

Research on the Construction and Implementation of a National Defense Education System within University Art Colleges

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Abstract:

National defense education is fundamental to the mission of fostering moral integrity and nurturing well-rounded individuals in higher education institutions. Currently, national defense education programs in art colleges face numerous challenges, including low student engagement and limited effectiveness; existing educational approaches fail to align with the active thinking patterns and emphasis on practical experience characteristic of art students. This paper adopts art colleges in universities as the practical platform to establish a national defense education system that aligns with the cognitive development patterns and professional characteristics of art students. Based on a review of domestic and international literature and an analysis of the theoretical foundations of national defense education, this study examines the current state and practical needs of national defense education within art academies, and elaborates in detail the specific components and implementation pathways for building a comprehensive national defense education system across three dimensions: curriculum design, practical programs, and campus culture development. By strengthening faculty development, enhancing policy and institutional support, establishing national defense education bases, and developing diversified evaluation metrics, we will further deepen the integration of national defense education with art education. This aims to create an educational practice model rooted in artistic disciplines that is replicable and scalable, thereby significantly improving educational effectiveness.

Keywords:

School of Arts, National Defense Education, System Development, Implementation Approaches

1. Introduction

National defense education in universities is a key measure for strengthening the national defense reserve forces. The National Defense Education Law explicitly requires that national defense education be incorporated into the talent development system. [1] National defense education is not only crucial to meeting national security strategic needs but also closely linked to shaping the values of young people. College

students are at a critical stage in shaping their values. By fostering a sense of patriotism and responsibility, national defense education can effectively guide young people to develop sound perspectives on history, ethnicity, and values. [2] While numerous studies exist on national defense education, research grounded in the arts discipline remains limited. Students in the arts discipline possess strong creativity and acute perceptiveness; integrating national defense education with art education holds significant importance and practical value for enhancing educational outcomes. Based on a review of domestic and international literature and grounded in the current state and practical needs of national defense education in university art schools, this paper aims to optimize the educational framework and explore implementation pathways, thereby providing insights for enhancing the effectiveness of national defense education.

2. Current Status of National Defense Education Research in Universities

In foreign art departments, national defense education places greater emphasis on integrating military and educational elements internationally and adopting interdisciplinary teaching approaches. European and North American universities have established an international education framework aligned with global technical operational standards [3]. Some scholars have also integrated artistic creation into military history and strategy, leveraging defense education initiatives to develop creative performances that enhance students' cultural identification with national security.

Domestic Research on National Defense Education regarding practical approaches and strategies for national defense education in universities, existing research using questionnaires has identified issues such as low participation rates and insufficient awareness among art students, and proposed corresponding improvement measures. [4] This indicates that national defense education in university art schools needs improvement in enhancing student engagement and awareness. The study emphasizes that ideological and political education in higher education institutions should be organically integrated with national defense education. Universities should prioritize strengthening top-level design, curriculum system development, faculty development, and infrastructure support [5]. Future national defense education will focus on areas such as national security, military-civilian integration, and collaborative education. [6] It is evident that national defense education in university art colleges should also emphasize integration with ideological and political education, building upon the theoretical foundations of national defense education while addressing the specific needs of art college students to strengthen the development of the educational framework. The latest research findings on integrating national defense education with art demonstrate that combining aesthetic education with national defense education is an essential requirement for talent development. By establishing an integrated curriculum system, fostering a cohesive campus culture, and organizing diverse practical activities, we can effectively promote the deep integration of aesthetic education and national defense education [7]. Overall, both domestic and international literature can provide valuable references for this study. By integrating art into national defense education and innovating teaching methods, aesthetic education can enhance the effectiveness of national defense education, thereby improving both quality and efficiency.

3. Theoretical Framework and Current State of Practice in National Defense Education

National defense education theory integrates various aspects such as the concept of national security, patriotic education, and the psychology of national defense education. The national security concept emphasizes the comprehensive safeguarding of a nation's sovereignty, security, and development interests. The purpose of patriotic education is to foster students' national pride. National defense education psychology provides support for strengthening ideological foundations by addressing dimensions such as cognition, emotion, willpower, and behavior.

The nature of art studies inherently demands that students exhibit high expectations regarding emotional expression and aesthetic experience; consequently, they also have stringent requirements for how national defense education is delivered. Currently, national defense education in art universities remains primarily delivered through traditional classroom lectures, with content mainly focused on disseminating defense knowledge and teaching military theory, while its integration with artistic education remains insufficient. Some art departments conduct national defense education through activities such as artistic exhibitions, volunteer services, and social practices; however, there remains room for improvement in both its systematic approach and practical effectiveness. Art major students demonstrate relatively limited engagement and identification with national defense education, and a balance between academic studies and such education still requires guidance and reinforcement.

4. Establishment of a National Defense Education System in University Schools of Art

4.1. Construction of the Curriculum System

To integrate national defense education into art-related professional courses, it is essential to deepen the system's core framework and refine both content standards and teaching methodologies. While adhering to the core requirements of the syllabus, national defense education can be deeply integrated into the art curriculum system, achieving seamless integration between implicit and explicit curricula. For instance, military-themed works such as *The Long March Suite* could be selected in art history courses to analyze their creative context and symbolic construction; a national defense visual identity module could be incorporated into design courses to enhance students' understanding of national security symbols; military role-playing exercises could be integrated into drama and film courses, guiding students to align professional competence with value orientation and achieve simultaneous development of both values and professional skills. [8]

In accordance with curriculum design principles, develop a school-based national defense education curriculum for art majors. A comprehensive integrated project covering "military field research – creation – performance" can be developed, fully leveraging the resources of local military units and inviting veteran artists to provide practical guidance, enabling students to gain firsthand insights and create works in authentic settings. The teaching methodology integrates case-based instruction, workshops, and interactive discussions, shifting national defense education from a knowledge-centered approach to a competency-oriented one, thereby fostering simultaneous enhancement of artistic expertise and national defense awareness. [9]

4.2. Construction of the Practical System

Building on the distinctive characteristics of art students—active thinking, strong emotional expression, and exceptional creative skills—the teaching and research team must innovate educational approaches to foster practical competence and explore new ways for aesthetic education to enhance national defense education. This involves using artistic creation to internalize defense awareness while leveraging defense-themed works to amplify their social value. Specifically, brand events such as a graduation exhibition themed on “Strengthening the Military,” a national defense animation design competition, and a series of military camp pop-up performances can be organized to guide students in comprehensively utilizing artistic forms like animation, dance, and visual communication to profoundly embody the spirit of national defense and the mission of strengthening the military. Meanwhile, a “Military-Themed Creation Studio” has been established to implement industry-academia integration projects—including battlefield sketching, exhibition design for military history museums, and heroic portrait painting—enabling students to deepen their understanding and emotional connection with national defense culture through authentic creative experiences. [10] Additionally, aesthetic education can be integrated into military drill formations, including conducting scenario-based exercises on battlefield first aid and designing artistic performances for national defense education; by enhancing the appeal and engagement of military training, this approach achieves mutual reinforcement between national defense education and art education.

4.3. Construction of the Campus Culture System

The construction of the campus cultural system is based on fostering a cultural atmosphere for national defense education. On key occasions such as Army Day, the Victory Day of the War of Resistance Against Japan, and National Defense Education Day, aesthetic education can be integrated into national defense education through events like military photography exhibitions, defense-themed fashion shows, and military song arrangement competitions, aiming to establish distinctive brand identities. Meanwhile, leveraging initiatives such as the Campus Weekend Cultural Program and the May Fourth Youth Art Festival, classic theatrical performances are organized to enhance students’ cultural identity and national defense awareness through immersive campus cultural experiences. Establish a cultural education mechanism that integrates “creation, dissemination, and feedback.” For instance, leveraging the Visual Communication program, we can develop defense-themed posters and military-themed cultural and creative projects for campuses. In art education spaces, national defense education elements are integrated to foster a culture-driven learning environment; through club activities, social practices, and volunteer services, young people are encouraged to engage in the creation and presentation of works themed around national defense. [11]

5. Support Measures for National Defense Education in University Art Departments

The core of faculty development lies in cultivating defense education teachers with multidisciplinary knowledge expertise. Enhance teachers’ knowledge levels through exchange programs, training sessions, and advanced studies; alternatively, invite experts in the defense sector as visiting professors to enrich teaching resources.

The key to policy and institutional safeguards lies in improving the support framework and clarifying the objectives, content, and methods of national defense education. By establishing a multidimensional evaluation system, this approach not only enhances skill acquisition but also strengthens students' value recognition and behavioral development, thereby improving their national defense literacy through artistic creation. Meanwhile, a regular mechanism for teaching evaluation, student feedback, and outcome tracking should be established to dynamically optimize practical implementation outcomes and enhance the overall quality of national defense education.

The effective implementation of resource guarantees hinges on deepening military-civilian integration and strengthening the development of national defense education bases. The college can collaborate with military academies and national defense education bases to leverage external resources and provide students with the necessary hardware support for practical training. It is also possible to collaborate with local military forces to establish demonstration bases for art-based national defense education, including military-themed sketching facilities, battlefield photography workshops, and immersive military history theaters, thereby creating an integrated functional ecosystem that encompasses teaching, creation, and exhibition. Regarding resource-sharing mechanisms, a "Military Artist Studio" may be established to provide creative guidance; faculty and students may also be assigned to participate in military cultural development projects (such as visual design for military camps or cultural outreach performances). The two-way embedded collaborative education model not only optimizes the resource pool between military and civilian sectors, but also transforms national defense education from one-way indoctrination to a model of joint development and shared benefits.

6. Future Prospects for the National Defense Education System in University Schools of Art

The development of a national defense education system tailored for art students requires continuous advancement in both theoretical research and practical exploration. Building on a literature review, this paper systematically identifies the core dimensions of system development. However, subsequent empirical research remains an essential component in implementing national defense education and a crucial pathway to enhancing its quality and effectiveness within art departments.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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