

The Influence of Mainstream Educational Culture and Dominant Aesthetic Values on the Inclusion of Diverse and Individual Aesthetics in Chinese Art Education

Yiming Xie

University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Abstract. This article discusses how mainstream educational culture and dominant aesthetic values affect the integration of multicultural perspectives and individual aesthetic expression in Chinese art education. Taking the college entrance examination art examination as an example, this article compares Taylor's theoretical foundation and Banks' multicultural curriculum framework to explore the different paths between the two in terms of curriculum design, educational equity and cultural diversity. The analysis points out that although Taylor's model maintains national uniformity through standardized curricula and assessments, it also limits the creativity of students, teachers' autonomy, and the presentation of ethnic minority culture. In contrast, Banks' framework advocates multicultural integration, culturally responsive teaching, and wider participation of students in curriculum development, but its implementation under China's centralized and test-based education system faces many challenges. This article further explores the relevance of these frameworks to the integration of creativity, art education and intangible cultural heritage into school curricula. The article suggests that future curriculum reform should seek a balance between standardization and inclusiveness, respecting multicultural traditions and ensuring the quality of education. This study helps to explore curriculum reform, multicultural education and cultural sustainability in contemporary Chinese art education.

Keywords: Chinese art education; Gaokao; multicultural education; curriculum reform; cultural diversity.

1. Introduction

If your manuscript is not in English, including the table and figure texts, we will not be able to publish it. You should maintain a backup copy of your manuscript at your workplace. We take it as read that the associated authors have granted us permission to publish their work in the specified journal or book upon receipt of the manuscript. In order to incorporate tables or figures from other publications into their own work, authors are required to obtain permission from the relevant publishers. To highlight a word or phrase, use italics. Section headings are the only exception to the rule against using boldface or capital letters; for more on this, see the comments section below.

In ancient China, there was a rigid national curriculum based on the Four Books and Five Classics, as well as an aesthetic system that was enough to keep society in line. Cultural variety in the classroom presents both opportunities and threats, especially in light of recent developments on a global scale and the rapidity with which society is embracing diversity. To meet the probable enormous problems of the future global community, authoritative and nationally homogeneous curricula are obviously insufficient. China must now act rather than sit back and wait for the world context to react or include a multicultural, cross-cultural curriculum into its highly globalized and interconnected educational system. Given this background, the essay will focus on the following curriculum inquiry question: How does the cultural aesthetics of the Chinese context and the authority's culturally dominant mainstream education influence the inclusion of diverse cultural aesthetic values and students' personal artistic expressions in art education curricula?

This paper examines the Gaokao art assessment as part of a larger exploratory methodological process that aims to promote inclusivity in Chinese art education. The Gaokao, China's most important national university admission exam, serves to highlight the ways in which prevailing aesthetic

standards and mainstream cultural authority permeate high-stakes testing and prompt important discussions regarding the need for inclusive curriculum development.

To answer this question, the analysis will look at two different curriculum frameworks, one from Tyler and one from Banks, and compare and contrast them.

2. Comparative Analysis

2.1. Framework A: Tyler's Rationale (Static Standardisation)

Using the principles of continuity, sequence, and integration, Taylor's theoretical framework first aims to identify the educational goals and purposes; second, choose learning experiences to accomplish the objectives; third, efficiently organize those experiences; and lastly, design an evaluation mechanism to determine whether the predetermined objectives have been achieved (evaluating educational outcomes). This framework aims to structure the curriculum around these four key foundational dimensions. The framework is based on the assumptions that educational goals can be known in advance, that knowledge can be standardised and used everywhere, and that comparable activities can be used to prove that something is fair (Tyler, 2013). Efficiency, organization, and measurable accountability were primary concerns throughout curriculum development (Hlebowitsh, 2021).

2.2. Framework B: Banks -Multicultural Curriculum Framework

Banks's multicultural curriculum framework includes the following five dimensions: (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, which aligns with culturally responsive teaching, (e) an empowering school culture and social structure, and (f) a multicultural integration curriculum. This framework aims to promote positive attitudes toward various racial and cultural groups (Banks, 1993). The following assumptions form the basis of this framework: cultural diversity is a social reality; all students should see themselves reflected in the curriculum; and equity implies that assessments and curricula cannot be applied universally. Promoting students' development into engaged, democratic, intercultural citizens is central to the multicultural curriculum framework.

2.3. Critically Evaluating two Curriculum Frameworks

The increased target measurability, high standardization, and heightened controllability over mainstream culture in static, standardized classrooms are the reasons why Tyler's framework uses them in curriculum design. These considerations address the educational demands of governments with dense populations in the socialist ideal system's quest for cultural unification, and they lend credence to statewide execution in highly centralized political systems like geopolitical China (Du, 2024). Striving for universal literacy, facilitating stronger curriculum development capacity and more curriculum-directed pedagogy, and narrowing the gap between educational goals and actual teaching practices were all noteworthy and innovative efforts made by developing nations in the previous century (Du, 2024; Hersh & Cohen, 1971).

On the other hand, according to Mockler & Stacey (2024), when standardized tests and curricula are implemented, curricular autonomy is handed over to the state. This means that teachers no longer have the freedom to tailor their lessons to the unique needs of their students, as state-mandated textbooks serve as a universal yardstick. According to Pinar (2014), this limits the opportunities for educators and students to express themselves creatively and critically, as well as to investigate multicultural aesthetics and cultural diversity.

The fundamental problem with Tyler's argument is that it is not addressed by Banks' multicultural curricular paradigm. Teachers and students engage in what Banks (1993) calls "co-construction" of knowledge. As direct implementers, teachers have intimate knowledge of curricular challenges and students' difficulties, which helps to create inclusive learning environments. This supports Brennan's

(2022) concept of stakeholder participation. Furthermore, this approach encourages group decision-making in the educational setting. Also, it fits well with culturally responsive teaching, as proposed by Gay (2018), which makes use of students' prior knowledge and experiences to enhance learning outcomes through making education more relevant.

But Banks' model won't work for every situation. Implementing inclusive frameworks requires taking cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political aspects of Practice Architectures into account, as Brennan (2022) cautions. In centralized systems like China's, where multicultural curricula are mandated, there are often systemic obstacles that reduce inclusive reforms to token efforts.

In general, Tyler advocates for equality by means of uniformity, comparability, and state authority in the form of standards; however, this approach may stifle both students' and instructors' right to free speech. Banks, on the other hand, is an advocate for cultural pluralism, diversity recognition, and student agency through the incorporation of minority and local aesthetics into core courses. The problems of "symbolism" and "implementation fragility" are common for these approaches in centralized systems and high-stakes testing frameworks.

3. Relevance to Creativity and the Arts

Looking at Tyler's reasoning from a macro perspective, it's clear that it can help any country's population improve their educational opportunities and cognitive development. Nonetheless, it is not meant to be taken as the pinnacle of curriculum design standards. An excessive dependence on standardization and uniformity inadvertently stifles specific forms of local and ethnic artistic expression; this is abundantly shown by the structure and assessment of China's art examinations, particularly the Gaokao. As an example, the Western classical traditions serve as a model for both the visual arts and music assessments. The former places an emphasis on drawing (plaster casts, portraits), painting (still life, landscapes), and rapid sketching (human figures in motion), while the latter places an emphasis on sight-singing, ear training, and bel canto techniques. Students from indigenous communities, like the Miao, Tibetan, or Uyghur, are forced to give up their traditional arts and crafts, like Miao embroidery or Tang card painting (Buddhist Iconography on card), because of this shared reliance on Western standards. In order to be admitted to university, the Gaoka mandates that they study and perform within the current "mainstream" aesthetic system (Ren, 2022).

4. Integration of First Nations' Knowledge

Using First Nations knowledge systems offers a valuable perspective, founded on the core principle that true inclusivity requires honouring the intellectual and cultural origins of indigenous peoples. Recognizing Aboriginal peoples' authority as knowledge systems, rather than as supplemental material, Australia's approach requires including Aboriginal viewpoints into core curricula. True inclusion, according to Taylor's theory, is attained by integrating valid information into predetermined models. Incorporating Indigenous narratives into lesson preparation and instruction is one way that Banks' multi-standardized framework provides clearer routes.

5. Application to Educational Contexts

The test-focused, centralised Chinese education system is a major roadblock to Banks' goal of multicultural, inclusive classrooms. Future improvements in art education in China could be greatly aided by recognizing and analyzing the relative merits of the Tyler and Banks frameworks, according to this research. A nation with 56 officially recognised ethnic groups faces the question of whether it can find a new equilibrium and reason.

While Banks' paradigm may not be perfectly relevant to China's reality, it does provide useful insights and recommendations for change. As an example, the educational system is slowly incorporating some of China's artistic assets, which are its intangible cultural heritage. These include the

aforementioned Miao needlework and Tibetan Tang Card painting. At the "contributions" level of Banks' four stages of intercultural integration, the Chinese Ministry of Education should organize regular cultural awareness events. At the "additive and transformative" level, students can take art classes that focus on intangible cultural heritage once a semester and get a test at the end of the term, all without changing the structure of the core curriculum. As part of the next "social action" phase, the Gaokao will incorporate a variety of artistic expressions through the introduction of an option for intangible cultural heritage in the educational system. This will set up a "2+1" test paradigm, which consists of two standardised national exams and an optional intercultural test focusing on intangible cultural assets. Social change, cultural inclusivity, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage are all goals that students can work toward by exploring China's multicultural aesthetics. This will help alleviate the crisis that many ethnic groups in modern China are facing.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 4 (Quality Education), seek to ensure that all people have access to a high-quality education by 2030. The artistic reform plan that is laid out above is in line with these goals. In addition, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11.4 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (United Nations, 2025), this article promotes the maintenance and passing on of intangible cultural assets.

6. Conclusion

In order to answer the research question, this paper looks at two different curriculum frameworks in China and compares and contrasts them.

It uses research on the Gaokao arts tests to demonstrate how the aesthetic values and educational culture of China impact intercultural cultures and personal creativity. Neither Banks' dynamic inclusivity frameworks nor Taylor's static model of standardization can adequately handle the difficulties of curriculum development in a centralised, test-driven system. According to the research, the dominant aesthetic ideology in China achieves two goals at once: standardization promotes equity and consistency across the system and the suppression of individual expression and multicultural aesthetics. Remember that justice is an ideology with many facets; it calls for cultural inclusion and representation at times and demands uniformity at other times. The next step in planning arts education reform in China should involve striking a compromise between two opposing goals: standardization and inclusivity, and between a rigid, predetermined curriculum and an open, adaptable one.

References

- [1] Banks, J. A. (1993). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. *Review of Research in Education*, 19, 3–49. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X019001003>
- [2] Brennan, M. (2022). Teachers and students as researchers: Rebuilding curriculum inquiry for the future. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 42, 85–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-022-00156-7>
- [3] Du, S. (2024). In defense of the Tyler rationale: As a model for curriculum development. *The Educational Review USA*, 8, 837–841.
- [4] Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- [5] Hlebowitsh, P. (2021). Ralph Tyler, the Tyler rationale, and the idea of educational evaluation. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore.9780190264093.013.1028>
- [6] Hersh, R. H., & Cohen, S. J. (1971). A case against a case against behavioral objectives. *The Elementary School Journal*, 71, 430–437. <https://doi.org/10.1086/460543>
- [7] May, S. (2010). *Critical multiculturalism* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- [8] Mockler, N., & Stacey, M. (2024). Outsourced curriculum planning to reduce teacher workload: Tracing the evolution of a policy solution. *Curriculum Perspectives*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-024-00189-8>
- [9] Pinar, W. F. (2014). Curriculum studies in China. In *Palgrave Macmillan US eBooks* (pp. 223–246). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137337234_13
- [10] Ren, R. (2022). Educational success in transitional China: The Gaokao and learning capital in elite professional service firms. *The China Quarterly*, 252, 1277–1298. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022001346>

- [11] Tyler, R. W. (2013). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), Curriculum studies reader (2nd ed., pp. 60–68). Routledge.
- [12] United Nations. (2025). The 17 sustainable development goals. United Nations.