LEARNING FROM THE WEST: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE ART EDUCATION FOR GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE FIRST HALF OF 20TH CENTURY CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Art education for general education was first introduced to China in 1902, when the reforms of Chinese education were begun. Despite China possessing a unique cultural tradition an overwhelming number of Western ideas were “borrowed” to develop art education in the first half of 20\textsuperscript{th} century China. From an historical, political and cultural perspective, this was not an isolated phenomenon in China at that time. After the defeat of China in the Opium War, generations of Chinese intellectuals devoted themselves to the long quest for Westernization. Many Chinese wished to modernize China by replacing the backward practices perceived in Chinese civilization with ideas from modern Western civilization; or to create a new culture through merging the essence of Chinese and Western culture.

Since the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, especially after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the pace of direct learning from the West increased rapidly. In the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century the influence of the West had penetrated into every aspect of Chinese culture including visual arts education, visual arts and general education. At the same time, the flow of such an enormous amount of Western ideas worried many Chinese intellectuals who found it a threat to Chinese cultural traditions. As well, there were concerns also about the blind adoption of Western ideas or the quality of the Chinese studies of Western knowledge. In today’s sense, all these concerns are equivalent to the notions of Globalization and Glocality.

This development of Chinese visual arts education as well as education and visual arts was under mostly Japanese, American and German influences. Japan was regarded as a bridge for China to learn from the West during the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and much of Western knowledge such as German pedagogic and art educational thinking and was imported to China indirectly through Japan.

This study seeks out and reviews the available Chinese writings on art education in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and suggests that among this mass of the Western ideas on art
education being imported into China especially from Germany. Thus the introduction of German ideas on art education, the study of the contextual factors of the formulation of German art educational notions at the turn of the 20th century (including the Dresden conference on art education) in these Chinese writings, are selected as part of the case study of this dissertation. Focus will be given to an in-depth analysis of the quality of study on this issue in the Chinese writings.

The Chinese and German intelligentsia’s and art educators’ original written texts published from the late 19th to the first half of the 20th century form the primary sources for this dissertation. All these written materials are text corpus and constitute the objects of scrutiny for the research. This thesis is significant because it is the first to explain and develop an insight into the development of Chinese art education for general education in the first half of the 20th century with a view to trace where many of the ideas originated from, how they were introduced and by whom. The study concludes with an examination of the German influences through a qualitative analysis of the available Chinese and German written texts of the period.
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A final word of thanks belongs to my family. My parents’ love and understanding have supported my long quest for knowledge. Also thanks my siblings and many friends for their supports and understandings.
CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, analyses and conclusions drawn by this dissertation are entirely the result of my own endeavor, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award.

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Signature of Candidate                   Date

ENDORSEMENT

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Signature of Supervisor                   Date

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