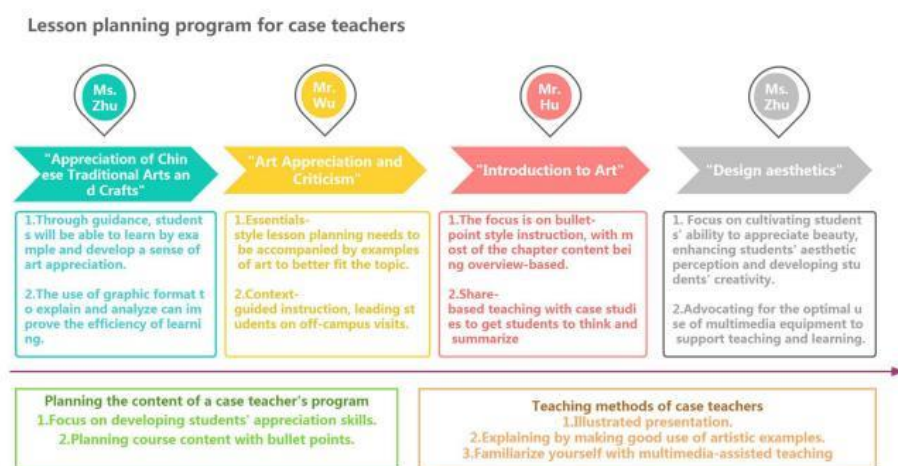
The study reveals five findings from reviewing these courses:

1. Teachers should synchronize their art course planning with other significant courses.
2. The curriculum should emphasize the connection between art and aesthetics.

3. Varied teaching methods should be used to enhance visual perception and creativity.
4. Curriculum development should prioritize flexible teaching to improve learning efficiency.
5. Successful teaching planning and execution depend on the instructor's guidance. Exploring different teaching modes can identify the most effective learning method.

**Figure 6.**

*A Summary on Lesson Planning Program*



### ***Difficulties and Challenges in the Implementation of Art Appreciation Courses for General Education in Chinese Universities***

This section discusses the hurdles in implementing art appreciation courses in Chinese universities. These include students' limited art knowledge, preference for "Art and Life" courses, and insufficient facilities and study time. Teachers like Mr. Wu, Mr. Hu, and Ms. Zhu encounter these challenges. High societal expectations in China lead to a preference for popular courses like "Art and Life" (Costigan, 2013; Jin, 2016; Zhu & Tao, 2021). Ms. Zou emphasizes the need for extended study time, and Mr. Hu suggests enhancing the classroom with professional-level equipment such as VR or AI.

This section discusses the gap between art appreciation and professional courses in Chinese universities. It emphasizes aligning course content with students' professional studies, highlighting professional knowledge relevance, and showing course connectivity via the syllabus. Ms. Zhu recommends internet resources for enhancing art appreciation. Analysis of Mr. Wu's views suggests students need professional knowledge. Mr. Hu promotes linking the Art Appreciation course to professional courses via the syllabus, enabling the application of knowledge to major courses.

### **How Case Teachers Meet the Pedagogical Objectives of the Art Appreciation Course**

This section discusses the instructor's strategies for achieving art appreciation course goals. Four strategies were used: using varied methods to meet learning goals, starting group discussions, enabling students to use professional language, and fostering a free-expression environment.

Firstly, the description of Ms. Zhu: *I like the straight give-and-take style of teaching. For example, I like to ask students to express their opinions after appreciating the artwork to them. I will even let give a topic for students to discuss in groups, and then the groups will report in groups. In the classroom, when introducing traditional Chinese arts and crafts works and encountering abstract works, I will first introduce the background of the works, analyze and explain the works in terms of external features such as shapes, materials, and colors, and then talk about the stories behind the works.*

Ms. Zhu's notes, while not explicitly stating teaching objectives, outline the pedagogical approach and content, satisfying this study's criteria. Her analysis of artworks' external characteristics provides students with a framework to comprehend art forms, characteristics, and values. The researcher identifies her objectives as fostering group discussion on art topics and promoting independent student expression in class.

Mr. Wu posits the following: *I will make use of the opportunities such as presentations and expressions so that students can discuss and express themselves with each other, as well as how to plan the content of the course and link it with other professional courses. Because I not only take art appreciation courses, but I also have many other professional courses, I can effectively connect the general education courses with other professional courses. Off-campus visits and other means are also used to enrich students' horizons. I think it is important to plan the content properly and to know how to share and communicate this method and content with students.*

Mr. Wu endorses a diverse Art Appreciation curriculum, promoting student engagement and external activities for effective learning. He aligns with Geoghegan's philosophy of utilizing external visual arts resources and fostering classroom-external activity interaction (Bai & Lu, 2018; Cropley & Cropley, 2011; Yehua et al., 2018), enhancing students' cultural understanding, aesthetic appreciation, and creativity.

In terms of achieving the teaching objectives for the Art Appreciation course, Mr. Hu articulates that *the teaching objectives of the general education art appreciation course can be achieved by adopting diversified ways to encourage students to complete the teaching objectives. For example, in the course of the class, I will first introduce a point of view and then ask students whether they agree with it and what are the reasons for their agreement? What are the counter-arguments for their disagreement? Then, I will let students debate with each other and exercise their artistic thinking skills in the process of communication. Or, I will put forward a few questions for students to write after a section, which not only exercises students' artistic thinking ability but also their ability to comment and write.*

The researcher's analysis highlights Mr. Hu's diversified approach, which enhances teaching effectiveness by fostering a positive environment and sustaining student motivation.

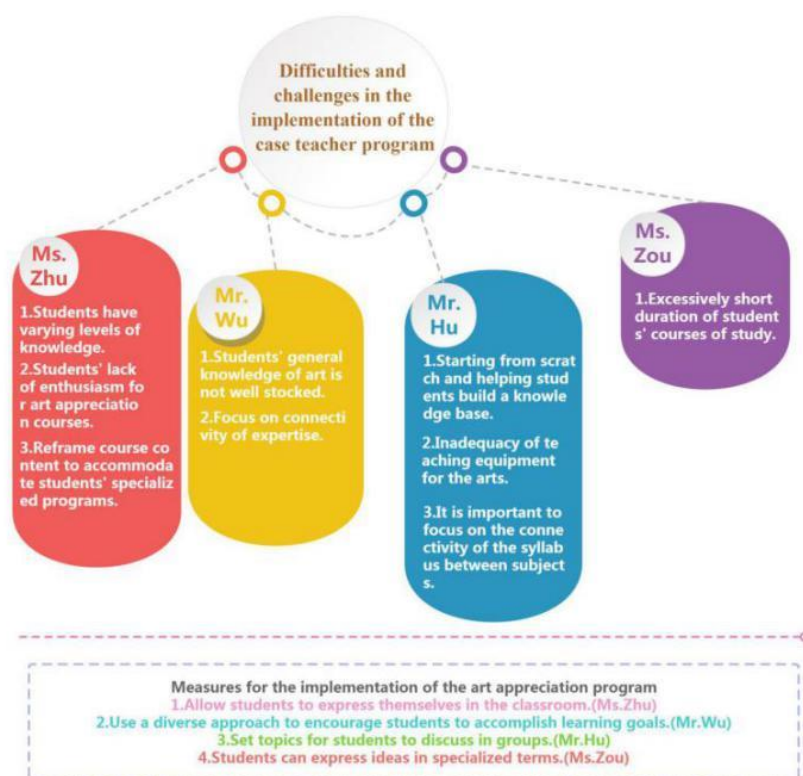
Zou articulates the following strategies for a lecturer to achieve the teaching objectives of an Art Appreciation course: *I often instill a lot of terminology into my students during the classroom teaching process, such as the design concepts of the handicraft era, the development*

of Western design aesthetics and aesthetic ideas in the industrial era, the constituent elements of design aesthetics (material, structural, formal, functional, economic, technological), the connection of aesthetic categories, the types of design aesthetics (formal beauty, technical beauty, artistic beauty), as well as design aesthetics related to life, life interest, fashion and style, and ethnicity. And technological elements), the association of aesthetic categories, the types of design aesthetic forms (formal beauty, technological beauty, artistic beauty), as well as those related to life, the interest of life, fashion, and style, and those related to ethnicity, the trend of nationalization of design aesthetics, and the trend of the ecology of design aesthetics, and so on.

The researcher's analysis highlights Zou's method, which fosters professional language use in design descriptions, enhancing art aesthetics understanding and artistic literacy. The study also addresses the challenges of implementing Art Appreciation in Chinese general education, suggesting pre-course questionnaires, online research assignments, and diversified teaching methods to stimulate student engagement.

### Figure 7.

*A Summary of Difficulties and Challenges*



### **General Education Art Appreciation Course Concept in Chinese Universities**

This section explores the Art Appreciation course for general education in Chinese universities from three angles: the replacement of aesthetic education with situational teaching, the planning and design of the course by case teachers, and the unique teaching characteristics of the Art Appreciation course.



### Substituting aesthetic education with scenario-based instruction

This section discusses the lecturer's use of scenario-based teaching as an alternative to aesthetic education. It focuses on three aspects: inspiring student learning in the classroom, engaging students with art story scenarios, and integrating personal experiences into teaching.

Ms. Zhu proposes *scenario teaching, and I will do it from my professional point of view because I am familiar with the textbook, and I will let the students interpret the artistic phenomena of different periods according to the historical lineage. For example, the background and arts and crafts of primitive society, arts and crafts of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods, arts and crafts production in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, etc. I will let the students do the scenario in groups to show the environment of the time through the interpretation, and the students will be able to deepen their impression of the course through independent learning. Afterward, I will give a lecture on the course so that students can have a more immersive feeling.*

Scenario-based teaching, fostering active learning and efficiency (Diblasio, 2016; Ma, 2021; Su, 2020), utilizes vivid imagery to immerse students in the learning environment, cultivating their emotional, cognitive, and intellectual development. The researcher identifies this approach as enhancing independent learning and aesthetic cognition.

Mr. Chu's perceptual cognition method encourages diverse thinking, while Mr. Wu's storytelling approach connects students with art narratives. Mr. Wu describes his approach as follows: *In the classroom, I don't like to use empty and boring theoretical knowledge. I like to use a small story to let the students enter the art enter the artwork. I think the real story will be more touching to the students. Because basically, every piece of art has its own creative background, these backgrounds are a scenario. Through the way of narration, a story presented in front of the students can move them and stimulate their feelings.*

The researcher highlights Mr. Wu's situational teaching as an aesthetic education alternative, using artist stories and skits for student engagement. Similarly, Mr. Hu emphasizes emotional connections and interactive scenarios to stimulate students' senses and convey concepts. He articulates: *what I understand by scenario teaching should be the feelings of the teacher and the students in the classroom, which are mutually described. In particular, we need to teach students' senses, such as the eyes are visual, the ears are auditory, and the physical performance is tactile. Through the stimulation of the senses, we can convey everything about the aesthetics of the art appreciation course or visually convey certain educational concepts, such as the concept of life, the attitude towards art, educational concepts, philosophical concepts, and so on, which can be integrated into the student's daily learning and life. I think scenario teaching is a way to gather all the perceptions and students into aesthetic education.*

The researcher notes Mr. Hu's effective integration of Art Appreciation with other courses, using situational teaching for aesthetic experience accumulation and independent learning. Ms. Zou's "Design Aesthetics" course necessitates continuous aesthetic sensibility cultivation. The researcher challenges Ms. Zou's assertions regarding substituting aesthetic education with situational teaching methods, positing that our school is still very reasonable in

the curriculum for the cultivation of aesthetic sense. *The course Aesthetics of Design is good for helping students to build up a sense of aesthetics in art. In the course design, I will let students focus on each artwork and analyze the artwork through multiple layers. After ten years of practice, I have gained a little knowledge of life, art, education, and even philosophy. I will use my own experience to share with my students and bring them new aesthetic experiences from my perspective.*

The researcher's analysis of Zou's views highlights the importance of positive guidance, empathy in classroom interactions, and integrating personal experiences in enhancing students' understanding of art through situational teaching.

#### Design of curriculum planning by case teachers

The lecturer's course planning integrates design thinking, sketching, and theme exploration. Ms. Zhu emphasizes genuine art opinions, originality, and capturing transient inspiration. The researcher notes that Ms. Zhu's approach enhances students' aesthetic sense, creativity, critique skills, and critical thinking: *I hope that my students can express their opinions about art real and attitudinally. Nowadays, science and technology are advancing by leaps and bounds, and many artificial intelligences are beginning to replace people gradually. Some students will use some technological means to complete their homework or comment on art for the sake of convenience and saving time. Their excessive reliance on electronic devices leads to their lack of taste in art. The works they design lose their soul and are even uniform and imitative, without their characteristics. I often tell my students that you can make something imperfect, but it must be your original design. Because only through your brain thinking will you gain something from it, and you can learn through my class.*

Mr. Wu also supports experiential and situational teaching, emphasizing student interaction: *We always want to leave the best in the classroom and the most useful for the students so that they will be interested in art appreciation. I think a trip to a museum or an art gallery is a more relevant thing to do. I certainly hope every student can take the knowledge from the classroom and go into the real world with doubts to observe and study. But the truth is, it's impossible to do everything, and the best I can do is to have my students respond to me in my classroom in a way that gives me a sense of their love of art or their rewards.*

The researcher underscores the significant impact of the teacher-student relationship on course effectiveness. The challenge of teaching art theory arises from students' diverse backgrounds and art perspectives. Course planning should aim for broad suitability, with art appreciation courses fostering critical thinking, observation, reflection, and moral values.

Mr. Wu's curriculum leverages art to engage students and cultivate empathy, using museum visits to enhance direct art connection. Mr. Hu simplifies art appreciation through basic aesthetics or art history concepts, considering each style and era's aesthetic value. His class design starts from a simple history of art, considering the art information expressed in each era. *From the point of view of my art appreciation course, I will choose simple concepts of art history and aesthetics because art history can link up the development of the whole East and West, and*



*each style and era expressed in these works of art has a certain aesthetic and appreciation value. Each style of artwork and each era has a certain aesthetic and appreciation value. For example, during the Renaissance, paintings were more emancipated than those of the Middle Ages, and they were filled with free and open ideas of breaking the chains. The paintings of this period, such as the Mona Lisa, the Last Supper, and David, are very rich and bold in color and shape.*

The researcher identifies Hu's strategies of focusing on simpler art periods for quick learning and studying artworks with diverse historical contexts.

In her Art Appreciation course, Zou emphasizes international alignment, diversified teaching methods, and the use of various resources for additional knowledge. This approach aims to provide a more fulfilling course and stimulate deeper thinking among students. *As far as my course planning and design is concerned, I am thinking more about diversified teaching methods. As I mentioned before, using multimedia and technology, I want art to have width and breadth. Art must have an international outlook and align with the international community. Nowadays, the world is an era of diversity and information interoperability. We no longer just focus on local art and design, but should go out and embrace the world with a broad mind.*

The researcher identifies Zou's strategies of aligning courses with international standards, utilizing internet resources, and introducing globally recognized exhibitions. The study underscores teacher-student interaction, empathy, and mutual learning as central to Chinese general education art appreciation.

#### Ideas for Teaching Characteristics of Fine Arts Appreciation Courses

The researcher advocates for art teachers in Chinese general education to embody the educational spirit, fostering independent learning, knowledge integration, societal engagement, and enhancing artistic sensitivity and creativity. Ms. Zhu shares her vision for the teaching characteristics of this course: *I focus on students' creativity. For example, if we are creating a sculpture or a pair of decorative paintings, I focus on the creativity of the students. What is your creative idea? It comes down to the value of art; only things that have value are meaningful. I would guide the students to think about the value of the artwork and make sure not to copy someone else's work. After the creation is completed, I will also let the students critique each other so that they can analyze the strengths and weaknesses of other people's designs, which will also be related to their own works, and in the continuous comparison and analysis, they will find out where the value lies, which will also lead to a different view of art and inspiration.*

The researcher's analysis of Mr. Zhu's teaching approach reveals two key strategies. First, Zhu implemented a peer-review system to foster classroom interactivity and student camaraderie. Second, Zhu advocates for focusing on the essence of the artwork, evoking genuine emotions, and encouraging originality in art appreciation.

In response to the teaching characteristics of the Chinese general education art appreciation course, Mr. Wu emphasizes the importance of teacher quality: *The quality of the teachers themselves is also very important. Because each school attaches different importance to general education, some professors in engineering also teach courses in the field of art, and*

*the biggest reason for this is that schools do not pay enough attention to the quality training of teachers majoring in art. Therefore, after determining the teachers' quality education should be professional counterparts, mechanical teachers will teach good mechanical automation, and for painting design, professional field teachers will teach the professional counterparts of the course.*

The researcher highlights the importance of teacher professionalism in art appreciation courses. Non-specialist teachers may lack foundational knowledge, leading to potential biases (Shih, 2019; Tsai & Liu, 2020; Yuan, 2017a; L. Zhang, 2021). Mr. Wu disapproves of non-specialist teachers teaching art courses.

Mr. Hu suggests that art teachers from various fields can contribute to the richness and comprehensiveness of the course: *The teachers of the general Studies Art Appreciation Course are art teachers from various fields, including animation, interior design, landscape design, oil painting, sculpture, graphic design and so on, all of whom are doing well in their own fields. How to make our teaching rich and not limited is what every teacher must think about.*

Ms. Zou's perspective on the features of the Art Appreciation Program in Chinese general studies is as follows: *"I believe that a teacher has already developed his or her own qualities at the beginning of his or her studies. As an art teacher, one should understand the meaning of "teacher, preaching, teaching, and solving problems," and the first thing is to cultivate oneself, develop a good academic orientation, and continue to refine one's knowledge in the process of practice, especially for teachers of art and design.*

Zou's analysis emphasizes teacher literacy in the Chinese Arts Appreciation course. It advocates for a shift in teacher roles towards facilitation, guiding student self-management, and researching student development (Crawford, 1987; Delacruz & Dunn, 1996; X. Li, 2020; Ma, 2021). The essence of education lies in teacher ethics, teacher-student relationships, student-centered teaching, and continuous self-improvement. Teachers must possess personal qualities, virtues, and authentic talent.

In alignment with prior research, the study underscores the importance of a constructive educational philosophy for art educators, advocates for the integration of the course with other professional disciplines to augment students' knowledge, and promotes the use of scenario-based course design to foster empathy (M. Li, 2021; X. Li, 2020; Ma, 2021). It further suggests necessary implementations such as the integration of art appreciation with other courses to produce well-rounded professionals (Wenqing, 2020; L. Zhang, 2021), the diversification of learning interests to address academic disparities (Johann, 2021), and the employment of effective situational teaching to facilitate character development and beauty recognition (Lin, 2021), thereby contributing to comprehensive personality development.

### **Figure 8.**

#### *Induction Analysis*

Ms.Zhu	Mr.Wu	Mr.Hu	Ms.Zou
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Presentation of classroom content in the form of a sitcom.</li> <li>2.Recreate the course context to give students an immersive experience.</li> <li>3.To allow students to be original and build a sense of beauty.</li> <li>4.Record what you see, hear and feel in the form of sketches.</li> <li>5.Add character to the classroom by critiquing each other's work.</li> <li>6.Restore the essence of artwork, focusing on creativity and value.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impress students with situational stories of artists.</li> <li>2.Trigger students' sense of beauty by creating sketches.</li> <li>3.Let students feel that art is closely related to life.</li> <li>4.Giving students a pleasurable feeling of mindfulness.</li> <li>5.the importance of professionalism of art appreciation course instructors.</li> <li>6. Art appreciation course instructors must recognize their professionalism.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Incorporate your own life perceptions into classroom instruction.</li> <li>2.Sharing and discussing with students with their own attitudes towards art, philosophical concepts, educational ideas, etc.</li> <li>3.Select simple art historical and aesthetic concepts to explore.</li> <li>4.Discussion on themes such as different historical backgrounds, creative environments, and stylistic features of artworks.</li> <li>5.The addition of art major teachers from different research backgrounds can add to the diversity of the curriculum.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Students should be given positive guidance.</li> <li>2.Personal experience should be integrated into the classroom.</li> <li>3. The curriculum should be in line with international standards and web-based information can be used to enhance the quality of the curriculum.</li> <li>4.Students should be introduced to more internationally recognized exhibitions or related topics.</li> <li>5.Enhance personal literacy and establish your own professional identity.</li> </ol>

Inductive analysis form for case teacher's curricular assumptions

This study proposes strategies for enriching the Chinese general education art appreciation course. It advocates for student creation of artworks to enhance aesthetic skills, teacher-organized outdoor activities like museum visits to stimulate creativity and multicultural appreciation, and the use of diverse teaching methods, including situational, experiential, and interactive teaching, to foster a high-quality, enjoyable exploration of art.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study involves four teachers from various Chinese universities who aim to improve students' aesthetic appreciation, independent thinking, and analytical skills through an art appreciation course. The study highlights the significance of a positive educational philosophy for art teachers and suggests integrating the course with other professional courses to broaden students' knowledge. It recommends using scenarios in course design to cultivate empathy among students and emphasizes the importance of situational teaching and positive interaction with students. The study concludes that students' art appreciation skills can be improved by their sensitivity to art creation and by visiting art museums or galleries.

Situational teaching in art appreciation enhances learning efficiency, fosters teacher self-perception, and cultivates a harmonious environment. Engaging students in art discussions and sharing aesthetic experiences strengthens teacher-student relationships and implements emotional education. The study concludes that integrating art appreciation with other courses produces well-rounded professionals, diversified learning interests compensate for varied academic levels, effective situational teaching promotes character development and beauty recognition, and successful general education implementation in Chinese universities contributes to wholesome personality development.

This study, while insightful, has limitations. The gradual implementation of General Education plans in Chinese universities and time constraints limited the scope of universities reached. Despite variations in Art Appreciation Course plans, teaching concepts and learning conditions are largely similar, providing useful reference points. The study's in-depth interviews

were time-consuming and limited by interviewee availability, restricting the selection of research subjects and case numbers. Thus, the study primarily includes interviews with school teachers and art design students.

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