

CURRICULUM INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION, PRACTICE-BASE CONSTRUCTION, AND TALENT EVALUATION REFORM AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CORE COMPETITIVENESS OF ART EDUCATION IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE HENAN PROVINCE*

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Abstract

This study aims to: 1) examine the impact of curriculum innovation, entrepreneurship education, practical training base construction, and talent evaluation reform on the core competitiveness of art education programs in private colleges and universities in Henan Province; 2) compare the relative explanatory power of these four reform dimensions; and 3) provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening applied arts education under the constraints of limited resources and quality assurance in private colleges and universities. This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey method, conducting a questionnaire survey of 260 faculty and staff involved in art education programs. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale to measure five constructs, and descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation

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analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results showed that: 1) all five scales had acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's α coefficients ranging from 0.792 to 0.876; 2) the regression model explained 47.9% of the variance in perceived core competitiveness ($R^2 = .479$, adjusted $R^2 = .471$, $F(4,255) \approx 58.62$, $p < .001$); 3) all four predictor variables had a significant positive impact on core competitiveness, namely, practical infrastructure ($\beta = .296$, $p < .001$), curriculum innovation ($\beta = .284$, $p < .001$), talent evaluation reform ($\beta = .215$, $p < .001$), and entrepreneurship education ($\beta = .159$, $p = .002$). The research results indicate that the competitiveness of art education in private colleges and universities in Henan Province depends on coordinated reforms, with practical infrastructure and curriculum innovation requiring priority attention. This study constructs a professional-level competitiveness model for art education in private colleges and universities, providing practical insights for curriculum committees, entrepreneurship offices, industry university research cooperation units, and quality assurance systems.

Keywords: Curriculum Innovation, Entrepreneurial Education, Practice-Base Construction, Talent Evaluation Reform, Core Competitiveness, Art Education, Private Universities Introduction

Introduction

China's private higher education has entered a quality-oriented development stage, with its institutional legitimacy increasingly linked to unique market positioning, transparent governance, and measurable educational outcomes. Recent policy analysis indicates that the revised "Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Law on the Promotion of Private Education" places greater emphasis on the public welfare orientation, standardized governance, and quality improvement of private schools (Liu, 2023). For private universities, these expectations drive them to go beyond enrollment size and develop

sustainable academic competitiveness. Arts education programs are particularly directly affected by this pressure. They must retain their aesthetic and creative characteristics while cultivating employable graduates capable of participating in the cultural, creative, digital media, design, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. In this context, program competitiveness cannot be measured solely by enrollment numbers or exam scores; it must also reflect curriculum relevance, graduate competence, industry recognition, professional practice opportunities, and continued adaptability. International policy discussions also emphasize that creativity and critical thinking in higher education require appropriate learning outcomes and assessment systems, rather than simply traditional examinations (Bouckaert & Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). Henan Province provides an ideal context for this study because private universities serve the local talent cultivation and regional development needs. To enhance the competitiveness of their art education programs, university leaders must weigh limited resources and allocate them among curriculum updates, entrepreneurship education, practical training base construction, and evaluation reform. However, existing literature often discusses these dimensions in isolation, lacking empirical research to explore how they collectively predict the core competitiveness of art education programs in private universities. Therefore, this study examines four reform dimensions curriculum innovation, entrepreneurship education, practical training base construction, and talent evaluation reform as antecedents of core competitiveness. This study aims to construct a concise and actionable model to guide program improvements in art education programs at private universities. Through survey data from stakeholders in art education at private universities in Henan Province, this study identifies which reform measures are statistically significant and which should be prioritized in practice.

Objectives

1. To examine the effects of curriculum innovation, entrepreneurial education, practice-base construction, and talent evaluation reform on the core competitiveness of art education programs in private universities in Henan Province.
2. To compare the relative influence of the four reform dimensions when they are analyzed simultaneously in a multiple regression model.
3. To propose evidence-based recommendations for improving the competitiveness of private-university art education through curriculum, entrepreneurship, practice-base, and evaluation reforms.

Literature Review

Curriculum Innovation and the Competitiveness of Arts Education

Curriculum innovation refers to the updating of curriculum content, learning outcomes, pedagogy, digital integration, and interdisciplinary design. In arts education, curriculum innovation is particularly important because creative work is increasingly influenced by digital tools, artificial intelligence, cultural heritage platforms, and evolving industry standards. Su and Mokmin (2024) reviewed the application of artificial intelligence in visual arts education and emphasized that technology should be integrated with pedagogy, ethics, and assessment design. This demonstrates that curriculum innovation can enhance the competitiveness of arts education because it strengthens students' creative foundation and improves their contemporary professional competence.

Entrepreneurship Education and Creative Career Preparation

Entrepreneurship education aims to cultivate students' abilities to identify opportunities, develop innovative skills, self-management skills, commercialize projects, and transform creative ideas into social or market value. These abilities are crucial in art-related majors, as graduates typically pursue project-based work,

freelancing, cultural entrepreneurship, or small creative enterprises. Shao et al. (2024) argue that entrepreneurship education in Chinese higher education should be understood through a collaborative framework of industry, academia, and research. Zhou (2024) also points out that entrepreneurship education in Chinese higher education institutions has evolved into part of a broader innovation and employment strategy. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is expected to enhance the competitiveness of art education by improving graduates' adaptability and employability.

Practice Base Construction and Experiential Learning

Practice base construction includes internship platforms, collaborative studios, cultural and creative laboratories, corporate projects, and industry mentor mechanisms. Art education is highly dependent on practice, as creative abilities are cultivated through project cycles, critiques, portfolio production, exhibitions, and collaborations. Literature on university-industry collaborations suggests that such partnerships can foster knowledge exchange and better align education with career needs, but this requires careful management and mutually beneficial value creation (Rossoni et al., 2024). In private universities, a strong practical foundation can also compensate for a lack of institutional reputation by producing tangible student outcomes and earning the trust of employers.

Talent Evaluation Reform and Competency-Oriented Assessment

Talent evaluation reform involves the redesign of assessment standards and recognition mechanisms. In arts education, narrow, exam-oriented assessments may fail to reflect originality, project competence, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and social contribution. Bouckaert and Vincent-Lancrin (2023) point out that the assessment of creativity and critical thinking in higher education requires policy and institutional practices that support deep learning outcomes. For arts courses, assessment reforms may include portfolio assessment, jury exhibitions, external tutor assessments, project evidence, and

assessment standards for creative problem-solving abilities. Such reforms can guide student and teacher behavior towards genuine creative competence.

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

Based on the above literature, this study proposes that all reform dimensions have a positive impact on the core competitiveness of arts education programs. Specific hypotheses are as follows: H1: Curriculum innovation has a positive impact on core competitiveness. H2: Entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on core competitiveness. H3: Practical infrastructure development has a positive impact on core competitiveness. H4: Talent evaluation reform has a positive impact on core competitiveness.

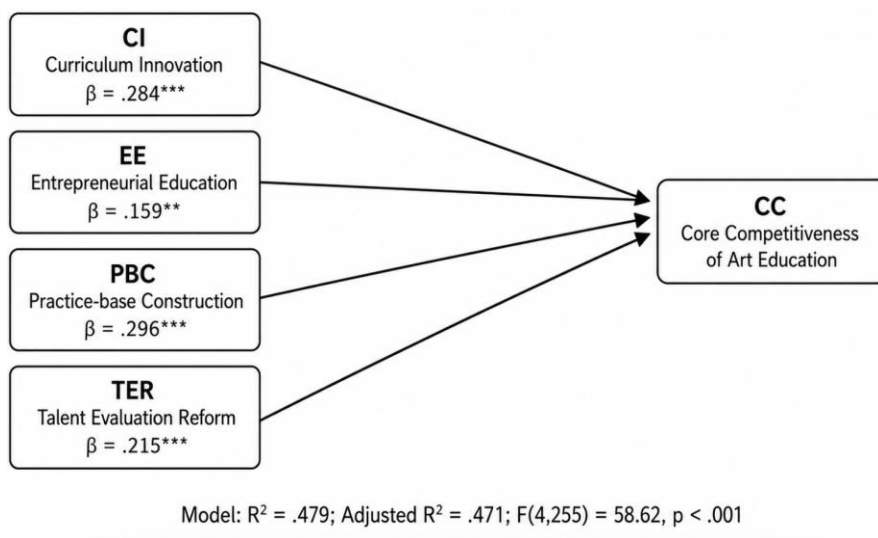


Figure 1. Conceptual and empirical model

Methodology

Research Design: This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. This design is suitable for measuring stakeholder perceptions using standardized items and examining the direction and strength of relationships at a given point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because this study required

estimating the unique contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable while controlling for common variance among predictors, multiple regression analysis was chosen (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

Population, Sample, and Data Collection: The target population included faculty, administrative staff, curriculum staff, practice base coordinators, entrepreneurship education staff, and quality assurance or evaluation staff from private universities in Henan Province offering arts education-related majors. Inclusion criteria required respondents to work at a private university in Henan Province, have at least six months of relevant work experience, and be involved in the operation of arts education projects. After screening for eligibility, completeness, and response quality, 260 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.

Research Tools and Measurement Methods

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Five constructs were measured: Curriculum Innovation (CI), Entrepreneurship Education (EE), Practice Infrastructure (PBC), Talent Evaluation Reform (TER), and Core Competencies (CC). Each construct comprises five items, for a total of 25 measurement items. This tool aims to reflect specific institutional practices, rather than abstract attitudes, including curriculum updates, digital integration, entrepreneurship support, real-world practice environments, evaluation criteria, and graduate or program competitiveness.

Data analysis was conducted in four phases. First, descriptive statistical analysis summarized the basic information and construct distribution of respondents. Second, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess internal consistency reliability; according to established measurement guidelines (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable in applied research. Third, Pearson correlation analysis

examined the bivariate relationships between constructs. Fourth, multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses H1-H4, with core competence as the dependent variable and CI, EE, PBC, and TER as predictor variables. Standardized beta coefficients were used to compare the relative effect strengths, and hypothesis testing included residual independence, normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity diagnoses (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

Results

Final sample included 260 respondents. Female respondents accounted for 56.2%, male respondents for 41.2%, and other/prefer-not-to-say responses for 2.7%. Most respondents were aged 25-34 (47.3%) or 35-44 (22.7%). Teaching staff formed the largest role group (55.8%), followed by administrative staff (31.5%) and respondents with both teaching and administrative roles (12.7%). The sample therefore represented both academic and management perspectives relevant to program-level reform.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability of constructs

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Curriculum Innovation (CI)	5	2.885	1.002	.841
Entrepreneurial Education (EE)	5	2.907	.985	.825
Practice-base Construction (PBC)	5	2.892	1.043	.866
Talent Evaluation Reform (TER)	5	2.914	.945	.792
Core Competitiveness (CC)	5	2.894	1.043	.876

Note. N = 260. All alpha values exceeded the commonly accepted .70 threshold, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Reliability: The mean scores of all constructs were close to the midpoint of the 5-point scale, indicating that users perceived reform implementation and core competitiveness as moderate rather than highly developed. This pattern suggests room for improvement in all four reform areas. Reliability analysis showed acceptable to strong internal consistency: CI ($\alpha = .841$), EE ($\alpha = .825$), PBC ($\alpha = .866$), TER ($\alpha = .792$), and CC ($\alpha = .876$). These results support the use of composite construct scores in correlation and regression analysis.

Hypothesis testing through multiple regression.

The multiple regression model was statistically significant and explained a substantial proportion of variance in perceived core competitiveness ($R^2 = .479$, adjusted $R^2 = .471$, $F(4,255) \approx 58.62$, $p < .001$). All four predictors had positive and statistically significant standardized coefficients. Practice-base construction had the strongest effect ($\beta = .296$, $p < .001$), followed closely by curriculum innovation ($\beta = .284$, $p < .001$). Talent evaluation reform also had a meaningful effect ($\beta = .215$, $p < .001$), while entrepreneurial education had a smaller but significant effect ($\beta = .159$, $p = .002$).

Table 2. Multiple regression predicting core competitiveness

Predictor	b	SE	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	.003	.202	--	.014	.989	[-.394, .400]
CI	.296	.054	.284	5.472	< .001	[.190, .403]
EE	.168	.054	.159	3.087	.002	[.061, .276]
PBC	.296	.054	.296	5.522	< .001	[.191, .402]
TER	.237	.054	.215	4.361	< .001	[.130, .344]

Note. Dependent variable = Core Competitiveness (CC). Model $R^2 = .479$; adjusted $R^2 = .471$; $F(4,255) \approx 58.62$; $p < .001$.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing summary

Hypothesis	Path	Result	Decision
H1	CI → CC	$\beta = .284, p < .001$	Supported
H2	EE → CC	$\beta = .159, p = .002$	Supported
H3	PBC → CC	$\beta = .296, p < .001$	Supported
H4	TER → CC	$\beta = .215, p < .001$	Supported

The residual diagnostic results show that the variables have acceptable independence (Durbin-Watson = 1.96), normality (Shapiro-Wilk $p = .484$), and homoscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan $p = .426$). However, the diagnostic results show a maximum variance inflation factor (VIF) of 11.97 and a minimum tolerance of 0.08, indicating possible multicollinearity among the reform dimensions. This result is conceptually understandable because curriculum innovation, practical infrastructure development, entrepreneurship education, and assessment reform are often developed together as a holistic institutional reform program. Therefore, the regression coefficients should be interpreted as relative effects within an interconnected reform system, rather than completely independent causal effects.

Discussion

The findings support the argument that the core competitiveness of art education in private higher education institutions is shaped by coordinated curriculum reforms. All four hypotheses were validated, indicating that competitiveness is not driven by a single reform element, but rather by a comprehensive system of capabilities. Among these, the construction of practical training bases is the most predictive factor. This means that private higher education institutions in Henan Province can most directly enhance their

curriculum competitiveness by building high-quality internship bases, collaborative studios, corporate projects, cultural and creative practice platforms, and mentorship systems. For applied art education, tangible practical achievements such as portfolios, exhibitions, real client projects, and employer recognition are particularly important for competitiveness. Curriculum innovation is the second largest predictive factor, with an impact very close to that of practical training base construction. This confirms that curriculum updates are a core pathway to enhancing competitiveness. Art courses must update their content and teaching methods, incorporating digital media, AI-assisted creation, interdisciplinary design, cultural heritage innovation, and project-based learning. This finding aligns with the argument that AI and digital technologies should be integrated into visual arts education through responsible pedagogical design, rather than superficial technology adoption (Su & Mokmin, 2024).

Talent assessment reforms have also had a significant positive impact. This finding is significant because assessment systems determine what students and teachers consider valuable. If assessments remain confined to traditional exams, art curricula may fail to adequately reward originality, process quality, collaboration, portfolio quality, entrepreneurial spirit, or community engagement. The findings support competency-based assessment approaches, including portfolio evaluation, jury exhibitions, external mentor feedback, and transparent creative problem-solving grading criteria. This aligns with broader discussions in higher education that creativity and critical thinking require more appropriate assessment policies and practices (Bouckaert & Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). Entrepreneurship education had the least impact, but it remains significant. This does not mean entrepreneurship is unimportant. Rather, it may indicate that entrepreneurship education has practical value when integrated into curriculum and practice. For art students, entrepreneurship learning should not be presented merely as generic business theory. It should be integrated into creative projects,

cultural product development, brand design, digital platform operation, and studio incubation. This interpretation aligns with the necessity of ecosystem-based entrepreneurship education emphasized in Chinese higher education research (Shao et al., 2024; Zhou, 2024). The multicollinearity diagnostic results also have theoretical significance. The four reform dimensions are interconnected in actual institutional practice. A university investing in curriculum reform may also invest in practical platforms, assessment reform, and entrepreneurship support. Therefore, this study proposes an integrated reform logic: curriculum innovation clarifies what students should learn; practical infrastructure provides authentic learning contexts; entrepreneurship education helps students transform their creative abilities into professional value; and talent assessment reform institutionalizes the content that should be recognized and rewarded.

Recommendation

Private universities should prioritize establishing practical training bases, developing long-term collaborative studios, corporate projects, museum and cultural tourism partnerships, and industry mentorship programs. The quality assessment of these bases should focus on learning outcomes, mentor engagement, project authenticity, and student portfolios, rather than simply the number of signed cooperation agreements (Rossoni et al., 2024). Curriculum committees should conduct systematic curriculum updates. Art curricula should retain fundamental art training while integrating digital media tools, AI-assisted creative processes, interdisciplinary design thinking, cultural heritage resources, and project-based modules through responsible instructional design (Su & Mokmin, 2024). Entrepreneurship education for art students should be redesigned. Universities should reduce their reliance on general entrepreneurship lectures and instead offer creative entrepreneurship workshops, brand and portfolio commercialization modules, cultural product design projects, incubator

connections, and mentorship programs for creative industry professionals (Shao et al., 2024; Zhou, 2024). Talent assessment systems should shift towards competency-based evaluation. Recommended approaches include portfolio review, exhibitions, project-based grading criteria, external expert evaluation, peer review, reflective learning reports, and recognition of entrepreneurial or community impact achievements (Bouckaert & Vincent-Lancrin, 2023). Because these four reforms are interconnected, university leadership should establish a comprehensive reform committee comprised of course directors, entrepreneurship office staff, practice coordinators, quality assurance personnel, and industry partners. This committee should coordinate learning outcomes, practice projects, assessment metrics, and resource allocation. Future research should utilize longitudinal data, objective outcome metrics, and multi-stakeholder evidence from students, employers, alumni, and industry mentors to validate whether perceived competitiveness translates into measurable graduate and program performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

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