

**Graduates' employability in the creative industry in China: What
competencies, qualities, and skills Chinese graduates with an
undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in China**

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Abstract

With the evolving effect of globalisation, the employment challenges of Chinese graduates has become highly complex and increasingly uncertain. China has witnessed a rapid expansion in its higher education sector in recent decades, with a concomitant increase in the number of graduates. This has severely affected the availability of relevant jobs, to the extent that we are witnessing a saturation of the graduate job market. In addition, various industrial restructuring and repositioning of productivity has created further challenges in the job market.

This emerging imbalance between job availability and graduates has become a matter of concern, not only for the those seeking professional employment, but for employers, government and universities. This research addresses the specific concerns regarding the employment of Fine Art graduates in China. Statistics indicate that, across all higher education disciplines, the employment rate for Fine Art graduates, six months after graduation, has severely declined for four consecutive years. This implies that existing pedagogical approaches and education policies in China have not successfully projected or responded to the changing job market and have not positively impacted the employment levels of Fine Art graduates.

The Fine Art curriculum in China is based on a relatively traditional approach to the discipline and is mostly dedicated to the development of skills in painting, drawing sculpting and printmaking. In contrast, the cultural industries, in which Fine Art is supposedly situated, are undergoing a process of development towards an approach more in line with the globalised creative industries. It is this situation that presents, not only an urgent, ongoing problem regarding the sustainability of Fine Art education in China, but also the central research problem of this thesis. The research addresses this problem through an

analysis that uses a coordination triangle model in combination with a heuristic model of employability, with the aim of identifying the competencies, qualities and skills Chinese graduates, with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art, need for employment in the emerging creative industries in China.

The research argues that the current traditional skills based approach to Fine Art education in China does not meet the needs of students in terms of their professional job prospects in the context of the fast developing, globalised creative industries. Furthermore, the researcher makes recommendations, based on a thorough analysis of original, current, primary data, for Fine Art higher education programmes towards curriculum development and delivery, that meets the expectations of graduates and employers of the creative industries of China.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, China has entered a dual transformation of its industrial structure and economic system, namely the shift from primary to secondary and tertiary industries and the transition from a planned economic system to a market economy. As an advancement of the cultural industries, the creative industries are becoming the fastest growing and most important part of China's national economy, relying on creativity and intellectual property to create jobs and future wealth (Ma *et al.*, 2012). In addition, as China's cultural industries development to creative industries and bring about structural changes, scientific and technological developments continue to place new demands on practitioners' knowledge, competence, and professionalism (Guo and Wang, 2019).

The term 'creative industries' first appeared in the 1990s and was originally used to describe all industries that create an intellectual property based on creativity (Garnham, 2005). In 2009, the China State Council issued the cultural industry revitalization plan, which promoted creative industry development to the national strategic level. It was proposed that

“creative industries should focus on the development of cultural and technology, music production, art creation, animation games, and other enterprises, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the development of related service and manufacturing industries.”

Thus, development in the industrial structure have led to new employability requirements for practitioners (Guo, 2022), posing a dual challenge for the labour market and higher education institutions.

In China, any vision of development, economic or otherwise, requires government leadership, and President Xi outlined his vision of the importance

of creativity in China when he described “creativity as being as important as maths and Chinese in the classroom” at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017. This set up a scene for the whole country to strive to look at an effective way to address creativity and innovation for the long-term including potential growth of Chinese economics. According to Fernández-Castañón *et al.* (2022), creativity can be found in all areas of life but has always been associated with artistic activity. Since the nineteenth century, as the art form changed, artists began to prefer spontaneous painting (Fernández-Castañón *et al.*, 2022), driving the development of creativity in arts subjects to a greater extent. According to Finn and Fancourt (2018), the arts subjects are those areas of human activity that relate to creativity, innovation and immigration. Therefore, students of arts subjects can be seen as a significant group of creative people, and the study of the employability of art students will be necessary for China's economic development.

However, the issue of employability of arts professions is still being explored. For example, in order to help graduates in the arts professions, enhance their employment, Chinese higher education institutions have offered career guidance courses. However, due to the limited number of professional career guidance staff and unevenly measured professional backgrounds, the courses have not been effective in helping art students (Meng and Zhang, 2009). Si (2014) found that universities constantly encourage arts graduates to start businesses, but neglected the issue of employment. In September 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the Guidance on Further Strengthening and Improving the Arts Profession in General Higher Education Institutions. It suggests that “the curriculum of arts subjects should closely align with social demand, and that the subject with insufficient social demand should be reduced or discontinued.” The release of this guidance also illustrates that the issue of employability of arts graduates has not yet been resolved. Furthermore, it is

necessary for continued research on the employability of arts students.

In China, arts subjects are divided into eight subject areas in higher education institutions: Fine Art, design, music, drama, theatre, dance, radio and television, and film (Cao, 2010). In all art subjects, the career direction of Fine Art graduates is beginning to blur due to the development of the cultural industries, and many of the positions that once corresponded to the careers of Fine Art graduates are already undergoing structural changes (Shipp, 2016). Furthermore, the reduction in the creative industries' requirements for Fine Art professional competencies resulted in the lowest overall national employment ranking for undergraduate subjects for four consecutive years from 2017 to 2020 (MyCOS, 2020). With the structural development from cultural to creative industries, the demand for employability by creative industry employers predominantly affects the employment rate of current and future Fine Art graduates. Therefore, this research aims to find out the employability required of Fine Art graduates in creative industries in China. Furthermore, it combines the literature review, questionnaire research on Fine Art graduates and interview data with creative industry employers. It is also useful to explore how the Chinese Fine Art undergraduate curriculum might be enhanced to better meet the employment needs of creative industries in China?

This research invokes the heuristic model of employability (Fugate *et al.*, 2004) and the coordination triangle model (Clark, 1983) as the two theories to build the theoretical framework. The heuristic model of employability is based on the definition of employability as “a psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, and effect, and enhances the individual-work interface” (Fugate *et al.*, 2004: 15). This theory suggests that the three dimensions of personal adaptability, career identity, social capital and human capital help coordinate the identification and

realisation of career opportunities within and between organisations. Although they are relatively independent, they can be combined to produce the concept of employability. Therefore, designing a questionnaire to survey Fine Art graduates based on this theory could help investigate the different aspects of Fine Art graduates and understand the reasons for their lack of employability.

The first phase of this research is to determine whether the Chinese Fine Art pedagogies can meet the employment needs of Fine Art graduates, and to understand the current employment situation of Fine Art graduates in China. The survey of Chinese Fine Art undergraduates was designed based on the Fugate's *et al.* (2004) heuristic model of employability, and was undertaken to address objective 1: "identify the extent to which the Chinese Fine Art curriculum provides students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries." The results of phase one will identify information on the employment status of Fine Art graduates and the impact of the various courses of the Fine Art pedagogies in China on the employment of Fine Art graduates. Phase one data will be valuable in analysing the employability of Fine Art graduates, validating the employability attributes that can be developed in Fine Art pedagogies, and help to identify Fine Art pedagogies that can enhance employability. However, it only addresses one side of this research and does not involve an in-depth analysis of the interrelationship between Fine Art graduates and creative industry employers and the employment requirements of creative industry employers for Fine Art graduates in China. Therefore, phase two takes employers' perspectives to evaluate the employability skills required in the creative industries. In the second phase of this study, the semi-structured interviews with employers in the creative industries specifically addresses objective 2: "determine through qualitative data the competencies, qualities and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in

China.”

The coordination triangle model (Clark, 1983), as a second theoretical framework was not used in the first and second phases of the research, but was used in the overall findings and discussion in chapter 8. Although data could be collected from the aspects of Fine Art graduates and employers in the creative industries in the first and second phases. However, to explore how the undergraduate curriculum of Fine Art can be enhanced to better meet the needs of creative industries in China, it would be necessary to involve the higher education sector and include government policy, demographic expansion, academic oligarchy and market formations, among other complex perspectives. (Gebremeskel and Feleke, 2016). In contrast, Clark's coordination triangle demonstrates how the government, market and institutional forces can be effectively balanced through the state market and academic oligarchy to ensure academic standards in higher education institutions. In a theoretical framework designed using the coordination triangle model, Chapter 8 examines the employment of Fine Art graduates from three different perspectives: globalisation, the creative industry and Chinese higher education institutions to discover the reasons for their mutual constraints, the similarities and differences in the employment needs of Fine Art graduates, and ultimately suggest ways to enhance the employability of Fine Art higher education graduates in the creative industry in China.

Section 1.1 examined the central theme of the research. It focuses on hypotheses and covers the research questions.

1.1 Research Problem

This research attempts to find out to explore the relationships between the

competencies of Fine Art graduates and employability, more specifically, the employability required of Fine Art graduates in creative industries in China.

A key hypothesis of this study is that as creative industries continue developing in China, the content of the Fine Art curriculum is no longer meeting the employment needs of employers in the creative industries. Therefore, the objective of the research is to analyse the nature of the Fine Art curriculum and the Fine Art graduates already employed in the creative industries in China, and to examine whether the aims and perceptions of the Fine Art curriculum are the same as the expectations of employers in the creative industries in China. It is therefore appropriate to outline the following research questions:

- What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?

It is also useful to explore:

- How might the undergraduate curriculum of Chinese Fine Art be enhanced to better meet the needs of creative industries in China?

1.2 Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- To explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates.
- To explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities and skills of Fine Art graduates from China.

Objectives:

- Identify the extent to which the Chinese Fine Art curriculum provide students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries.
- Determine through qualitative data the competencies, qualities and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in China.

1.3 Thesis structure

This section outlines and explains the ways in which the structure has been approached in the context of constructing the argument and therefore addressing the research problems and the stated questions.

Chapter Two focuses on the research design methods of the thesis. Its examine the research questions in chapter one and establishes the gap in knowledge. Following this it explains the role of the researcher in the research and the philosophical position. Next, it develops and examines two theoretical positions in order to build a theoretical triangulation to analyse the research from different perspectives and answer the research questions. This chapter concludes with an introduction to data collection methods used, including the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey and creative industry employers interviews. Fine Art pedagogies employability survey is undertaken to address aim 1: explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. The data collected from the 60 completed surveys were analysed quantitatively. The creative industry employer interview takes a grounded approach to designing interview methodology in order to understand the employability skills required in the creative industries, and it used with ten

creative industry employers.

After establishing the theoretical framework and research methodology, Chapters Three and Four review the literature on employment in creative industries and Fine Art higher education in China to facilitate the data analysis in chapter 5.

Chapter Three focuses on investigating graduate employment issues under the development of creative industries in China. In order to assess the causes of the employment problem, there is a discussion on globalized economic growth, the Chinese creative industries, and the career patterns of creative workers. This chapter also addresses the diversity and complexity of the creative industries.

Chapter Four demonstrates the teaching and learning structure of Fine Art higher education in China, including a discussion on different categories of higher education institutions that teach Fine Art, their admission criteria, curriculum content, and related courses for supported employment. It also examines the influence of Chinese culture in Fine Art teaching and learning. The standard features, commonalities, and links between the Fine Art curriculum and the creative industries are also discussed.

Chapter Five discusses the connection between creative industries and Fine Art education. This discussion is based on the Fine Art teaching model and creative industry working model, creativity, and the role of universities in the creative industry, and leads to identification of the current employment issues of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China.

In Chapter Six, the research moves from the theoretical stage to the empirical.

The validity of the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapters is verified. Moreover, a quantitative approach to data collection, and discuss the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey results from 60 Fine Art graduates in China. The statistical analysis outlines the findings for aim 1: explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates.

In Chapter Seven, the creative industry employer interviews explores employers' views on the competencies, qualities, and skills required for employment in the creative industries. Evidence has been generated on 15 qualities, competencies, and skills required for employment in the creative industries. The hypothesis presented at the beginning of this study is also confirmed in this Chapter.

Chapter Eight discusses the literature review, the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey, and the creative industries employer interview. It also considers the three aspects of China's creative industries, Fine Art higher education in China, and globalisation based on the second theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, the Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model. The discussion provides suggestions on enhancing the employability of Chinese Fine Art pedagogies in the creative industries.

Chapter Nine draws the study together to give overall conclusions on the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries, an assessment of the proposed model and theory of graduate employability in Fine Art and recommendations for further research. The discussions are also extended to include critical reflections, limitations of the research, and potential directions for future research.

Chapter 2 Research Design and Methods

This chapter presents the research design and methods used to conduct the research. It goes on to re-state research questions mentioned in chapter one and explain the research's context. This research invokes the heuristic model of employability (Fugate *et al.*, 2004) and the coordination triangle model (Clark, 1983) as the two theories to build the theoretical framework. Data collection methods will be outlined, including the survey questionnaire and interviews. The plan for data analysis and presentation will be explained, in order to optimise how readers can evaluate later data discussion.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining the research gap and my role in the research. It then examines the philosophical implications of the research strategy in section 2.4. Section 2.5 explains the theoretical framework of this study. It then explains the approach to the research design as a whole in section 2.6. Section 2.6.3 explains the quantitative method of this research: The Fine Art pedagogies employability survey, and section 2.6.4 deals with the qualitative method of this research: creative industries employers' semi-structured interviews.

2.2 Gap in the Knowledge

The 2019 report on higher education enrolment on the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Education shows that the three subjects with the highest number of undergraduate students admitted in 2019 in China are engineering 1,485,300, management 666,700 and arts subjects (including art and design, Fine Art and media subjects) 435,900, with the above three disciplines accounting for 60% of the total 4,312,900 undergraduate students enrolled

nationwide. According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China press conference on the 28th of May 2020, the number of applicants for art and design subjects in China in 2020 reached 1.15 million. The projected number of graduates is 424,542, accounting for 10.73% of the total applicants for university entrance examinations in China (Wang, 2020). This shows an influx of students into art and design studies, and there is also an influx of art and design graduates into the labour market, which undoubtedly poses a challenge for both the teaching mission of the higher education institutions and for art and design graduates in finding employment.

In China, art and design study is divided into three subject areas in universities: Fine Art, Design, and Media (Lu, 2015). However, the employment rate of Fine Art graduates is not optimistic (MyCOS, 2020). In the 2020 Employment Report of Chinese University Graduates, the red card subject of 2020 undergraduate employment is Fine Art, and the employment rate after six months graduated has declined for four consecutive years. Red card subject refers to significant unemployment, low employment rate, salary, and employment satisfaction. The report points out that the supply and demand for Fine Art graduates and the professional skill gap between their study and social demand are the reasons for their employment difficulties. This illustrates that existing research and government policy in China has not improved the employment levels of Fine Art graduates and that the Fine Art discipline is not recognised by employers in the creative industries in China.

In June 2018, MyCOS (Chinese data survey and analytics) noted that the employment rate of Fine Art graduates has been declining for four consecutive years from 2018 to 2020. This shows that Fine Art graduates do not fully meet the employability skills requirements of employers. Through the review of the government documents and academic publications, no comprehensive studies

that address the issue of Fine Art graduate employability have been found, neither in English or Mandarin. However, outside China, there are a number of studies that address the employability of Fine Art graduates and enterprises (Hjelde, 2015; Thom, 2017) including how Fine Art graduates become focused on employability through initiating their own businesses. Many institutions in the UK and China have recognized this as an essential part of the curriculum and therefore encourage students to establish a business immediately after graduation. Educators have found that there are possibilities for Fine Art graduates to develop their businesses by becoming more entrepreneurial. However, it remains a very limited extent that all graduates can find employment. Other researchers have discovered that entrepreneurship and the encouragement of students to establish their own business after graduation have been agreeable concepts. However, lectures and instructors at university or higher education institutions have not necessarily seen this as a priority in the classroom. Therefore, educators have continued to be challenged on how to extend their influence on future employment for Fine Art graduates through the change in the curriculum.

Furthermore, since 1999, all PhD. dissertations in China have been published by CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). There have been 217 published doctoral research studies based on graduate employability in 2022, but none have been related to Fine Art graduates. This indicates a gap in the knowledge in the realm of competencies and skills required for employment in China for Chinese graduates with degrees in Fine Art.

This research establishes an original perspective to investigate the gap between Fine Art higher education pedagogies and employment in the creative industries and critically re-examines the content and objectives of Fine Art higher education in China, identifying the extent to which the Chinese Fine Art

curriculum provides students with the competencies, qualities, and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries in China. Moreover, this study will make suggestions for enhancing the employability of Fine Art graduates in China's creative industries.

2.3 Role of the Researcher

Academic research has traditionally been seen as an impersonal activity: researchers are expected to conduct their research objectively (Etherington, 2004). However, research is started related to the researcher's personal background and interests. Personal views and beliefs also guide our choice between research paradigms, methods, and research questions (Etherington, 2004). Choosing to research this topic has a lot to do with the researcher's personal educational and work background. I have completed my undergraduate and postgraduate studies at art and design universities. Although my subject area is not Fine Art, I have studied creative subjects. This shows that I am familiar with the structure of teaching, the content and the state of the students and teachers in art and design universities.

Furthermore, I have worked in China's education system and creative industries for over ten years and have interviewed many Chinese Fine Art graduates during my career. When interviewing them, it is clear that most of them choose to apply for part-time jobs. They also work part-time in other jobs, such as insurance sales and painting teachers. Although, these are my personal and subjective feelings the section 2.2 has also provided factual evidence of the employment issues of Fine Art graduates in China.

I am no longer a creative subject student, and I am no longer an employee in the creative industries. However, I have worked and studied in all of their related

fields. I may start my research with some subjective personal experience, but at the same time, as a researcher, I will use sound research methods to present factual findings. My experience and subjective ideas will be turned into tools to conduct smooth research with the respondents and ultimately achieve objective factual data.

2.4 Philosophical Position

Philosophical positioning requires the researcher to state their ontological and epistemological perspective. According to Dieronitou (2014: 5)

“ontology refers to the nature of knowledge and reality, while epistemology is concerned with the foundations of knowledge - whether this is hard, real, transmittable in a concrete form, or whether it is softer and more subjective, based on personal experience and insight.”

Both fields are related in that methods are the techniques or procedures for collecting and analysing data relevant to the research question. Ontological and epistemological fields are often further combined into research paradigms, employing prescribed methods, such as quantitative versus qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012).

This research aims to explore the employability skills required by the creative industries in China, which involves designing and transforming the higher education curriculum. Liu (2014) argues that the transformative development of higher education institutions is not simply a matter of institutional change and technological innovation but also involves a profound conceptual revolution, i.e., it involves new demands on the epistemology and ontology of higher education.

In the traditional approach to higher education programmes, ontology tends to be subordinated to epistemological issues. Dall’Alba and Barnacle (2007) suggest that the epistemology behind higher education has been flawed. They further explain that the focus on the intellect in traditional higher education programmes has neglected the crucial role of the living body, more specifically, the embodiment of knowledge or knowing. This has led to the problem that the knowledge and skills acquired by students in higher education are difficult to integrate into social practice. Thus, in addition to the role that learners' underlying epistemologies play in maintaining cognitive agency, the role of social norm must also be considered (Fedyk and Xu, 2018). In considering the relationship between people in society, attention is given to the epistemological edge of constructivism. According to Galbin (2014), constructivism is the idea that humans construct meaning through their interaction with the world and is determined by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms operating within that context and time frame (Berger and Luckman, 1966). In 2016, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued guidelines on teaching and learning reform in higher education institutions. The focus was on

“promoting synergy between talent training and social needs, relevant industry sectors working together to promote whole-process collaborative education, establishing a synergistic mechanism for training objectives, teacher teams, resource sharing and management, and strengthening two-way communication between university teachers and experts in the practice sector.”

In addition, other recommendations include learning by doing in conjunction with activity-based learning and integrated real-life scenarios in classroom teaching (Tan and Ye, 2021). Although the pedagogy of this reform is not

explicitly mentioned, Chinese scholars and educators believe that the dominant theory is constructivism. This research attempts to answer the question, “What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?” Therefore, this study requires an understanding of employers' needs for employees in the creative industries and the content of Fine Art higher education programmes, combining qualitative and quantitative research for knowledge construction, following the constructivism model in ontology.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

“Theory has a central role in research...theory and research are interrelated and are dependent on the other to make sense of a phenomenon” (Udo-Akang, 2012: 91). A theoretical framework is an analytical tool that combines various theories' concepts, assumptions, and expectations to explain the assumed relationships between the main aspects to be studied (Lederman and Lederman, 2015). Wacker (1998) provides three reasons why theory is essential to research: It provides a framework for analysis; it provides an effective method of domain development; it provides a clear explanation for the practical world. In the same vein, Maxwell (2006) maintain that a theoretical framework serves two purposes. The first is to demonstrate how the research fits into what is known to existing theory and research and the second is to show how the research contributes to the academic field. It is, therefore, necessary to develop a theoretical framework before data collection, not only to facilitate the design of the research methodology but also to provide a framework for analysis after data collection.

2.5.1 Introduction

The aims of this research are to explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities and skills of Fine Art graduates from China, in addition to exploring the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. The objective is to understand whether Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies meet the employability development of Fine Art graduates and the employability needs of employers in the creative industries and to suggest courses for Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies that can facilitate the employment of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China. Thus, this study needs to obtain the needs of both Fine Art graduates and creative industry employers to verify the employment benefits of Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies. When research needs to be conducted with multiple perspectives in mind to answer questions to support or refute findings, Denzin (1970) suggests that theoretical triangulation can observe and explain the social phenomenon under study.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources, research theories and research methods to analyse the same issue within the same study to gain a comprehensive understanding of multiple research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Sun, 2006; Noble and Heale, 2019). A study requires strong internal and external validity and reliability and a comprehensive multi-perspective view. Triangulation is a method to increase the validity, strength, and explanatory potential of the research, reduce researcher bias, and provide multiple perspectives (Turner and Turner, 2009). Triangulation combines two or more methodologies, theoretical perspectives, data sources, investigators and analytical methods for studying the same phenomenon (Hussein, 2009). Despite the benefits of triangulation as a research strategy, it has limitations for specific research purposes for doctoral dissertation research projects, including time and budget constraints for completion (Hussein, 2009). However, to better

analyse the research from different perspectives and answer research questions, this research has used two theories to build a theoretical triangulation.

A general discussion of the research theories relevant to graduate employability and various employability models before discussing the conceptualisation of the Fine Art graduate employability model, which provided a foundation for developing a measure of Fine Art graduate employability in section 2.5.2. Section 2.5.3 will provide the first theory—The heuristic model of employability. Section 2.5.4-2.5.7 explain the derivation of the three elements of the model regarding Fine Art education. A Fine Art graduate employability model has been suggested based on the variations of the three elements in section 2.5.8. The section 2.5.9 provides the second theory we use— The Clark’s triangle. The aim of the model is not to find the truth but to gain a greater understanding and insight into the phenomenon by gaining different perspectives. This theory is used as an external framework for the heuristic model for discussing and analysing the data. The following Table 1 shows the content of the theoretical framework.

Table 1 The content of the theoretical framework

<p>Theoretical Framework</p> <p>2.5.1 Introduction</p> <p>2.5.2 Theories of Graduate Employability</p> <p>2.5.3 The Heuristic Model of Employability</p> <p>2.5.4 Personal Adaptability</p> <p>Positive Career Self-concept</p> <p>Internal locus of Control and Motivation</p> <p>Information Identity Style</p> <p>Creativity Adaptability</p> <p>2.5.5 Career Identity</p> <p>The Creation of a Student’s Career Identity in Higher Education</p> <p>Creative Identity</p> <p>2.5.6 Social Capital and Graduate Employability</p> <p>The Creation of Student Social Capital in Fine Art Higher Education</p>
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Online or Offline □ Social Media, Social Capital

2.5.7 Human Capital, Higher Education and Graduate Employability

The Human Capital and Social Capital Output of Fine Art Education

2.5.8 Conclusion

2.5.9 Employer, Higher Education and Government

2.5.10 The State - Political Power and Higher Education in China

Political Aims Determine the Orientation of Fine Art Education

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — First Phase : Soviet Art Education Template

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — Second Phase: The Cultural Revolution

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — Third Phase: Globalisation

2.5.11 The Market – Higher Education’s Third Mission

2.5.12 The Academic Oligarchy – The Eight Major Arts Universities

2.5.13 Fine Art Graduate Employability Coordination Triangle Model

2.5.14 Theoretical Framework Conclusion

2.5.2 Theories of Graduate Employability

Before discussing the theoretical framework of this study, it will first review and discuss the existing theories on graduate employability. This helps in exploring and reflecting on the structure of employability skills. The idea of employability emerged as a policy concept in the early 20th century debates on unemployment (Gazier, 1998). Based on the global knowledge economy development, graduate employability has been a significant focus of employer and government policy since 1993 (Hu, 2016). The literature used to describe desirable graduate employability is challenging to define succinctly and comprehensively. However, terms such as “generic”, “core”, “key”, “enabling”, “transferable”, “professional” and “attributes”, “skills” or “competencies” are used interchangeably, thereby adding to the conceptual confusion surrounding employability (Green, Hammer and Star, 2009: 19). Over the past 10 years, scholars have proposed a number of frameworks for graduate employability (Artess *et al.*, 2017: 7-38) as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Graduate employability literature review database of articles

Author	Year	Research
Hooley, T., Watts, A. G., Sultana, R. G. and Neary, S.	2013	The 'blueprint' framework for career management skills: a critical exploration.
Cai, Y	2013	Graduate employability: a conceptual framework for understanding employers' perceptions
Cole, D., and Tibby, M.	2013	Defining and developing your approach to employability: a framework for higher education institutions
Jones, H and Warnock, H	2014	Towards a competency-based framework for work-based learning
Smith, A M J and Paton, R A	2014	Embedding enterprise education: A service based transferable skills framework
Serrano, G <i>et al</i>	2015	Measurement and Sustainability of the Qualifications frameworks in the European Higher Education Area through an Employment Survey on Access to the Labour Market
Higher Education Academy.	2015	Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education
Ferrández-Berrueco, R	2016	A framework for work-based learning: basic pillars and the interactions between them.

However, graduate employability studies have become more complex and multidimensional, and it is more difficult to define graduate employability in today's society because there are various definitions in the existing literature.

Cotton's employability model (1993) is considered one of the first employability models and is famous for its simplicity and practicality. His theoretical framework identifies four employability competencies that employers require: basic skills, higher-order thinking skills, effective skills, and traits. The model is based on the notion that employability depends on an individual's skill level without reference to other factors such as attitudes, behaviours, and personal experiences (Sumanasiri *et al.*, 2015). The over-reliance on skills has been criticised as a major weakness of this model of employability, as an individual's skills alone are not sufficient to achieve meaningful employment (Knight and Yorke, 2006). The study conducted by Hillage and Pollard (1998) relatively extends the other elements of employability skills, and it summarises for the first time all contemporary perspectives. In their summary, there are four main elements of employability skills: assets, deployment, presentation, and context (Sumanasiri *et al.*, 2015: 4). It provides a broader framework for employability, where skills are no longer the only quality valued for employment but are equally crucial for subject understanding, metacognition, and personal qualities. However, Pool and Sewell (2007) argue that while being richer, this model of employment is too complex and is not conducive to understanding and elaboration if student participation is required in the study. Hence, the model does not apply to this study.

The literature review also found that Fugate *et al.*, (2004) could offer a more multidimensional explanation of graduate employability. They argue that employability reflects the synergy of career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital in the context of career and work. More specifically, they argue that employability captures aspects of each of the three dimensions that contribute to identifying and realizing career opportunities within and between organisations that lead to employability (Koen, 2013; Fugate *et al.*, 2004). This synergistic combination empowers and brings value to

employability as employability is certified by both employers and employees (Gerryts, 2018). This is in line with the logic of this study which sought to investigate employability skills from both employers and Fine Art graduates in the creative industries.

Furthermore, several scholars, such as McArdle *et al.*, (2007) and Clarke (2017) have conducted empirical studies based on Fugate's Heuristic Model of Employability. Based on the geographical characteristics of this study, further empirical research on the heuristic model of employability by Chinese scholar (Qiao *et al.*, 2011) is reviewed. Qiao *et al.*, 's (2011) study on the structure of university students' employability and its impact on employment used questionnaires to validate the results of the heuristic model of employability proposed by Fugate *et al.*, (2004): adaptability, occupational identity, human capital, and social capital, and shows that there is a significant predictive effect on the number of offers made to Chinese university graduates, and the starting salary of graduates. Although Qiao *et al.*, 's (2011) study has different research objectives from this study's attempt to discover the employability of Fine Art graduates. However, its study covered professional categories of Fine Art graduates, reflecting the manipulability and suitability of the heuristic model of employability for research on the employability of Fine Art graduates in China.

2.5.3 The Heuristic Model of Employability

The heuristic model of employability is based on the definition of employability as “a psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, and effect, and enhances the individual-work interface” (Fugate *et al.*, 2004: 15). According to Fugate *et al.*, (2004), employability is reflected in three dimensions: personal adaptability, career identity, social capital and human capital. Individual adaptability refers to the

factors that make an individual employable and individual differences in how people are adaptable. Career identity refers to an individual's self-definition in an occupational context, and the individual's self-understanding of the occupation (Shi, 2006). Human capital refers to individuals' knowledge and abilities that allow for changes in action and economic growth and social capital refers to the networks of relationships that can be used for the individual or the collective (Dakhli and De Clercq, 2004). These three aspects help coordinate the identification and realization of career opportunities within and between organizations. They are relatively independent, but they can be combined. Together, they produce the concept of employability (See Fig 1).

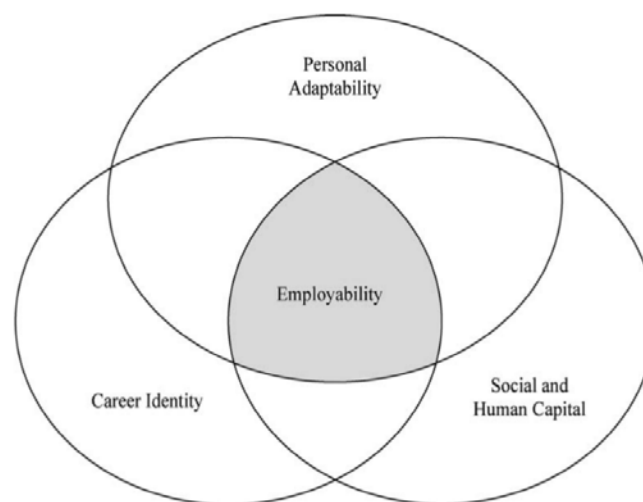


Fig 1. The Heuristic Model of Employability

University graduate employability can be seen as a combination of several smaller subsystems, and together graduate employability is built. To understand the employability of the Fine Art graduate in more depth, it is necessary to analyse each component. Thus, the following sections will explore each element of the heuristic model of employability.

2.5.4 Personal Adaptability

The first dimension of the heuristic model of employability is personal adaptability. Hall (2004) proposed that adaptability is an occupational meta-ability that constitutes the core of common occupation and personal identity. Personal adaptability can significantly help job performance (Seibert *et al.*, 2001) and career success (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000), it enables people to remain productive and attractive to employers in changing work areas. Personal adaptability refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, other characteristics (KSAO), dispositions, and behaviours that individuals possess that enable them to meet the demands of a particular situation, particularly in the work environment (Ashford and Taylor, 1990; Campion *et al.*, 2011).

Fugate *et al.*, (2004) maintain that employees are responsible for acquiring the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) valued by current and future employers in order to remain employable in the current and future employment environment. KSAO simultaneously forms the competency model, which underpins employment and influences recruitment, training, promotion, compensation, and succession planning (Campion *et al.*, 2011). People with solid personal adaptability will scan the working environment to understand what jobs can be provided and what experience and skills are needed. Market opportunities are compared with their images and skills, and personal changes are made to adapt better to work needs.

Fugate (2001) identified individual characteristic variables associated with personal adjustment, including three areas: positive career self-concept, motivation to learn, and information identity style. These individual factors have a significant impact on identifying and realizing employment opportunities.

Positive Career Self-concept

A positive career self-concept is a combination of self-esteem and locus of control that describes how people perceive themselves at work (Fugate *et al.*, 2004). Shi (2006) maintains that people with a positive career self-concept have high levels of career self-esteem and internal locus of control, Neck *et al.*, (2017) describe a locus of control as the extent to which a person or group believes they have control over their environment. Kovach (2018) further explains that one way to educate a locus of control is to allow students to examine the sources from which grades are earned. Once a student completes a semester, grades are finalized and posted. A student with an internal locus of control believes course grades are acquired directly from their focus on the course, all in proportion to the grades earned (Kovach, 2018). On the other hand, a student with an external locus of control would believe that the rates reached are based on other external factors. Other external factors could include “poor instruction, (lack of) genetic intelligence, familial expectations for academic performance, the student's background (people from my background do not do well in school), and/or a person's luck.” (Kovach, 2018: 41)

Therefore, the internal locus of control is identical to the positive professional self-concept. People with a high positive career self-concept often attribute career success to individual ability and effort and career failure to reasons other than the individual. People with a high positive career self-concept are more likely to take on challenging work, and a high positive career self-concept is an intrinsic factor that facilitates individual adjustment (Fugate *et al.*, 2004). Locus of control is also related to motivation; a person with learning motivation strives to acquire skills and competencies to develop themselves (Fugate *et al.*, 2004).

Internal locus of Control and Motivation

According to Kovach (2018: 35), “Motivation is a valuable construct in life that determines the degree of success in outcomes (i.e., students in school,

professionals at work, potentially the well-being of personal and professional relationships).” Ormrod (2016) maintains that motivation is an internal state that stimulates action and helps maintain focus on the final goal. Kovach (2018) suggests that in higher education, the concept of motivation affects multiple opportunities for students, such as choosing whether to attend universities, being accepted to a specific university and being accepted to a specific subject. This set of influences continues to fester in employment after graduation, affecting the graduates' employability.

Numbers of scholars have certified that learning motivation is considered an essential predictor of someone's level of employability (Tammaro, 2005; Berntson *et al.*, 2006; Thijssen *et al.*, 2008; Tentama and Arridha, 2020). A recent study by Wittekind, Raeder, and Grote (2010) states that low levels of learning motivation could also affect employability. Motivation for learning is an individual's beliefs about their ability to learn and value-based activities related to education and is associated with mastery of goals and intrinsic interest (Kramarski and Michalsky, 2009). Cole *et al.*, (2004) argue that motivation is also a psychological resource that can facilitate individual learning process behaviours that achieve learning goals through increased learning intensity. A person with learning motivation may prefer challenges, internalise professional success, and persevere in the face of adversity. These behaviours are signs of adaptability and contribute to a person becoming more successful.

Information Identity Style

The last dimension of personal adaptability variable is information identity style. According to Ashforth (2011), the identity style refers to a person's sensitivity to their behaviour and potential identification with their role. Ashforth (2011) describes three identity styles: information orientation, standardisation orientation, and avoidance orientation. Information-oriented employees tend to

be proactive in gathering information and attending training when changing careers (Fugate *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, people with an information identity style tend to be more sensitive to information that can enhance their position and proactively acquire information. Thus, individuals with an information identity style may be better prepared to cope with many future stressors, making them more adaptable.

Creativity Adaptability

Creativity is a core requirement for the creative industries and Fine Art education (Kloudová and Chwaszcz, 2014; Corazza, 2016). However, artists invest creativity, novel elements, unconventional elements, and non-conforming elements in creating their work, which in some cases are associated with unfavourable adaptive development (Runco, 1999). Therefore, creativity may be excluded when adaptation needs to be met (Cohen, 2012). Hence □ adaptability and creativity are somewhat presented as mutually exclusive. Orkibi (2021) proposes a notion that seems to address this issue, arguing that although creativity and adaptability are different constructs, sometimes acting in opposite ways, creativity and adaptability are still related. In the same vein, Cohen (2012) maintains that internal shifts in the self can shape the development of creativity. This internal shift requires acceptance and willingness to modify existing experiences and adapt to uncertainty. Thus, the developmental process of creativity includes the ability to adapt.

According to Martin *et al.* (2013: 728), adaptability is defined as “appropriate cognitive, behavioural, and/or affective adjustment in the face of uncertainty and novelty.” Other scholars have also found that one of the core cognitive demands facing the art and design subjects is dealing with uncertainty and indeterminacy (Lawson, 2006; Cross, 2011; Nelson and Stolterman, 2012). Although uncertainty is often experienced as a negative psychological state that

people are motivated to resolve or avoid (Bar-Anan, Wilson, and Gilbert, 2009), it can also be the most conducive to developing creativity (Lane and Maxfield, 2005). Beghetto (2019: 33) maintains that trying to understand uncertainty may stimulate creative thought and action because “uncertainty typically requires us to challenge our old assumptions and try new things.” Changing students' conceptual and personal understanding of a topic and motivating further learning (Tovey *et al.*, 2010), this self-relevant uncertainty is then transformed into the most significant motivational force (Hogg, 2007). Therefore, creativity adaptability emerges when creativity and adaptivity needs coexist. According to Orkibi (2021), creative adaptability refers to a person's ability to respond creatively and adaptively, which helps individuals generate new and potentially effective ideas, enhancing employability. Assessing the creativity adaptability of Fine Art graduates would be more applicable to this research.

2.5.5 Career Identity

The second dimension of the heuristic model of employability is career identity. According to Fugate *et al.* (2004), career identity (i.e., role identity, occupational identity, and organisational identity) is how individuals define themselves in the work environment. In a study conducted by Meijers (1998) it is argued that career identity is how people define themselves in terms of their job or occupation, and it reflects the ability to ‘know why’ (Defillippi and Arthur, 1994). The ability to ‘know why’ includes attributes such as career motivation, personal meaning, and personal values (Jaussi *et al.*, 2007). At the same time, career Identity can also guide the individual in terms of unemployment, make the individual's professional identity clear, and have strong pertinence in the characteristics of his/her workability, which can make the individual better stand out from the competitors who may appear in work (McArdle *et al.*, 2007). However, Costas and Fleming (2009) argue that as organisational domination

seems to increase to constitute the employee's career identity, more research is looking at dis-identification of the workplace as a tactical response in the workforce. For example, in a company's cultural management context, employees may forget who they are and who they must be at work, and employee career identities may change depending on the company a person works for.

According to Bridgstock *et al.* (2015) career identity development has been largely neglected in higher education. Students complete their courses with only the vaguest idea of what they will do afterwards, or are guided by unrealistic, media-influenced ideas about the world of work in their chosen field, forming closed and idealised professional identities (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015). Schediwy *et al.* (2018) argues that career identity formation in the creative industries may have more particular challenges. This is because careers in the creative industries are often individual-led and conducted across professions, many of which involve short-term project work for freelancers (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, this form of combined career is often vulnerable to instability (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Therefore, career identity shaping in the creative industries must face some challenges (Schediwy *et al.*, 2018). These challenges are rooted in the inadequate shaping of students' career identities by higher education and the creative industries' career complexity. Both sides are deficient in terms of career identity.

The Creation of a Student's Career Identity in Higher Education

A person's career identities are continually constructed and reconstructed (Gotsi *et al.*, 2010). From personal learning to gaining practical work experience, developing career management skills, and perceiving the demands of social roles, the structure of career identity changes continuously (Schediwy *et al.*, 2018). The career identity can be established in the classroom (through

masterclasses, mentoring, and project work) and through authentic, contextualised learning opportunities (Crebert *et al.*, 2004). In addition, students promote career identity by engaging in internships to build relationships with professionals in the industry (Raffo and Reeves, 2000). However, Bridgstock *et al.* (2015) argue that career identity could also influence students' engagement with their studies at university, and those students who have a good understanding of their career identity are more likely to take a more meaningful approach to their studies and engagement with their courses. On the other hand, students who are less aware of their career identity are less motivated to study for their courses and only want to pass exams (Nyström, 2009). Other authors also found that transitioning students from graduation to work is also a process of career identity development (Hall, 2004; Nyström, 2009). Ecclestone (2009: 3) describes this process of transition as “becoming somebody personally, educationally and occupationally.”

As the scope of this study is Fine Art higher education in China, higher education in China is addressed. The Chinese government is aware of the importance of students' career identities and provides much support to students in the identity-building process through career guidance programmes. However, these services are often not well integrated with the creative professional programmes in higher education institutions, resulting in students starting their professional studies without a clear definition of what they will do afterwards (Bridgstock, 2011). Wang *et al.* (2011) maintain that Fine Art students experience distress and anxiety in their final semester because they are not prepared for the challenging transition into the world of work. Students studying creative disciplines in higher education are on a journey involving a shift in identity (Orr and Shreeve, 2017), both as students and professionals as creative practitioners (Kinniburgh, 2014). Orr (2011) argues that in Fine Art higher education, identity is considered central to the assessment of learning.

Glăveanu and Tanggaard (2014) maintain that career identity is also considered a contextual element of creative production. Compared to the other subjects, students of creative subjects may need more support to develop an adaptable and realistic career identity before engaging in work (Bridgstock, 2011). Therefore, establishing a creative career identity is crucial for those who work in the creative industries and for Fine Art students.

Creative Identity

Creative self-beliefs have attracted significant attention in the creativity research literature over the past decade. According to Dollinger and Dollinger, (2017), three key self-beliefs include creative self-efficacy (i.e., perceived confidence to perform a particular task creatively), creative metacognition (i.e., beliefs based on a combination of creative self-knowledge and situational knowledge), and creative self-concept (i.e., general beliefs about one's creative abilities). Karwowski and Barbot (2016) argue that self-beliefs can shape a person's creative identity, and play a key role in determining whether a person will engage in creative performance opportunities, persist in their efforts when faced with challenges, and ultimately demonstrate creative achievement (Michael *et al.*, 2011; Tierney and Farmer, 2011; Dollinger and Dollinger, 2017).

Karwowski and Kaufman (2017) offer an alternative view of creative identity and suggests that there is an emerging consensus in research on creativity - that creativity results from a confluence of factors, some of which are related to the personal qualities of creative potential, while others are related to factors that enable the realization of that potential. Thus, compared to other industries' career identities, creative career identity requires recognition and validation from people of the same profession, consumers, critics, and other stakeholders (Reckwitz, 2018). As early as 1983, Hirshman suggested that the underlying motivation of the Fine Art artist was to create works of art that would satisfy the

audience. Although subsequently, Alpers (1988) argued that a distinction should be made between Fine Art and commercial art. However, the value of Fine Artwork is from both the artist's subjective evaluation and feedback from the market (Gutner, 2005). Marketing, critics, and consumers largely determine the work's market value and define the Fine Artist's creative identity (Marshall and Forrest, 2011). Thus, recognition of one's creative identity also signifies one's credibility and future potential (Rindova *et al.*, 2005), testing Fine Art graduates for their creative identity, which will help this research test the employability of Fine Art graduates.

2.5.6 Social Capital and Graduate Employability

The final dimension is social and human capital. The social capital of interpersonal relationships and social networks that reflect employability provide access to career-related information and resources (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; McArdle *et al.*, 2007). It is also multidimensional and occurs at both individual and organizational levels (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). The trust of internal organizations can be enhanced by people-to-people contact, and more valuable resources can be provided by building bridges of external networks (Adler and Kwon, 2002). One of the main factors to enhance the strength of social capital is trust, which is usually the result of obligation, censure, threat, and exchange (Coleman, 1988). For this research, social capital is significant because social capital can predict education characteristics such as academic achievement, educational quality, intellectual development, and employability (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Ellison *et al.*, 2007). Higher education is considered one of the most influential producers of social capital (Tonkaboni *et al.*, 2013). It can contribute to social capital variables. It brings connections and new social networks and leads to developing students' social capital in the education system (Zaker, 2008).

The Creation of Student Social Capital in Fine Art Higher Education

According to Brouwer *et al.* (2015). in a higher education environment, social capital resources may come from parents (family capital), friends and peers (peer capital), and academic staff (teacher capital). The social capital of university students refers to the set of identity relationships formed through interactions between various objects at home, school, and society and the total amount of resources available to them through their social networks (Zhou, 2022). Brouwer *et al.* (2015) argue that during the transition from secondary education to higher education, it is particularly challenging for students to build social capital, as students may feel uncertain when facing a new social environment. Clark (2005) maintains that in addition to meeting university requirements and adapting to university life, they must also be away from the parental home and former classmates and need to establish new social networks. With this transition, peers, teachers, and friends at university may become more important than parental support because of the higher frequency of meeting with classmates and professors. Thus, upon entering university, peer capital and teacher capital formed the student's social capital that contributes positively to students' academic success (Brouwer *et al.*, 2015). University students also face another particularly challenging time of building social capital between university graduation and social employment. The challenge can be enormous at this time, as each student's employment goals are different. If the teacher has a dual role as an industry practitioner and educator (Zhou, 2022), this will undoubtedly facilitate the expansion of the students' social capital.

There is a mindset of respecting tradition and valuing identity in China, especially in Fine Art. If a student studies under a famous painter or teacher, this student is more likely to succeed in his/her career (Zhou, 2022). This could

prove that teacher capital has significantly impacted Fine Art education in China. However, with the advent of the internet age, students have more ways to build their social capital. A discussion follows on whether the social media era can replace traditional social capital and create a new social capital form.

Online or Offline, Social Media, Social Capital

The UK government published its first document on the development of creative industries in 1998 (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1998), the same year Google was established as a privately registered company (Flew, 2018). Both the UK government and Google have simultaneously driven innovation in the product-related media, arts and entertainment industries. Thus, the Internet and the creative industries have been interconnected from the beginning. However, although there have been some attempts to think of the creative industries and the Internet together, Hartley (2005) argues that the two fields have gone in different directions, with the creative industries being associated with the economy and supporting artistic and cultural activities, while the Internet is mainly associated with technological innovation. Social capital can be broadly defined as the value derived from resources embedded in social relationships with others (Lin, 2008). In contrast, social media, including sites such as Facebook and Twitter, allow users to construct public or semi-public profiles that articulate their social connections to other profiles and navigate these connections in virtual spaces (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). As such, social media changes the structure and nature of social relations, and these may alter the distribution and nature of social capital embedded in these social relationships.

According to Lin and Lu (2011), Social platforms have influenced online business activities and changed how people conduct business. Everyone can join groups on social platforms based on school affiliation, employer,

geographic location, hobbies, or shared interest. It suggests that the Internet can create new social networks, retrieve disconnected social networks, and, more importantly, create social capital. However, Johnston *et al.* (2013) question the social platforms, arguing that the virtual online communication model can negatively affect face-to-face interactions. However, Fukuyama (2001) argues that the way people connect is inherently changing as technology evolves. According to Bargh and McKenna's (2004) use and gratification theory, the specific purpose of an individual in a communication setting determines the outcome of the interaction. It does not limit the form of the communication channel used. Therefore, what constitutes the social impact of online social networks on people should depend on the context of the social environment. Despite the various benefits of social capital, negative features exist (Graeff and Svendsen, 2013). According to Fukuyama (2001), social capital on online social platforms can promote hate group formation and hate speech.

The advent of social media has arguably changed the nature of social capital generated from social relationships. Social media allow creators to connect directly with people who may purchase their work (Blumenfeld, 2018). For artists, social media can enable them to express themselves better. They can adopt more modalities and techniques to interact with participants online and create and maintain social capital (Ellison *et al.*, 2011). However, Liu (2021) argues that as China's creative industries are still fragmented, the public's recognition of art and aesthetic levels vary, and art transactions are mostly limited to well-known painters and high-income groups. Social media are not significant for the sale of artworks. Lin (2008) maintains that even in an era of pervasive social media, offline social capital in China is still a strong benchmark for measuring the extent to which people are connected, share values, and care about each other in a community (Liu, 2021). Therefore, after considering the pros and cons of online social media, this study will focus on discovering the

traditional offline social capital of Fine Art graduates. In contrast to real-life social capital, online social networks are flexible, vary from person to person, and are subject to uncertainty.

2.5.7 Human Capital, Higher Education and Graduate Employability

Human capital is the intrinsic value of employees' knowledge and skills. In a broad sense, human capital includes two aspects: the first one is valued, which can be expressed by the contribution of improving organizational capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency; the second one is uniqueness, which is expressed as tacit knowledge or expertise (O'Connell, McNeely and Hall, 2008). According to O'Connell *et al.* (2008), the life-long income of educated workers defines the value of education investment. We can see education, work, productivity, and income as a continuum of linear development. When the productivity of educated student work is generated, the personal income of graduates will follow, which is human capital.

Higher education will more or less automatically trigger private wealth, career success, and national economic growth. From this perspective, higher education can be understood as preparation for work and occupation, and education itself has nothing to do with family income, cultural attributes, or social network, which is the starting point of career outcome and income (Hodgson, 2014). Gillies (2015) argues that the human capital theory also defines education as personal and public goods. According to the theory, the return on education investment is both personal and social. Individuals will receive economic returns, while individuals with advanced human capital will promote the development of the whole economy (Gillies, 2015). The economic function of education for an individual is that it can help a person find a job (Robeyns, 2006). Therefore, education is essential because it can improve

workers' productivity so that they can earn higher wages. By considering skills and knowledge as an investment in labour productivity, economists can estimate economic returns to education from different levels and types. Some economic changes based on the number of graduates for each subject can even be estimated, which is one reason why the government favours human capital theory (Gillies, 2015). Therefore, human capital is acquired when the knowledge acquired in higher education transforms into employability skills.

Robeyns (2006) proposes an alternative way of thinking about human capital theory, which he argues the only benefits to be considered from education are higher productivity and higher wages? The theory conceptualises the world through the eyes and disciplinary lens of contemporary mainstream economics, a discipline that has increasingly shielded itself from the cultural, social, and immaterial dimensions of life (Hennessy, 2014). The OECD (2020) also notes that 'many factors related to education and circumstances' affect the returns to human capital beyond learning itself. Thus, higher education does not bear full responsibility for human capital, and all employability does not translate exclusively from school knowledge. However, Hennessy (2014) argues that human capital theory influences the relationship between higher education and that even though opportunities are faltering in an increasingly unequal society, graduates can still change their fortunes by their abilities. Higher education that converts knowledge into employability skills which are in demand in the labour market will undoubtedly enhance the opportunities for students' human capital acquisition.

The Human Capital and Social Capital Output of Fine Art Education

While the higher education system has long tapped into students' minds to find specific commodities that fit the needs of the workforce they serve, career choices are also made based on predictions (Towse, 2006). However, McDonal

and Hite (2015) argues that no one knows what these future jobs will look like, but the purpose of education is to take us into that future. Today, due to the development of global labour markets, new technologies and rapid advances in science and technology, human capital needs to be mobile and translated into skills and expertise in different fields (Tonkaboni *et al.*, 2013). Higher education institutions need to impart knowledge, preserve and disseminate culture, innovate, explore new knowledge, and assign people to different social positions (Sharepour, 2004). Therefore, the content of higher education curricula needs to be teaching the known and develop the unknown.

Most students have received years of professional instruction before enrolling in Fine Art higher education, showing a portfolio or other evidence of such achievement as admission requirements. What else can schools offer students beyond their professional knowledge? Towse (2006) argues that an essential part of the experience of going to university, beyond learning professional skills, is socialisation and specialisation. All artists need to network - to work in partnerships, meet other artists and agents, get recommendations from renowned teachers; these all help to create an experience for post-graduation career development (Towse, 2006). Thus, higher education institutions generate human capital as well as social capital. Tacit knowledge, trust, and reputation, which are also crucial in the artists' labour market, are all evidence of social capital. Therefore, social capital and human capital strongly impact the employability of Fine Art graduates.

2.5.8 Conclusion

Morgan (2014) argues that experience is not always sufficient to provide answers to all questions. When answering research questions, researchers are free to combine their research on the topic and existing theories with intuitive

guesses, ultimately modifying or generating new theories (Tomiyaamal *et al.*, 2003, Wheeldon, 2010). This is called reasoning about the best explanation (Paavola, 2015). Therefore, to answer this study's research question, the existing employability heuristic model of Fugate *et al.* (2004) was modified for application in the direction of creativity. As a result, the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates has been suggested in this section. The unique properties of the Fine Art graduates and the creative industries turn personal adaptability into creativity and adaptability, career identity into creative career identity. Social and human capital remains the same (See Fig. 2).

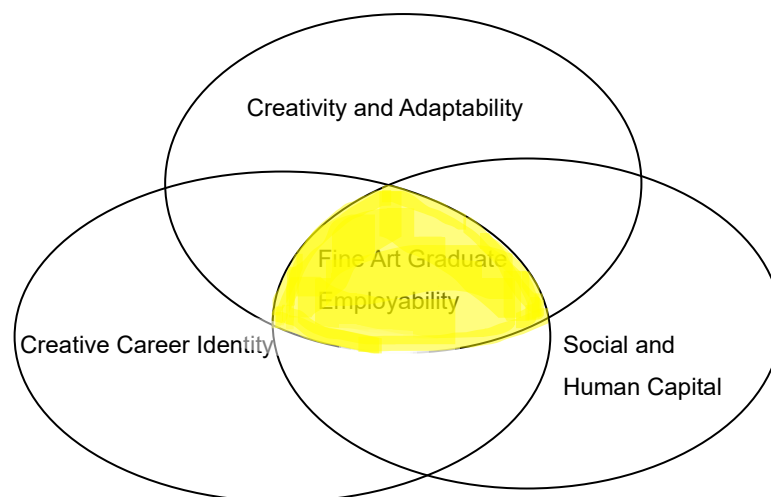


Fig 2. The Heuristic Model of Employability for Fine Art Graduates

The heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates aims to answer the research question: what competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in the creative industries in China? However, as the current economic crisis severely affects youth employment in many parts of the world, higher education faces severe challenges as a traditional means of employment (Peters and Besley, 2013). In the same vein, Tomlinson (2017) maintains that higher education institutions are currently being accused by labour markets and the government of failing to produce such graduates because their education is not

sufficiently linked to working life. Luo (2019) argues that these three parties must maintain a state of equilibrium but that labour relations in China are out of balance.

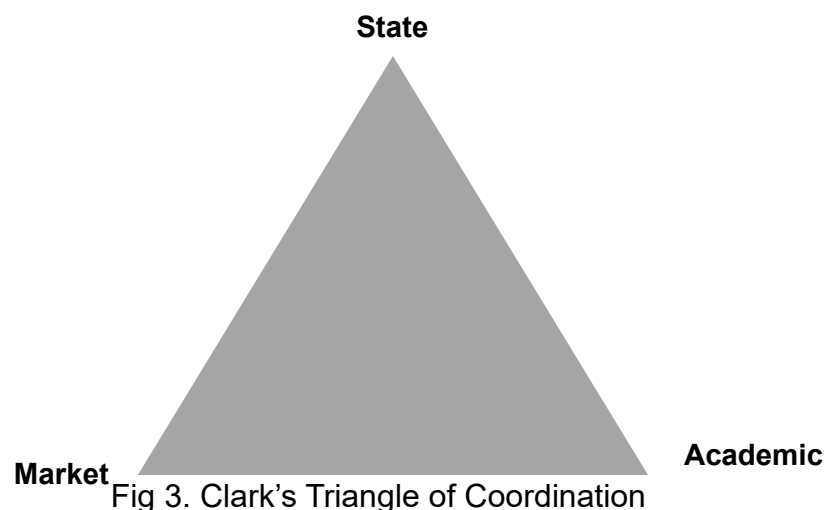
Therefore, to answer the other aspect of the research question (How might the employability of the Chinese Fine Art undergraduate curriculum be enhanced better to meet the needs of creative industries in China?) there needs to be a discussion on both the creative industry employers and higher education Pedagogies, but we also need to include the power of government. As education has been incorporated into the act of the state (Foucault, 1979), the change and implementation of pedagogies need to be discussed at the national government level. This section will analyse the current and responsible relationship between Fine Art institutions, creative industry employers, and government concerning graduate employment, using Clark's triangle of coordination model (1983). It then combined with the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates to form the final theoretical framework for this study.

2.5.9 Employer, Higher Education and Government

Globalisation has led to increasing the knowledge economy, the rise of information technology, and has put enormous pressure on teaching and learning in higher education institutions (Morey, 2003). However, data from several studies suggest that curriculum reform is complex and involves the higher education sector and issues including government policy, population expansion, academic oligarchy, and market forms (Gornitzka and Maassen, 2000; Jongbloed, 2003; Gebremeskel and Feleke, 2016). Foucault (1979: 307) describes the education institution as “multiple networks of diverse elements—walls, space, institutions, rules, discourse.” Educational research has become

increasingly politicised because the governments believe in a direct link between educational achievement and a strong economy (Somekh and Lewin, 2005).

In 1983, coinciding with the beginning of the globalisation process, the American scholar Clark (1983)¹ discussed in more depth the issue of power in the higher education system and proposed that state, market, and academic oligarchy constitute a coordination triangle model (See Fig 3). The model attempts to show how academic activities can be coordinated through organisations, groups, and entities (Jongbloed, 2003). While understanding changes in higher education reform and policy, it is essential to pay close attention to the actors involved and understand their values and relationships (Kogan and Marton, 2006). The model aims not to find the truth but to gain a greater understanding and insight into the phenomenon by gaining different perspectives. A discussion will follow distinguishing between the three elements in Clark's triangle of coordination in section 2.5.10-2.5.12, eventually refining the three elements that apply to this study.



¹ Clark, B. R. (1983). *The higher education system*. University of California Press.

2.5.10 The State - Political Power and Higher Education in China

In Clark's (1983) triangle of coordination model, the triangle's apex is the state. In a study conducted by Pusser (2008), it was argued that the state typically includes formal and informal rules and laws that guide social, local, and federal authority, including law enforcement and the military. According to Ball (2012:118), "education has always been inevitably under the constraints or influence of political power of the state, and higher education institutions are more critical than ever as they become closely linked to the 'political economy'," as well as being responsible for socio-demographic and wealth issues (Foucault, 2009). Several authors have considered the effect of higher education concerning political power (Foucault, 1998; Foucault, 2009). Forest *et al.* (2015) work on a contemporary template of governance logic also finds that university as an instrument for political goals, is sometimes pursued by the state for economic development at the expense of academic, professional development (Reihlen and Wenzlaff, 2014).

In Chinese Fine Art higher education research, political power refers to the socio-political forces that can directly influence higher education institutions' teaching and other academic activities (Wang, 2015). This political power manifests itself mainly in policy control over universities and, under certain conditions, direct management of universities (Wang, 2015). In China, political power dominates any level's education. The primary responsibilities of the Ministry of Education in China are to formulate educational reforms and educational teaching reforms, educational policies and plans for all levels of institutions, to draft relevant laws and regulations, and to supervise their implementation (Wang, 2015). At the same time, the Ministry of Education is responsible for employment guidance and services for graduates before they leave school. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security is responsible for employment guidance and services for graduates after they

leave school; and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security takes the lead in formulating employment policies for graduates, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and other departments (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2021). In China, therefore, all institutions are required to base their curricula on the content issued by the Ministry of Education and career guidance for students. At the same time, the government appoints party committee secretaries for all institutions. The party secretary is the political representative of the party (the communist party of China) in the university and has the power to make decisions, including the university's management, the supervision of the administration, and the guidance of academic development (Wang, 2015). Thus, the Chinese government has absolute control and mastery over all professional higher education institutions.

Political Aims Determine the Orientation of Fine Art Education

After founding the People's Republic of China in 1949, Fine Art education in China underwent three key shifts as the country developed and the government demanded it. The first shift began in the early 1950s when all art schools in China did not divide art education content into subjects, and there was only one department in art schools, the painting department (Zou, 2002). The painting department was formed by merging the different types of painting that existed at the time, and the teaching content was mainly woodblock prints, propaganda paintings, and comic strips to complement the revolutionary propaganda role of the government at the time (Zou, 2002). With the gradual stabilisation of society, in 1953, the Chinese government began sending students to the Soviet Union to study art and brought about a second shift in Fine Art education in China. Although different from the first shift, the second shift truly changed the Fine Art curriculum content. However, what is the same is that the change was also made under government demand this time. Because both China and the Soviet Union belonged to socialism at the political level, both countries had the same

political orientation (Zhu, 2016).

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — First Phase : Soviet Art Education Template

The first version of China's Fine Art higher education syllabus was drafted between 1955 and 1957 and was largely modelled on Soviet art education (Zou, 2002). Many Soviet art theories and teaching materials were translated, and Soviet art was widely disseminated in China and profoundly influenced all aspects of Chinese Fine Art. However, Chang (2016) argues that the Soviet Fine Art and Fine Art education system also negatively impacted the development of Chinese Fine Art and Fine Art education. During that period, students continued to receive more homogeneous training and lacked a comprehensive understanding of world art history, which made Chinese art and Fine Art education somewhat disconnected from the ever-changing international environment. Zhu (2016) maintains that the lack of initiative in such learning due to the compulsory nature of the state's administrative approach to the implementation of Soviet Fine Art, to certain extent, led to a single-aspect development in Chinese Fine Art education. In terms of more far-reaching effects, some of the artists produced during this period became the teaching staff in Chinese Fine Art higher education today, thus influencing the development of Fine Art higher education in China. At the same time, due to the administrative imposition, the single-aspect study of Soviet art education undoubtedly limited the space for artists to create freely and personalise their teaching, and in some disciplines even created a hindrance and led to the development of Chinese art education towards homogenisation (Zhu, 2016)

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — Second Phase: The Cultural Revolution

In the 1960s, China's political movements interfered to a large extent with and even interrupted the development of art education in China (Zou, 2002). During the Cultural Revolution, the function of Fine Art continued to serve the political movements, and the style of propaganda painting, characterised by red, smooth, and luminescent paint, replaced the earlier Soviet and European grey tones that had influenced Chinese art education (Wu, 2019). In 1976, when the Cultural Revolution ended, art schools nationwide resumed enrolment and teaching (Zou, 2002). In 1980, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education in China jointly issued the “Opinions on Some Current Issues in Art Education,” which required art schools to reformulate their teaching programmes and send teachers abroad to other countries for further training and study (Chang, 2016).

With the open doors policy, the artists in China began to have more academic exchanges with other countries around the world, and this greatly contributed to the development and transformation of Fine Art higher education in China. Fine Art higher education sought to shift from arts and crafts education to art and design education in response to the economic and industrial development needs. Thus, the German Bauhaus education system was introduced to the Fine Art higher education pedagogy because it combined technical and artistic features. However, after drawing from Soviet art and the Bauhaus, Fine Art higher education in China has continued using curriculum templates from other countries as references. Chinese Fine Art higher education does not yet develop its education system.

Chinese Fine Art Educational Process — Third Phase: Globalisation

In the twenty-first century, Fine Art higher education in China has entered a third phase - globalisation (Chang, 2016). The wave of globalisation triggered by the technological revolution has had a great impact on the map of human thought.

In this new context, the disciplinary structure system built up by various disciplines in the past decades is failing in to varying degrees, which in a sense becomes an opportunity for disciplinary curriculum reform.

After entering the 21st century, the development of science and technology has promoted the use of image production techniques, and some jobs that once required technological procedures have replaced Fine Art graduates. For example, image documentation (portraits, landscapes) has been replaced by photography, and promotional posters have been replaced by digital printing technology (Feng, 2020). Thus, it seems that in the era of globalisation, the social function of Fine Art in China as defined by the State has been gradually replaced by technology. With globalisation, the current state of Fine Art higher education in China has changed considerably, not in terms of the evolution of artistic techniques, but in the development of concepts (Li, 2017). Chinese Fine Art higher education has moved from revolutionary propaganda needs to industrial development and creative needs (Li, 2017).

Therefore, the State at the top of Clark's (1983) coordination triangle model is inappropriate for this study. Although the Chinese government prescribes the educational curriculum, university teachers and curriculum specialists are not yet autonomous in their curriculum decision-making tasks (Sun, 2012). However, in the globalisation era, compared to other countries in the world, the Fine Art curriculum in China still suffers from a shift from traditional to modern and a mismatch between talent development and social needs (Feng, 2012). Therefore, at the top of Clark's (1983) coordination triangle model, the State has been changed to globalisation. Because globalisation can lead to changes in governmental decision-making, Wu (2019) argues that globalisation has led to the development of national education policies increasingly influenced by globally accepted educational values, focusing on the expected future of

humanity. In the same vein, Feng (2020) maintains that the development of educational activities across countries is increasingly geared towards enabling students to acquire the ability to understand complex international systems, develop a global perspective, and elevate nationalisation to globalisation as a must for any professional future.

2.5.11 The Market – Higher Education’s Third Mission

In Clark's (1983) coordination triangle model, market impact is the second key construct in the model. According to Knudsen *et al.* (2021), traditionally, universities have two missions: teaching and research. While following these missions, universities must embark on a third mission: establishing their immediate value to society (Knudsen *et al.*, 2021). This shows that universities have extended from teaching and studying existing knowledge to creating it. In the same vein, Forest *et al.* (2015) argue that university is becoming a market-oriented service provider, the production of university knowledge is beginning to be calculated according to the valuation of social utility, and universities need to readily adapt their teaching to respond to changing market demands (Nowotny *et al.*, 2001). In order to achieve the 'Third Mission,' universities need to become innovators and job creators (Gulbrandsen and Slipersaeter, 2007). Universities have begun to focus more on knowledge creation (Grimaldi *et al.*, 2011; Rothaermel *et al.*, 2007), knowledge exchange transfer (Rosli and Rossi, 2016), sought to generate public value (Bozeman *et al.*, 2015), and social impact (Fini *et al.*, 2018).

Moreover, the link between higher education and the market is not new. Higher education has started to engage in different types of collaboration with industry to enhance graduate employment since the 1990s (Perkmann *et al.*, 2013). In China, to further increase graduate employment, many higher education

institutions have started cooperating with industry, including art and design higher institutions. Although Fine Art is part of art and design higher institutions, the interdisciplinary teaching model fits well with work demands in the creative industries (Hearn *et al.*, 2014). However, it is challenging to develop school-enterprise cooperation compared with other disciplines due to its special boundlessness and interdisciplinary nature (Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). The definition of what skills are required for employment in the creative industries is complex and variable, and the creative industry in China is still developing. Organizational coordination is not yet fully adapted to China's creative industries' needs at the governmental level. Because school-enterprise cooperation is a combined operation between different types of subjects, effectively matching the creative industries with the curriculum of Chinese higher education institutions is a challenge to the way the government organises and coordinates (Li, 2014). The mechanism for training creative talents in higher education institutions is insufficient, with a high proportion of theoretical courses and students lacking the necessary hands-on skills. Real-life projects do not support teaching, and content has been based on fictional topics for some time. There is a disconnect between teaching, research, the frontiers of the creative discipline, and the creative industries' needs.

Fine Art graduates can pursue many different occupations in the job market after graduation, and although their employment patterns can be considerably diverse, most are involved in the creative industries (Mottram and Whale, 2001). Furthermore, this study locates the market as creative industries because, with globalisation, the Chinese government sees creative industries as part of its long-term economic strategy and the next stage of economic growth, a shift in consumer behaviour from 'Made in China' to 'Created in China' (O'Connor and Xin, 2006). In turn, Fine Art higher education has gradually moved in a new direction from its initial formation of a single painting skill to serve government

propaganda. This new direction is undoubtedly related to China's long-term economic strategy and is associated with the creative industries.

2.5.12 The Academic Oligarchy – The Eight Major Arts Universities

The last element in Clark's (1983) coordination triangle model is 'academic oligarchy.' Zhang (2020) argue that there are two main types of academic oligarchy in Chinese higher education. The first is the academic authorities who have theoretical depth and can occupy a dominant role in their professional academic activities. The second is the academic authorities who do not live up to their name and use injustice and disinformation to maintain their position as academic authorities, which significantly affects the impartiality of academic activities.

Several authors have considered the effect of Merton's Matthew effect on academic oligarchy (Liu and Hou, 2007; Zhang, 2020). The Matthew effect was initially used to describe the impact of a scientist's achievements on social status, with Merton (1968) arguing that a scientist's achievements could recognize his or her scientific institution. Today, the Matthew effect refers to the idea that once any individual, group, or region has achieved success and progress in one area (e.g., money, reputation, status), there is a cumulative advantage that leads to more opportunities for tremendous success and progress. In investigating the Matthew effect on academic oligarchy. Liu and Hou (2007) argue that celebrity scholars and prestigious universities are gradually becoming dominant academic oligarchs. The phenomenon of 'academic oligarchy' in academia can be understood as reflecting the Matthew effect in academic accreditation. These prestigious schools and academics use their halo and oligarchic advantage to put them at the heart of academic decision-making organizations. In China, there is a clear academic oligarchy in

Fine Art higher education.

There are eight independently established professional art and design universities in China: the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the China Academy of Art, the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts and the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts. These are often referred to as the 'Eight Major Schools of Fine Arts' in China. From 2000, with the rapid development and expansion of the scale of art and design higher education in China, almost all comprehensive universities and vocational colleges have opened Fine Art departments. Fine Art students have spread across all universities, not just limited to the eight major art schools (Gao, 2013).

In 2020, the number of applicants for the university entrance examination across China is 1,071 million, with approximately 55 million art candidates (Yao, 2020). The total number of applicants for the Central Academy of Fine Arts is 55,571; the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts is 70,000; the China Art Academy is 79,000; the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts is 42,000; the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts is 20,694; the Luxun Academy of Fine Arts is 90,000; the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts is 53,484, and the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts is 111,700. The number of applicants from the eight art schools is about 520,000, accounting for more than 94% of the total art candidates in China. It is clear that these eight art schools are not only the academic oligarchs of higher art education but are also considered by the general public to be the prestigious universities that produce the artistic elite. Bourdieu developed a field theory based on elite education (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989, 1990), where he argues that most leading universities have slowly transformed the accidental nature of their long history into the inevitable nature of excellence and that this trend is difficult to change and is even intensifying. The eight art schools and the field of power have developed a mutual interest, and the data shows that artists with a

background in the eight art schools (graduates and teachers) are more recognized by the market and employers and are often used as one of the criteria for judging their market value in the Chinese art market (Pang, 2016).

However, these eight art schools ultimately accept a limited number of students. The Fine Art graduates from these eight schools are not representative of the employment status of Fine Art graduates in China as a whole. According to the China Education Commission 2020 report, China has 1,265 higher education institutions, of which 760 are comprehensive universities with art, and design programmes and 31 are universities specializing in art and design. Although these eight art schools are the first choice for most Fine Art students in China, it cannot be ignored that ultimately the majority of Fine Art graduates will come from other Chinese higher education institutions. Thus, to add to the breadth of this research, the element of the academic oligarchy will be replaced by Chinese higher education institutions.

2.5.13 Fine Art Graduate Employability Coordination Triangle Model

Clark's coordination triangle demonstrates how the government, market, and institutional forces can be effectively balanced through the state, market, and academic oligarchy to ensure academic standards in higher education institutions. Other authors such as Cloete *et al.* (2004) question the integrity of Clark's coordination triangle model, arguing that it does not seem to anticipate the significant changes that will occur as the world enters globalization. Maggio (2011) maintains that Clark's coordination triangle model has apparent limitations. However, it can still be used as a foundational reference in the quest to understand the systemic nature of higher education (Gebremeskel and Feleke, 2016).

This section reviews Clark's coordination triangle model while providing an extended discussion of the three elements of the model. The model is then refined to meet the needs of this research in relation to the research objectives of this study (See Fig. 4)

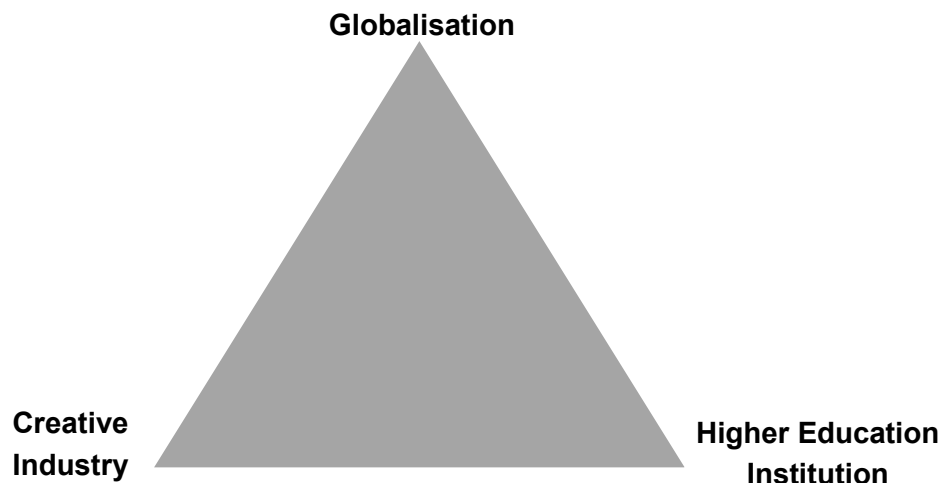


Fig 4. Fine Art Graduate Employability Coordination Triangle Model

2.5.14 Theoretical Framework Conclusion

Section 2.5 first identifies the theoretical triangulation to analyse the research from different perspectives and answer the research questions. Two theories have been used to build a theoretical framework, the heuristic model of employability and Clark's coordination triangle model. After discussing and refining each of the two theories, the theoretical framework for this research was finally developed (See Fig 5).

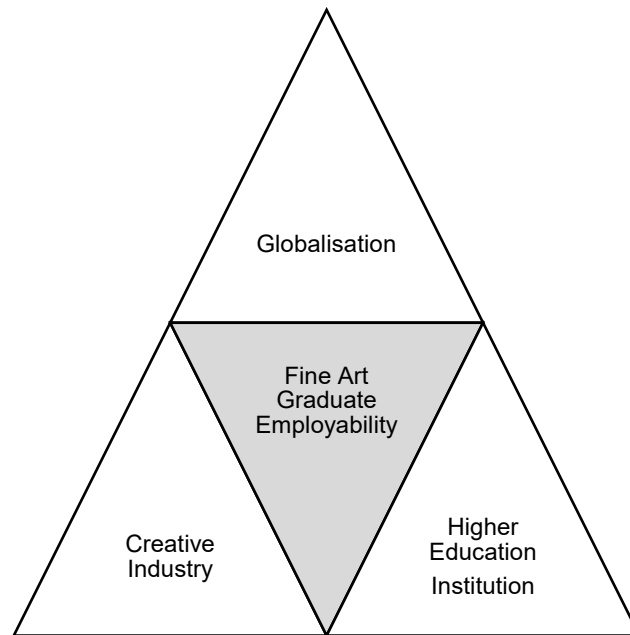


Fig 5. Theoretical Framework of this research

The three elements of the heuristic model of employability were broken down and discussed separately and then tailored to this research topic. The personal adaptability element was refined into creativity adaptability; the career identity element was refined into creative career identity. It then formed the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates (see Fig 2). The theory will be used to design the Fine Art graduate survey and creative industry employer interviews for answering the research question: “What competencies, qualities, and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?”

To answer the other aspect of the research question- How might the employability of the Chinese Fine Art undergraduate curriculum be enhanced better to meet the needs of creative industries in China- data from several studies suggested that curriculum reform is complex and involves the higher education sector and issues including government policy, population expansion □ academic oligarchy, and market forms. It is essential to pay close attention to the actors involved and understand their values and relationships (Kogan and

Marion, 2006). Clark (1983) discussed the issue of power in the higher education system and proposed that state, market, and academic oligarchy constitute a coordination triangle model. The three elements of the coordination triangle model are discussed separately. The Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model is based on China's current globalisation strategy, the rise of the creative industries, and the higher education institutions. It will be used to analyse and discuss the data and ultimately answer the other aspect of the research question. After establishing the theoretical framework, the following research process determines the most appropriate and feasible methods for conducting the investigation.

2.6 Research Methods

2.6.1 Introduction

After establishing the theoretical framework, the following research process determines the most appropriate and feasible method for conducting the investigation. Section 2.6.2 begins by explaining the methodology of the research design and the overall structure. Given the mixed-methods design adopted for this study, Section 2.6.3 explains the quantitative approach of the study: Fine Art pedagogies employability survey. Section 2.6.4 describes the qualitative approach of the study: semi-structured interviews with employers in the creative industries. The chapter concludes with a conclusion. The following Table 3 shows the content of the methodology.

Table 3. The content of the methodology

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
2.6.1 Introduction
2.6.2 Research Design
Triangulation
Methodology Structure
2.6.3 Phase one - The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability Survey
Online Survey Design
Survey Questions Design
Survey Response Design
Sampling Method
Survey Participants
Sample Size
The Pilot
Data Analysis
The Ethical Considerations of Survey
Language Translation
2.6.4 Phase Two – Creative Industry Employer Interview
Introduction of Phase Two
Creative Industry Employers Semi-structured Interviews
Interview Sample Size
Participant Backgrounds
Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in the Interviews
The Face-to-Face Interview
Interview Video Recording and Data Collection
Interview Question
The Pilot Interview
Analysis of Creative Industry Employer’s Interviews Based on Grounded Theory
Determining Data Saturation
The Coding Process
Selective Coding
The Ethical Considerations of Interviewing
Language Translation
2.6.5 Methodology Conclusion

2.6.2 Research Design

Different scholars have defined the meaning of graduate employability

differently and have measured it in different ways. Therefore, there is no standard measurement method for graduate employability to date. However, many researchers have utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to measure and test the employability of graduates in China, which has some relevance and reference to this research.

Traditionally, it is believed that there is a gulf between qualitative and quantitative research, each belonging to a very different paradigm (Layder, 1988). However, over time, a set purpose for mixed methods inquiry have evolved from these early days, with Somekh and Lewin (2005) summarising four points; (1)The mixed methods has greater validity or credibility, and is less biased; (2) A more comprehensive understanding provides a complete picture of our social world through multiple perspective; (3) When disagreements are found, they can be reconciled through different perspective shifts; (4)A greater range of values and positions can be better understood. Furthermore, Garbarino and Holland (2009) argue that while quantitative methods produce data that can be aggregated and analysed to describe and predict relationships, qualitative studies can help explore and interpret these relationships and explain contextual differences in the quality of these relationships. Thus, in this research, the research methods will combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to address the research questions and meet the aims and objectives. When a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is required, scholars frequently use triangulation. It is considered an ideal comprehensive and pluralistic research strategy (Sun, 2006; Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources, research theories and research methods to analyse the same issue within the same study to gain a

comprehensive understanding of multiple research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Sun, 2006; Noble and Heale, 2019). According to Sun (2006), triangulation has been increasingly used by qualitative and quantitative researchers, but it is also seen as a comprehensive research model that combines the two. Triangulation has more significant cognitive potential than single research methods, helping to compensate for the shortcomings of single research methods, increasing the breadth, depth and dimensionality of analysis and allowing researchers to understand complex issues in detail (Flick, 2002; Creswell and Poth, 2018), and it is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings (Noble and Heale, 2019). However, researchers argue that a pluralistic combination of research methods does not necessarily increase the validity of a study (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Thurmond, 2001; Asif, 2013). They further explain that the triangulation may increase the breadth and depth of analysis but may not increase its accuracy. Thus, the purpose of triangulation is primarily to increase the breadth, depth and dimensionality of research analysis, not validity. This is in line with the aim of this research which seeks to answer the question of what competencies, qualities, and skills are required by Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art for employment in the creative industries in China? This research could provide recommendations for Fine Art higher education in China to enhance the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries, but it is not valid as testing the validity of this study would be for another future research.

Denzin (1970) proposed four different forms of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. This study will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. This model belongs to the second type of methodological triangulation - across-method

triangulation (Denzin, 1998). Sun (2006: 126) argues that this approach allows different research methods to equalise the determinations between them and proposes a structure for across-method triangulation (See Fig 6).

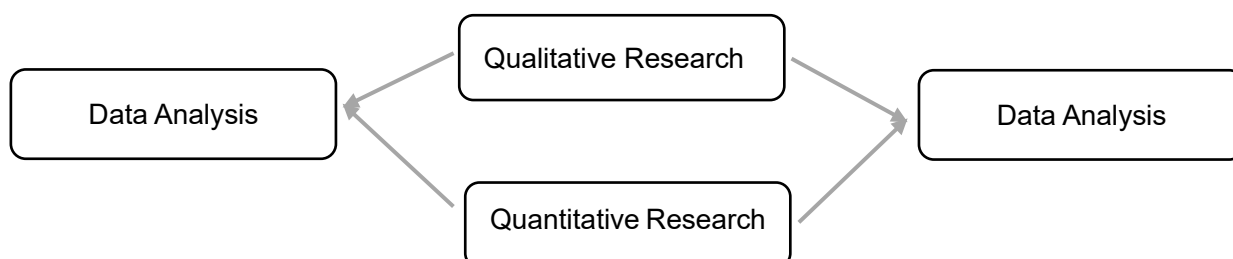
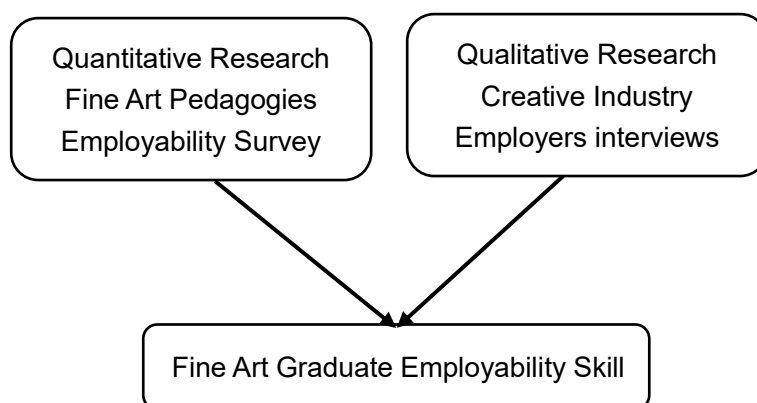


Fig 6. Across-method triangulation

This research aims are to explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities, and skills of Fine Art graduates from China and explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. The objective is to understand whether Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies meet the employability development of Fine Art graduates and the employability needs of employers in the creative industries and to suggest courses for Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies that can facilitate the employment of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China. Therefore, this research needs to obtain the needs of both Fine Art graduates and creative industry employers to verify the employment benefits of Chinese Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies. Triangulation can effectively combine qualitative and quantitative research data from creative industry employers and Fine Art graduates. A complementary result is derived from different aspects of the same issue to better understand the research question. At same time, it will enrich the data, as triangulation provides a dataset of Fine Art graduates and creative industry employers to explain different aspects of the employability of Fine Art undergraduate pedagogies in China. Meanwhile, triangulation helps to refute the case where one dataset invalidates the hypothesis generated by the other (Noble and Heale,

2019). It can help confirm the hypothesis by confirming the other set with one set of findings, thus explaining the study's results and giving more confidence in the findings.



Methodology Structure

The methodology of this research was divided into the following two phases. It started with quantitative research. The Fine Art pedagogies employability survey was conducted in a positivist context to understand the effectiveness of Chinese Fine Art pedagogies content on the employability skills development and analyse the employment status of Fine Art graduates in China. After that, in an interpretivism context, interviews were conducted with employers in the creative industries to obtain information on the employability requirements of Fine Art graduates in China. Next, it analysed the findings of those two phases and answer the first research question: “What competencies, qualities, and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?” Finally, combining the results of phase one and phase two studies. It answers the other aspect of the research question: “How might the employability of the Chinese Fine Art undergraduate curriculum be enhanced to better meet the employment needs of creative industries in China?” For clarity, Table 4 provides a clear diagram of how each phase corresponds to the impact study.

Table 4. Phases of Reach

	Phase 1	Phase 2
Research Method	Quantitative The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability Survey	Qualitative Creative Industry Employers interviews
	Positivist context	Interpretivism context
Aims	Explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates	Explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities and skills of Fine Art graduates from China.
Objectives	Identify the extent to which Chinese Fine Art curriculum provides students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries.	Determine through qualitative data the competencies, qualities and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in China.

2.6.3 Phase one - The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability Survey

To determine whether the Chinese Fine Art pedagogies can meet the employment needs of Fine Art graduates and understand the current employment situation of Fine Art graduates in China. The heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates has been designed in the theoretical framework. It helped to design the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey to test whether the employability model of Fine Art graduates in China could be explored. The survey was used as it is the most practical method of collecting standardised information about a group of people, students, and graduates from different courses (Oppenheim, 2004). Check and Schutt (2012: 160) maintain that surveys are also recognised as “an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and educational settings.” Surveys are widely used in various types of educational research. They are often used to paint a descriptive picture of respondents' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours about various topics such as

teaching quality, student satisfaction, policy concerns, and leadership (Check and Schutt, 2012). The Fine Art pedagogies employability survey. was undertaken to address objective 1, which is identified below:

Objective 1: Identify the extent to which Chinese Fine Art curriculum provide students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries.

The initial quantitative phase of this research was surveyed and completed between October 2021 and November 2021. The consent form and information sheet for the survey were developed to optimise understanding of the project and gain the participation of participants (see Appendix 1). It was intended to improve the quality of the research data collected from participants.

Online Survey Design

Based on the impact of Covid-19, an online survey was chosen for this research. This is not a desperate move, but because numerous scholars have also supported the research methodology of the online survey. According to Saleh and Bista (2017), online surveys have become a popular data collection method in educational research. Some researchers have found that online surveys are cheaper and more responsive than traditional paper-based surveys and can improve satisfaction with the results of research projects (Koundinya *et al.*, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2017; Fosnacht *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, the online survey is also more secure given the current reasons for the Covid-19 epidemic. However, some scholars have questioned the online survey. Silva and Durante (2014) argue that most people use the internet for entertainment and leisure, leading them to not actively participate in academic surveys, resulting in low response rates. Fan and Yan (2010) maintain that the response rate for online surveys is approximately 11% lower than other surveys. Therefore, this

research identified the survey respondents before using the online research survey format and pre-notified and reminded the respondents, which could effectively increase the response rate of the online survey.

Online research is usually conducted using email and web-based applications (Duarte, 2014). The option is to use one of the available online survey systems, a solution that allows for faster and easier data collection. Most systems are available in both free and paid versions, but the free version is often more limited. A summary of the online survey systems is provided by Duarte (2014) in his study of electronic surveys for international research; see Table 5 below.

Table 5. Online Survey Tools

Online solutions
2ask http://www.2ask.net
eSurveysPro http://www.esurveyspro.com
Google forms http://drive.google.com
Key survey http://www.keysurvey.com
KwikSurveys http://kwiksurveys.com
LimeSurvey http://www.limesurvey.org
PollDaddy http://www.polldaddy.com
Qualtrics http://www.qualtrics.com
QuestionPro http://www.questionpro.com
SurveyGizmo http://www.surveygizmo.com
SurveyMonkey http://www.surveymonkey.com
Wufoo http://wufoo.com
Zoomerang http://www.zoomerang.com

Source: Duarte (2014: 300)

As all the respondents in this study were Fine Art graduates from China, it was necessary to present a bilingual (Chinese and English) survey. However, after

researching all the survey platforms in Table 4 above, it was found that only the SurveyMonkey platform offered a Chinese language option and that the platform could be used without any problems on the Chinese network. Therefore, the survey for this study was chosen to be implemented on the SurveyMonkey platform.

Survey Questions Design

The forms of survey questions can be roughly divided into two categories, structured or closed-ended question, and unstructured or open-ended question (Acharya, 2010). According to Krosnick (2018: 266) “One of the first decisions a researcher must make when designing a survey question is whether to make it open (permitting respondents to answer in their own words) or closed (requiring respondents to select an answer from a set of choices).”

For this research, the survey questions are designed with the closed-ended question to explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. The closed-ended questions were chosen because it makes the form convenient to fill in and answer, and the formal specification is convenient for unified coding, which is suitable for quantitative analysis (Acharya, 2010). However, Geng *et al.* (2014) argue that closed-ended questions sometimes limit the researcher's thinking, and the data lacks richness and diversity. The advantage of an open-ended question is that it allows the interviewees to express their opinions freely, giving the researchers unexpected data and inspiration (Geng *et al.*, 2014). However, Krosnick (2018) questions the complex data analysis of the open-ended question and numerous uncertainties, arguing that closed-ended questions are more suitable for general research, especially self-filled ones.

The Fine Art pedagogies employability survey consisting of five sections was

created based on the theoretical framework of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates developed in the section 2.5.8. The length of the survey has been a controversial topic, depending on the research topic and the information required, and completed in less than half an hour is usually considered comfortable for both researcher and participant (Acharya, 2010). The Fine Art graduate survey consisted of 39 questions distributed to the participants. The sections captured five areas, three of them focus on the Heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates, one focuses on the basic personal information, and one focuses on the Fine Art pedagogies' employability. Including section (1) demographic question (question1-5); section (2) social and human capital (questions 6-18); section (3) creativity adaptability (questions 19-26); section (4) creativity career identity (questions 27-38); section (5) the Fine Art pedagogies (questions 39).

Section 1. Demographic Question

Although, some scholars suggest that routine questions about respondents, such as age, gender, background, and demographic characteristics, often come at the end of the survey (Krosnick, 2018; Yaddanapudi and Yaddanapudi, 2019). However, in contrast, a growing body of research suggests that asking demographic questions first at the beginning of a survey increases response rates (Drummond *et al.*, 2008). still, other researchers report no difference in response rates whether demographic questions are placed at the beginning or the end (Green *et al.*, 2000). The demographic question part is placed at the beginning of this survey, using simple questions to help respondents access the survey. This section includes five questions, each response with 5 to 6 options, and respondents were asked to choose only one that matched their own.

Section 2. Social and Human Capital

The social and human capital section questions reference the same categories that were used in the survey from Zhang's (2013) research on the influence of human capital and social capital on higher education students' careers. His study shares the same research objectives, aimed at the same group of Chinese graduates as this study. It includes 13 questions, each response with 5 to 6 options, and respondents were asked to choose only one that matched their own. Those questions are designed to find out Fine Art graduates' interpersonal and social networks and higher education institutions' human and social capital.

Section 3. Creativity Adaptability

As mentioned in the theoretical framework section, Fugate (2001) identifies individual characteristic variables related to personal adaptation, including three areas: positive occupational self-concept, motivation to learn, and information identity style. Creativity adaptation occurs when creativity and adaptive needs are present simultaneously. According to Orkibi (2021), creativity adaptability refers to one's ability to respond creatively and adaptively, which helps individuals generate new and potentially effective ideas and improve employability. Therefore, the questions used the creativity adaptability Scale developed by Orkibi (2021) to test the emotional ability of Fine Art graduates to create creative responses and adapt to stressful situations. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). The Likert scale was used because it is widely used in attitude research to investigate attitudes and opinions (Göb *et al.*, 2007).

Section 4. Creative Career Identity

Career identity (i.e., role identity, occupational identity, and organisational identity) is how individuals define themselves in the work environment.

Compared to the career identities in other industries, an artist's career identity requires recognition and validation from people of the same profession, consumers, critics, and other stakeholders (Reckwitz, 2018; Mao and Shen, 2020). Therefore, creativity identity is considered a contextual element of creative production. The establishment of a creative career identity is crucial for those who work in the creative industries and Fine Art students.

This part of the survey was assessed to determine how Fine Art graduates perceive creative career identity. Creativity identity was measured using Zhou and George's (2001) 13-item scale survey. On a 5-point scale ranging from 1 "very uncharacteristic" to 5 "very characteristic."

Section 5. The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability

The questions are set based on the National Curriculum Guidance Programme for Undergraduate Fine Art Courses in general higher education institutions' latest version, issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2005. The questions are designed to determine whether the Fine Art pedagogies help Fine Art graduates in their employment? A total of 38 courses were asked for each of the 11 compulsory courses, 19 optional courses, and 8 practical sessions in Fine Art higher education institutions in China. A Likert five-point scale was used, based on "strongly disagree", "disagree", "average", "agree", "strongly agree" and "agree", and "strongly agree", "disagree", "fair", "agree", "Strongly agree". The specific curriculum is planned as in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Guidance Program for Curriculum Development of Undergraduate subject in Fine Art of National Higher Education Institutions Description

Areas of study	Compulsory Courses	Optional Course
Painting	Fundamentals of Painting Fundamentals of Design (graphic, three-dimensional) Fundamentals of Craft	Colour Perspective Composition Fundamentals of Modelling Language Artistic Anatomy

Art Theory and History	Introduction to Art History of Chinese Art History of Foreign Art Chinese Folk Art Art Appreciation and Criticism	Aesthetics Chinese Painting Theory Western Art Theory Current Contemporary Art Thought History of Modern Foreign Design
Art Expression and Creativity	Artistic Expression Design and Production	Sculpture Photography Multimedia Art Seal Carving Weaving
Art and Humanities Education	Guided Reading of Masterpieces of Culture and Art	Art Sociology Visual Culture and - Communication World Cultural Heritage Heritage Conservation
Practice sessions	Military training, labour, social survey, graduation thesis defence, art practice, final project, artistic expedition, career guidance.	

Source: Arts Education Committee, Ministry of Education (2005)

Survey Response Design

Closed-ended formats include the choice of categories, Likert-style scale (e.g., strongly agree, agree, cannot decide, disagree, strongly disagree), differential scales (e.g., fascinating to incredibly dull, rated on a 10-point scale), Yes/No questions, multiple-choice, and rankings (Leung, 2001).

For this research, the response options for the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey are a mixture of multiple-choice questions and Likert scale response methods. Scholars found that respondents were more likely to respond to multiple-choice questions (Malhotra, 2006). The optimal number of response options for multiple-choice questions is a long-standing debate. Several studies have shown that 5 to 7 response categories are reasonable (Bloom, 2003; Malhotra, 2006; Lietz, 2010). Therefore, there is no “other” category in the multiple-choice survey, and the number of choices is between 5

to 6.

The survey also used a Likert scale to answer a number portion of the questions. The Likert scale is a commonly used psychometric scale to capture the survey participant's level of preference or agreement with a statement or set of statements (Bertram, 2007; Roopa and Rani, 2012). The scale is easy for researchers to construct and administer and easy for respondents to understand. However, Malhotra (2006) argues that the main disadvantage of the Likert scale is that it takes longer to complete the rating scale than other item-by-item scales. There is no optimal number of categories for the number of scale categories. Most research suggests that between 5 to 9 is appropriate (Malhotra, 2006; Bertram, 2007). However, some scholars suggest using 7-to-9-point scales to add additional granularity. The Fine Art pedagogies employability survey will use Likert scales to measure whether Fine Art pedagogies in China meet the employment needs of fine art graduates. The options are on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' on one end to 'strongly agree' on the other, with 'neither agree nor disagree' in between. After determining the survey questions, the sampling methods for this research were considered.

Sampling Method

A 'sample' is a subset of the population selected to represent the larger population, and since the entire population cannot be studied, a sample need to be taken (Adebayo and Ackers, 2021). The reasonableness of the survey sample is directly related to the effectiveness of the whole research (Thomann and Maggetti, 2020). It can reduce the costs incurred, the time to conduct the study, and the human resources required to carry out the research (Acharya *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, sampling ensures that theoretically relevant groups are selected (Greckhamer *et al.*, 2018).

There are two ways to select a sample from a sampling frame: random or non-random (Rai and Thapa, 2015). Random sampling, also known as probability sampling or chance sampling, consists of four types: (1) random sampling, (2) systematic sampling, (3) stratified random sampling, and (4) cluster sampling (Acharya *et al.*, 2013). Non-random sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, is a sampling method not based on the probability of a unit entering the sample but on other factors such as the shared knowledge, experience, intention, and expertise of the sampler (Rai and Thapa, 2015). It includes three types: (1) representative sampling, (2) accidental sampling, and (3) purposive sampling (Acharya *et al.*, 2013).

Some researchers have favoured non-probabilistic convenience and purposive sampling techniques (Archarya *et al.*, 2013; Adebayo and Ackers, 2021). According to Jager *et al.* (2017:3) “non-probability sampling strategies are any methods of sampling that do not utilize some form of random selection.” In contrast, convenience and purposive sampling are not the same sampling methods (Suen *et al.*, 2014). Purposive sampling is generally used in qualitative research where the researcher carefully selects study participants. Each participant can provide the researcher with different depths of information due to their various attributes (Suen *et al.*, 2014). Convenience sampling is a method where the researcher has easy access to the research participants on their terms and is based on their convenience (Dörnyei, 2007; Bornstein *et al.*, 2013). Convenience sampling can be used for qualitative or quantitative research (Suen *et al.*, 2014). Before the quantitative research for this research started, the researcher contacted numbers of Fine Art teachers based on her contacts, and these teachers then informed the target group of Fine Art graduates. The sample is selected based on the researcher's convenience, and respondents were chosen because they are in the right place at the right time.

This method of sampling based on researcher convenience is the more common in research as it is also less expensive to create a sample, can be done within a set time frame, and data can be counted quickly (Bhardwaj, 2019). However, Archarya *et al.* (2013) argue that the disadvantage of convenience sampling is the inability to measure or control for variability and bias. Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of convenience sampling are the opposite of probability sampling. Probability sampling produces results with clearer generalisations, whereas convenience sampling is cheaper, more efficient, and uncomplicated (Jager *et al.*, 2017). However, although all convenience samples are not as straightforward to generalise as probability samples, not all convenience samples are the same, and some convenience samples are more clearly generalised than others (Jager *et al.*, 2017).

Jager *et al.* (2017) split convenience samples into two categories: conventional and homogeneous convenience sampling. Conventional convenience samples are sampled as long as people voluntarily participate. These convenience samples can also be conceptualised as heterogeneous convenience samples, as the heterogeneity (i.e., diversity) of all socio-demographic factors will be part of the statistics of the type of sampling strategy. In contrast to conventional convenience sampling, the sampling frame of homogeneous convenience sampling is intentionally restricted to socio-demographic backgrounds. In homogeneous convenience sampling, researchers study a homogeneous population regarding one or more socio-demographic factors. Therefore, the target population (not just the sample under study) is a specific socio-demographic subgroup (Jager *et al.*, 2017). The respondents in this research were restricted to Fine Art undergraduate graduates from Chinese higher education institutions. The sampling set a cohort, and therefore the sampling method could be refined to homogeneous convenience sampling. In the

following section, the background description of the survey participants is provided.

Survey Participants

Using a positivist context in the first phase, a range of issues to affect the reliability of the data were expected. All participants volunteered for the survey, so the research data only included participants who volunteered to participate in the study and whose voices and experiences subsequently became important. It meant that the voices of those who did not choose to participate were absent. However, a rich sample of experiences should have been obtained for all participants who participated in the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

The survey participants consisted of graduate students with Fine Art bachelor's degrees in China. According to the Chinese Education Commission's report in 2020, there are 1,265 higher education institutions in China, 760 are comprehensive universities with art and design programmes, and 31 are art and design specialist universities. However, only eight vocational colleges offer Fine Art subjects (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). It can be seen that Fine Art is not a mainstream subject in Chinese vocational higher education, and its number cannot be effectively compared with either comprehensive universities or art and design specialist universities. Therefore, the survey obtained responses from art and design specialists and comprehensive universities in China. After determining the survey participants, the sample size is determined in the following section.

Sample Size

The sample size is an essential feature of any empirical study that aims to extrapolate from a sample to the aggregate (Taherdoost, 2017). Some scholars suggest that survey samples need to be of sufficient size and that the larger the sample, the less likely the results will be biased (Gill *et al.*, 2010; Taherdoost,

2016). They suggested that collecting more than 100 surveys may make the analysis more robust and provide the opportunity to generate broader insights. However, Taherdoost (2016) argues that a larger sample size would be less rapid. Many authors have successfully used limited samples to study similar topics, and their studies have raised questions and implications of broader value than generalisability (Tymon, 2013; Burke, 2015; Finn, 2015). In the same vein, Rowaley (2014) maintains that many surveys may present a lower response rate with a large number of respondents. Furthermore, according to Holton and Burnett (1997: 71) “One of the real advantages of quantitative methods is their ability to use smaller groups of people to make inferences about larger groups that would be prohibitively expensive to study.”

Therefore, to get a higher response rate, the survey obtained responses from a sample of 60 Fine Art undergraduate graduates of higher education institutions in China. The higher education institutions are divided into two categories: art and design specialist universities and comprehensive universities in China. In order to reach this number, we directly contacted teachers at ten universities with Fine Art subjects and asked them to distribute the surveys to Fine Art undergraduate graduates who they had taught. These universities span China's different provinces and cities and include both prestigious and general comprehensive universities. Using a network of acquaintances for the distribution of surveys was tried to ensure that all respondents were Fine Art undergraduate graduates (for the names of the specific institutions, see Table 7).

Table 7. Survey Participants Institutions

Art and design specialist universities	Comprehensive universities
China Art Academic	Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology
Central Academy of Fine Arts	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University
Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts	Zhejiang University
SiChuan Academy of Fine Arts	Communication University of China
Dalian Art College	Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University

Investigating the employment of Fine Art graduates in these two categories gives a more informed overview of different models and course cultures and brings more reliable datasets of Chinese Fine Art graduates' employability issues. In addition, this dataset allows us to determine which elements of the Fine Art discipline content they have studied at school and which have been translated into employability skills and which skills have not been used in employment.

The Pilot Study

The pilot or pre-test needs to test the face validity of the survey before it is assigned to the final sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Bell and Waters (2014), the face validity pilots study can identify respondents' feelings and responses to survey questions visually. The pre-tests involve participant feedback rather than statistical analysis, and sample sizes are typically small (de Vaus, 2014). The number of pre-test samples is usually 15 to 30, and a pilot sample's minimum value is 10 (Fink, 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, the aim is to identify and eliminate potential problems with the survey, which contains all aspects of the survey, including question content, wording, the

order in which the questions should be tested, format and layout, question difficulty, and instructions (Malhotra, 2006).

The pre-test will first be conducted in a format of the interview with ten respondents invited through online chat on Wechat (a Chinese social networking platform). 10 respondents were sourced individually via the researcher's network connections to retrace partial responses in the pilot study. Respondents to the formal survey were drawn from both the researcher's and the participant's social networks. The interviews were carried out informally. This format allows for better observation of respondents' responses and attitudes (Malhotra, 2006). After making the necessary changes, another pre-test was conducted, using a sample of 10 different respondents in the same environment of an online survey as the setting for data collection.

Feedback was then considered from all 10 participants with the individual scale items. There were no questions that participants found uncomfortable answering. As the survey was designed in English and then translated into Chinese, three respondents found that the wording of some of the questions would not be conducive to understanding. One student found some courses in the Fine Art Pedagogies section had not been studied, so we added the 'No such course' option to that section. Survey respondents were selected with attention to the age span. The respondents were mixed with students who just had graduated and those who had graduated some time before (see details in Table 8). In order to address this issue, the survey questions were phrased in more colloquial terms without changing the meaning of the questions.

Table 8. Results of Face Validity Pilot Testing

Participant	Question	Participant Comment	Solution
1, 2, 3	Section 5. The Fine Art Pedagogies	“Easy to choose “Neither” due to a large number of subjects.”	Remove the ‘Neither’ option and add the ‘No such course’ option.
7, 10	Section 5. The Fine Art Pedagogies	“Some courses are not available at my school.”	add the ‘No such course’ option.
4, 5, 6	Section 5. The Fine Art Pedagogies	“Forgetting some of the courses I have taken after graduating for too long.”	Survey respondents were selected with attention to the age span. The respondents were mixed with students who had just graduated and those who had graduated some time before.
8, 9	No questions about the survey		

After the first face validity pilot testing, the survey was modified, and a second online survey test with ten new participants was conducted. No additional questions appeared in the second online survey test. Thus, the pilot test was completed. Finally, the survey questions were edited and corrected based on the feedback from the pre-test. The distribution of the survey questionnaire was set for between October and November 2021.

Data Analysis

For this research, descriptive statistics, reliability, and validity tests were used to analyse the data from the returned surveys. A database was created using all valid survey data to validate the proposed theoretical framework—the hypothesis model of The Heuristic Model of Employability for Fine Art Graduates and to explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates.

This research used the analysis system of the Survey Monkey platform to conduct a descriptive statistical analysis of the profile of the survey respondents. We used descriptive statistics to identify respondents from the same background as the study population (Chinese Fine Art graduates) and analysed Fine Art graduate employment situations from different types of institutions, different types of companies, and different family backgrounds. Descriptive Statistical analysis of the sample was conducted to illustrate the means of variables percentages, to describe the type and characteristics of the sample, and to objectively describe the nature and magnitude of sensory characteristics (Kemp *et al.*, 2018). Descriptive statistics were used to inform the subsequent qualitative interview. Following this, descriptive statistics were used to verify whether the three elements of the hypothesis model of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates, as proposed in the theoretical framework, matched the employability needs of Fine Art graduates. Finally, descriptive statistics were applied to answer the second aim of this study: to explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates.

After the descriptive statistics, the research data were collected, and statistical validity and reliability testing were carried out on the final sample using SPSS. A measure of the consistency and stability of survey measurement is reliability, and reliability testing is necessary for data analysis. A Likert-type response design was used in phase one, and sections three, four, and five of the survey. When using Likert-type scales, the researcher needs to calculate and report the internal consistency reliability of any scale or subscale used (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). Reliability indicators can be obtained and validated through retest reliability methods, copy reliability methods, class reliability methods, and internal methods. One of the standard methods is the internal consistency method, dominated by Cronbach's alpha confidence coefficient method.

Cronbach's alpha confidence (Cronbach, 1951) is one of the most widely used reliability measures in the social and organisational sciences (Bonett and Wright, 2015). Cronbach's alpha is a test of reliability technique that requires only one tester to provide a reliability estimate for a given test (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). The survey aims to explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. When analysing the reliability of the survey response, Cronbach's alpha method is used for analysing attitudinal, opinion-based Likert-type scales (Zou, 2013). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient method was used to test the reliability of this study's scale. Cronbach's alpha confidence coefficient is usually between 0 and 1.0. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items on the scale (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). George and Mallery (2003: 231) provide the following rules of thumb: “_ > 0.9 – Excellent, _ > 0.8 – Good, _ > 0.7 – Acceptable, _ > 0.6 – Questionable, _ > 0.5 – Poor, and _ < 0.5 – Unacceptable.” After determining the reliability of the survey, a descriptive data analysis was conducted.

The Ethical Considerations of Survey

General ethical considerations are crucial to any research project to ensure that no harm is done to participants and confidentiality is protected (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). All data was anonymised for this research, i.e., it is not possible to identify information relating to students' names, higher education institutions, and courses. All reasonable precautions were taken to ensure that no respondent was harmed or affected by their participation in this research project. All participants were treated with dignity and respect in all communications and observed the professional etiquette of the research.

Graduates were asked to recall their graduate identity and compare it to their

current career identity. I understood the risk that participants may not recall or may exaggerate their responses (Manzoni *et al.*, 2010). However, self-perception is key to the research objectives, and asking graduates to make conscious comparisons is appropriate (Bohmer and Schinnenburg, 2016).

In addition to data collection, I also considered axiology in the interpretation of my research. Axiology relates to the role of values in research and how researchers position themselves in research (Zhang and Creswell, 2013). For pragmatists, it is essential to be explicit about the purpose of research (Biddle and Schaft, 2015). Pragmatists see reality as existing in a cultural context where the intended actions (including research) related to problem-solving are purposeful (Morgan, 2007), and intending to solve social problems (Morgan, 2014). It also involves continually reflecting on the impact that research findings may have on others (Hall, 2013), ultimately producing knowledge that is useful to society (Feilzer, 2010). Furthermore, from a pragmatist's perspective, if findings are unexpected, researchers need to reflect and use retrospection to re-evaluate the theory used rather than changing the research questions to fit the data (Feilzer, 2010). Therefore, I maintained axiological reflection throughout the research process. Academic researchers are expected to conduct their research objectively, taking distance from non-involvement, uninvolved in subjectivity. However, research is started related to the researcher's background and interests (Etherington, 2004). I may start my research with some subjective personal experience, but at the same time, as a researcher, I will use sound research methods to present factual findings. My experience and subjective ideas will be tools to conduct smooth research with the respondents and ultimately achieve objective factual data.

Language Translation

For this research, one of the challenges lies in the use of language. Using different languages may make the interviewees understand some ideas

differently (Harzing, 2005). The language used in the survey is an essential part of the survey construction (Acharya, 2010). All the participants' first language is Chinese. I am a native Chinese speaker and am certified as a teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, so I translated the survey into Chinese, and sample of the survey was double-checked by a professional interpreter to ensure that the translated texts between Chinese and English have no discrepancy in meaning, and did not have missing content.

In summary, this section 2.6.3 explains the underlying philosophy of the phase one methodology and justifies and explains it in the context of this philosophy. It describes the methods that have been implemented and identifies the applications. It outlines how the data was obtained and analysed. Section 2.6.4 explains the creative industry employer interview in phase two.

2.6.4 Phase Two – Creative Industry Employer Interview

This section introduces the second phase of the research, qualitative research including the semi-structured interviews with employers in the creative industries, and will specifically address:

Objective 2 □ Determine through qualitative data the competencies, qualities and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in China.

Introduction

The results of phase one will identify information on the employment status of Fine Art graduates and the impact of the various courses of the Fine Art pedagogies in China on the employment of Fine Art graduates. Phase one data will be valuable in analysing the employability of Fine Art graduates, validating

the employability attributes that can be developed in Fine Art pedagogies, and helping to identify Fine Art pedagogies that can enhance employability. However, it only addresses one side of this study and does not involve an in-depth analysis of the interrelationship between Fine Art graduates and creative industry employers and the employment requirements of creative industry employers for Fine Art graduates in China. Therefore, phase two takes employers' perspectives to evaluate what employability skills are required in the creative industries.

By making links between these two phases (see Fig 7), a more comprehensive understanding of the employability requirements of graduates in China's creative industries can be developed, and solutions can be proposed for teaching undergraduate art in China to improve the employability of graduates in China's creative industries. Interviews were conducted with employers in the creative industries through a qualitative research approach. First, the structure of the interviews is introduced, followed by the background of the participants, and the interview questions. Then there is an analysis of the interviews with employers in the creative industries based on grounded theory and coding processes; and finally, a discussion on the ethical and linguistic issues that may arise from the research.

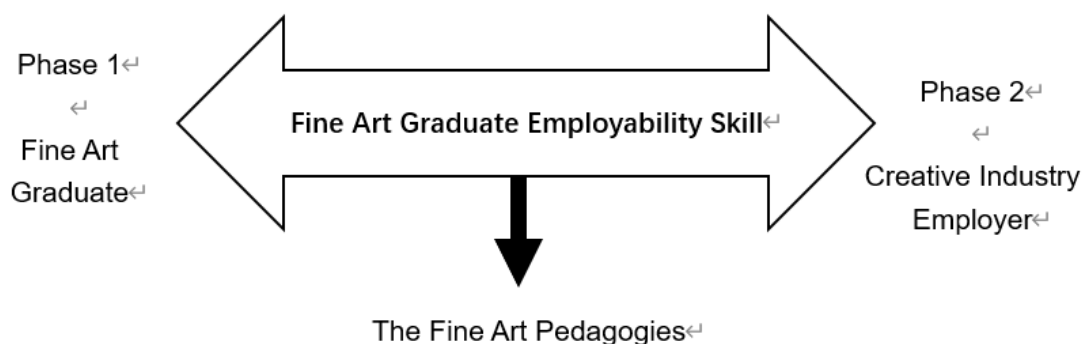


Fig 7. Links Between the Two Phases

Creative Industry Employers Semi-Structured Interviews

In Phase two of this research, the qualitative method was used to explore the employability skills that are valued in Fine Art graduates by creative industry employers. Samples for qualitative studies are usually much smaller than those used in quantitative studies (Mason, 2010) because there is a point of diminishing returns for qualitative samples and more data does not necessarily lead to more information as the investigation progresses (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Researchers also need to consider their time resources (for conducting interviews and analysing interview data) and their ability to maintain validity during extended interviews (Rowley, 2012). Thus, 10 face-to-face interviews with senior position managers working in the creative industries were conducted. Face to face interviews is characterised by synchronous time and place communication, where social cues such as the interviewee's voice, tone of voice, and body language can give the interviewer much additional information (Opdenakker, 2006). However, Wengraf (2001: 94) argues that the interviewer must focus on the “double attention” because of this synchronous nature. This means

“that you must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need.”

Thus, the interactivity of the communication between the two parties is crucial. For this research, all interviews were conducted in semi-structured interviews. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), one of the main advantages of semi-structured interviews is that it allows interviewers to control the information collection process while allowing them to track when new clues and questions arise. A semi-structured interview also has good flexibility to capture more

personal insights and opinions, which may be lost due to the implementation of more rigorous 'structured' interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In addition, Rapley (2004) maintains that semi-structured interviews also allow respondents to elaborate on their responses to provide a variety of understandings and ideas that may be beyond the scope of the original research design. However, Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) argue that unstructured interviews allow the researcher to access more unexpected data and help to better understand the social reality from the respondent's perspective. Although unstructured interviews can generate detailed data and allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, they are not used as much as semi-structured interviews (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Because this method requires a great deal of time to gather the required information, a great deal of effort must be put into analysing the data systematically to identify patterns (Patton, 2002). Therefore, considering flexibility, traceability, and manipulability, the decision was made to use a semi-structured interview format for this research.

Each participant was interviewed independently, and each interview was kept to one hour, as any interview longer than one hour may produce too much data for analysis (Cohen and Manion, 2000). However, Kirchner and Olson (2017) argue that an interview's length depends on the interaction between the respondent and the interviewer. If this interaction changes during the fieldwork, then the interview length will also change. Rapley (2004) agrees that participants will be more likely to be informed and talk in an interview setting if they feel comfortable. The interviewer needs to be neutral in interviews, probe participants and encourage conversation on specific topics that may lead to bias in the processing of the data collected, and the primary way to address this is the need for precise wording (Patton, 2002). Therefore, to avoid bias, the interviewer needs to remain natural and passive throughout the conversation and consider the interaction and vocabulary of the interviewer and interviewee

to address any bias that may have been inadvertently introduced.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for the interviews needs to be determined first. There are two ways to select a sample from a sampling frame: random or non-random (Rai and Thapa, 2015). Random sampling, also known as probability sampling or chance sampling, consists of four types: (1) random sampling, (2) systematic sampling, (3) stratified random sampling, and (4) cluster sampling. Non-random sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, is a sampling method not based on the probability of a unit entering the sample but on other factors such as the common knowledge, experience, intention, and expertise of the sampler (Rai and Thapa, 2015). It includes three types: (1) representative sampling, (2) accidental sampling, and (3) purposive sampling.

Purposive Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was chosen to be used in this study. This is because it is a frequently used sampling method in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), and purposive sampling is “used to select respondents who are most likely to generate appropriate and useful information” (Kelly, 2010: 317). This phase aims to explore and determine how employers in the creative industries value the competencies, qualities, and skills of Fine Art graduates from China. A representative sample of creative industry employers was selected for the interview, and this method is a purposive sampling method (Vehovar *et al.*, 2016). This non-random technique does not require grounded theory or a certain number of participants (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). The researcher decides what they need to know and then proceeds to find people who are able and willing to provide information based on their knowledge or experience (Bernard and Bernard, 2013).

According to Oliver (2015), purposive sampling represents a different set of non-probability sampling techniques. Also referred to as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling, purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher in selecting the units to be studied (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, data segments). This strategy is far removed from any random form of sampling and is a strategy to ensure that particular types of cases that may be included are part of the final sample in the study (Campbell *et al.*, 2020). However, Sharma (2017) argues that purposive sampling is highly susceptible to the researcher's personal bias as its criteria are vague. The selection of units in purposive sampling (i.e., the selection of people or organisations) is subjective and non-probabilistic, making it difficult for the data to defend the sample's representativeness (Sharma, 2017). Some scholars argue that purposive sampling of specific people is essential, but they may hold different ideas and opinions about the topic under discussion (Mason, 2002; Robinson *et al.*, 2016). Although purposive sampling may be mixed with the researcher's personal bias, as the respondents were chosen explicitly, this study will use purposive sampling and remain as neutral as possible as a researcher. After determining the sampling method, we need to determine the sample size.

Interviews Sample Size

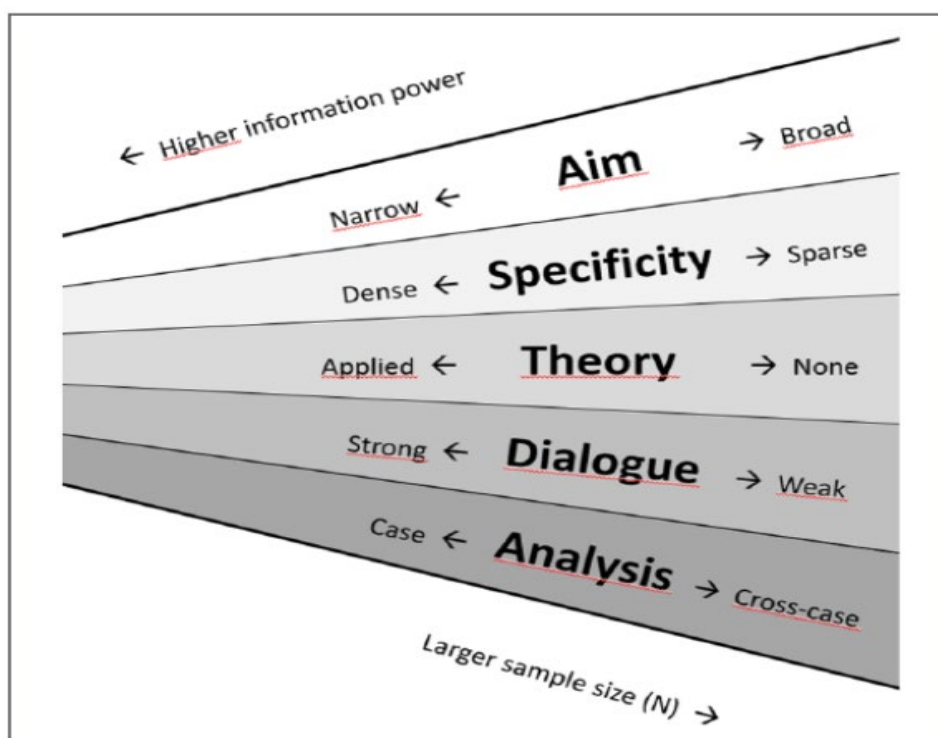
“What is an adequate sample size for qualitative studies?” This is a common question for which there is not a straight forward response (Hennink *et al.*, 2017: 591).

In qualitative research, obtaining an appropriate sample size is essential to generate sufficient data (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that there is no fixed number of times that theoretical saturation occurs in interviews. However, a more comprehensive review of the literature

found that saturation typically occurs between 10 and 30 interviews, with the first saturation likely to occur after the tenth interview (Atran *et al.*, 2005; Guest *et al.*, 2006; Thomson, 2010). Some scholars argue that samples that are too small may not provide information that adequately captures the phenomenon and therefore reduces the validity of the findings (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Carlsen and Glenton, 2011). However, Bowen (2008) argues that data saturation focuses on sample adequacy rather than the sample size. Hennink *et al.* (2017) also found that too large a data wastes research funding and participation time and that a reasonable number of interviews is sufficient to understand a range of issues in the data. How much additional data is needed depends on a range of saturation parameters, including the purpose of the study, the population being studied, the type of code, and the complexity and stability of the code (Hennink *et al.*, 2017).

Malterud *et al.* (2015) propose the information power model to guide sample size estimation for qualitative research. Information power means the richness of the information that a sample can provide, i.e., the more prosperous the information provided by the sample and the more relevant it is to the study, the smaller the sample size required (Malterud *et al.*, 2015). Thus, information efficacy depends on (1) the aim of the study, (2) the specificity of the sample, (3) whether the established theory was used, (4) the dialogue quality of the interviews, and (5) the analysis strategy (Malterud *et al.*, 2015). These five dimensions of information effectiveness were constructed to model the relationship between information effectiveness and sample size (see Fig 8). This practical model for estimating sample sizes for qualitative research is described below as a reference point for analysing information effectiveness for a given sample size.

Fig 8. Information Power—Items and Dimensions



Source: *Qualitative Health Research* (2015:4)

Aim of the study

The information efficacy of a qualitative research sample size is closely related to the aim of the research. When selecting research participants, researchers should carefully consider which factors are most closely related to the question they plan to study and the aim they are trying to achieve (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). The research aim of this study is to uncover the employability skills needed for Chinese Fine Art graduates to be employed in China's creative industries, and it is a relatively narrow objective. It sets a specific country and maps to one subject and industry.

Specificity of the Sample

The specificity of the sample refers to the characteristics of the sample itself, closely related to its demographic characteristics, experience, knowledge, and the richness of the information it can provide (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Malterud *et al.*

(2016) argue that respondents should be selected from those who have lived in the environment under study for a relatively long time, know the reality within the research environment, and have some observational and reflective skills. Zhu *et al.* (2021) maintain that this situation requires a smaller sample size to achieve sufficient information efficacy. The respondent group in this study is employers and senior managers in the creative industries who met the requirements for demographic characteristics, experience, and knowledge. Thus, the specificity of the sample falls into the rich category.

Theoretical Support

The information efficacy of the sample size is related to the theoretical background. In chapter two of the theoretical framework, the heuristic model of employability (Fugate *et al.*, 2004) was further explored and developed and resulted in the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates. Zhu *et al.* (2021) argue that theoretical frameworks can lead research to explain the relationship and role of different dimensions of practical information more thoroughly. Therefore, the theoretical framework helps analyse the data and does not require large sample sizes to achieve sufficient information effectiveness (Zhu *et al.*, 2021).

Dialogue Quality

Information validity is also related to the quality of the dialogue in the interview. Zhu *et al.* (2021) suggest that a clear, high-quality interview dialogue requires fewer participants in order to be sufficiently informative than an ambiguous or unfocused discussion. In qualitative research, research data is constructed through interactive communication between the researcher and the participants (Malterud *et al.*, 2016). The analytical value of the research data also depends on the interviewer's skills, eloquence, and interaction between the researcher and the participant (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, to ensure the quality of the

dialogue, a mock interview was conducted before the formal interview to enhance the dialogue quality of the interview. Zhu *et al.* (2021) suggest that a high-quality dialogue requires only a small number of participants to provide rich information and achieve sufficient information efficacy.

Analytical Strategies

Finally, information efficacy is related to the analysis strategy. An exploratory cross-case analysis requires more participants to achieve sufficient information efficacy than an in-depth narrative analysis or a detailed discourse analysis of a few cases (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). The research objectives of this study did not address the need for cross-case analysis.

The information efficacy model provides a reference point for assessing sample sizes for qualitative research (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). In summary, the research aims of this study are narrow, the information provided by the particular participants was theoretically supported, the quality of the interview dialogue could be high, and in-depth narrative analysis strategies were used. Thus, sufficient information efficacy can be achieved with a relatively small number of participants. 10 participants were first contacted for a one-to-one online video call. The background information of the interviewees is described in the next paragraph.

Participant Background

For the selection of respondents, this research refers to 2009, when the Chinese State Council released the Plan for Revitalising Cultural Industries, which elevated the development of creative industries to a national strategic level. It proposed that “the creative industries should focus on the development of cultural technology, music production, art creation, animation and games, and other enterprises, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the

development of related service and manufacturing industries.” Therefore, the sample of participants was selected to cover as many of these categories as possible, with ten participants from culture, technology, music production, entertainment, art and design, media, and events. However, as the creative industries continue to evolve, this study could only add to the richness of the data among the limited number of respondents.

The 10 participants in the qualitative interview study were all from China's major cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou) and from in the creative industries working in senior positions in their companies. The reason for choosing those three cities is that the creative industries in those cities are developing more rapidly than in other cities in China and are already taking shape and forming distinctive creative clusters (Yang and Yu, 2012). Employers working in senior positions in the creative industries in those cities provide insight into the current employment requirements of the creative industries and a glimpse into the talent needed for the creative industries of the future.

Usually, it does not seem to matter who is the first interviewee as long as there are enough interviewers to saturate the information (Pan *et al.*, 2008). However, Pan *et al.* (2010) argue that the quality of the first interviewee is crucial, and if he is a leader, this will help accelerate the rate of information saturation. In this study, we set a senior manager from a multinational technology company in Hangzhou as the first interviewee. This multinational technology company is currently the largest e-commerce platform in China, with business, cloud computing, digital media and entertainment, and creative industries. It has also recently increased its investment in the creative industries globally (Paquienséguy and He, 2018). Pan *et al.* (2010) suggests that the second respondent in an interview could choose the person who differs most from the first respondent, such as gender, age, geographical location, and demeanour to accelerate information saturation. Therefore, the second respondent is

different gender and geographical location than the first respondent was chosen. The most different information was expected to come from the second respondent.

Pan *et al.*'s (2010) study found that after the first and second interviews had been completed, there could be situations where the information was not significantly different or where the information was significantly different. In either case, the selection for the third and subsequent interviewees followed how the interviewee differences were ranked (see Table 9). This respondent sequence also helps to saturate the research data with the most significant variation in information (Pan *et al.*, 2010).

Table 9. List of Interview Participants Information and Sequence

No.	Employees	Location	Gender	Position of the interviewee
01	Multinational Technology Company	Beijing	Male	Departmental Director
02	Cultural and Creative Company	Hangzhou	Female	CEO
03	Newspaper Publisher	Shanghai	Male	Departmental Director
04	Designers Association	Beijing	Female	General Secretary
05	Media Company	Hangzhou	Male	CEO
06	Online Media Company	Beijing	Female	Departmental Director
07	Live webcast	Shanghai	Male	CEO
08	Gallery	Hangzhou	Female	General Manager
09	Audio Company	Beijing	Male	General Secretary
10	Exhibition Company	Hangzhou	Female	Vice General Manager

The Face-to-Face Interview

Generally speaking, the most effective interview form is the face-to-face interview (Bryman, 2012). However, I could not go back to China due to the global epidemic, so I decided to use an Internet-based video chat interview. Some scholars also suggest that Internet-based interviewing can be used instead of traditional interview methods (Fielding *et al.*, 2008; Sedgwick and Spiers, 2009). For example, more conventional data collection models such as e-mail and IM (instant messaging) software are used (James and Busher, 2009). Internet-based video software allows participants and interviewers to hear and see each other. The fact that they do not occupy the same physical space leads to missed opportunities for researchers to observe the physical space of the participants and respond to body language and emotional cues (Cater, 2011). However, with the rapid spread of social media, companies, and organisations are choosing to use video conferencing software more frequently, and people are becoming more accustomed to voicing their opinions on social platforms (Gray *et al.*, 2020). In the last two years, many people had to choose to work from home due to the impact of Covid-19. At this stage, extensive use of the internet has been made as a bridge for communication, learning, and working. The extensive use of online video conferencing features has made us all accustomed to communicating in an online scenario.

Wechat is a social media and multi-functional application in China that has more than 1 billion active users per month and has become one of the most popular social media platforms globally (Montag *et al.*, 2018). Most of the participants are familiar with the software and have previous experience in using it, which means that they can easily talk and answer questions through this medium. Wechat connection provides visual and audio communication, so through this medium, the nonverbal cues can be generated in the interaction, which helps to establish a harmonious relationship with the participants. Therefore, it was

decided that when face-to-face interviews were not possible, Wechat would be used. However, Huang and Zhang (2017) raised concerns about the privacy risks and personal information leakage of the WeChat system. In their study, participants also suggested that the WeChat platform was too personal to be used for an interview. On the other hand, participants argued that the Skype and QQ platforms are more suitable for an interview and work better than WeChat in terms of functionality, such as transferring files and sharing documents (Huang and Zhang, 2017). Communication with the respondents before the interview design was made to avoid any possible negative impact of the Wechat platform on the interview data. The participants agreed to conduct video interviews on Wechat and follow up on the Wechat platform for further questions after the interview. Participants felt this to be the most convenient and effective way to communicate.

Interview Question

After establishing the interview format and the interviewees' samples, specific questions for the interviews are discussed in this section. The advantage of the semi-structured interview method is that it allows for successful reciprocity between interviewer and participant, enabling the interviewer to ask extended questions based on the participant's impromptu responses and leaving room for the participant's verbalisation (Polit and Beck 2010; Galletta, 2012). Therefore, the semi-structured interview is flexible in terms of question design. The questions and answers in the interviews may be taken for granted or obvious (Mann, 2016). Thus, part of a reflective process on interviewing is shifting the focus from 'obtaining answers' to more attention to learning what questions to ask and how to ask them' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 93).

For this research, the interview questions aimed to explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies,

qualities, and skills of Fine Art graduates from China. Through qualitative data, the objective is to determine the competencies, qualities, and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in China. The interview questions reference Chen's (2012) research on graduate employability development. His study shares the same research objectives, aimed at the same group of Chinese graduates as this study. Unlike Chen's (2012) research, this study only focuses on the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China. Thus, the interview questions modifications are required. Kallio *et al.* (2016) suggest that Interview questions need to be identified before the interview and developed using the interview guide.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed as a series of questions (Krauss *et al.*, 2009) that steered the conversation towards the research topic during the interview (Cridland *et al.*, 2015). The interview guide aims to elicit answers from participants that are spontaneous, in-depth (Baumbusch, 2010), unique (Krauss *et al.*, 2009), and vivid (Dearnley, 2005). Such answers can reflect respondents' personal feelings (Winiarska, 2008) and experiences (Rabionet, 2011) and can generate data and new concepts (Krauss *et al.*, 2009).

Kallio *et al.* (2016) argue that interview guides need to provide a focused structure. However, Holloway and Wheeler (2010) argue that the structure should not be strictly followed because it is necessary to be flexible to explore areas of research based on the reality of the conversation. In addition, Turner (2010) argues that the format of the semi-structured interview guide is considered to be loose and flexible, allowing for dialogue during the interview (Whiting, 2008, Cridland *et al.*, 2015) and allowing the opportunity to change the order of questions (Dearnley, 2005). Therefore, the sequence of questions

needs to be progressive and logical in its design.

Scholars have suggested that interviews could be conducted through four questions to obtain research objectives ultimately. (1) Introductory questions, (2) transition questions, (3) key questions, and (4) closing questions (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Castillo-Montoya (2016)). However, Whiting (2008) argues that the first section of the the interview questions should address core issues familiar to participants and central to the research topic (Whiting, 2008). Castillo-Montoya (2016) argues that to start with some relatively neutral and non-threatening questions at the beginning of the interview to elicit general and non-intrusive information is best practice. Thus, at the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were invited to introduce their company background briefly. Then, the transition questions that link the introductory questions were asked. For example, “What percentage of the total number of Fine Art graduates are there in your company?” Following this, the key questions that are most related to the research questions were asked, such as the needs of the creative industry for the employable skills of Fine Art graduates; and whether they meet these requirements. For example, “For employment and career development in the creative industries in China, what do you think are the main qualities, competencies, and skills that Fine Art graduates need to possess?” After this, the sequence of significant themes moved from lighter themes to more emotional and in-depth themes (Baumbusch, 2010; Cridland *et al.*, 2015). In this part, we will focus on whether university programmes prepare Fine Art graduates for employment from employers' perspectives in the creative industry and how Fine Art pedagogies can better enhance the employability skills of Fine Art graduates. For example, “Could you please tell us your views on the existing university's development of employability of Fine Art graduates? What are the good aspects and shortcomings?” Furthermore, the word why can be used during the interview

for in-depth exploration (Turner, 2010). Finally, the last part of the interview questions ended with a lighter question that was easy to answer and provided the opportunity for closure (Baumbusch, 2010; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Creative industries employers offer forward-looking advice on the employability skills needed for future employment in the creative industries. For example, “What employability skills do you think are needed for the future of the creative industries?”

Having identified the questions and structure of the interviews to support the development of inquiry-based dialogue, Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggests that researchers could also draft scripts as part of the interview protocol. Developing scripts also helps to support a smooth transition between interview questions (Patton, 2015). According to Castillo-Montoya (2016: 824), A script is a

“written text that guides the interviewer during the interview—supports the aim of a natural conversational style... In writing a script, the researcher considers what the participants needs to know or hear to understand what is happening, and where the conversation is going.”

At the beginning of the interview, the script should first tell the interviewee something about the researcher to start building rapport; prompt the researcher to share essential details about the study, the research question, aim, and objective in the information sheet. Then the concept of informed consent should be explained to the interviewee and the participant should be instructed to sign the interview consent statement (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). (See Table 10).

Table 10. Interview Guide outline

Information Sheet (Appendix 3)
Interview Consent Form (Appendix 4)
<p>Interview Questions (Appendix 5)</p> <p><i>Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]</i></p> <p><i>If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To begin this interview, could you please tell us a little bit about your company? 2. What percentage of the total number of Fine Art graduates in your company? 3. For employment and career development in the creative industries in China, what do you think are the main qualities, competencies and skills that Fine Art graduates need to possess? 4. Could you please tell me your views on the existing university's development of graduate's employability? What are the good aspects and shortcomings? 5. How do you think universities should implement the development of a graduate's employability? Please give examples of courses or skills that could be added <p><i>Before we conclude this interview, are there any other questions about this interview?</i></p>

The Pilot studies

After identifying the participants' backgrounds and interview questions, the next step was to conduct a pilot test of the semi-structured interview. The researcher simulates the actual interview under as realistic conditions as possible. This aims to confirm the coverage and relevance of the content of the interview guide developed, get a realistic idea of how long the interview will take and whether the participants will indeed be able to answer the questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). In addition, identify the possible need to reformulate the questions and test their implementation (Kallio *et al.*, 2016). Testing the interview guide allowed for reasonable changes and adjustments to be made to the interview

questions (Chenail, 2011) and improved data collection quality (Chenail, 2011).

According to research by Kallio *et al.*'s (2016), testing of interview guides can be conducted using three different techniques: internal testing, expert assessment, and field testing. The internal testing refers to evaluating the initial interview guide collaborating with the research team's researchers (Chenail, 2011). This technique can provide essential information about the interview guide, such as removing ambiguities and inappropriate leading questions and highlighting possible interviewer bias (Chenail, 2011). The researcher may take on the participant's role and be interviewed in person by another researcher to gain insight into what it is like to be interviewed. However, there was only one participant in this study, and therefore it would not be appropriate to test the interview guide using an internal test. The second assessment technique was expert assessment, which involves exposing the initial interview guide to critique by experts outside the research team (Kallio *et al.*, 2016). Kallio *et al.* (2016) argue that assessment by external experts is beneficial for the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the content of the interview guide and can yield valuable guidance on the wording and arrangement of questions. Finally, field testing refers to an end to testing with potential research participants of the interview (Kallio *et al.*, 2016). Field tests simulate real-life interview situations and provide essential information about the conduct of the interview (Chenail, 2011; Turner, 2010). Testing interview guides with potential participants can be used to ensure that the interview questions are understandable (Chenail, 2011), to improve the relevance of the questions to the research topic (Krauss *et al.*, 2009), and to determine whether they elicit different perceptions and experiences of the participants (Chenail, 2011). Based on field testing, researchers can reformulate the order and format of the questions to make them more practical (Kallio *et al.*, 2016).

This study used field testing techniques to test the interview questions in conjunction with the literature review. Of the 10 participants selected, two were selected for the pilot interview. These two participants were asked questions about the pilot design. Although the basic interview questions were planned, they tried to clarify them further when they were confused or need more information. These two pilot interviews provided me with valuable information about the content of the interview but also provided me with the skills needed for effective interview technique and communication. Furthermore, follow-up questions could be refined to improve the quality of the final interview guide (Krauss *et al.*, 2009). The pre-test pilot also allowed me to determine if participants were reluctant to answer any questions. The interview information sheet (Appendix 1) clarified that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any point without giving a reason, with assurances given surrounding data protection. After the pilot interviews, it was found that there was a need to be more descriptive in some of the questions (see Table 11). I noted possible areas for improvement, made final revisions to the interview protocol, and prepared to initiate the actual interviews and data collections.

Table 11. Results of Interview Pilot Testing

Participant	Question	Participant Comment	Solution
1	Question 1	'Unsure of what qualities and competencies meant'.	In Mandarin, competencies are comprehensive qualities reflected in accomplishing a goal or task, which means competencies are included in a person's qualities. Thus, for this question, we will remove competencies from the sentences.
1, 2	Question 4 and 6	'Two questions are a bit repetitive.'	Combine the two questions into one.

After completing the interview pilot testing, the results validated the feasibility of the interview questions. The following sections discuss specifically the forms of recording in the interviews, the methods of data collection, and the data analysis.

Interview Video Recording and Data Collection

As the interviews were to be conducted via online video, the video was used to record the interviews. The video interview platform provides a unique data generation for qualitative research (Gray *et al.*, 2020). It facilitates remote or international communication, captures data from a more comprehensive and diverse population, enhances collaboration, and reduces the cost of business travel (Sedgwick and Spiers, 2009; Deakin and Wakefield, 2013). Similarly, Winiarska (2017) insists that video interviews also reduce unpredictable situations, such as adverse weather conditions, which would prevent participants from attending meetings. Researchers can already study the process and data of interviews using new methods that help increase speed and efficiency (Gray *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, even though the online video interview format was chosen due to the epidemic, video interviews have the definite advantage of assisting with data collection for interview research. An example of this is the WeChat platform used in this study, which allows researchers to transcribe audio recordings and convert audio conversations into intelligent notes and text. WeChat can also convert into 31 different languages, which fits well with the language requirements of the data analysis for this study.

Deakin and Wakefield (2013) found that a congenial conversational atmosphere contributes to the smoothness of the participation in video interviews. Deakin and Wakefield (2013) suggest that exchanging a few emails

before the video interview helps to establish rapport before the interview. Therefore, before the interview begins, there was a preliminary communication with the interviewee, including the researcher's background and the purpose of the interview, to generate a rapport before the formal interview. To ensure the quality of all interviews, all interviews were recorded by two audio recording devices (video recordings and mobile recordings). At the same time, notes were taken during the interviews as part of the interview. The final interview data consisted of audio recordings, field notes, and historical and original documentation. These preparations were an essential part of the analysis of the qualitative research process.

However, Gray *et al.* (2020) argue that video interviews are also subject to numerous uncertainties, most notably internet uncertainty, such as internet connection disruptions, freezes, or other audio and video disruptions that may occur. Smith (2014) suggests that arranging a backup plan with participants in advance is essential. For example, before starting their information sheets and participant visits, participants were reminded that the researcher would call them if there were problems with the internet signal (Smith, 2014). Hai-jew (2015) also encourages researchers to allow extra time for interviews to accommodate unexpected delays. Therefore, all interviews were booked with an extra half hour of space to help the video run more smoothly.

Analysis of Creative Industry Employer Interviews Based on Grounded Theory

Once the session in which the interviews were conducted was established, the data analysis was discussed. According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012), interviews and interview data present complex challenges despite the interview process seeming simple. Manson (2017) maintains that whether qualitative data can constitute 'evidence' and the judgement of the quality of qualitative

research is a concern. Because the answers to the questions come from different individuals, there may be other versions of the questions, which are often complex and multifaceted.

In order to analyse the complex data from the interviews, the process of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is followed after the initial collation of the interview text data. Grounded theory is a qualitative exploratory approach to theory-generating research (Corbin and Holt, 2005) and applies to the second phase of this study. All grounded theory “consists of unstructured interviews that use specific techniques to categorise and characterise data, and they are interested in interactions and processes” (Corbin and Holt, 2005). The interaction in unstructured interviews based on three principles. Firstly, the researcher should not formulate hypotheses prior to the study to ensure that existing theories do not influence their views on the phenomena encountered during the study (Jones and Alony, 2011). Secondly, the method requires the researcher to continually compare and contrast the empirical material collected (Wang and Gao, 2010). Through this comparison, a code is developed, which is subsequently used to organise, interpret and select the most important categories used to form the theory (Hensel and Glinka, 2018). Finally, is regulated according to the principles of theoretical sampling (Hensel and Glinka, 2018). Therefore, although the data from this study cannot become a representative sample, the data could help expand the researcher's understanding of the research question.

There are three dominant grounded theory designs: the systematic design, the emerging design, and the constructivist design (Creswell, 2012). This study uses a systematic design to carry out the analysis. This grounded theory design is broadly applied in educational field research. A systematic design in grounded theory contains three coding stages, namely open coding, axial

coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2012).

Determining Data Saturation

Saturation originated as a grounded theory approach to qualitative research and was used to determine the adequacy of data for theory development (Hennink and Kaiser, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to determine how data saturation is reached before collecting formal data. It has been defined as a guiding principle for qualitative data collection (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Manson, 2010). Bryant and Charmaz (2007: 611) further explain data saturation as “the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical construct reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory.” However, Low (2019: 131) argues that saturation defined as no new information, “is a logical fallacy, as there are always new theoretical insights to be made as long as data continues to be collected and analysed.”

For semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions may produce many columns of answers and narratives. The ground theory usually recommends continuing the interview until saturation is reached (Weller *et al.*, 2018). To achieve data saturation, Sandelowski (1995) suggests using the iterative coding method, where researchers need to simultaneously sample, collect, and analyse data. However, its process is undoubtedly challenging and time-consuming; it requires simultaneous collection and analysis until data saturation is achieved (Egan, 2002). In order to avoid unlimited data collection, Stolterman (2001) suggests that researchers must place limits and constraints on the interview process, otherwise, they will experience 'analysis paralysis' (Stolterman, 2001:1). Dey (1999) suggests theoretical sufficiency as an alternative to saturation to capture the notion that data collection stops when researchers have reached sufficient depth of understanding to build a theory. In a recent study, Nelson (2016) similarly proposes adding conceptual density

or conceptual depth to the concept of theory saturation. Thus, Braun and Clarke (2021) conclude that theory saturation is related to the quality of the data collected and encompasses richness, depth, diversity, and complexity.

Comparative Method for Themes Saturation

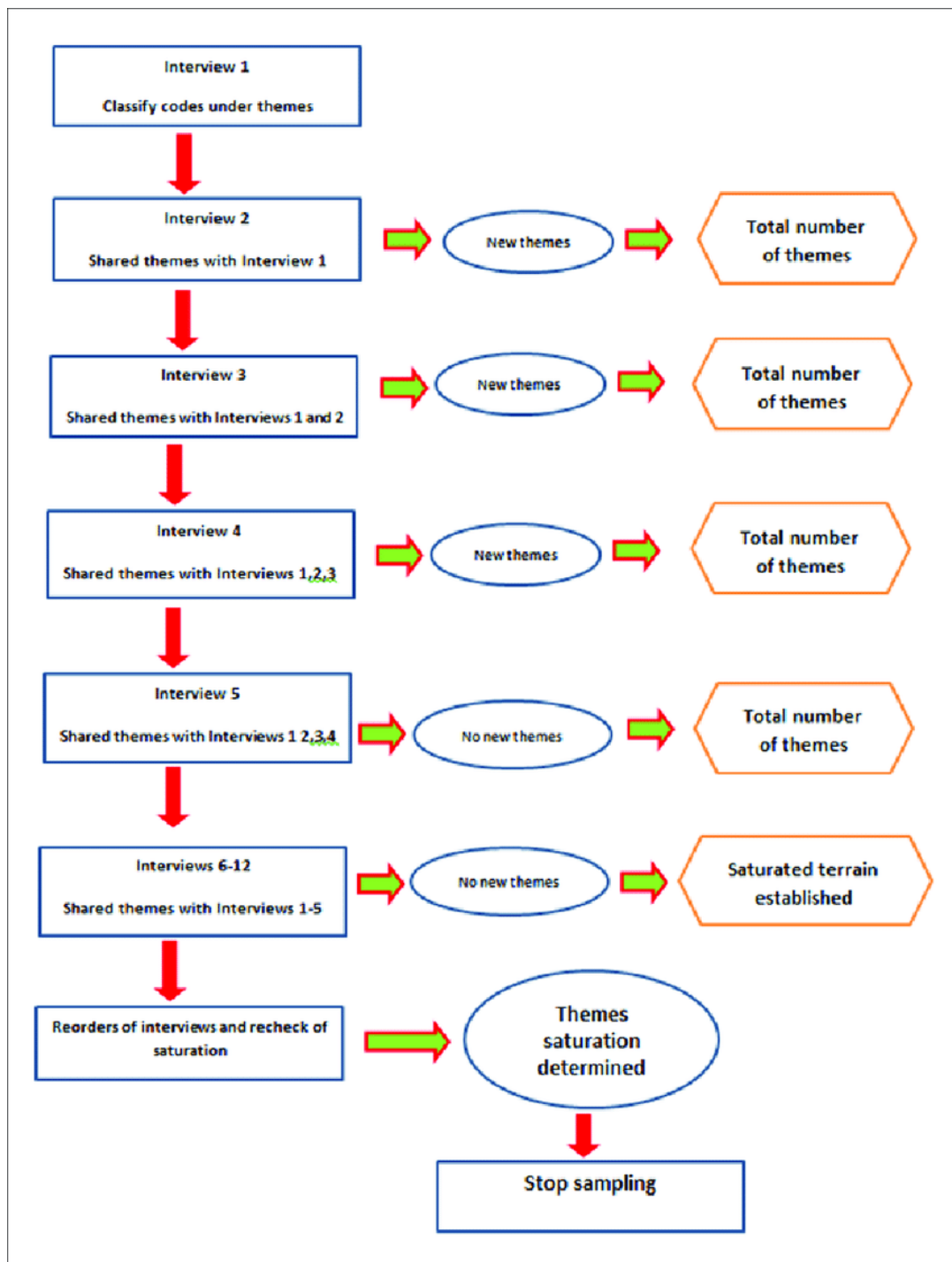
As mentioned above, many researchers acknowledge saturation as a marker of data robustness in qualitative research. However, what needs to be clarified is how we will achieve saturation in this study. Ten employers in the creative industries have been interviewed, and iterative coding has been used until no new themes emerged from the interviews in order to achieve data saturation. However, it has been assumed that each interviewee presents a different theme.

According to Morse's (2015) approach to saturation, he argues that it is not the saturated data but the categories or themes. The data are the raw words expressed by the participants, and these cannot be saturated as different people may use different words even if they want to express the same items (Morse, 2015). The function of these words or raw data is that they can be classified according to their commonalities (Constantinou *et al.*, 2017). For example, “there is the glue that binds them together, and this glue comes from the research question” (Constantinou *et al.*, 2017:6). Saturation is reached when all the original data belong to existing categories or themes and no longer form new themes.

In a recent study, Constantinou *et al.* (2017) proposed a new method for achieving saturation based on Morse's (2015) saturation method for complex qualitative studies, the comparative method for themes saturation (CoMeTS). CoMeTS uses multiple sequential comparisons of all interviewed themes to conclude that saturation has been reached (Constantinou *et al.*, 2017). CoMeTS has two approaches of comparison. First, all interview themes are

compared; second, the interview sequences are reordered multiple times to recheck saturation. This is because the order of the interviews during the check causes the saturation to change, so the reordering helps confirm the saturation (Constantinou *et al.*, 2017). The CoMeTS approach can answer our hypothesis about data saturation: if new themes appear for each interview, how the saturation problem solved? Starting with the second interview, after the interviewee answered each question, the previous interview themes were shared with the interviewer. All interviews were compared to each other to ensure thematic saturation (See Fig 9). Before concluding the thematic saturation, the interviews were reordered several times to double-check the saturation and avoid order-induced errors.

Fig 9. A Diagram of the Comparative Method for Themes Saturation



Source: Constantinou *et al.* (2017:6)

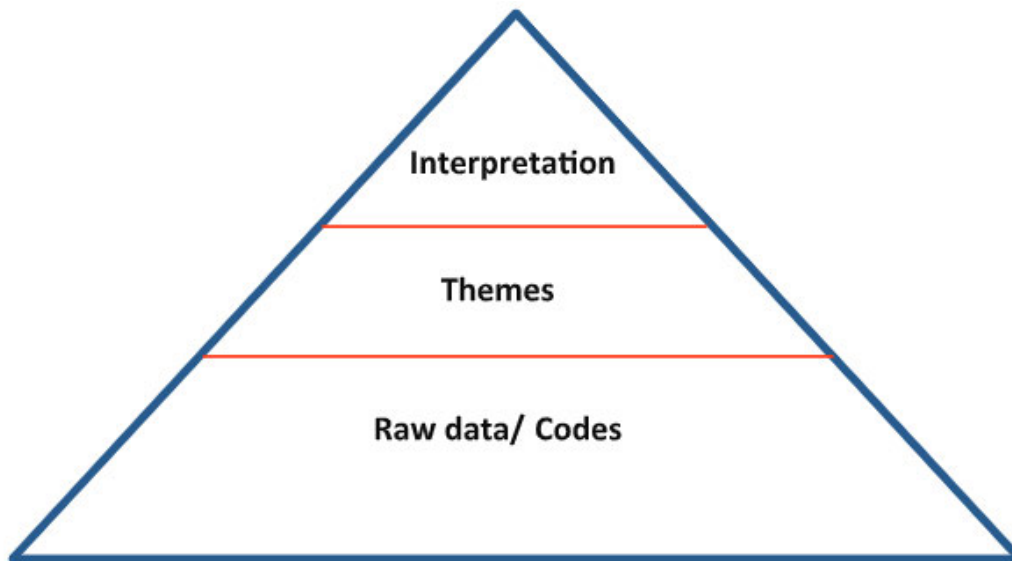
After determining that the interview would use the comparative method for themes saturation, the approach to the development of the coding process is described in the next section.

The Coding Process

Grounded theory coding is a method of analysing data to identify and disentangle potential issues in complex data (Allen, 2003). A systematic design for grounded theory consists of three coding phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2012). The first coding stage requires the researcher to construct initial categories to obtain information about the subject of study by segmenting the collected data (Creswell, 2012). To do this, researchers need to identify essential words or phrases in the data and use appropriate terminology (Birks and Mills, 2011). First, all keywords or codes are identified from the raw data, then organised into categories based on their similarity, and finally an interpretive framework is created based on the most important categories (Constantinou *et al.*, 2017). Constantinou *et al.* (2017) refer to these categories as 'saturated terrain.' The percentage of this terrain in each interview was then calculated.

Based on the themes derived from the data encoding, work on the description and interpretation aspects was carried out. The pyramid of coding and analysis in Fig 10 shows that most codes derived from the base (data) and the volume was narrowed down through group coding, theme identification, and interpretation. "This process is called coding, and the short descriptor phrase is a code (Allen: 1)."

Fig 10. Pyramid of Coding and Analysis



Source: *Qualitative Research* (2017:10)

This study will create a detailed codebook based on the pyramid of coding and analysis structure. In the first layer of the pyramid, the original coders from 10 interviews with employers in the creative industries were identified. These codes are keywords or phrases relayed by the participants in the interviews in response to the question: “Codes are one-- or two-word ideas that cogently and succinctly explain what is happening in the data” (Chametzky, 2016: 164). The coding was selected by numbering according to the PX-Y rule, where PX is the serial number of the interviewee, and Y is the employability skill element. For example, P1-1 indicates the first employability skills element presented by the first interviewee; here is an example below:

Q3. For employment and career development in the creative industries in China, what do you think are the main qualities, competencies and skills that Fine Art graduates need to possess?

The first interviewee: I think Fine Art graduates working in the creative industries need to have professional skills and the ability to execute.

P1-1: professional skills

P1-2: ability to execute

These codes were then grouped into similar domains and constructed themes (layer 2). Finally, these themes were used to interpret the data and to analyse the research questions (layer 3).

Chametzky (2016) suggested that after completing the coding for the first interview, all the codes should be copied into a blank MS Word document to help with better analysis and to omit duplicate codes. Each code should be separated by a few blank lines and a memo written. Elliott and Lazenbatt (2005) claim that memo writing is also an effective way to reduce distortion as it increases the researcher's sensitivity to personal bias. Mavetera and Kroeze (2009) maintain that memo writing is an exemplary process for recording concepts or ideas that emerge throughout the research process. Thus, memo writing is a continuous process from the beginning of the research to its completion, and these memos are translated into research outputs.

After determining the creative industry employers' semi-structured interviews sampling method, sample size, participants' backgrounds, interview questions, pilot study, data collection, and analysis. Following section will conclude with the ethical considerations and researcher positionality and reflexivity in the interviews.

The Ethical Considerations of Interviewing

Each element of the research process received approval before data collection commenced; the ethics approval application was reviewed in February 2021. The confidentiality of information has been ensured throughout the research

process and every effort has been made to ensure that individuals who may be identified in the study remain anonymous. Therefore, pseudonyms have been provided for all participants. In addition, all data collected is stored confidentially and securely and cannot be used by any third party.

The one-to-one interview is an ethical challenge. The challenge comes from the investigation of “real people” and “real experiences.” Thus, in some cases, “participants” may change their behaviour because “they” know they are being studied (Bryman, 2004: 512). Therefore, to ensure data quality, transcripts of all interviews were returned to interviewees after interviews for their inspection and comment. If any responses were inappropriate and not in line with their views, a further interview was conducted and any amendments made (Mason, 2017).

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity - a consideration of its influence and place in the interviews

Researchers in the social sciences are often required to explore and explain their positionality (Holmes, 2020). Positionality describes the individual's worldview and stance towards the research task and its social and political context (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014). Moreover, an individual's political stance, religious affiliation, gender, sexuality, history, geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, and status also simultaneously influence a researcher's positionality (Marsh *et al.*, 2002). Positionality ultimately influences research methods and outcomes (Rowe, 2014; Grix, 2018). “There is no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all” (Hall, 1996a: 18).

The age and appearance of the researcher in this research project would have conveyed youth and gender, and this would be the first impression the

participants received (Mason-Bish, 2019). As a young woman, the researcher may inadvertently show inexperience. However, the researcher's knowledge of the subject matter and professional role helped counterbalance this (Mason-Bish, 2019). The researcher has had many years of experience working and collaborating in the creative industries, and although not a Fine Art graduate, shares the same profile as a Fine Art graduate in that both graduated from art and design universities. The researcher will maintain a neutral and objective perspective (Padgett, 2016), establishing a gentle rapport, in a non-threatening manner (Mason-Bish, 2019).

According to Kim (2012: 264), "a researcher is defined as someone who shares common languages, themes, and experiences with their participants." Regarding the researcher's positionality, linguistic positionality is essential. Data collection always suffers when the researcher does not speak the same language as his or her participants (Cormier, 2018). McNess *et al.* (2015: 301) argue that "researchers using the same language for interviews can make participants feel more comfortable as they evoke a sense of belonging." Sharing a common language can directly influence the level of openness of participants, which can lead to the generation of rich data (Couture *et al.*, 2012). Thus, for this study, all interviewees and researchers were native speakers of Chinese, which helped to avoid issues that might arise from linguistic positionality. However, Cormier (2018) argues that even though researchers may speak the same language as participants, there may be significant differences in other levels of identity such as race, ethnicity, or religion, or having different accents, which may also affect the positionality of the interviewees to varying degrees. Therefore, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin to avoid possible errors in the interview data due to the power generated by language.

Furthermore, the power characteristics of the participants may also influence

the researcher's positionality in qualitative research (Finlay, 2002). For this study, the interviewees were employers in the creative industries, i.e., the owner or senior management of a company. They were chosen because they were dealing with more Fine Art graduates than general staff, and they have a more comprehensive understanding of the employability skills needed in the creative industries. However, Chestney-Harvey (2010) argues that a person's particular position within a company or organisation may be an illusion of elite status. In the same vein, Mason-Bish (2019) maintains that it is commonplace to be interviewed because of status, and while this helps the interview go smoothly, it may not yield accurate data. As Aberbach and Rockman (2002: 674) suggest, "elites mainly - but other highly educated people as well - do not like being put in the strait-jacket of close-ended questions, they prefer to articulate their views explaining why they think what they think." Thus, the participants were allowed to assert their knowledge and expertise and then the conversation was steered towards the specific questions the researcher wanted to ask.

Out of consideration for participant power, Berger (2015: 220) encourages the researcher to be reflexive and to engage in "internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's position, as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that such a position may influence the research process and outcome." According to Finlay (2002: 533), reflexivity can be defined as the exercise of "immediate, ongoing, dynamic and subjective self-awareness." Researchers argue that reflexivity can add credibility to research findings and deepen understanding of the work; as a criterion, it can ensure rigour and quality in qualitative research (Teh and Lek, 2018; Mitchell *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, conscious and deliberate attention to one's responses to respondents and how research accounts are constructed will help identify and interpret the potential or actual impact of personal, contextual, environmental aspects on the research process and outcomes. However, Delamont (2018)

argues that reflexivity is also not a guarantee of good research; it does not guarantee the research's authenticity, veracity, or ethics. No matter how critically one reflects and rethinks, some aspects may still be left out. Thus, while reality can never completely be objectively described because language is a human social construct and the meaning of words is a personal subjective construct (Von-Glaserfeld, 1988), reflection on the self will enhance the feasibility and authenticity of the findings.

Language Translation

The issue of language has been highlighted in the first phase of the research design. The use of different languages may allow respondents to understand some ideas differently (Harzing, 2005). According to Cormier (2018), cultural concepts often pose severe problems for translators when translating data, as equivalence is often absent in the target language. During the design and translation of the quantitative survey for this study, the problem of not finding exact equivalents when translating from Chinese to English was also encountered, and this needs further clarification. According to Dalby (2003), researchers need to know that no language can directly match a language. To address this issue in the interview data, Pennycook (2001: 14) states that translation needs to be done through cultural understanding in the translation process. Halai (2007: 345) describes this process as “cultural decoding.” Translators need to have a deep understanding of language and culture as these types of translations cannot be found in bilingual dictionaries (Santos *et al.*, 2015). In this research, the researcher took on the role of a translator, as I have studied and worked in both the UK and China, contributing to a cultural understanding of translation in both languages.

Moreover, to ensure the accuracy of the translation, a qualified translator will also conduct a secondary review to ensure the accuracy of the translation

(Cormier, 2018). However, Sutrisno *et al.* (2014) argue that since bilingualism does not always correspond, the translator requires professionally-related knowledge to carry out the translation and the knowledge of the language. Thus, for the selection of translators for the interview data in this study, those were selected with work experience related to the creative industries.

Overall, phase two examines the overall plan for qualitative research, managing some of the critical elements of the interview interaction. It includes participant background, sample size, pilot study, data collection, and data analysis. It identifies the content, sequence, and type of questions that building an interview guide before the interview helps to consider. Between the semi-structured interview structure, where it was necessary to leave space for the discussion to continue to illuminate whose lifeworld, sometimes it was necessary to explore in more detail and with more elaboration (Mann, 2016). It was also found that the questions asked, pauses allowed, and probes used helped the interviewees to share a range of past experiences, current understandings, and emerging perspectives (Mann, 2016). At the same time, potential ethical considerations, language translation issues, and solutions were raised.

2.6.5 Methodology Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the research design and methods of this thesis. It is divided into six sections. It restates the research questions mentioned in chapter one and explains the research gap. Then it explains my role in the research and moves on to discuss philosophical positionality. Section 2.5 developed two theories - The heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates and the Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model. These two theories helped build a theoretical triangulation to analyse the

research. Section 2.6 described the methods implemented and identified the applications which outlined how the data were obtained and analysed. The methodology for this research used two mixed research methods. These include the Fine Art pedagogy employability survey and the creative Industries employer interviews. The Fine Art pedagogy employability survey was conducted in a positivist context to understand the effectiveness of Chinese Fine Art pedagogy's content on employability development and to analyse the employment status of Chinese Fine Art graduates. In an interpretive context, interviews were conducted with employers in the creative industries to obtain information on the employability requirements of Chinese art graduates.

Despite the limitations of the two research methods, this research was designed to maximise its rigour and subsequent credibility. It was intended as a mixed-method, allowing different parts of the data to be used for different audiences. The entire design, from timing to sampling to survey design and interview questions, was carefully decided upon to maximize the research's rigour. After establishing the theoretical framework and research methodology, chapters 3 and 4 will review the literature on employment in the creative industries and art higher education in China to facilitate the data analysis in Chapter 5.

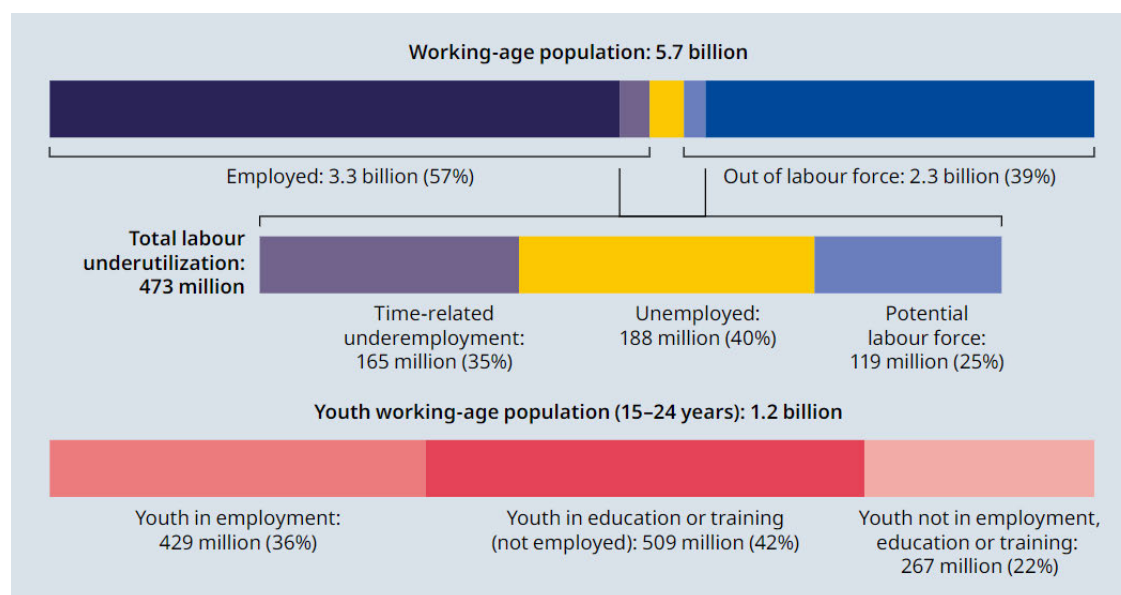
Chapter 3 Employability of the Creative Industry

Before implementing the research methodology, chapters 3 and 4 will review and discuss the literature on employability in creative industries and Fine Art higher education in China to better carry out the collection and analysis of data for this study in chapter 5. In Chapter 3, the discussion first addresses the current employment issues globally, drawing out the relationship between the emergence of creative industries and employment issues. Moving on, the discussion is specific to the creative industries in China, where this study is located and includes a discussion of the development process of the creative industries in China, the problems encountered in the development process, and the future directions under government policy. The chapter concludes by suggesting an exciting fit between creative careers and Fine Art.

3.1 Employment Issues in the Context of Global Economic Slowdown

After a long period of economic development, the world has begun to slow down since the 2008 sub-prime crisis (IMF, 2019a). Global economic growth decreased from 3.0% in 2018 to 2.3% in 2019 and has not yet started to pick up (UN, 2020). Although economic growth is expected to recover slightly to 2.5% in 2020, it may take several years to recover to the previous level (Gomis *et al.*, 2020). According to World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020 report, in 2019, 429 million (36%) of the world's youth aged 15 to 24 are unemployed; 509 million (42%) are educated or trained but not employed at the same time; 267 million young people (i.e., one-fifth of young people) do not have the skills and jobs required by the employment market (See Fig 11). Young people are at higher risk of labour underutilisation than adults, with 141 million young people affected by underutilisation and 68 million unemployed (Gomis *et al.*, 2020); youth unemployment has become a grave global issue.

Fig 11. Global overview of access to employment and labour underutilization



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates (2019)

Employment is not a new topic in economic development. There have been many studies related to economic growth and employment since the late 1930s (Fisher, 1935; Clark, 1940). Many macroeconomic works of literature have studied the critical relationship between employment dynamics and economic growth and concluded that improving employment will improve economic growth and ultimately reduce poverty (Lucchese and Pianta, 2012). Today, employment is as crucial as raising living standards around the world. With the enormous challenges facing the world of work, it is more important than ever to examine a clear picture of global employment and social trends (Gomis *et al.*, 2020). Current research needs to go more precisely into the analysis of employment in different industries to understand which industries are stable and which groups of workers are underemployed. Research into these issues will help develop social policies and guide future employment policies for sustainable national development.

3.1.1 Higher Education and Graduates Employability

When it comes to employment issues, people's eyes unconsciously turn to higher education. As a key demographic in the job market, graduate employability is now seen as one of the most important goals of higher education (Donald *et al.*, 2017), and responsibility for that capability rests with higher education institutions (hereafter HEIs) (Christie, 2017; Behle, 2020). Universities and other HEIs are under increasing pressure to produce 'employable' graduates, encouraging graduates to develop their personal qualities, skills, and experience in order to compete in the graduate labour market (Suleman, 2018; Behle, 2020).

The idea of graduate employability has been a topic of concern for universities as university league tables have come under increasing scrutiny for performance in key areas such as teaching quality and education (Bridgstock, 2011). Hillage and Pollard (1998: 1) defined the graduate's employability as "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that graduates are expected to be able to demonstrate they have acquired in higher education." Graduate employability is also defined as obtaining and maintaining graduate-level jobs (Bridgstock, 2011). Large numbers of universities define graduate employability as "a set of achievements – skills, understandings, and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Yorke and Knight, 2006: 8). Universities have engaged with the employability agenda by developing generic key skills such as communication, numeracy, literacy, problem-solving skills, and certain desirable personal qualities (Bridgstock, 2011). The rationale is that these skills and qualities will make graduates attractive to a wide range of employers by virtue of their transferability of skills.

Although increasing attention has been paid to graduate employability in the past decades, this complex concept has not been fully explored in the current higher education studies (Jame *et al.*, 2013; Clarke, 2017). Universities face huge pressure to improve graduates' employability (Teichler, 2009). Furthermore, the graduate employability of creative-related subjects is consistently lower than in other fields (Bridgstock, 2011). This is one of the reason this research sought to explore the question, "What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?"

3.2 The Increase in Development of Global Creative Industries

As a new economic component of national wealth and employment growth points, the creative industries are becoming the fastest growing and most important part of the national economy, relying on creativity and intellectual property to create jobs and future wealth (DCMS, 1998). The creative industries mark as an important link between commercial and cultural activities and the emerging media driven by technological change (Foord, 2009). The label brings the corporate dynamics of these activities (risk-taking, self-starting, idea-driven, lifestyle-based) to the forefront and resonates with the new knowledge economy (Cunningham, 2002). Globally, the creative industry has created 29.5 million jobs, equivalent to 1% of the world's active population, and has great potential for economic growth (Lhermitte, Perrin, and Blanc, 2015).

The term 'creative industries' first appeared in the 1990s and was originally used to describe all industries that create an intellectual property based on creativity (Garnham, 2005). According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2008), the creative industries contain activities that draw on creativity and intellectual capital and produce tangible and intangible

products or services of creative and economic value. The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creativity and Innovation define the creative industries as consisting of “architecture, design and visual arts; music and the performing arts; film, radio and television; writing and publishing; advertising and marketing; and software and digital content” (Hearn *et al.*, 2014: 2). UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2009) defines creative industries as activities “whose principal purpose is the production or reproduction, promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services, and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature.” However, to this day, there is no global consensus on the definition and classification of creative industries, as they vary slightly depending on the cultural background of each country. In 2009, the China State Council issued the cultural industry revitalization plan, which promoted the development of the creative industries to the national strategic level. It was proposed that “creative industries should focus on the development of cultural and technology, music production, art creation, animation games, and other enterprises, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the development of related service and manufacturing industries.”

3.2.1 Creative Industries Drive Economic Growth and Employment

Potts (2009:1) states that “Economic evolution is driven by the process of innovation along the line of technological trajectories. Analysis of this process tends to focus on the origination and diffusion of new technologies, on the agents and organizations engaged in this process, and on the institutions that facilitate.”

The concept of the creative industries was proposed by the British creative industry task force as a national industrial policy and strategy in 1997 to enhance employment (DMCS, 1998). British Prime Minister Tony Blair

proposed and promoted the establishment of a creative industries task force to revitalize the British economy. In the UK, creative industries have been greatly promoted for their economic benefits due to the growth of income and employment figures (Banks and O'Connor, 2009). In addition, as the structure of the global economic system evolves, the creative industries have become a more important part of the economic order (Potts, 2009). Evidence from mapping documents of the creative industries in many countries clearly shows that the creative industries sector is growing in value-added and employment at about twice the average rate for all industries (Potts and Cunningham, 2008). In 2015, the creative industries created 29.5 million jobs, equivalent to 1% of the world's active population, and shows great potential for economic growth (Lhermitte *et al.*, 2015). This demonstration that creative industries have a positive effect on boosting productivity, wealth, and employment growth (Stam *et al.*, 2008), and identifies the positive impact of creative industries on cities. At the same time, creative workers have a simultaneous external form of influence on human capital outside the creative industries due to the diversity of capabilities they possess (Chapain *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the presence of creative workers will influence the innovative performance of firms and the generation of social innovation, which in turn will contribute to the employment growth of the region (McGranahan and Wojan, 2007; Piergiovanni *et al.*, 2012; Innocenti and Lazzeretti, 2019).

Across the Asia Pacific region, creative industries are beginning to play an important role in national and urban policy agendas globally, especially in China (Kong and O'Connor, 2009; Banks and O'Connor, 2009). The creative industries in the Asia Pacific region generate \$74.3 billion (33% of global creative industry sales) and 12.7 million jobs (43% of global creative industry jobs). The Asian market is driven by a large population, which is the hometown of creative industries leaders, such as Tencent, CCTV, and Yomiuri News

(Lhermitte *et al.*, 2015). In 2004, the added value of China's creative industries was RMB 344 billion, accounting for 2.15% of the country's GDP in the same year; in 2010, the added value reached RMB 1105.2 billion, accounting for 2.75% of the country's GDP, with an average annual growth rate of 23.28%, nearly five percentage points higher than the national average growth rate in the same period (Ma *et al.*, 2012). Thus, the creative industries have become a new growth point of China's economy.

3.2.2 Global Creative Industries Variety during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2019, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting our lives in a huge way that has never been seen before. It has devastated not only our health but also the economy, including creative professions (Comunian and England, 2020). The devastating impact of the blockade on the creative industries has already been recognised by the Creative Industries Federation (2020), as the “Coronavirus Disease 2019,” and is causing a “cultural disaster” (Creative Industries Federation, 2020). Musicians, actors, or visual artists in the creative industries in most countries are struggling, as their work possibilities are almost diminished (Comunian and England, 2020).

In 2022, after three years, the creative industries as a whole face additional short and long-term challenges such as layoffs, bankruptcies, and event cancellations due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (OECD, 2020). However, Herbane (2019) argues that creative industries are entrepreneurial, innovative, sustainable, and flexible. Therefore, when external crises such as COVID-19 occur, creative industries are particularly resilient (OECD, 2020). Furthermore, UNESCO (2021) maintains that creative industries are a sector that makes a significant contribution to sustainability and inclusive growth.

While COVID-19 has been a global disaster that has sent shockwaves through the creative industries, due to the flexibility, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the creative industries, the disaster has pushed the creative industries to develop new and more resilient ways of operating from different perspectives (Eggers, 2020; Ivanov, 2020). The creative industries have adopted more new business models to operate during this crisis, which is another renewal of the creative industries. For example, some museums began to offer online exhibitions, while musicians streamed or recorded their performances online (Agostino *et al.*, 2020, Gu *et al.*, 2020). These have changed the way customers experience, demand, and consume. The literature also suggests that businesses, freelancers, and self-employed people in the creative industries are also struggling to adapt to changes and remain resilient (UNESCO, 2021). COVID-19 is another reminder of the creative industries and the importance of creative talent. In addition to the great impact of COVID-19 on the global creative industries, the problem of employment of graduates in the creative industries is even more pronounced in China.

3.2.3 Graduates Employment Issues Under the Development of Creative Industries in China

The Chinese government regards creative industries as part of its long-term economic strategy, and the next stage of economic growth, the transformation of consumption practices from “mass” to “individualized”, and from “made in China” to “created in China” (O'Connor and Xin, 2006).

It has been argued that China's economic development is largely dependent on large international markets and low costs, particularly in manufacturing (Hong *et al.*, 2014). However, scholars point out that China's productivity growth is also driven by the rise of creative clusters and the development of creative

industries (Wei and Hao, 2011; Hong and Su, 2013). According to the annual report of China cultural and creative industries talent development research 2012-2013, 40% of the employers from creative industries felt that the inadequate curriculum structure is a key factor for the low quality of talents. By 2015, the number of creative industries organizations in China reached 338,700, with 2.78 million core employees (Zhou, 2015). There are hundreds of thousands of relevant professional graduates flooding the job market after graduation, but there are very few who have reached the employer standard (Zhou, 2015). In 2020, the number of university graduates in China had exceeded 8 million annually, and the employment scale of young people will continue to expand (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Research into employment in the creative industries is therefore imminent. But before discussing the causes of the employment issue in the creative industries in China, a literature review of the development of the creative industries in China follows. This will contribute more to a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of China's creative industries.

3.3 From Cultural Industry to Creative Industry

In 2000, the tenth five-year plan on the development of cultural industries was announced as the primary policy to be implemented in almost every province and city in China, while creative industries only emerged as a concept at that time (O'Connor and Xin, 2006). The concept of “creative industry” was put forward for the first time in the outline of China's national cultural development plan during the China National 11th Five Year Plan period in 2006. For the first time, the Chinese government announced its aims for the development of China's creative industries as,

“taking creation, and innovation as the fundamental means, cultural content and creative achievements as the core value, and intellectual property realization or consumption as the transaction characteristics, to provide the public with literature the industry cluster with the internal connection of experience.”

In 2009, the China State Council issued the cultural industry revitalization plan, which promoted creative industry development to the national strategic level. It was proposed that,

“Creative industries should focus on the development of cultural and technology, music production, art creation, animation games, and other enterprises, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the development of related service and manufacturing industries.”

As described above, China's creative industries were first proposed to develop the cultural industry. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) established their understanding of the cultural industry, which was regarded as a way of producing cultural goods, which included film, music, and magazine industries. With globalization, cultural industry highlights its limitations to a certain extent; it is usually targeted at a single country's specific cultural content and tradition (Cunningham, 2002). Kong and O'Connor (2009) maintain that because of the difference between linguistic, religious, ethnic, and other characteristics, the culture of each country is not easily understood by other countries. That is why the concept of the creative industry appears. In the same vein, Oakley (2009) argues that the creative industries represent a shift in the role that people expect culture to play and an increasing focus on the economic growth potential of culture, which can be seen as a development to the cultural industries. However, Cunningham *et al.* (2008) argue that the value of creative and cultural industries is different; creative industries lie in developing and adopting new

knowledge, whereas cultural industries focus on preserving tradition and equality. Bunting (2007) maintains that innovation is key for creative industries but should not be seen as a quality that cultural industries require.

The relationship between the creative and cultural industries is complex but relevant. Unlike the UK government, the creative industries in China are expected to develop the cultural industries rather than to promote employment. Therefore, the consideration from the government level is more about harnessing creativity and innovation to drive the development of cultural industries and multi-industry linkages in the face of globalisation and rapid technological development. This has thus created a fundamental problem of employment in the creative industries. Creative talents driven by factories form creative industries, textbooks do not bring creativity, and it is unclear how creative industries can be formed if creative talents are not ready. In response to the increasing pressure from employers, HEI has begun to pay more attention to the employability of graduates by developing and integrating many skills-based learning outcomes into degree courses (Clarke, 2017). An increasing number of HEIs requires teaching staff to develop and adopt teaching tools to enable graduates acquire transferable skills during their time at university (Archer and Davison, 2008).

3.3.1 Transferable Skills and Employability Skills

Transferable skills can be used to act effectively in different real-life situations and can be either technical or non-technical (Nägele and Stalder, 2017). Daubney (2021) maintains that transferable skills are not limited to any occupation; they can be developed across different fields and transferred between contexts and situations. Thus, it is not limited to a skill but an ability.

Although the transferable abilities do not correspond to any particular skill, transferable skills are given different labels, such as generic skills, employability skills, basic skills, or key competencies (Nägele and Stalder, 2017). Rosenberg *et al.* (2012: 8) argue that basic skills are “transferable core proficiencies”, including basic literacy and numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, management skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, information technology skills, systems thinking skills, and ethical dispositions. Transferable skills are also described as generic skills. These skills can be used in a variety of different tasks in life, such as literacy, leadership, problem-solving, physical skills, influence, teamwork, planning, numeracy skills, communication, time management skills, lifelong learning skills, technical training skills, written and interpersonal skills, and skills to handle the vast amount of information available through today's information technology (Keneley and Jackling 2011; Teo *et al.*, 2012; Ramos *et al.*, 2013). Thus, there is diversity in transferable skills.

In addition, Blades (2012) argues that employability skills equate to transferable skills and improve the likelihood of job seekers being hired. Research on talent selection and career development by Fugate *et al.* (2004) suggests that individuals with more or better transferable skills are more valued by employers. Bangerter *et al.* (2012) maintain that transferable skills are an important signal to improve personal employability. However, some scholars question the realizability of the transfer of transferable skills. Perkins and Solomon (1992) found that learning transfer does not always occur as hoped or expected. Canning (2007) maintains that there is little convincing evidence to support the transferability of skills across contexts. A skill that one person is good at may become rusty in another scenario.

The above definition of transferable skills suggests no universally accepted set of transferable skills, and whether skills can be successfully transferred

depends on the individual. However, many scholars have a consensus that transferable skills can promote the employment skills development of graduates in different environments and fields. The report on transferable skills by Nägele and Stalder (2017: 748) summarises a set of skills that can consistently be found in descriptions of transferable skills: “fundamental skills (e.g., numeracy, literacy), people related skills (e.g., communication skills), conceptual skills (e.g., problem-solving), business-related skills (e.g., innovation) or community-related skills (e.g., citizenship).” In addition, Fugate *et al.* (2004) argue that transferable skills played an essential role in the recruitment and selection process and organizational entry process, which increases the individual's ability and sense of employment. Furthermore, transferable skills are essential in job interviews and organizational entry (Ashforth, 2012). Therefore, transferable skills play an essential role in improving the employability of graduates.

After identifying the contribution of transferable skills to graduates' employability, creative careers in the creative industries is explored more specifically in section 3.4.

3.4 Creative Careers in Creative Industries

In addition to the critical role those creative industries play in global economic development, creative skills also influence regional economic growth and development (Andersen *et al.*, 2010; Mellander and Florida, 2021). In discussing creative industries and creative work, some scholars have also referred to the classic 'chicken and egg' question: which emerges first creative industries or creative workers? Mellander and Florida (2021) argue that businesses constitute the demand for skills and, therefore, skills as supply. This is not just a chicken and egg issue, nor is it a question of how creative industries

and creative skills interact to contribute to regional economic growth.

Scholarly discussions of workers in the creative industries have always taken one of two seemingly incompatible positions. Cultural studies scholars argue that there is a current sense of job insecurity for people working in creative jobs, stemming from the precarious element of the creative industries (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015). Traditionally, creative occupations have been described as unstable occupations, i.e., involving long-term unemployment and underemployment (Bridgstock, 2015). As a result, creative workers have, in most cases, opted for the 'portfolio career' model, which is also the typical employment model in the creative industries (Ball *et al.*, 2010). The 'portfolio career' model is characterised by fragmented creative and non-creative work, short-term, project-based, and self-employment-based work (e.g., Bridgstock, 2005; Ross, 2009; Throsby and Zednik, 2010). It is a career made up of multiple part-time jobs, and it can be a full-time commitment that includes part-time work and other activities that require specialist knowledge under flexible conditions (Morgan *et al.*, 2013).

Some scholars (e.g., Hall, 1996a; Howkins, 2001) have touted portfolio careers as the career configuration of the future, particularly for the entrepreneurial aspects and lifestyle benefits, including flexibility, autonomy, and excitement. The same explanation is offered by Morgan *et al.* (2013), who argue that the state of freedom and risk-taking element that portfolio work brings lends itself to many young creative workers. In Polland's (2013) study of creative graduates, 48% of graduates pursued portfolio careers. These findings prove that portfolio careers have become a common choice for workers in the creative industries. However, it might be argued that the portfolio career model has disadvantages for studying employment in the creative industries. Due to the diversity and complexity of jobs under the portfolio career model, it is hard to identify creative

industries' employment skills and knowledge. Furthermore, it is impossible to obtain a clear career trajectory. Portfolio career work educational background is also complicated by studying the association with work (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015). Thus, although portfolio careers are a standard model of employment in the creative industries and may even be a significant direction for the future job market, it does not apply to current employment skills in the creative industries in China, as Chinese higher education does not have relevant experience in developing portfolio occupations.

In contrast to the precarious employment in creative industries, a large number of researches have shown the importance of creative industries and creative workers to the innovation economy and economic growth (Stam *et al.*, 2008; Banks and O'Connor, 2009; Lhermitte *et al.*, 2015; Innocenti and Lazzarotti, 2019). Usually, the two positions are considered to be incompatible. However, Bridgstock *et al.* (2015) found that creative workers are spread across the economy, not just in the creative and cultural sectors. People who work in the creative industries and other industries simultaneously can also be found. Thus, rather than the creative industries driving economic development, creative workers drive economic development. Therefore, chapter 4 discusses higher education for creative workers.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature and finds that employment problems sweep the world as the global economy slows down, with young university graduates being the most affected group. In order to solve the employment problem, the UK government introduced the concept of creative industries. It has led to the rapid growth of the creative industries worldwide and has increased employment. However, the creative industries in China were first

proposed based on development the cultural industry and other related industries, and the employment problem emerged while the creative industries were developing in China. As China's higher education is not yet experienced enough to train creative workers, reforming the higher education curriculum is urgent. This research focuses on the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative professions in the entrepreneurial industry. Therefore, it is necessary to review Fine Art higher education in China before discussing creative workers in the creative industries in China.

Chapter 4 Fine Art Higher Education in China

Fine Art higher education is currently available in China at comprehensive universities and art and design specialist universities. However, there are significant differences between art and design specialist universities and comprehensive university Fine Art studies, from entry requirements to curriculum, teaching content, and teaching methods (Pan and Huo, 2019). This chapter will therefore discuss the structure of Fine Art higher education in China, from entry criteria to the structure of the curriculum and relevant elements concerning graduate employment.

4.1 Admission Criteria for Fine Arts Subjects in Comprehensive Universities and Art and Design Specialist Universities in China

In China, the “national examination remains the only progression route for selecting students for any higher education institution, and it' has acted as a 'sifter' for Chinese higher education since 1952” (Liu, 2001: 330). Students who apply to art and design specialist universities are referred to as ‘Art Candidates’ (Luo, 2019). These applications have to take both a national examination (which includes Chinese literature, mathematics, and one foreign language) and professional art exams (which includes sketching, colouring, and quick sketching). Before applying to higher education institutions, they must first pass professional art exams and achieve a standard score on the national exam (Wang, 2017).

The entry pathways to the Fine Art programmes of comprehensive universities are less competitive because the students do not need to take the professional art exams (See Fig 12). However, many problems have arisen with the rapid growth of art candidates. Wang (2005) reported that as the admissions standard for Fine Art subjects is lower than most other general subjects, this certainly

has a solid appeal to students who do not do well in national exams and need to gain qualifications. In a similar vein, Luo (2019) argues that these underachieving candidates usually do intensive training before the exam but do not have a passion for arts, and do not pursue a related career after graduation. This group of students cannot enter the top art and design specialist universities and often enter the Fine Art programmes of comprehensive universities (Wang, 2005).

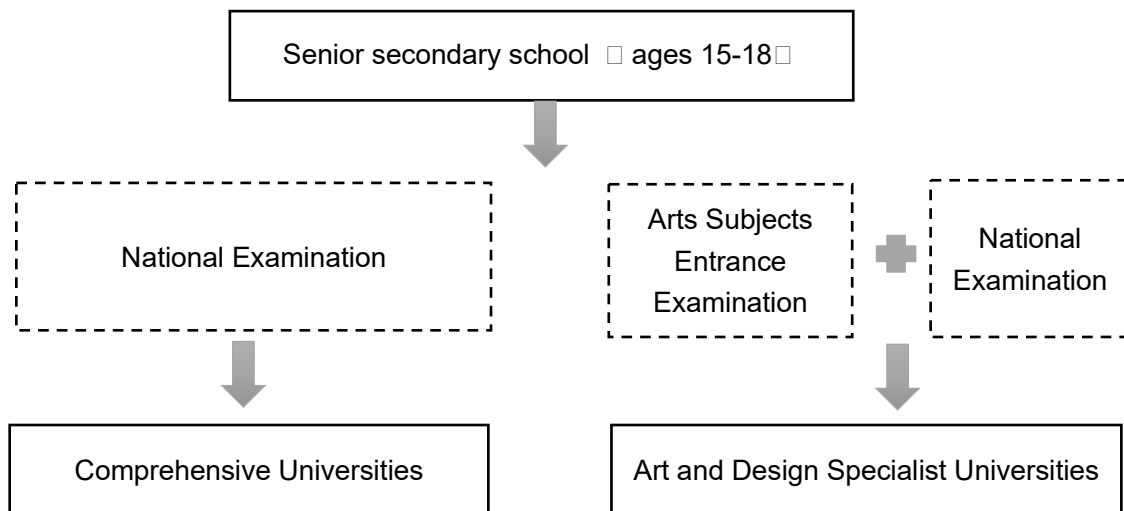


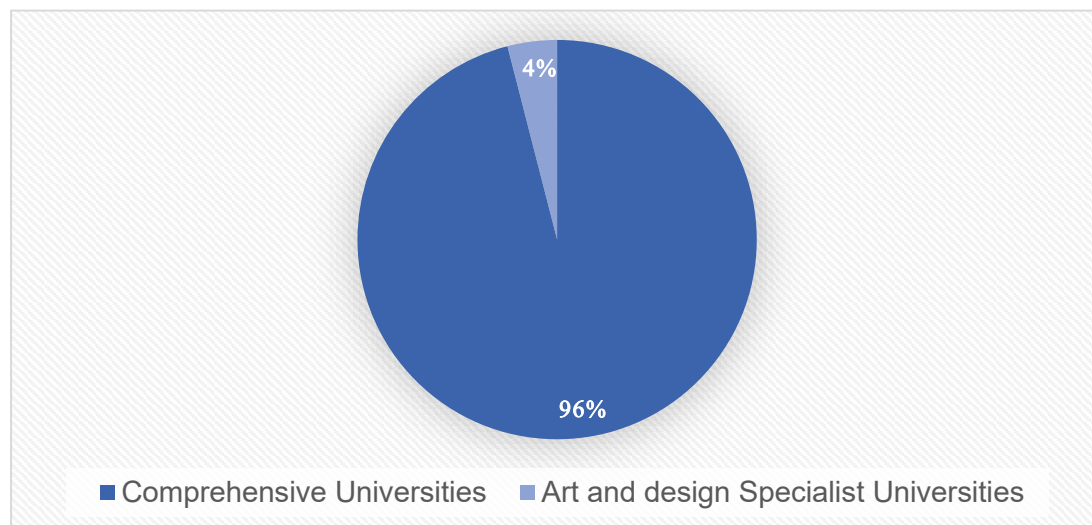
Fig 12. Fine Art Higher Education Entrance Route in China

According to the Chinese Education Commission's report in 2020, of 1,265 higher education institutions in China, 760 are comprehensive universities with art and design programmes, and 31 are art and design specialist universities. However, Wang (2005) argues that there only 8 of them are art and design specialist universities (the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the China Academy of Art, the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts and the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts). The other 23 schools include other disciplines that are not relevant to art and design subjects. These eight art and design universities, labelled by Chinese Fine Art candidates as the top choice of higher education institutions for art and design, are also the

most challenging art and design universities to be accepted in China.

In 2020, over 600,000 art candidates applied for art and design courses in China, while the total undergraduate enrolment number of the eight art and design specialist universities was only 11,784, with a minimum acceptance rate of 1.45% and a maximum of around 2% (Chinese Education Commission's report in 2020). This evidently shows that the eight art and design specialist universities are the first choice for Fine Art candidates in China. However, the data also shows that 17,278 students progressed to the other 23 art and design specialist universities, and 570,938 students progressed to the comprehensive universities, which means, in 2024, 96% of Fine Art graduates will graduate from comprehensive universities in China.

Fig 13. 2020 Percentage of Chinese



4.2 Difference in Fine Art Curriculum between Comprehensive Universities and Art and Design Specialist Universities in China

In China, application to both comprehensive universities and art and design specialist universities are required to take the same college entrance examination. However, as art and design universities must take an additional

examination in painting, this creates different professional competencies and different curriculum structures. Chen (2013) argues that the two types of higher education institutions have different teaching objectives, resulting in different curriculum structures. In terms of Fine Art courses, for art and design specialist universities, the teachers are mostly art and design specialists who teach content with specialist knowledge and other knowledge related to the art world (Chen, 2013). In contrast, the Fine Art courses at comprehensive universities have a trapezoidal platform structure with a broader foundation and lower art expertise. These focus more on providing students with a solid and broad knowledge based on integrated disciplines while providing Fine Art expertise (Chen, 2013).

Chen's (2013) study reported that the Fine Art curriculum in art and design specialist universities is relatively homogeneous and professional. Students are more inclined to seek employment within the corresponding industry after graduation. In contrast, Fine Art students at comprehensive universities are less professional because they have to take other general courses, and the total length of their professional courses is only one year in the four years of undergraduate study (Yu, 2008). However, Wang and Cao (2015) argue that because of the broad coverage of disciplines in comprehensive universities, schools could be more flexible in developing interdisciplinary programmes, making it easier to produce comprehensive artistic talents. According to Orr and Shreeve (2017), Fine Art is an aesthetic approach to the world, which is initially based on painting and observation, and covers a variety of interdisciplinary media and skills. However, Fry (2015) argues that there is a lack of relevant learning in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, cross-culture, economy, and history in art and design specialist universities nowadays because they focus on specific skills and knowledge.

However, Chen (2013) questions the professionalism of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities, arguing that due to the lack of professional competence, comprehensive university Fine Art graduates are rarely able to meet the requirements of positions in the relevant industry directly and generally require a certain period of internship, or entry into postgraduate studies, to make up for this shortage. As a result, there is a shortage of general knowledge in art and design specialist universities and a shortage of professional skills in Fine Art programmes at comprehensive universities. In turn, the government has identified the employment problems that have already emerged in Fine Art higher education. In order to compensate for the lack of comprehensive skills of Fine Art graduates, the Chinese government has proposed to increase cultural programmes in art and design universities to train creative talents with comprehensive skills (Wang, 2017).

4.2.1 Cultural Courses at Chinese Art and Design Specialist Universities

In Chinese higher education studies, all non-specialist courses are collectively referred to as “cultural courses”, consisting of nine courses: Chinese, mathematics, foreign language (English), physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, and political studies. These courses run throughout the Chinese education system from primary school to university. All the higher education entrance examinations (national examination) content is based on cultural courses. Due to the need to prepare for professional examinations and the lower request for national examination scores, most art candidates are already underachieving in cultural subjects before entering higher education institutions (Hou, 2011). For some time, Chinese Fine Art higher education disciplines were focused on professional rather than cultural courses. Fine Art students' comprehensive knowledge level is generally lower than students of other subjects. Luo (2019) maintains that the lack of comprehensive knowledge of

cultural courses makes it difficult for Fine Art graduates to choose jobs across subjects. Numerous Fine Art students' professional ability is difficult to fully reflect in other industries, presenting a single employment pathway. Therefore, in 2017, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the Notice on the Enrolment of Art Subjects in Colleges and Universities, which put forward improved admission requirements of art candidates' culture courses scores (national exam scores); it is hoped that this will facilitate the cultural studies of art students.

In art and design specialist universities, culture courses are usually set up independently, known as the basic course department or public course department, which is a secondary teaching function of the school (Li, 2013). Most teachers of culture courses in art and design specialist universities have graduated from ordinary universities in Chinese, ideology, politics, mathematics, and English, and they have limited knowledge of art (Wu, 2017). Li (2013) argues that there are no teachers specialising in art among the culture teachers in art and design specialist universities, and therefore, culture teachers are not integrated with subject teaching, resulting in a gap between cultural and professional content (Liu, 2015). A recent study by Zhu (2019) examined a three-in-one blended teaching model in Fine Art higher education and found that the cultural curriculum could be structured by combining online teaching, classroom teaching, and practice. Each discipline can allocate time and course content for cultural courses according to its disciplinary characteristics and practical needs, striving to complement and integrate each discipline with the cultural curriculum so that the cultural curriculum and the Fine Art discipline can be effectively integrated to produce a typical value (Zhu, 2019). Dong (2017) argues that the Internet has brought many new opportunities for traditional teaching, thus improving teaching efficiency and the attractiveness of the curriculum. The hybrid teaching model of traditional teaching and the Internet

can achieve curriculum reform in an absolute sense. However, it is undeniable that the change of course content should be more significant than the form and that the course content still needs to be modified to make Fine Art professional courses compatible with cultural courses.

4.2.2 Public Foundation Courses at Chinese Comprehensive Universities

Unlike the arts and design specialist universities, the curriculum structure of Fine Art at comprehensive universities is divided into three categories: compulsory public courses, public foundation courses, and subject courses (Zou, 2012). Fine Art subjects at comprehensive universities are the same as art and design specialist universities, and offer cultural courses (compulsory public courses), which are designed according to government development objectives and general requirements, including political theory, Chinese language, English language, computer science, and physical education (Zou, 2012). In addition, like art and design specialist universities, comprehensive universities offer specialised courses to learn knowledge and skills related to the subject (Li, 2008). However, unlike art and design specialist universities, comprehensive universities offer public foundation courses. As comprehensive universities have a wide range of disciplines, public foundation courses aim to expand students' comprehensive ability and develop talents that meet the needs of Chinese society (Wang, 2015).

Zou's (2012) study reports that public foundation courses in comprehensive universities are generally divided into two categories: the first is introductory quality courses, including ideology and morality, humanities, science, employment quality, and physical and mental health; the second is comprehensive vocational ability courses, including computer applications, English, advanced mathematics, and physics. Furthermore, Li (2008) maintains

that these courses can provide the necessary conditions for students to receive further education, change careers, and adapt to social development. Public foundation courses increase students' general knowledge and provide the necessary conditions to continue their education, change careers, and start businesses. However, many authors have questioned the outcomes of public foundation courses, arguing that current teaching does not improve students' general knowledge and employability (Li, 2008; Huang *et al.*, 2012). Due to many students in comprehensive universities, public foundation courses are usually taught in large classes, with 70 to 200 students in a single classroom, which prevents discussion and communication between teachers and students and makes it challenging to motivate students to participate (Zou, 2012). Li (2008) maintains that, as public foundation courses are usually taught without a subject, the courses are not linked to students' subjects, leading to a lack of interest in learning. Huang *et al.*'s (2012) study also found that in terms of content selection, public foundation courses focus on national requirements, but ignore the needs of students' professional development. All of these reasons have led to public foundation courses, which should benefit students, not being given their substance. Reasons for this include the excessive number of students in lectures and the lack of linkages with professional courses.

Another study from Huang *et al.* (2012) on public foundation programmes in higher education found that it is essential to explain the issues of public foundation programmes in higher education from the perspective of foundational student development theories. Evans *et al.* (2009) argue that in the expansion of higher education, an increasing number of students from different family backgrounds are enrolled in higher education, and their learning has different purposes, needs, foundations, and career development goals. Diversity is an inherent characteristic of university students. However, in China, due to a large number of students and the influence of the Soviet model of

education, higher education has focused more on social needs and job requirements and less on the needs of personal development (Huang *et al.*, 2012). However, like every individual, the needs of each industry should be different. While some industries are rigid and rigorous, creative industries are still developing and blazing new trails. To make up for the lack of public foundation courses and strengthen higher education graduate employability, the Chinese government has launched the Higher Education Career Guidance Programme. This programme is explained and discussed in detail in section 4.2.3.

4.2.3 Career Guidance Programmes for Fine Art in Chinese Higher Education Institutions

In 2007, the General Office of the State Council of China (2007) issued a document explicitly requiring higher education institutions to “incorporate career guidance courses into the teaching plans of higher education.” The main contents of the career guidance programmes include career design, employment policy, employment concept, employment information, employment psychology, employment skills and entrepreneurship guidance, and social practice activities (Lin, 2005).

According to Song and Xu (2006), 93.8% of higher education institutions in China offer career guidance courses. However, unlike the policy for other courses, there is no national standard for career guidance courses in Chinese higher education institutions, and each institution arranges its own career guidance courses (Liu, 2014). As a result, there is a large degree of arbitrariness in selecting career guidance course materials, developing teaching plans, and selecting career guidance teachers. Song and Xu (2006) reported that over 80% of students were disappointed with the career guidance

courses in university. The reason for this is that the tutors who teach career guidance courses are often school staff who do not have extensive knowledge of career guidance or employability skills and only formally instruct students to no avail (Liu, 2014). The career guidance course is still more formal than meaningful, and the content and mode of teaching are still in the early stages of exploration.

Some authors have considered the impact of the lack of emphasis on career guidance courses in the Fine Art departments of most art and design specialist universities or comprehensive universities in China. Zhang (2022) argues that some art and design specialist universities do not include career guidance courses in their teaching plans and do not have professional teachers and curriculum planning. Similarly, Zhang (2010) insists that some art and design specialist universities only set the career guidance course as an elective course, and the class time is usually arranged in the evening or on weekends, resulting in a low attendance rate of students, which fails to achieve the purpose of improving students' employability. Compared to the art and design specialist universities, comprehensive universities are characterised by a diversity of disciplines and a relatively diverse employment platform provided by the university, with more interdisciplinary employment opportunities for Fine Art students (Cen, 2011). However, due to the more significant number of students and large subject areas at comprehensive universities, career guidance courses are difficult to relate to Fine Art subjects (Ye, 2014). As a result, career guidance courses are not as valuable in promoting employment for Fine Art students at comprehensive universities and art and design specialist universities.

On the other hand, unlike other disciplines, in addition to internships, Fine Art subjects need to prepare their final projects in the last six months or years of

their undergraduate studies, and students also feel pressure on preparing for employment (Guo, 2022). According to Zhang (2010), compared to other disciplines, Fine Art graduates are more flexible in employment and suitable for entrepreneurship. In order to improve the employment rate of Fine Art graduates, the Chinese government has started to increase its support for art students to start businesses, and both the government and higher education institutions are trying to improve the employment situation of art graduates through entrepreneurship (Liu, 2014). The discussion on what effective entrepreneurship is for Fine Art graduates continues in the section 4.2.4.

4.2.4 Enterprise Education for Fine Art in China Higher Education Institution

According to Moreland (2006: 2), entrepreneurship can be seen as a particular form of employment, and “when universities and colleges promote employability, they are also promoting elements of entrepreneurship.” Moreland (2006) argues that only a minority of students are willing to become self-employed. However, Li’s (2011) study on the employment of Fine Art graduates found that 65.32% of Fine Art graduates in China wanted to start their own businesses after graduating; this is a very high percentage. In 2015, the General Office of the State Council issued the report, *Implementing Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Chinese Higher Education*, which proposed making innovation and entrepreneurship education compulsory in order to help improve the quality of higher education in China, revise professional talent training programmes, improve the curriculum system of innovation and entrepreneurship education, and reform teaching methods.

The popularity of entrepreneurship with Fine Art graduates is also based on their inherent similarities and interoperability. Risk-taking, opportunity

identification, and creativity are considered essential elements of entrepreneurship (Phillips, 2010), and these elements also apply to artists (Jackson and Tomlinson, 2009; Cobb *et al.*, 2011). Thom (2017) argues that those who create art can be considered art entrepreneurs. They take the risk of uncertainty about the demand for their artworks and market needs, and they find or create the ideal audience to create market appeal (Phillips, 2010), a situation similar to all entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas and market concepts (Thom, 2017), with artists, simultaneously being entrepreneurs. However, the entrepreneurship courses in higher education Fine Art programmes are a complex challenge, and the challenge is how to define the concept of Fine Art entrepreneurship (Pollard and Wilson, 2014). Essig (2013) suggests that approaches to teaching Fine Arts entrepreneurship courses include: entrepreneurial mentoring, collaborative team projects, and experiential learning created through incubating entrepreneurship: Pollard and Wilson (2014) articulate five distinct but interrelated goals for teaching arts entrepreneurship: the ability to think creatively, strategically, analytically, and reflectively; confidence in one's abilities; the ability to collaborate; good communication skills; and an understanding of the current context of the Fine Art. In China, art and design specialist universities are in the same position as comprehensive universities in entrepreneurship education, and entrepreneurship courses for Fine Art subjects are still in the exploratory stage (Jin, 2018).

4.3 Conclusion

Chapter 4 has reviewed the two categories of Fine Art higher education institutions in China: the art and design specialist university and the comprehensive university. Both types of higher education institutions in China offer Fine Art teaching, but the content and structure of the courses are very

different. The art and design specialist universities have insufficient admission numbers and additional art examinations regarding entry criteria. In contrast, most Fine Art candidates go to comprehensive universities and do not need to take professional art exams. The Fine Art curriculum in art and design specialist universities is more specialised, with courses focusing on specialist art and design-related subjects. The Fine Art courses at the comprehensive universities, on the other hand, contain many courses that are less relevant to the specialism. However, both universities offer public foundation courses, career guidance courses, and courses related to entrepreneurship due to government policy requirements.

The Chinese government first used public foundation courses and culture courses to promote and enhance the employment of Fine Art graduates, followed by the introduction of career guidance courses in 2007 and guidelines for entrepreneurship courses in 2015. These courses now co-exist in Fine Art higher education programmes, but Fine Art graduate employment levels have not improved. Therefore, in chapter 5, the discussion explores the integration of the creative industries and Fine Art higher education.

Chapter 5 Creative Industries and Fine Art Higher Education

After the literature reviews and discussions on employment issues in China's creative industries and Fine Art higher education programmes in China. This chapter 5 discovers the connection between creative industries and Fine Art education. It then discusses three points, including the Fine Art teaching model, the creative industry working model, and creativity and the role of university in the creative industry, in an attempt to identify the current employment issues of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China.

5.1 The Connection between Creative Industries and Fine Art Education

Compared to traditional industries such as financial services or manufacturing, creative industries exhibit something different from other industries, namely a 'boundarylessness' occupational profile (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Guan *et al.*, 2019). According to Arthur *et al.* (2005: 179) the "boundarylessness of careers influences career success, defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time." The concept of "boundarylessness" involves a shift in uncertainty from a risk society, which is a necessary trigger for creating new industries (Zelenko and Bridgstock, 2014). Furthermore, in another sense, Fine Art is also 'boundarylessness'. The Fine Art curriculum can often be effectively combined with multiple skills such as drawing, painting, and modelling (Beech, 2014). New skills may be continually learned during the creative process to finalise the work. Beech (2014) makes an interesting point when he argues that, Fine Art is a non-specialist discipline, and the curriculum can serve the development of multiple skills. Moreover, these skills should also be without boundaries (Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). Mottram and Whale's (2001) study found that the employment patterns of Fine Art graduates were quite diverse, with only a minority becoming lifelong artists, the majority were involved in the creative

industries. Thus “boundarylessness” is a unique attribute shared by the creative industries and Fine Art education.

5.1.1 The Fine Art Teaching Model and the Creative Industry Working Model

The most common model in Fine Art education is studio-based, where students use different materials to produce through the studio teaching method (Orr and Shreeve, 2017). It is also the working model of many creative enterprises (Mottram and Whale, 2001). Unlike the studio-based pedagogies that emphasise creative work in a single discipline that expresses the skills required, Fine Art has an interdisciplinary attribute (Beech, 2014). Moreover, this interdisciplinary teaching model fits well with work demands in the creative industries (Hearn *et al.*, 2014). In Fine Art education, studio practice aims to nurture the individual and the process of artistic creation and learning (Bellugi, 2015). Students discuss their work with classmates and teachers and with other technical staff, visiting design consultants, and sometimes students from other subjects working in a public studio space, with invited external clients. In addition, Oak (1998) argues that this learning model is similar to the studio-based model of work in the creative industries. Although creative works are often thought of as independent creations, work in the studio model often involves working with other designers and technicians, clients, and consumers (Blair, 2006).

The studio-based study has long been considered the signature pedagogy of the creative subjects, reflecting “the ways of thinking, knowing, doing, and feeling” (Motley *et al.*, 2016: 224), and further involves “experimental learning and reflective processes, personal creative/design processes, and exposure and self-disclosure” (Austerlits and Aravot, 2002: 87). Amongst other things, the

studio critique is considered in many national contexts to be an essential part of the Fine Art undergraduate education, known as a reflection in action (Schön, 1983). In the studio, the critical analysis of work by teachers and fellow students provides an opportunity for students to explain ideas and work and to receive feedback from teachers and peers to reflect on their creative work. This analysis and understanding are beneficial to both designers and student peers and teachers, as it clarifies the thinking and understanding of all parties and shares the process. Oak (1998: 416) maintains that “critiques are significant occasions in a student's educational career as it is partly through them that the students gain experience in expressing their design-related ideas.” This creative knowledge transfer has necessary implications for preparing students for work experience in the creative industries (Chamorro-Koc and Kurimasuriyar, 2020).

5.2 Creativity - the Core of Fine Art Discipline and Creative Industries

Creativity is an essential element of social development, a unique ability, and a core requirement shared by the creative industries and Fine Art education (Kloudová and Chwaszcz, 2014; Corazza, 2016). Ball *et al.* (2021) found that in the traditional model of work, higher education aims to develop skills for employment needs, but on the other hand, these skills are limited by the industry in which the student is employed after graduation. In the creative industries, job satisfaction is more about individual creativity (Ball *et al.*, 2021). Higher education institutions need to provide an environment that promotes creative practice (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015) and one which encourages the development of creativity for employment purposes.

In the middle of last century, creativity was seen as a comparable ability that was innate and naturally developed (Feldman, 1999). Bethune (1839: 59) suggested that creativity exists in both art and genius, because “it has the

quality of originating new combinations of thought, and of presenting them with great clarity and force.” However, Davis and Rimm (1998) argue that for a person to be creative, they need to have intelligence, but not all people with intelligence have creative potential. Therefore, the fact that a person is a genius is not sufficient to mean that he is creative. On the other hand, higher education offers a more incredible wealth of knowledge and thus increases the potential for students to develop their creativity. The definition of creativity has been constantly expanded. For example, Florida (2003) identifies three types of creativity: technical creativity or innovation; economic creativity or entrepreneurship; and artistic or cultural creativity. He argues that these three types are interdependent and each model reinforces each other. The definition of creativity is a constant flow of new ideas, and it is varied, fluid, and highly complex.

Runco and Jaeger (2012) have published the standard definition of creativity, which seems to help solve the problem of measuring creativity. According to their studies, creativity has two criteria, Firstly, creativity requires both originality and effectiveness, and it should exclude the mundane and traditional as they are not original; Secondly, originality is not sufficient to represent creativity, but it represents an essential part of creativity. Anyone can have an original idea, but it may be unworkable and useless. Originality is vital, but must be balanced with fit and appropriateness (Runco and Jaeger, 2012).

Clarke and Cripps (2012) argue that undergraduate Fine Art courses are more about learning how to create creative approaches and that students can use creativity at all stages of the learning process, rather than solely in the final work. In the Fine Art study process, creativity is defined as a transformative process of knowledge, thought, and action that involves elements such as risk-taking, conception, engagement, persistence, observation, experimentation, attention

to relationships, and a benign attitude towards mistakes (Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 2007; Hetland *et al.*, 2007). These traits, which are developed during creativity partially overlap with the employability skills summarised by Olivier *et al.* (2014). For example, participation corresponds to teamwork; persistence corresponds to the ability to cope with stress; experimentation corresponds to self-directed learning, the ability to develop new ideas and innovation; attention to relationships corresponds to teamwork and interpersonal interaction; and an amoral attitude towards mistakes corresponds to problem-solving. As a result, the Fine Art course already contains employment-related content.

This research is highly geographical, and it attempts to discover the competencies, qualities, and skills Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in China. Each country has its own cultural background, and teaching methods may vary. Therefore, section 5.2.1 reviews and discusses the impact of Chinese teaching and learning culture on students' creativity development.

5.2.1 The Influence of Chinese Teaching and Learning Culture on Creativity Development

Since the 1990s, the concept of teaching and learning has been explored, where the cultural background of the learner's society is thought to influence teaching and learning to a large extent (Watkins and Regmi, 1992). Biggs and Moore (1993) define cultural as the way of life of a group of people, which is transmitted from one generation to the next. Each country has a different culture, and the culture background makes their teaching and learning methods unique. In China, teaching and learning is historically defined by Confucianism, which encourages people to improve their thinking, morality, and lifelong learning (Yu, 1996; Li, 2001).

Li (2004) argues that cultural beliefs are an integral part of learners' learning beliefs and may not be directly related to the acquisition of knowledge, but that cultural beliefs guide learning behaviour and ultimately lead to changes in the extent of knowledge acquisition. Thus, cultural beliefs play an essential role in studying human learning and are directly related to knowledge acquisition. The influence of Chinese culture on learning is mainly reflected in the transmission of Confucianism (Li, 2001). Specifically, students need to learn general cognitive skills while already being accustomed to the Confucian way of learning. This largely influences the way students learn as they are used to being humble and respectful of their teachers and do not rashly question their knowledge (Wang and Byram, 2010).

Wang and Byram (2010: 3) report that in Chinese education, both teachers and students use “memorisation and comprehension as interlocking processes” due to the Chinese educational culture, which believes that knowledge, wisdom, and truth are all in the book (Kennedy, 2002). Teachers are required to follow lesson plans to recite what needs to be taught, while students are usually told what they need to recite to complete assignments and exams, and in the end, students and teachers are effectively reciting the same content (Collier, 2003). Similarly, Jin and Cortazzi (2011) found that this passive approach to learning made learning a matter of memorisation and habit rather than comprehension. However, Mullis *et al.* (2020) argue that Chinese students do better at mathematics and science than their Western counterparts. Chinese mathematics education is more practical than other subjects, using mnemonics and formulas for students to remember and then form memories in constant connection (Leung and Park, 2002).

Other authors such as Kennedy (2002) question the impact of this cultural

background on students' creativity and future employment, arguing that the current teaching model in China essentially limits students' imagination and the known standard answers limit them. Thus, students lack creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Kennedy, 2002). In recent years, China has begun to emphasise 'quality education', which involves a shift towards more modern teaching methods that emphasise student-centred teaching and learning (Mullis *et al.*, 2020). Another critical approach to quality education reform is the development of creative skills (Qi, 2012). According to Zhang (2007), this creative ability can be explored in Fine Art education. Fine Art education's creative, critical, and problem-solving skills are formally missing from Chinese education. As a result, the government has begun to encourage the introduction of more arts-related programmes into the Chinese compulsory education curriculum, hoping that the arts can be used to foster the development of students' personalities and creativity (Zhang, 2007). A recent study by Huo and Li (2020) casts doubt on the effectiveness of art education, arguing that current Chinese art colleges and universities are also undergoing quality education reforms and have not yet achieved pedagogical renewal. The employment level of Fine Art graduates also makes it easy to see that the teaching of art higher education in China deserves more in-depth research and curriculum proposals.

5.3 The Role of University in Creative Industry

Universities play a magnetic role in attracting talent, and it is “a classic increasing returns phenomenon” (Florida, 1999: 20). It cannot be said that all university graduates achieve success in society, but there is no doubt that universities continue to attract quality research programmes and support research projects and academics as talent collectors. Companies need a well-educated and skilled labour force to improve productivity, service quality, and

overall competitiveness (Wilson, 2006). As a social organization, universities are responsible for education and teaching skills and a wide range of social functions. These functions include “cultivation of citizenship, the preservation of cultural heritage(s), and the formation of individual character and habits of mind” (Gumport, 2000: 71). Hence, universities significantly impact creative industries under the knowledge-based economy (Godin and Gingras, 2000).

In the creative industries, the dominance of higher education in knowledge production is being eroded, and knowledge production is increasingly becoming a collaborative activity based in and around the workplace (Roodhouse, 2009). The creative industries are often focused on innovation and the development of existing knowledge, resulting in innovative products. Therefore, as the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC, 2005) report points out, if universities continue to contribute to the knowledge economy, they need to expand work-based learning and see the workplace as another place of knowledge, a classroom outside the university (Brennan, 2005). Many employers in the creative industries have demonstrated the professional skills shortages and gaps in many graduates, particularly in multi-platform and digital content, intellectual property, and business acumen (Haukka, 2011). Universities are also struggling to keep up with employer requirements by developing graduates' written communication, critical thinking, and numeracy skills (Ball *et al.*, 2010). However, Bridgstock's (2013a, 2013b) research suggests a range of other skills critical to success in creative work, namely social networking skills, disciplinary agility, enterprise, and professional self-management. To achieve this, The Higher Education Funding Council for England (2004) suggests that universities can contribute to regional and national economic and social development by working with creative industries, employers, operators, students, and their staff in activities that meet the needs of businesses and communities, enabling the transfer of knowledge and skills

and employment skills development is possible. A similar model of higher education institution-enterprise collaboration has been implemented in various countries for years.

5.3.1 Fine Art Higher Education - Creative Industry Collaboration

Higher education institution-enterprise collaboration is a long-lasting model of cooperation established between schools and enterprises (Wei and Du, 2017). As early as 1985, the Chinese government promulgated the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Education System, in which it proposed to “establish a consortium of teaching, research, and production.” In Rong’s (2010) study, it was found that these collaborations were usually for research development, technology upgrading, and training. In other words, universities are still more of an exporter of knowledge and do not collaborate (Rong, 2010). Current university-enterprise collaborations are also focused on science, technology, and humanities disciplines and vocational colleges.

For Fine Art, the fundamental problem with higher education institution-enterprise collaboration is that the aims and objectives are different. The higher education institution-enterprise cooperation aims to train talents for enterprises in a targeted way, to increase the employment rate of students and thus the enrolment rate of universities (Wei and Du, 2017). However, Fine Art already has more students than it can admit each year, so there is no need to increase the enrolment rate; moreover, students are studying not only for employment but also to become artists. As a result, it is challenging to develop school-enterprise partnerships.

After researching the school-enterprise project of eight art and design

universities in China, it was found that the school-enterprise project was concentrated on the following subject areas: art management, art education, industrial design, fashion design, architectural design, sculpture, jewellery, and vision communication. Furthermore, three of the universities did not offer a school-enterprise project, and none of the art and design universities had any school-enterprise project for Fine Art subjects (Official website of the Chinese Ministry of Education, 2022). It suggests that there is a gap in school-enterprise cooperation in Fine Art higher education in China and that the possibility of using school-enterprise cooperation to grow the employment of Fine Art graduates in China has not been verified.

5.4 Conclusion

Chapter 5 has explored and reflected on the relationship between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education through literature and government policy document reviews. Both the creative industries and Fine Art higher education share the characteristic of 'boundarylessness.' Creative industries are formed in different industrial combinations. In contrast, Fine Art higher education requires the continuous learning of new knowledge and techniques in response to the needs of creativity. Therefore, the 'boundarylessness' of each brings the challenge of both uncertainty and infinite possibilities.

The most common model in Fine Art education is studio-based, and it is also the working model of many creative enterprises. The most common model in Fine Art education is studio-based, and it is also the operating model of many creative enterprises. The discussion on the learning/employment environment focused on the creative industries and the creative force at the heart of Fine Art higher education. Creativity is defined as transforming knowledge, ideas, and actions in the Fine Art education process. However, in China, influenced by

Confucianism, the current teaching model in essentially limits students' imaginations, and the known standard answers determine their creative power development.

The final section of chapter 5 has explored the university's role in the creative industry; concluding that the creative industry is borderless and evolves through industrial clustering, restructuring, and innovation. As a result, those employed in the creative industries require a more comprehensive range of knowledge and skills. Although Fine Art is taught to allow students to explore new knowledge and skills, the support provided by universities is inadequate, and models such as university-enterprise collaboration are not well developed in Fine Art higher education in China.

In summary, chapter 5 demonstrates the connection between Fine Art education and creative industries, which further validates the suitability of Fine Art graduates for employment in the creative industries. However, it has also found that due to the Chinese cultural context, teaching styles limit the development of creative power, while higher education institutions still do not consider the creative industries as a career path for Fine Art graduates, and no school-enterprise partnership projects were found to be in progress.

Chapter 6 is devoted to data analysis by using questionnaires from Fine Art graduates and interviews with creative industry employers to explore further the interface between the creative industry and Fine Art higher education in China. Thus, it is possible to answer the research questions: what competencies, qualities, and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China.

Chapter 6 Phase One Findings

6.1 Introduction

In chapter 6, the research moves from the theoretical stage to the empirical. This stage is central to the thesis because the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapters may be examined and thus subjected to a validation process. It clearly outlines the data drawn from the methods employed and outlines the analysis results. This research began with a quantitative approach to data collection and discussed the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey results. This chapter outlines the findings in fulfilment of aim 1: explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates.

The findings are divided into four sections. Section one begins with descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the participants involved in the research, including demographic characteristics such as gender, age, graduation institution. This section aims to examine the survey sample in terms of representativeness of the 60 Fine Art graduates. In section two, the data used to verify the validity of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates, three components of model are analysed. Section three investigates the impact of the various courses of Fine Art pedagogies in China on the employability of Fine Art graduates. Finally, the results are summarized in the chapter conclusion.

6.1.1 Survey Reliability Measurement

Before analysing the data, Williams (2003) suggests that it is advisable to check for missing data when each complete survey is received. This is because the impact of missing data on quantitative research can be severe, leading to biased parameter estimates, missing information, reduced statistical power,

increased standard errors, and reduced generalisability of findings (Dong and Peng, 2013). Missing data is often defined as one or more values missing from the study variables included in the dataset (Bannon Jr, 2015). Enders (2003) states that a missing rate of 15% to 20% is typical in educational research. Similarly, Rowley (2014) argued that 20% could be considered a reasonable response rate, with many surveys having much lower response rates. A total of 60 surveys were distributed, of which 98 were actually received. Of these, 73 responded to the survey with completeness of 100%. This exceeded the expected number of completions. However, 13 of the responses did not meet the requirements of this study because the country of the graduating institution was not China. The final selection of 60 surveys that met the criteria for this study was the same as the number of surveys expected.

6.1.2 Cronbach's Alpha Confidence Coefficient

In general, the results of this research are limited by the relatively small sample size and the fact that the survey questions relate to Likert-type scales. Therefore, a measure of the consistency and stability of the survey measures is reliability, and reliability tests are necessary for data analysis. When using Likert-type scales, researchers are required to calculate and report the internal consistency reliability of any scale or subscale used (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). The survey used Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of Likert-type responses.

Cronbach's alpha confidence coefficient is usually between 0 and 1. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items on the scale (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). George and Mallery (2003: 231) provide the following rule of thumb: “ $\alpha > 0.9$ - Excellent, $\alpha > 0.8$ - Good, $\alpha > 0.7$ - Acceptable, $\alpha > 0.6$ - Questionable, $\alpha > 0.5$ - Poor, and $\alpha < 0.5$ - Unacceptable.” Generally, for exploratory studies, the Cronbach's coefficient is

above 0.6 and benchmark studies above 0.8. Typically, a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.6 or above is considered high reliability. Removing the corresponding question items below 0.8 can improve the reliability of the whole survey. The reliability of this survey was tested on three sections, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all sections were greater than 0.9. Thus, the reliability of this survey can be considered excellent (See Table 12).

Table 12. Reliability Statistics

Creativity Adaptability of Fine Art Graduates		
Case Processing Summary		
	N	%
Case Validity	60	100
Excluded	0	0
Total	60	100
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
0.917	8	
Creative Career Identity of Fine Art Graduates		
Case Processing Summary		
	N	%
Case Valid	60	100
Excluded	0	0
Total	60	100
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
0.9	12	
Survey Section 4 Fine Art Pedagogies		
	N	%
Case Validity	60	100
Excluded	0	0
Total	60	100
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
0.943	38	

Above all, the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey meets the research criteria regarding the number of data collected and the reliability of the data

responses. The following section analyses the individual sectors of the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey.

6.2 Survey Section One — Demographic Information

The first section of the survey involves demographic information of Fine Art graduates, their gender, graduation institution, year of completion (Bachelor of Fine Art), type of work, and employment status. This section of the analysis highlights those findings and provides an insight into the survey population structure. Of the 60 participants, 42 (70%) identified as female, 17(28%) identified as male, and one did not disclose. The respondents' earliest graduation date was 1987, and the latest was 2021. Respondents were from seven art and design specialist universities and ten comprehensive universities in China. The proportion of respondents from art and design specialist universities was 38 (63%), and 22 (37%) from comprehensive universities. All respondents were Fine Art graduates from Chinese universities, in line with the target population. Currently, 19 (31%) of the respondents work in higher education institutions, 16 (26%) in private enterprises, 15 (25%) in self-employment, 7 (11%) in government agencies, and 3 (5%) in state-owned enterprises. The current employment profile is 38 (63%) full time, 4 (7%) part-time, 5 (8%) self-employed, 6 (10%) freelance and 7 (12%) unemployed.

6.2.1 Gender

Of the 60 participants, 42 (70%) identified as female, 17 (28%) identified as male, and one remained undisclosed (See Fig 14). The data from the gender options reveal that there is a surplus of female participants over male participants in this volume. Multiple considerations were made regarding the skewed nature of the gender of the survey. Despite the demographic variables,

the female and male samples were different. However, based on the growth in the number of female students in Fine Art higher education institutions in China, an imbalance in male to female students has long been established (Pang, 2009). This suggests that this research indicates that no demographic variables might affect statistical comparisons between women and men.

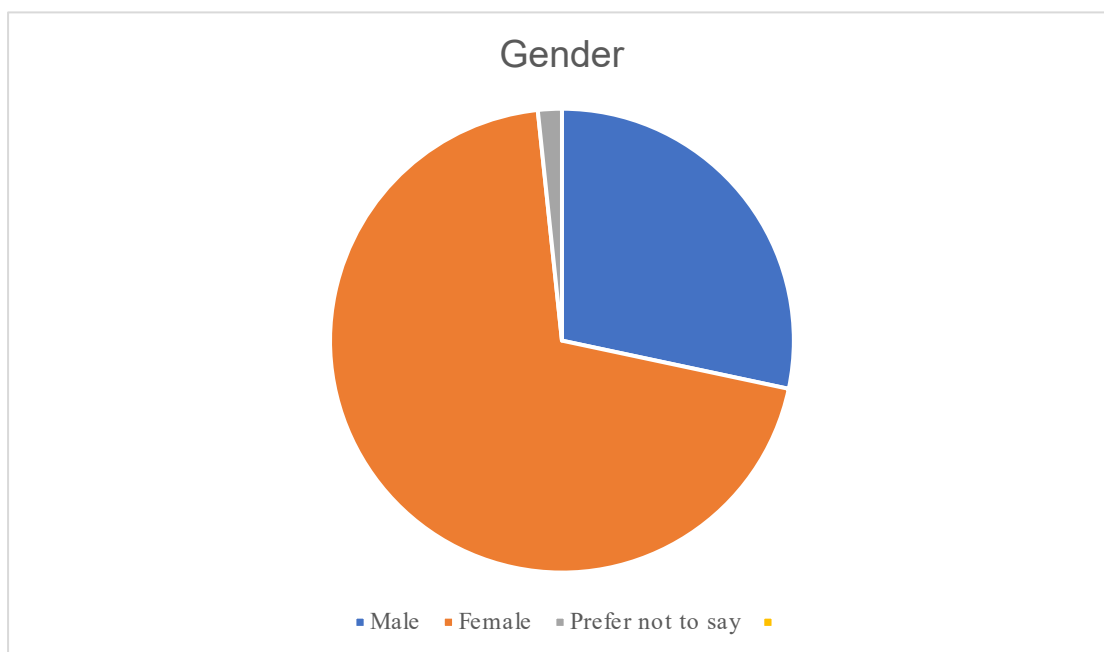


Fig 14. Gender (Survey)

6.2.2 Year of Completion

The earliest date of graduation for a respondent was 1987, and the latest was 2021. This shows a gap between the year of graduation of respondents was up to 34 years. However, more than half of these respondents, (33/55%) had graduated in the previous five years; 7 (11%) of the respondents graduated ten years ago, and only one respondent had graduated in 1987 (See Fig 15). This differs considerably from the year of graduation of the other respondents, and there is only one. Therefore, data for this respondent has been excluded from this research.



Fig 15. Year of Completion (Survey)

6.2.3 Graduation Institution

After obtaining the data, it was found that the number of respondents per institution was not evenly. Fine Art graduates from sixteen universities took part in the survey. 7 of these universities are art and design specialist universities, and 9 are comprehensive universities (see Table 13).

Table 13. Graduate Universities Participated in the Survey

Art and Design Specialist Universities	Comprehensive Universities
China Academy of Art	Chongqing University
Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts	Jiangnan University
Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts	Zhejiang University
Central Academy of Fine Arts	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University
Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts	Hubei University
Dalian Art College	Harbin Normal University
Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University	Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology
	Zhengzhou University of Light Industry
	Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

There are currently 34 provincial administrative regions in China, including 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities directly under the central government, and 2 special administrative regions (China Discovery, 2021). The survey covers 8 provinces and 3 municipalities directly under the central government. (See Fig 16).



Fig 16. China Provincial Map

The China Academy of Fine Arts has the highest feedback from Fine Art graduates accounting for 17 (28%) of the total respondents. The highest number of respondents is from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology with 10 (17%) of the total respondents and the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts with 7 (12%). The total number of respondents from art and design specialist universities was 38 (64%), while respondents from comprehensive universities were 22 (36%) (See Fig 17). However, this does not affect the validity of the survey, because, even if all students completing a particular course at the same

university at the same time seem to have the same experience, this is not the case as their individual experiences can vary (Bannon, 2015).

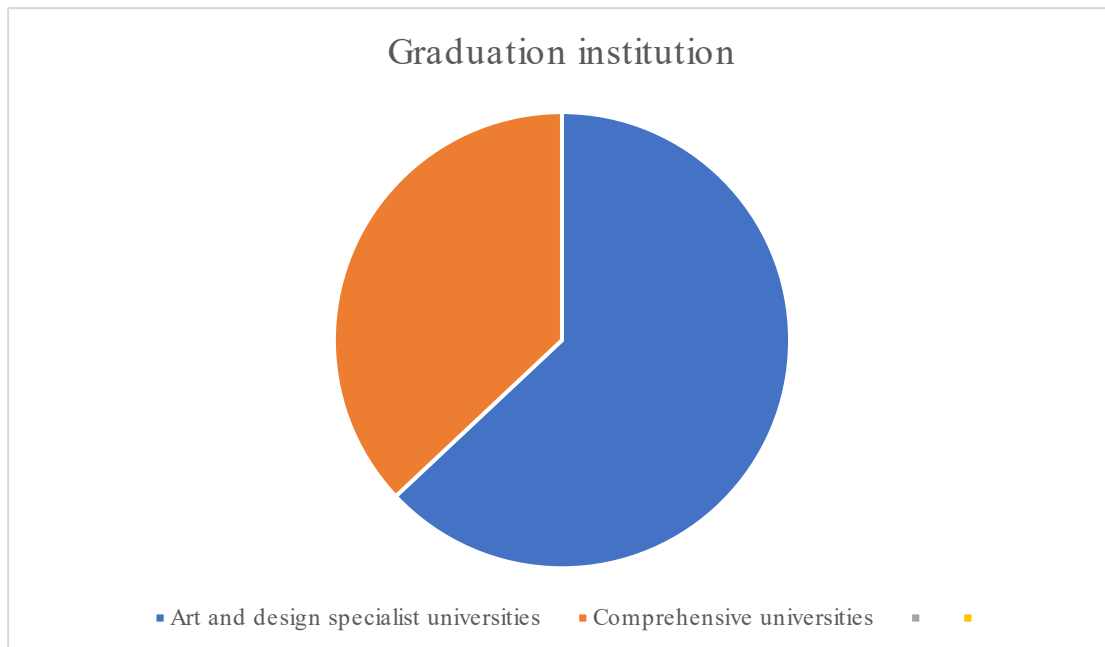


Fig 17. Graduation institution (Survey)

6.2.4 Current Workplace Type

The survey classifies the types of employment units into the following five sections: government agency, higher education institution, state-owned enterprise, private enterprise, and self-employed. 19 (32%) of the respondents work in institutions, 16 (26%) in private enterprise, 15 (25%) are self-employed, 7 (12%) work in government agencies and 3 (5%) in state-owned enterprises (See Fig 18). Of these, three types of workplaces, except private enterprises and self-employment, are under the state's authority, accounting for 29 (49%) of the respondents. Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are financially supported by the government, resulting in higher benefits for those working in SOEs than for those working in the private sector. This is also why most Chinese graduates choose to work in SOEs (Zhang, 2013). The rest of the Fine Art graduates are also more evenly split and work in private enterprise, 16

(26%), and 15 (25%) are self-employed, showing that the Fine Art graduates surveyed tend to be more diversified.

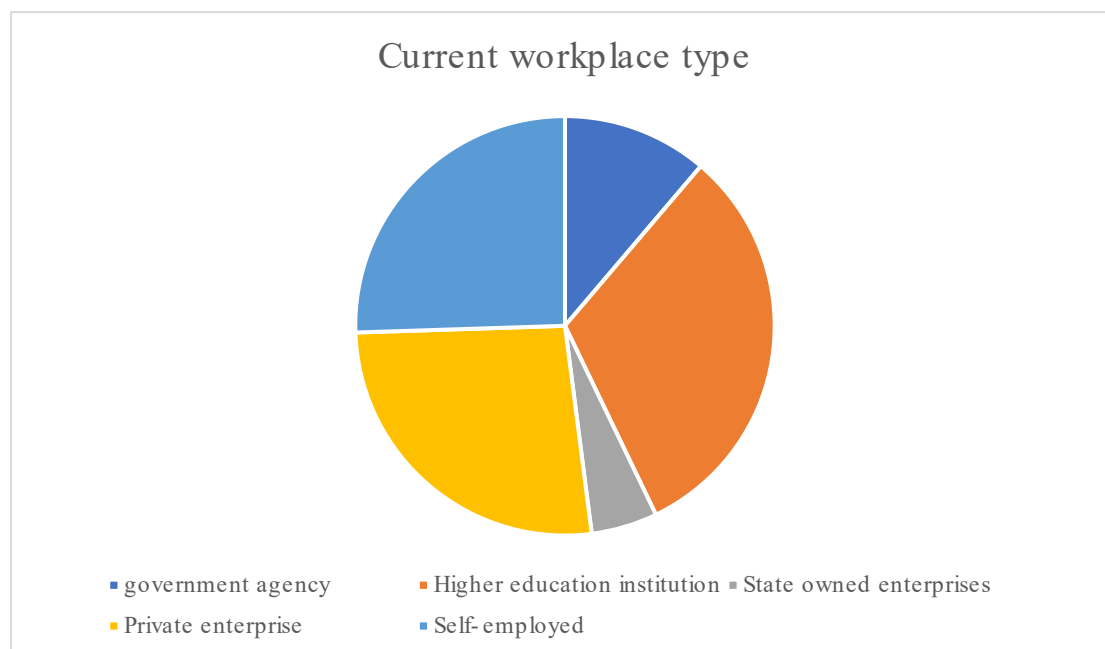


Fig 18. Current workplace type (Survey)

Among all respondents, 37 (61%) of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities are employed in SOEs, 13 (22%) in private enterprises, and 10 (17%) are self-employed. However, 24 (40%) of Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities are employed in SOEs, 18 (30%) in private enterprises, and 18 (30%) are self-employed (See Fig 19). Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities are more likely to be employed in private enterprises and be self-employed than Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities. The data suggests that the workplace type of Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities is more diverse than that of comprehensive universities.

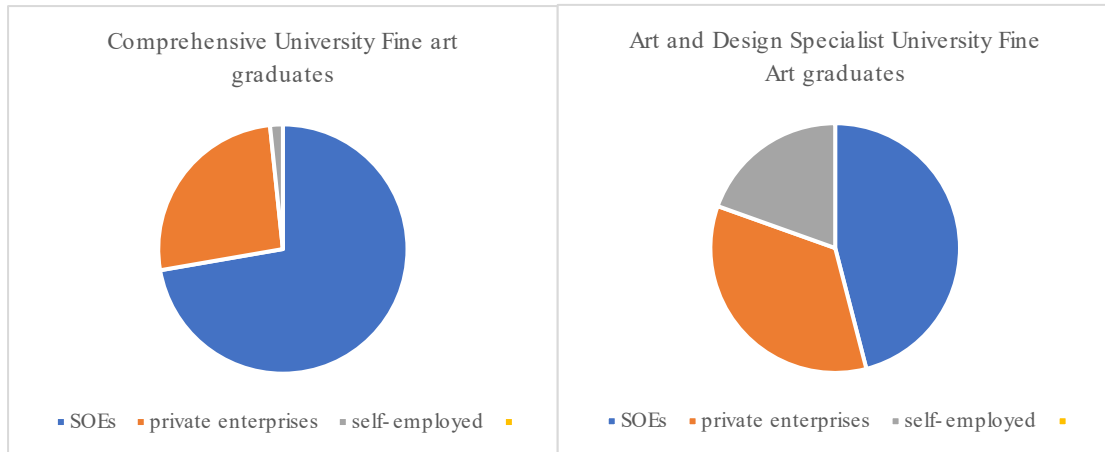


Fig 19. Different universities current workplace type (Survey)

6.2.5 Current Work Situation

The current employment profile is 38 (63%) full time, 4 (7%) part-time, 5 (8%) self-employed, 6 (10%) freelance and 7 (12%) unemployed. The largest number of these people have full-time jobs. Of these, 46 (77%) of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities were full-time, and 38 (63%) of Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities were full-time (See Fig 20). Furthermore, 6 (10%) of Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities started their own business or have gone freelance, but only about 6 (1%) of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities started their own business or went freelance. This data suggests that while Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities have a more comprehensive range of employment patterns, Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities have a higher and more stable employment rate.

The first-choice university of Fine Art students is one of the eight art and design specialist universities, which have an acceptance rate of only around 1-2% compared to comprehensive universities (Chinese Education Commission, 2020). Peng (2016) maintains that the market and employers recognise graduates with a background from the eight art and design specialist

universities. However, the data suggested that out of the 7 unemployed graduates, 5 of them are from the eight art and design specialist universities. Thus, the background of eight art and design specialist universities does not guarantee employment for Fine Art graduates in this survey.

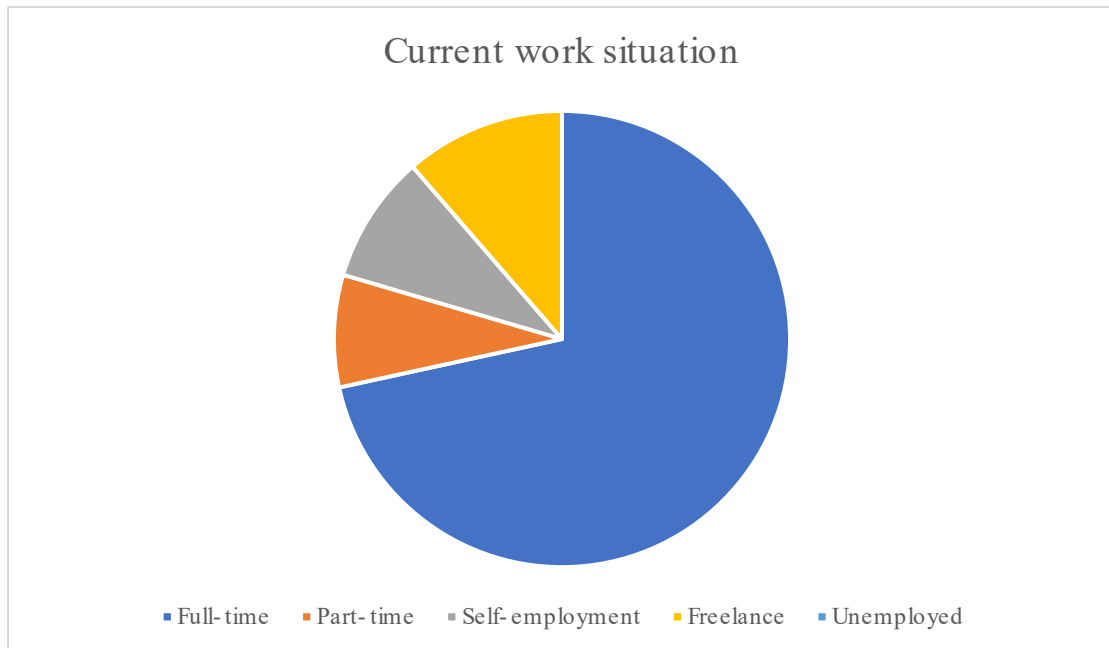


Fig 20. Participants current work situation (Survey)

6.2.6 Demographic Results Conclusion

The descriptive demographic results shows that the respondents' backgrounds are consistent with the research's population. It also gives an idea of the characteristics of the Fine Art graduate sample: the gender, graduation information, and employment status prove that the respondents' background to this survey, provides contextual support for the analysis that follows. The data suggested that Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities have a wider range of job types and work situations than comprehensive universities, but comprehensive universities have a higher employment rate. In contrast, the eight art and design specialist universities' prestigious backgrounds do not guarantee employment for Fine Art graduates in China.

The section 6.3 validates the theoretical framework of the heuristic model of employability of Fine Art graduates in chapter 2. In addition, each of the three elements is described as impacting the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates.

6.3 Section Two. The Heuristic Model of Employability for Fine Art Graduates

The heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates has been developed in chapter two. This model includes three elements: social and human capital, creativity adaptability, and creative career identity. Phase one used the model to design section two of the survey to discovering the employability model of Fine Art graduates in China. The following Table 14 shows the content of the section 6.3.

Table 14. The Content of the Section 6.3

<p>The Heuristic Model of Employability for Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>6.3.1 The Impact of Human Capital on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>Income of Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>Fine Art Graduates Annual Income from Artistic Practice</p> <p>6.3.2 The Impact of Social Capital on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>Occupational Background of Parents</p> <p>Parents Educational Background</p> <p>The Impact of Social Connections on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>Advantages and Disadvantages of Fine Art Graduates in Employment</p> <p>The Employment Opportunities for Fine Art Graduates in China</p> <p>6.3.3 Creativity Adaptability of Fine Art Graduates</p> <p>6.3.4 Creative Career Identity</p>
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6.3.1 The Impact of Human Capital on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates

According to Magicson (2017), education, work, productivity, and income develop as a linear continuum, and when educated students work to generate productivity, personal income for graduates follows, which is human capital. Therefore, to examine the impact of human capital on the employment of Fine Art graduates, the academic performance and income levels of Fine Art graduates is analysed.

Respondents were asked about their overall and professional rankings in class to understand whether Fine Art graduate achievements were effectively translated into human capital. It is worth noting that the middle response option appears in this data set. Different scholars have offered their opinions on the middle response option. For example, Stone (2004) argues that the middle category has no value. Simms *et al.* (2019) maintain that because the meaning of the middle option is unclear, this should increase measurement error. However, Taherdoost (2019) argues that the middle response option does not adversely affect the reliability and validity estimates in the study. He further explains that if no midpoint is provided, respondents will still choose the optimised midpoint, but the proportion with the middle option may prevent respondents from being biased in one direction, resulting in biased data reliability. Therefore, to prevent the low reliability of the midpoint scale, this research included the upper middle and lower middle options in the survey, which helped collect more valid data.

According to the statistical results (See Fig 21), most participants choose 'upper-middle' in their class overall ranking and professional ranking (41.67% and 36.67%). More than half of these respondents, 35 (58%), considered their class overall and professional rankings to be 18 (30%) participants gave a

higher professional ranking than overall ranking in class (See Fig. 21). Of these, 26 (43%) respondents with “top” professional rankings were from comprehensive universities and 34 (57%) from Art and Design Specialist Universities.

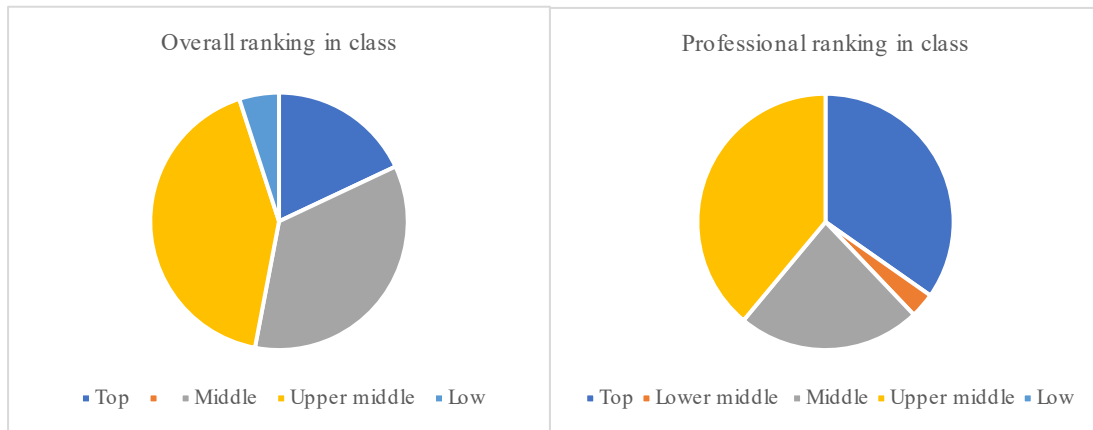


Fig 21. Class ranking (Survey)

Income of Fine Art Graduates

After obtaining the respondents' study ranking, they were asked about their income. The data shows there is a total of 18 (30%) participants who earned more than RMB 200,000 per year; 16 (26%) participants earned between RMB100,000-200,000 annually; 11 (18%) participants earned below RMB 50,000 per year; and the remaining number earn between RMB 50,000 to RMB10,000 (see Fig 22).

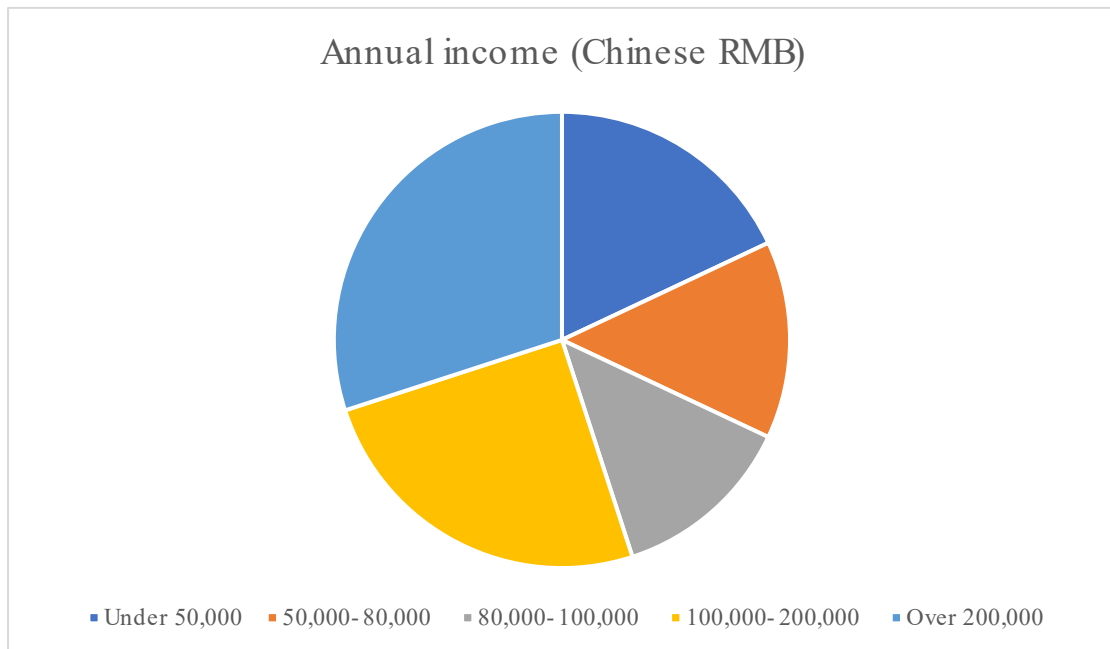


Fig 22. Annual income (Survey)

Of those earning over RMB 200,000 per year, 17 (29%) Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities and 19 (32%) of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities (22 in total, 7 of whom earn over RMB 200,000 per year). However, among those earning less than RMB 50,000 annually, 14 (24%) of Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities. Those graduates are from the eight art and design specialist universities. The acceptance rate for the eight art and design specialist universities is only around 1.45% to 2% (Chinese Education Commission's report in 2020). All Fine Art students try to enter the eight universities, but it is undeniable that most who are not successful usually choose comprehensive universities. Researchers believe that Fine Art graduates with a background in the eight art schools are more recognised by the market and employers (Pang, 2007). However, the data suggests that Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities accounted for only 6 (1%) respondents earning less than RMB 50,000 per year. Fine Art graduates from the eight art and design specialist universities have lower annual incomes than those from comprehensive universities, and their famous university backgrounds do not contribute to their annual incomes.

Fine Art Graduates Annual Income from Artistic Practice

Annual revenue from artistic output, is made up of between 51% and 100% of total income (47% of respondents). The artistic creations of 7 (12%) respondents accounted for between 26% and 50% of their annual revenue. The artistic creations of 2 (3%) respondents amounted to between 10% to 25% of annual revenue. The artistic creations of 14 (23%) respondents accounted for less than 10% of their annual income. Furthermore, the annual income of 9 (15%) of respondents did not involve any form of artistic activity (see Fig 23). The data suggests that most respondents from the survey are engaged in artistic creation related to their profession. Of the 21 respondents (35%) who earned more than half of their annual income from artistic creation, 20 (33%) were above “middle” in their professional ranking in class. However, there were 9 respondents (15%) with no artistic creation in their annual income and 7 (12%) of them also with above “middle” in their professional ranking. These two figures suggest that Fine Art graduates have not converted their excellent performance in school into human capital.

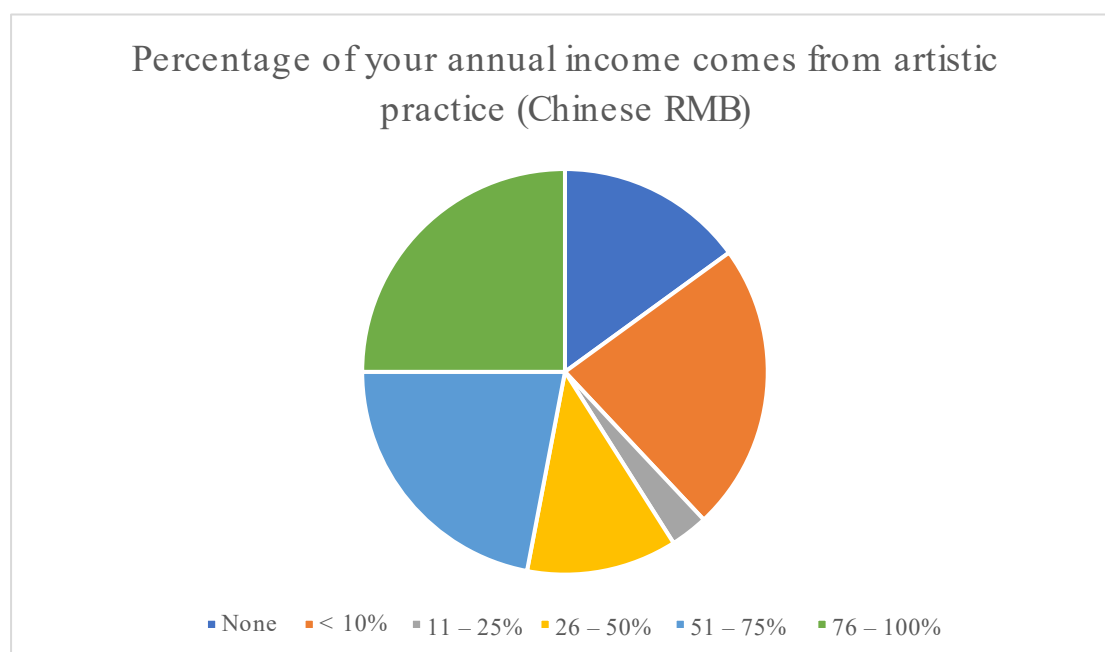


Fig 23. Percentage of your annual income comes from artistic practice (Survey)

Of those respondents who earned more than half of their annual income from artistic creation, 15 (25%) earned more than RMB 200,000 per year, 15 (25%) earned between RMB 100,000 to 200,000 per year, 22 (36%) earned between RMB 50,000 to 100,000 per year, and 8 (14%) earned less than RMB 50,000 per year. All respondents with an annual income of more than RMB 200,000, with more than half of their annual income from artistic creation, graduated from art and design specialist universities. Furthermore, those respondents had above average overall and professional grades (See Table 15). This data suggests that professional achievements for graduates from art and design specialist universities translate better into human capital than for those who graduated from comprehensive universities.

Table 15. Fine Art Graduates with an Annual Income of over RMB200,000 Half comes from Artistic Creation (Survey)

Grade	Overall ranking in class	Professional ranking in class
N.7		
Top	3	3
Upper middle	2	2
Middle	2	2

In the statistical results on Fine Art graduates' human capital, the school performance and income of Fine Art graduates were investigated. It has been suggested that Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities have better school grades, and their workplace type and employment patterns are more diverse than those of Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities. Furthermore, a significant proportion of their annual income comes from artistic practice. On the other hand, although the annual income from artistic practice for Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities is less

than art and design specialist universities, they have a higher and more stable employment rate, with a higher average income. It has been suggested that Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities have a lower conversion rate of human capital than those from comprehensive universities.

6.3.2 The Impact of Social Capital on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates

The social capital of university graduates refers to a series of identity relationships formed through interactions and interactions between various objects such as family, school, and society, and the total amount of resources that can be called upon through social networks (Zhang, 2013). In China, university students generally live with their parents before and after university study, and family factors influence their employment. Zhang (2013) argues that university students from different family environments show a high degree of inconsistency in their career choice and behaviour. Thus, in order to examine the impact of social capital on the employment of Fine Art graduates, respondents were asked about their parents' occupations and educational background, social connections, advantages and disadvantages in employment, the most effective way to find a job, and the influences when choosing a job.

Occupational Background of Parents

In order to examine the impact of social capital on the employment of Fine Art graduates, the social resources of the parents of the participants were analysed. According to the statistical results (see Fig 24), the most significant proportion of respondents' parents' occupations were businessmen (18 (30%) of fathers and 20 (33%) of mothers). In contrast, the occupation with the least number of parents was that of artist. The data suggests that Fine Art is no longer an

inherited profession in China and that the pattern of family succession of famous Chinese artists is changing, and parents' careers do not influence their children's career plans to any great extent.

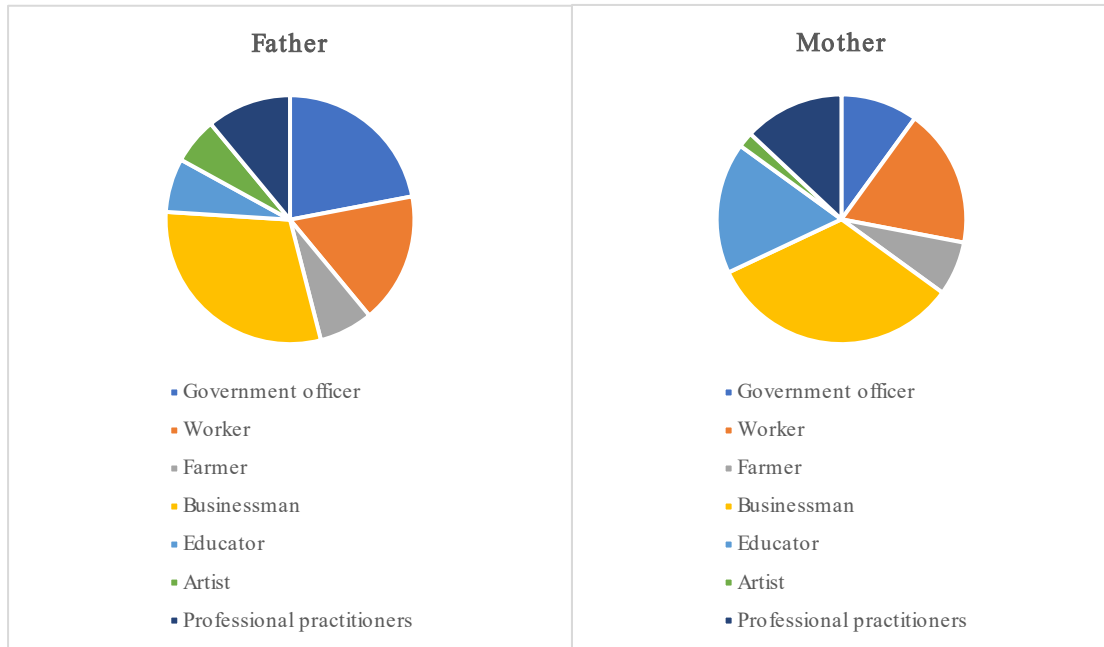


Fig 24. Social resources of the parents (Survey)

Parents Educational Background

The highest level of parents' education was a bachelor's degree 18 (30%), followed by 15 (25%) who graduated from high school, 26 (44%) had graduated from college and below, and only 6 (1%) parents had a master's degree or higher. This data (see Fig 25) suggests that more than half of the parents (69%) of Fine Art graduates in this study had not entered higher education.

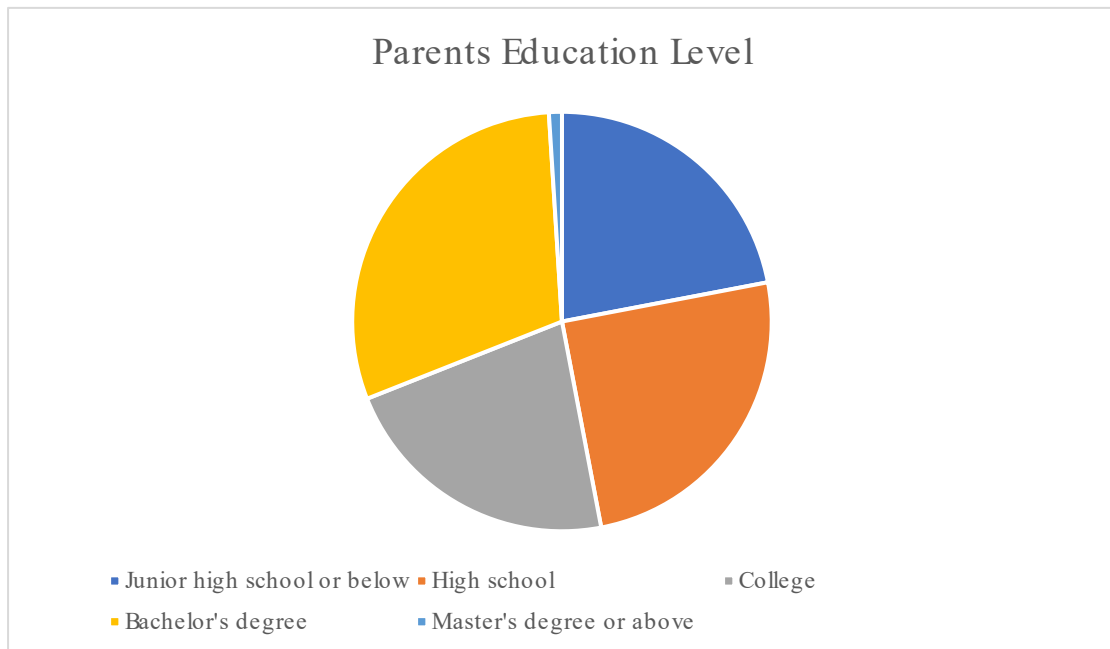


Fig 25. Parents education level (Survey)

From this data, paternity was not found to have a significant impact on Fine Art graduates, with parents having a wide range of occupations and most parents not having received higher education, while only 6 (1%) of respondents considered the family background an employment advantage. Thus, the data suggests that family factors have little influence on Fine Art graduates in their choice of employment, and their parents' resources do not translate into social capital for Fine Art graduates' careers.

The Impact of Social Connections on the Employment of Fine Art Graduates

The statistical suggests more than half of the respondents considered their social connections to be general 32 (53%); 17 (29%) respondents considered their social connections between rich and enriching; the remaining 11 (18%) respondents considered their social connections to be between relatively poor and poor. This data (see Fig 26) suggests that most Fine Art graduates have comparatively good social connections. Of those with a strong social connection, 50(83%) earn over RMB 200,000 per year, and none earn less than

RMB 100,000 per year. This data further suggests that having good social connections is beneficial for Fine Art employment.

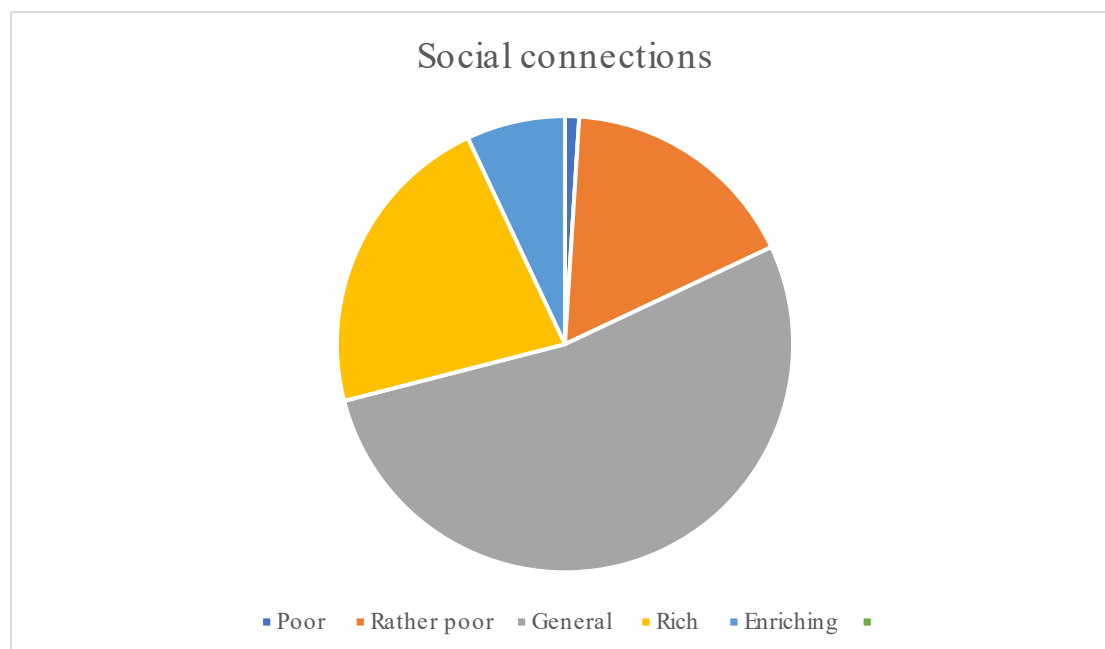


Fig 26. Social connection (Survey)

Advantages and Disadvantages of Fine Art Graduates in Employment

The statistical analysis suggests that only 1% of respondents consider family background an employment advantage, and 2% consider personal ability an employment disadvantage. Most respondents considered their employment advantage to be good academic performance 25 (42%), followed by creativity with 22 (37%). In the Fine Art learning process, creativity is defined as the process of transforming knowledge, ideas, and actions, the development of good creativity ultimately leads to good academic performance. Thus, the data suggests that most Fine Art graduates acquire sufficient expertise for employment from their studies in universities.

The majority of respondents felt that their weaknesses in employment were social connections 27 (45%). Combining this data with the social connections data, it can be seen that although the majority, 49 (82%) of Fine Art graduates,

have social connections, their social connections are not sufficient to give an advantage in employment (see Fig 27).

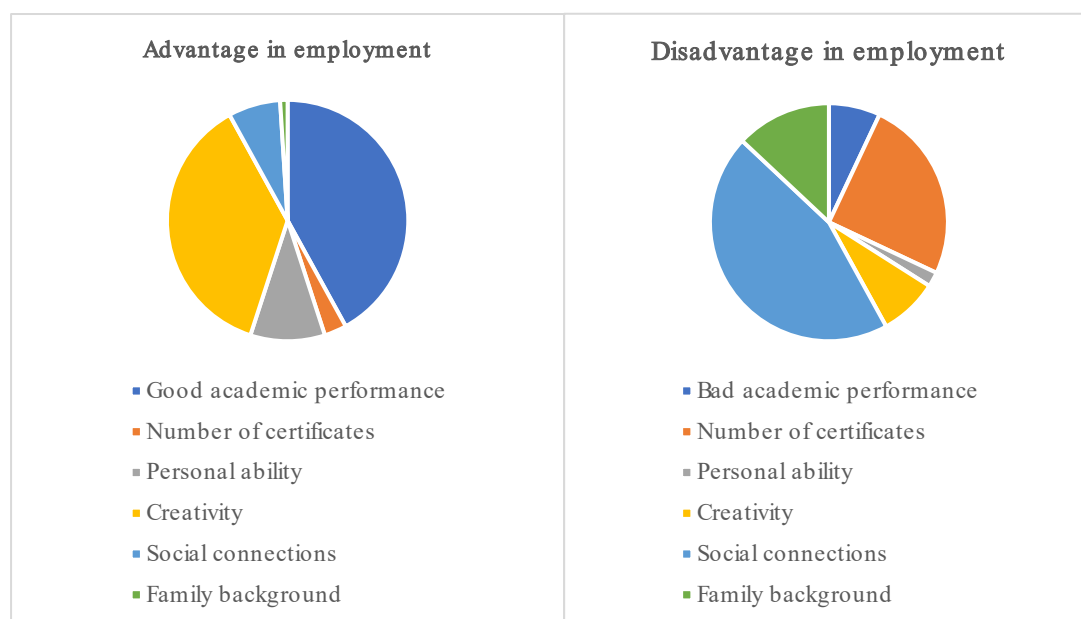


Fig 27. Advantage and disadvantage in employment (Survey)

The Employment Opportunities for Fine Art Graduates in China

When searching for employment opportunities, the availability, accuracy, and timeliness of employment information have a crucial impact on employment, and access to employment information is the beginning of other career choices (Zhang, 2013). In the survey, there are 5 main channels through which university students obtain employment information: campus job fairs, various social connections, talent market, networking, newspapers, and other media. Regarding the choice of various job information channels, more than half of the respondents, 32 (53%), considered social connections the most potent channel to finding a job. The majority of respondents, 26 (43%), consider friends the most crucial channel for getting a job, while 27 (45%) respondents generally consider that they are entirely on their own in choosing their career path. This statistical result suggests that Fine Art graduates are more likely to find a job through a medium than entirely through their own ability (see Fig 28). Fine Art graduates who have good social capital or social networks are undoubtedly

more likely to access job opportunities in the employment process and enhance employability.

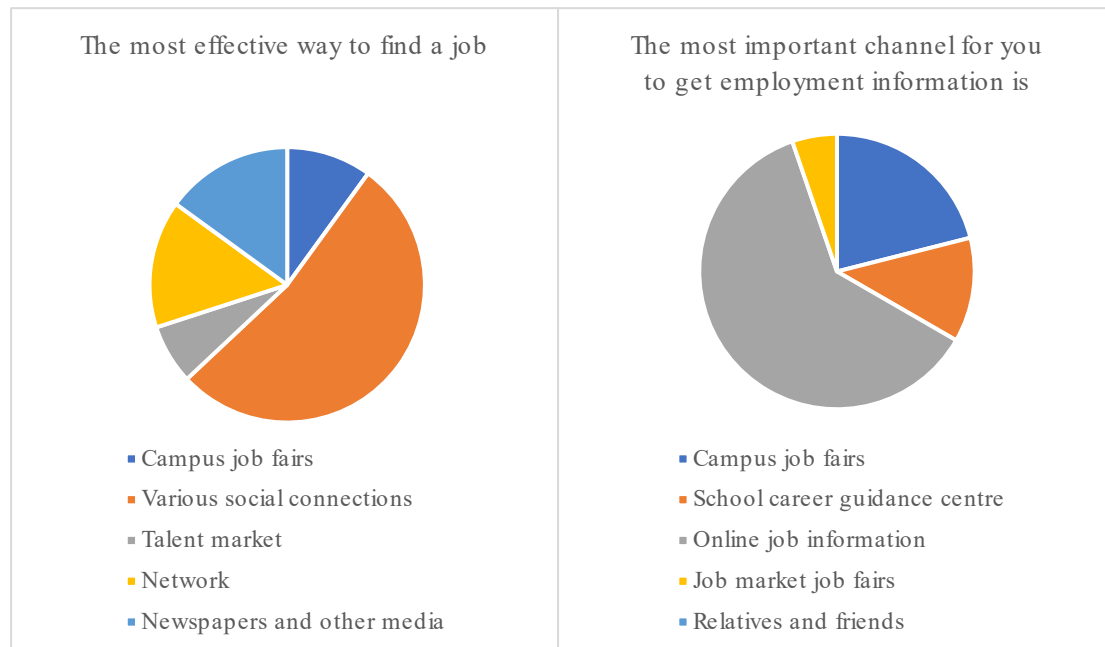


Fig 28. The channel to find a job (Survey)

From the social capital aspects of Fine Art graduates, the statistics suggest that Fine Art graduates are less influenced by family factors when choosing employment. Furthermore, the knowledge and creativity of Fine Art graduates are well utilised in their employment, translating into personal strengths in work. However, the social connections of Fine Art graduates do not meet their employment needs, which is also not reflected in the current China national Fine Art pedagogies.

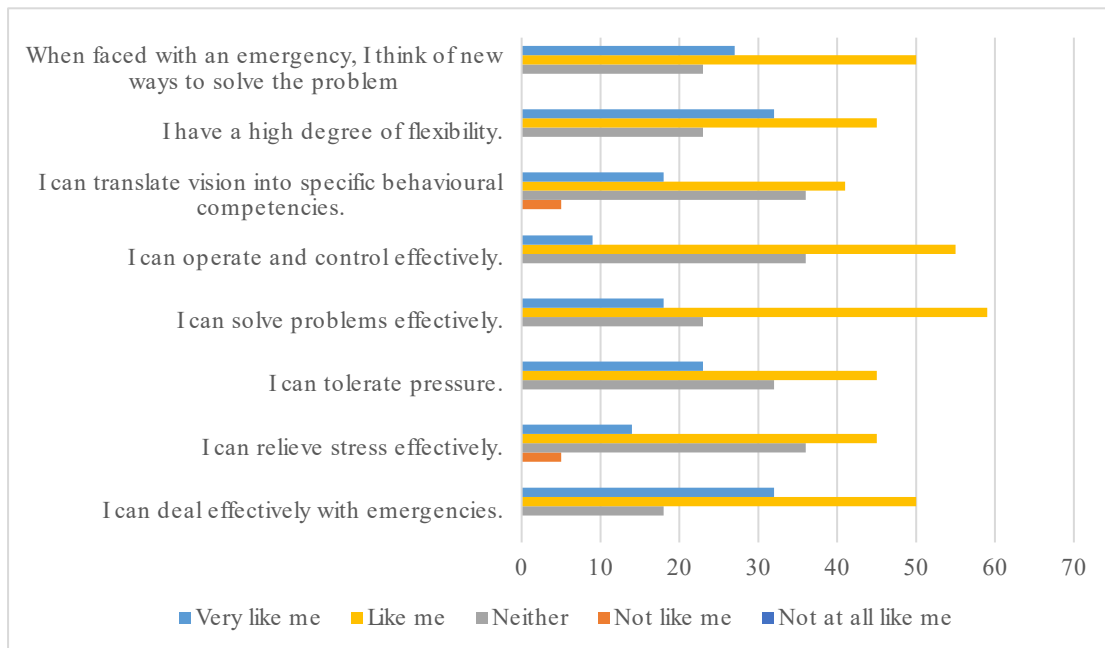
6.3.3 Creativity Adaptability of Fine Art Graduates

Having established the importance of human and social capital to Fine Art graduate employability, the second element of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates - creativity adaptability is discussed in section 6.4. Creative adaptability refers to a person's ability to respond

creatively and adaptively, which helps individuals generate new and potentially effective ideas, enhancing employability (Orkibi, 2021). In the survey, the creativity adaptability of the respondents was explored through 8 questions. From the data (see Table 16), more than half of the respondents felt they chose “like me” or “very like me.” question 1 (82%), question 2 (59%), question 3 (68%), question 4 (77%), question 5 (64%), question 6 (59%), question 7 (77%), and question 8 (77%).

One of the core cognitive demands facing art studies in Fine Art study is uncertainty and indeterminacy (Lawson, 2006; Cross, 2011; Nelson and Stolterman, 2012). Students try to understand that uncertainty stimulates creative thinking and action and try new things (Beghetto, 2019). The statistical analysis also proves that Fine Art graduates can cope with the unexpected and have greater flexibility in their employment. Furthermore, none of the respondents considered themselves utterly different from the scenario described in the question (“nothing like me”). This suggests the coexistence of creativity and adaptability needs, creating creative adaptability in the employment of Fine Art graduates, and suggests that assessing creative adaptability will focus more on assessing the employability of Fine Art graduates than adaptability.

Table 16. Creativity Adaptability of Fine Art Graduates



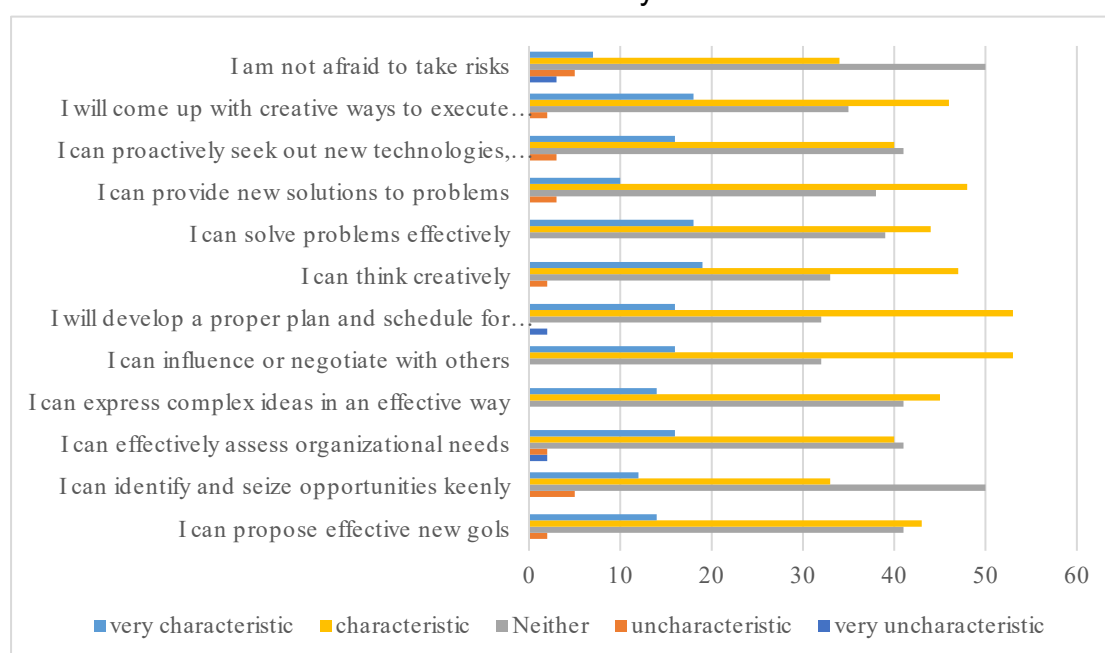
6.3.4 Creative Career Identity

In the third part of the survey, the last element of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates, creative career identity. Career identity (i.e., role identity, occupational identity, and organisational identity) is how individuals define themselves in the work environment. Compared to other industries' career identities, an artist's career identity requires recognition and validation from people of the same profession, as well as consumers, critics, and other stakeholders (Reckwitz, 2018; Mao and Shen, 2020). Thus, recognizing one's creative identity also signifies credibility, employability, and future potential (Rindova *et al.*, 2005).

This part of the survey was assessed by 12 questions to find out how Fine Art graduates perceive creative career identity. From the data (see Table 17) more than half of the respondents chose 'characteristic' and 'very characteristic' in ten questions, with question 2 (64%), question 3 (56%), question 4 (58%), question 5 (62%), question 6 (66%), question 7 (57%), question 8 (69%),

question 9 (59%), question 10 (56%), and question 12 (57%). Less than 50% of respondents agreed upon the other two questions (questions 1 and 11). More than 5% of respondents chose “very uncharacteristic” and “uncharacteristic” in question 1 (8%) and question 11 (5%).

Table 17. Creative Career Identity of Fine Art Graduate



The statistical analysis suggests that most of the skills in the study of Fine Art were transferred to Fine Art graduate career identities, with the best performance being in communication skills, which is related to the Fine Art's studio-based model of teaching and learning. The studio-based teaching model often involves working with others (Blair, 2006). Less well developed is the ability to take risks and identify and seize opportunities. Both creative adaptability and creative career identity are transferable skills (Keneley and Jackling, 2011; Teo *et al.*, 2012). From the data, it can be seen that the rate of transferability of career identity is slightly lower compared to adaptability, which validates the same point made by Bridgstock *et al.* (2015), suggesting that career identity development has been largely neglected in higher education.

To sum up the results of the survey, the analysis in the second part of the survey identified the impact of social and human capital, creative adaptability, and creative occupational identity on the employability of Fine Art graduates. These three dimensions help coordinate the identification and realisation of career opportunities within and between organisations. These dimensions are relatively independent, but when combined, they help explore and analyse the employability of Fine Art graduates.

6.4 Section Three. The Fine Art Pedagogies

The final section of the survey was undertaken to address objective 1, which are identified below:

Objective 1: Identify the extent to which the Chinese Fine Art curriculum provide students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment in creative industries.

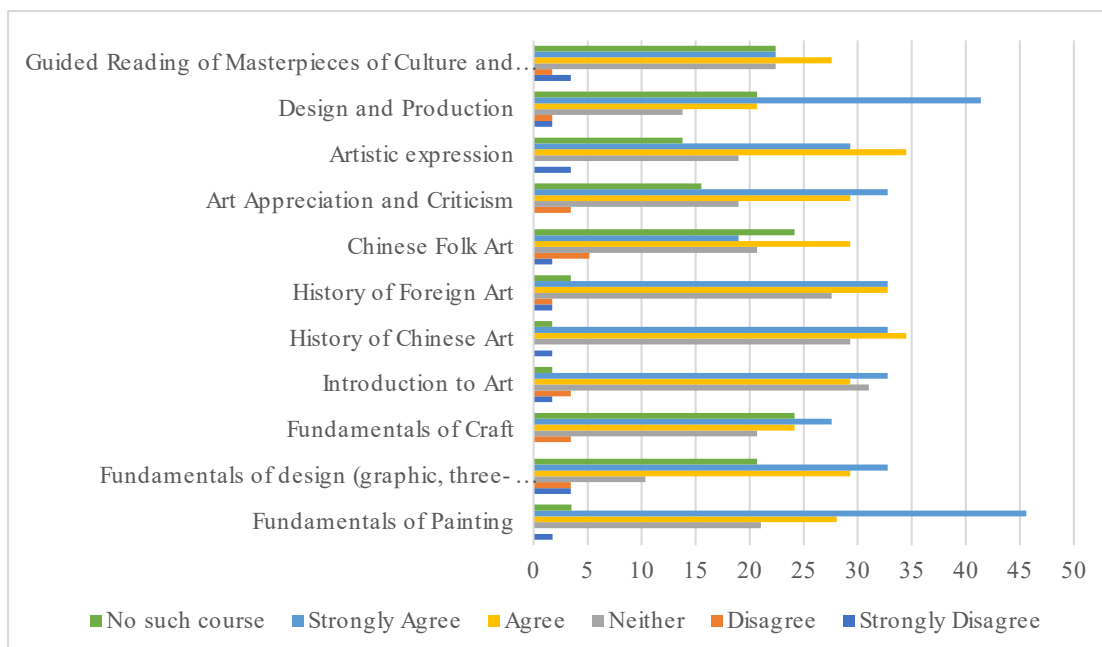
The questions are set based on the National Curriculum Guidance for Undergraduate Fine Arts Courses in General Higher Education Institutions, issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2005. One respondent graduated in 2004, and another in 1987, which is earlier than the courses used in the survey; therefore, their data are not counted in the data used in this research. The questions are designed to determine whether the Fine Art pedagogies help graduates in their employment.

6.4.1 Fine Art Compulsory Courses Implications for Employment

There are 11 compulsory courses in Fine Art undergraduate programmes in China (see Table 18). Over half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed

that 9 of these courses were helpful to them in their employment, including Fundamentals of Painting (74%), Fundamentals of Design (62%), Fundamentals of Craft (52%), Introduction to art (62%), History of Chinese Art (67%), History of Foreign Art (66%), Art Appreciation and Criticism (62%), Artistic Expression (63%), and Design and Production (62%). The lowest proportion of respondents agreed (strongly agreed) that the Chinese folk-art course was helpful in employment (48%), followed by guided reading of masterpieces of culture and art (49%). Among all respondents, 7% of respondents felt that Chinese Folk Art did not help them in their employment and felt that it is the least helpful for Fine Art employment in Fine Art compulsory courses content. Thus, combining the above data suggested that fundamentals of painting is the most helpful for Fine Art employment in the content of the Fine Art compulsory courses.

Table 18. Fine Art Compulsory Courses

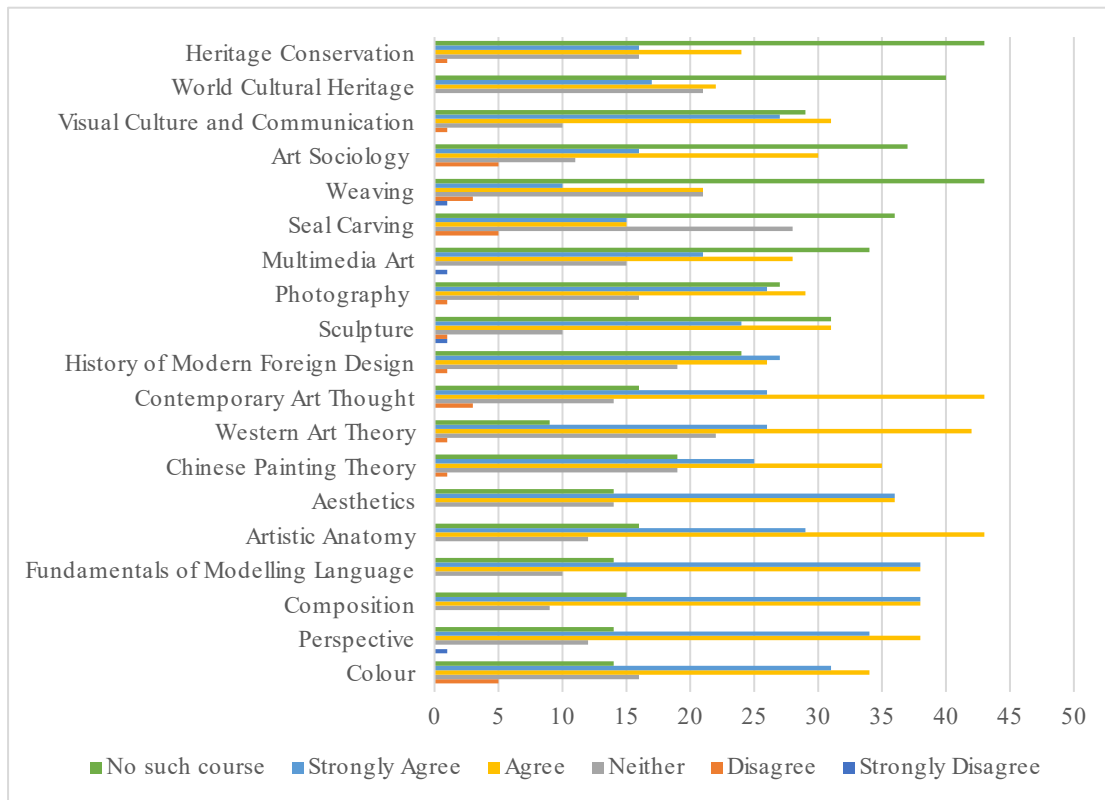


6.4.2 Fine Art Optional Courses Implications for Employment

There are 19 optional courses in Fine Art undergraduate programmes in China (see Table 19). Five of these courses, which none of the respondents felt were not valuable for employment, were composition, fundamental of modelling language, artistic anatomy, aesthetics, and world cultural heritage.

Of these, there were six optional courses where no more than 50% of respondents chose to agree (strongly agree) that it would help them in their employment, which are contemporary art thought (42%), art sociology (46%), heritage conservation (40%), world cultural heritage (39%), seal carving (32%), and weaving (31%). Those who strongly agreed that the course was the least helpful in terms of employment were heritage conservation (15%), Seal Carving (15%), and weaving (10%). The above data suggests that heritage conservation, seal carving, and weaving are the three least helpful courses for Fine Art graduates' employment among the Fine Art optional courses.

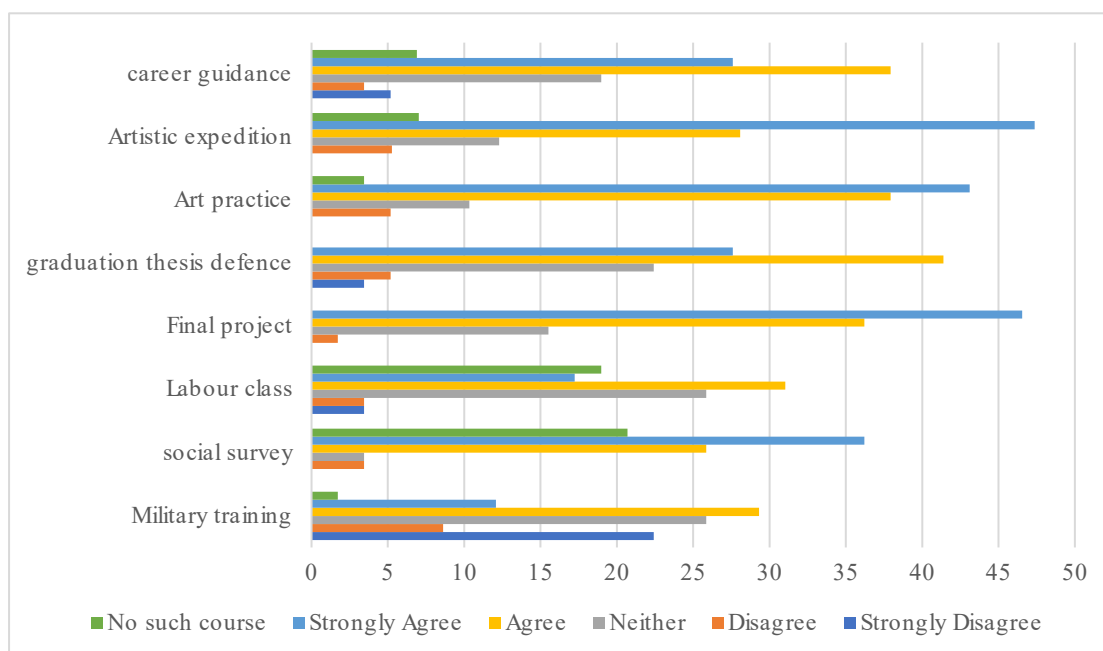
Table 19. Fine Art Optional Courses



6.4.3 Implications for Employment of Fine Art Practical Sessions

There are 8 practical sessions in Fine Art undergraduate programmes in China (see Table 20). More than half of the respondents strongly agreed (agreed) that six of the courses were helpful in employment, namely Final Project (83%), Art Practice (81%), Artistic Expedition (75%), Graduation Thesis Defines (69%), Career Guidance (66%), and Social Survey (57%). Of these, 22% strongly disagreed that military training was helpful for employment, which is far more than all the other sessions. This data suggests that the least helpful of the Fine Art practical sessions for Fine Art graduates is military training.

Table 20. Fine Art Practical sessions



By investigating the impact of The China National Curriculum Guidance Programme for Undergraduate Fine Arts Courses in General Higher Education Institutions on the employment of Fine Art graduates, the data found fundamentals of painting (compulsory course), art sociology (optional course), and final project (practical session) provide students necessary skills for successful employment in China. Among the optional courses, heritage conservation, seal carving, and weaving were not very helpful in their employment. In the practical sessions, military training was less helpful in their employment.

6.5 Indications of Phase One Findings

Chapter 6 aims to discovering the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art Graduates. It is undertaken to address aims 1: to explore the extent to which the Fine Art curriculum meets the expectations of graduates. The data collected from the 60 completed surveys were analysed quantitatively, and the validity and reliability of the questionnaires were tested using IBM SPSS software,

using descriptive analysis. The composition of the data was divided into three sections as follows.

1. The data of the demographic results show that the respondents in this study were from art and design specialist universities and comprehensive universities. Fine Art graduates from art and design specialist universities have more diverse employment patterns and employment types, which is similar to the portfolio career pattern in the creative industries. However, the employment rates are higher at comprehensive universities.
2. The data validates that the three elements of the heuristic model of employability for Fine Art graduates have implications for Fine Art graduates' employability. The model can be used to explore and test the employability of Fine Art graduates. The data suggest that Fine Art graduates have poorer human and social capital than creative adaptability and creative career identity elements. The majority of respondents identified their employment weaknesses as social connections.
3. The data shows fundamentals of painting (compulsory course); composition, fundamentals of the modelling language, artistic anatomy, world culture heritage (optional course); and final project (practical session) provide students with the skills necessary for successful employment in China.

It could suggest that university Fine Art pedagogies mostly meet the employment needs of Fine Art graduates, but the employment rate is not high. Painting is a compulsory and core component of Fine Art teaching in Chinese higher education institutions. As a result, Fine Art graduates consider painting a core advantage in employment. However, the decline in employment rates for Fine Art graduates suggests that painting should be something other than a core competency in Fine Art teaching. Painting as a core component course of

the Fine Art pedagogies meets the expectations of graduates. However, as seen from the declining employment rate, there is a mismatch between painting techniques and the job market's needs. Therefore, to better explain this, answers are sought in the chapter 7 on qualitative data analysis regarding employers in the creative industries.

Chapter 7 Phase Two Findings

7.1 Introduction

The second phase of the field study takes a grounded approach to designing interview methodology to find out the employability skills required in the creative industries from 10 creative industry employers' perspectives.

The interviews aim to explore and the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities and skills of Fine Art graduates from China by determining through qualitative data, the competencies, qualities, and skills that Fine Art graduates require for successful employment in creative industries in China. This will answer the research questions: "What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?"

The findings of the study are divided into 8 sections. Section 7.2 describes the context in which all interviews were sampled. Section 7.3 describes the combined perceptions of all interviewed employers in the creative industries, who were asked about the employability of Fine Art graduates. Section 7.4 describes the coding process of the statistics. Section 7.5 summarises the analysis of the interview data and the pyramid coding and analysis model based on Constantinou *et al.*'s (2017) pyramid coding and analysis model. Section 7.6 analyses interview data, and the pyramid coding and analysis model summarises the employability competencies and skills that employers in the creative industries request. Section 7.7 and 7.8 categorise employability skills and competencies with discussion. Finally, section 7.9 summarises the demand for employability skills and competencies in the creative industries in the second phase of this study.

7.2 Sampling

The findings presented in this chapter are derived from a sample of 10 creative industry employers. The employers were interviewed and consisted of males (n=5) and females (n=5), aged from 36 to 50 (at the time of their interview). All interviews were recorded, with quotes and narratives included in the primary analysis and interpretation of the data. Each interview lasted between one and two hours, the average interview being 90 minutes. All recorded interviews were transcribed in full, with transcripts ranging from 3,317 to 5675 words. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, with all respondents having fluent Mandarin (as their native language), which facilitated analysis and prevented bias or error due to translation or lack of comprehension.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with participants' full consent. The interviews were then anonymised to remove references to the names of companies. Each transcript was renamed with a first name, which was not their real name, to identify the transcript data within the thesis.

7.3 Overview of Creative Industries Employers Perceptions of the Employability of Fine Art Graduates

Before moving on to the coding process, section 7.3 provides an overall account of the perceptions of all respondents in phase 2 of the employability of Fine Art graduates employability. This section brings a general description to the analysis of the second phase to provide more clarity for the data analysis that follows.

Of the 10 creative industry employers interviewed, seven have Fine Art graduates working for their companies. The seven interviewees were from

designer's association, an audio company, a gallery, a multinational technology company, a newspaper publisher, a cultural and creative company and an exhibition company. Fine Art graduates work in graphics, visual and advertising positions in these companies, mostly related to graphics, painting and design. All seven employers agreed that Fine Art graduates are less employable than graduates from other disciplines. The other three creative industry employers felt that Fine Art graduates were not suitable to work in their companies because their employability skills did not match. These three employers were from online media companies, and live webcast companies, all of which are in the internet-related technology sector. This initial overview of the statistics suggests that even in the creative industries, and after the cultural industries have been developed, the content of Fine Art graduates' careers has not changed much. They are still working in graphics and visual related fields, and employers in the creative industries are not very satisfied with the employability of Fine Art graduates.

7.4 The Coding Process

Coding has become a central analytical procedure in grounded theory (Dey 2007). Some claim that analysis is coding, but most agree that coding is data management. Once data is coded, the data can be sorted into category heads, making it easier to compare within and across categories.

After conducting the interviews, I listened to all of them several times and compared the contents of my memo writings with the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed in full by myself. I took each interview as a text and coded it line by line, from the beginning to the end. The transcripts were then cut up to isolate each code and their associated text from other codes with their connecting text.

The coding process, has been described in the methodology in chapter 2. The first coding stage requires the researcher to construct initial categories to obtain information about the subject of study by segmenting the collected data (Creswell, 2012). To do this, the pyramid of coding to analyse the majority of codes derived from the base (data) was used, and its volume was narrowed down through group coding, theme identification, and interpretation.

7.5 Pyramid of Coding and Analysis

Section 7.5 created a detailed codebook based on the pyramid of coding and analysis structure. Most codes derived from the base (data) and its volume are narrowed down through group coding, theme identification, and interpretation. The first layer of the pyramid identified the original coders from 10 interviews with employers in the creative industries. It then grouped these codes into similar domains and constructed themes (layer 2). Finally, it used these themes to interpret the data and analyse the research questions (layer 3).

7.5.1 First Layer of the Pyramid: Raw Data/ Codes

At the first layer of the pyramid, 227 original codes from the ten interviews conducted were identified as being directly related to Fine Art graduates' employability skills in creative industries. These codes are keywords relayed by creative employers in response to the questions asked. The coding was then selected by numbering according to the PX-Y rule, where PX is the serial number of the interviewee, and Y is the employability skill element. Below are two examples of line-by-line coding; codes are in red, and the text of the transcript is in black. The first box is from Jane's (P1) transcript, and the second is from Allen's (P2).

Jane (P1)

Appreciation and evaluation (P1-1)

Basic qualities... I think ... to have an appreciation and evaluation of the field

Trends and information (P1-2)

The ability to keep up to date with trends and information on...

Professional and academic skills (P1-3)

Communication skills (P1-4)

Emotional intelligence (P1-5)

Skills... The combination of skills is a big part of the job, and the job may test his professional and academic skills and communication skills □

Emotional intelligence

Allen (P2)

Design software (P2-1)

Market analysis skills (P2-2)

The skills...training in some computer design software, and then there is also something that can improve ... market analysis skills

Colours (P2-3)

Styling (P2-4)

Creativity (P2-5)

...understand the current trends, colours, styling, creativity

Transcript 1 Jane, female, from a designer's association, produced 26 codes

Transcript 2 Allen, male, from an audio company, produced 34 codes

Transcript 3 Michelle, female, from a gallery, produced 27 codes

Transcript 4 John, male, from a multinational technology company, produced

20 codes

Transcript 5 Angela, female, from an online media company, produced 20 codes

Transcript 6 Alex, male, from a newspaper publisher, produced 9 codes

Transcript 7 Monica, female, from a cultural and creative company, produced 30 codes

Transcript 8 Jack, male, from a media company, produced 34 codes

Transcript 9 Linda, female, from an exhibition company, produced 26 codes

Transcript 10 Phillip, male, from a live webcast company, produced 21 codes

7.5.2 The Second Layer of the Pyramid: Themes

After counting all the original codes related to the research, these were grouped into similar themes. From this, 22 themes were generated, forming the second layer of the pyramid. More specifically, the first interview yielded 26 codes. These 26 codes were categorised according to their similarity, resulting in 7 themes. The common themes between the first and second interviews were then measured, any new themes from the second interview were identified: 6 shared themes (also found in the first interview) and one new theme. After the second interview, the total number of themes was 7. The third interview elicited 6 shared themes (common in interviews one and two) and 1 new theme. Interview four elicited 3 shared themes and 5 new themes compared to the first 3. Interview 5 elicited 3 shared themes and 3 new themes compared to the first 4. Interview 6 presented four shared themes compared to the first 5, and no new themes were generated. Interview 7 when compared to the first 6, showed 5 shared themes and 1 new theme. Interview 8, compared to the previous 7, presented 7 shared themes and 2 new themes. Interview 9, compared to the previous 8, presented 6 shared themes and 1 new theme. Interview 10, compared to the previous 9, presented 6 shared themes and no new themes were

generated again. These statistical results bring the total number of themes to 22 (see List below).

List of the Theme Codes of Creative Industry Employers:

P1 Jane

Aesthetic skills, communication skills, emotional intelligence, industry market analysis, sense of logic, presentation skills, office software applications

P2 Allen

Aesthetic skills, communication skills, emotional intelligence, industry market analysis, presentation skills, office software applications, creativity

P3 Michelle

Self-perception, communication skills, emotional intelligence, industry market analysis, presentation skills, office software applications, team work

P4 John

Office software applications, team work, creativity, innovation, implementation of ideas, resistance to stress, planning skill, self-learning skill

P5 Angela

Wide-ranging knowledge base, socialist values, industry market analysis, creativity, innovation, internet mindset

P6 Alex

Industry market analysis, communication skills, presentation skills, emotional intelligence

P7 Monica

Creativity, innovation, industry market analysis, wide-ranging knowledge base, aesthetic skills, perceptual skills

P8 Jack

Creativity, innovation, industry market analysis, communication skills, wide-

ranging knowledge base, planning skill, resistance to stress, self-confidence, aesthetic skills

P9 Linda

Wide-ranging knowledge base, planning skill, creativity, innovation, industry market analysis, aesthetic skills, methodology approach

P10 Phillip

Wide-ranging knowledge base, creativity, innovation, industry market analysis, communication skills, presentation skills

7.5.3 The Peak of the Pyramid: Interpretation

The total number of themes across all interviews was 22; these themes were not identified in one single interview but were found in all interviews (see Table 21). In other words, these 22 themes are all possible themes in the interviews for this study. Constantinou *et al.* (2017) refer to this as 'saturated terrain.' After identifying the themes, the percentage of terrain in each interview, as shown in the last column of Table 21 was calculate. For example, interview 1 included 32% of all possible themes. The range is between 100 % (interview 10) and 32% (interview 1). On average, all possible themes were found in 63.6% of all interviews.

Table 21. Themes Saturation Worktable

Interviews	Number of codes	Number of themes	Number of shared themes with previous interviews	Number of new themes per interview	Total number of themes	Percentage of saturated terrain per interview
Int 1	26	7	0	7	7	32
Int 2	34	7	6	1	8	36
Int 3	27	7	5	2	10	45
Int 4	20	8	3	5	15	68
Int 5	20	6	3	3	18	82
Int 6	9	4	4	0	18	82
Int 7	30	6	5	1	19	86
Int 8	34	9	7	1	20	95
Int 9	26	7	6	1	21	100
Int 10	21	6	6	0	21	100
Average percentage of saturated terrain across interviews						63.6

Saturation is essential to knowing when enough data have been collected and therefore has far-reaching implications for research designed to produce a theory grounded in the data. Bowen (2008) recommends a percentage threshold for grounded theory studies. According to his study, a data category was considered saturated if it was reflected in more than 70% of the interviews. In this study, interviews 5 to 10 had percentage thresholds above 70%, and a total of 15 themes were generated in these interviews.

7.6 Employer Perceptions of the Creative Industry Employability

Following interviews with employers in the creative industries, the following 15 skills competencies in demand for employment in the creative industries are summarised:

Wide-ranging knowledge base

Socialist values

Industry market analysis

Creativity

Innovation

Internet mindset

Effective Communication Skills

Presentation skill

Emotional Intelligence

Aesthetic skills

Perceptual skills

Planning skill

Resistance to stress

Self-confidence

Methodology approach

According to the needs of the employing units and requirements, skills can be roughly divided into soft skills and hard skills (Mishra, 2014). Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance personal interactions and job performance, and hard skills are concerned with a person's skill set and ability to perform certain types of tasks or activities (Hendarman and Tjakraatmadja, 2012). According to Downing (2005), hard skills are measurable and teachable (Mishra, 2014). Unlike hard skills, soft skills are interpersonal and widely applicable. Many scholars have defined soft skills, but they all coincide with the following. The "soft skills" mainly include life skills (WHO, 1993); horizontal skills, and general abilities (Oecd2003,2012), such as personal communication skills (Kantrowitz, 2005), interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, leadership, team skills, negotiation skills, time management, stress management, and business etiquette (Seth and Seth, 2013); lifelong learning ability, ability to cope with uncertainty, and willingness to take responsibility (Clarke, 2017; Moore and

Morton, 2017). Ghosh (2012) summaries soft skills as the process of human psychological, and personality development, which makes a person more socialized and accepted by society, including the corporate community. Based on the literature review, the 15 themes from creative industry employers were classified into two broad categories: hard and soft skills competencies (see Table 22).

Table 22. Creative Industry Employability Skills

Hard skills competencies	Soft skills competencies
Industry market analysis Wide-ranging knowledge base	Creativity Innovation Internet mindset Communication skills Presentation skills Emotional Intelligence Aesthetic skills Perceptual skills Planning skills Resistance to stress Self-confidence Socialist values Methodology approach

From the statistical analysis, it is clear that employers in the creative industries require more soft skills competencies than hard skills competencies. Therefore, in the section 7.7, these employability skills competencies are discussed in-depth with reference to the interview data and literature.

7.7 Hard Skills Competencies

With regard to hard skills competencies, employers in the creative industries have identified two skills competencies: wide-ranging knowledge base and industry market analysis.

7.7.1 Wide-ranging Knowledge Base

The employers in the creative industries consider a wide-ranging knowledge to be a foundational competency for employment. Wide-ranging knowledge provides a basis for comparing and understanding different types of knowledge in employment, and having such a wide-ranging knowledge base facilitates more effective acquisition of new knowledge in any new field (Caves, 2000). From the statistical analysis, Linda and Angela believe that it is essential to have a wide-ranging of knowledge base in the creative industries. Linda believes that it is often necessary to combine different knowledges when working in the creative industries. This combination pattern is related to the development process of China's creative industries, which began with the transformation and development of cultural industries in the light of technological development (Jin, 2012).

Linda: “Regardless of the type of creative industry company one works in, practitioners need to have a primary wide-ranging knowledge pool first... We need to combine two or more different things to form a creative product in many cases.”

Angela: “Because the creative industry has an inherent human resource and cultural advantage, it requires a wide-ranging knowledge base for its people.”

From the statistical analysis, five creative industry employers mentioned the importance of a wide-ranging knowledge from five different creative industry companies: media company, cultural and creative company, online media company, exhibition company, and live webcast. This suggested that no matter what type of creative company, the employee will need to have a diverse

knowledge base, including practical professional skills, literary and artistic knowledge, and market-related knowledge.

Furthermore, Jack makes another point about the wide-ranging knowledge of Fine Art graduates. He argues that Fine Art graduates lack logical skills and theoretical knowledge. This is primarily related to Fine Art higher education content in China.

Jack: “As for the skills, one must have a wide-ranging knowledge base, including both culture and general knowledge. However, Chinese Fine Art students are characterised by leaps in logic, so they lack the linear thinking of science students, that is, the theoretical knowledge of the source and end of the problem.”

7.7.2 Wide-ranging Knowledge of Fine Art Higher Education

With global change centred on knowledge, people are no longer seeking greater consumption of resources, energy, and agricultural products, but rather a knowledge and wisdom, i.e., the value of knowledge (Zeng, 2008). In their analysis of the knowledge economy, Galloway and Dunlop (2007) show that competitive advantage is increasingly derived from investment in intangible assets (information), which may be practical or scientific, making knowledge intensity an increasingly important competitive tool in a wide range of consumer markets. As a result, the creative industries exhibit highly knowledge-intensive, high value-added, and highly integrated characteristics, and the demand for a comprehensive knowledge base of practitioners is relatively high (Zeng, 2008). However, the wide-ranging knowledge base of Chinese higher education is not yet comprehensive enough in itself because Chinese students are divided between arts and science courses in their second year of high school.

In China, the division between arts and science begins in high school (Xu, 2015). Fine Art is part of the arts curriculum, and the arts focus on the study of human beings and the social phenomena and problems that structure human society, giving value and standards of meaning to human activities. Science subjects are mainly the study of natural sciences, applied sciences, and mathematical logic, which are crucial to the development of human science (Xu, 2015). Both arts and sciences have compulsory and elective courses related to their disciplines, in addition to public electives offered in both subject areas. Jack mentioned the difference between arts and science students in the interview, and he believes that art students have insufficient knowledge of science subjects and poor logic skills. The demand for wide-ranging knowledge comes not only from the creative industry employers interviewed but also from other industries in China (Liu, 2021). In order to improve students' a wide-ranging knowledge, the Chinese Ministry of Education introduced a new high school reform policy in 2021. Under the new policy, there is no longer a distinction between arts and science subjects. Candidates are required to take three exams in language, mathematics and foreign languages, plus a graded exam in any three subjects from geography, history, politics, physics, chemistry and biology. As a result, the development of students' wide-ranging of knowledge skills has also attracted the attention and support of the government.

Furthermore, in Chinese Fine Art higher education, public elective courses aim to broaden students' knowledge in different disciplines, optimise their knowledge structure, improve their overall quality and enhance graduates' employability (Ge, 2011; Xu, 2015). However, students are not highly motivated due to the few credits available for public elective courses. In addition, students come from different disciplines; therefore, the course is usually offered in the evenings or on weekends (Ge, 2011). On the other hand, compared to

comprehensive universities, as Fine Art is inherently more homogeneous subjects, the elective content only focuses on art and design subjects, which does not expand students' wide-ranging knowledge (Qiao and Ding, 2014). Although comprehensive universities can increase students' professional knowledge vertically, it limits students' horizontal development and reduces their wide-ranging of knowledge base to a certain extent.

For wide-ranging of knowledge of Fine Art graduates, although the division between arts and science subjects will no longer exist in the future of Chinese high school studies, students will be able to accumulate a more diverse and wide-ranging of knowledge at the high school level. However, the content of the curriculum in Chinese higher education in Fine Art continues to be mono-specialised, attempting to give students more specialised knowledge before employment, but contrary to the comprehensive competencies expected by employers in the creative industries interviewed.

7.7.3 Industry Market Analysis

Another hard skill mentioned by creative industry employers in the interviews is industry market analysis. The statistics market analysis is a highly valued employability skill by employers in the creative industries, but it is clear that Fine Art graduates poorly understand the creative market. The interview data revealed that this depends on four points. Jane, Allen, and Linda believe that Fine Art graduates are unclear about the market needs of the creative industries. The professional standards at universities are not fully representative of employment needs. Students need to fully understand the needs of the creative market and analyse the creative industries and combine their professional knowledge with the needs of the market.

Jane: “When a Fine Art graduate arrives at a company, more things have to be re-taught, and the strengths you had at school, such as drawing, are one standard at school and another in the marketplace. By understanding the market demand, you can turn your strengths as a student into an advantage in employment.”

Allen □ “Fine Art graduates are often adamant when the market is contrary to their perceptions. It is challenging for them to adjust to this because they have an idea themselves, and the company has a culture and a brand background, so it is challenging for them to make that balance in the middle....Fine Art graduates generally have no understanding of the creative industry. The universities should focus more on marketing training, which will help them combine students' knowledge with the creative industry and generate value in the workplace.”

Linda □ “The market determines whether you are qualified to survive in the creative industry; otherwise, if we do it purely for the sake of creativity, it will face a problem of market acceptance...There is a demand for such a product in the market at a particular time.”

From the National Curriculum Guidance Programme for Undergraduate Fine Arts Courses in General Higher Education Institutions' latest version in 2005, it is clear that neither the compulsory courses nor the optional courses contain any courses on any industry market analysis. This indicates a gap in the Fine Art syllabus regarding industry and industry market analysis. The job market for Fine Art graduates is not reflected in the curriculum content.

Furthermore, John believes that because most Fine Art teachers in China

either do not work, or have worked in the creative industry, and they lack an understanding of the creative industries and cannot analyse the market in the first place. Thus, they do not have the awareness to transmit market-related information and knowledge to Fine Art students.

John: “Chinese universities do not train professionals, and very few university lecturers have worked in the industry, so how can students who are handed a job with no understanding of the market meet the job requirements?”

The threshold for applying for a full-time teacher position in a university is very high. The general professional institutions require candidates to have high academic qualifications and qualities, and those who are accepted generally have master's degrees from “211” and “985” (the top universities in China similar to The Russell Group in the UK). The students are assessed by their academic qualifications (Yin, 2014). In contrast, most teachers in higher education institutions are recruited directly as university graduates, and teaching is their first job. They usually have a high level of theoretical knowledge but less practical experience (Wang *et al.*, 2016). This makes it challenging to produce graduates aware of market needs and developments. This understanding of the market will undoubtedly clarify Fine Art graduate employment contracts. In the creative industry, the market's needs are the goal of product design. Therefore, unfamiliarity with the market will undoubtedly hinder the employability of Fine Art graduates.

7.8 Soft Skills Competencies

Hard skills are academic skills, experience, and professionalism, while soft skills are self-development, interaction, communication, humanization, and transferable skills. The literature suggests that hard skills contribute only 15%

to a person's success, while the remaining 85% is contributed by soft skills (Mysirlaki and Paraskeva, 2017). This is similar to the data returned by employers in the creative industries in this research, suggesting more demand for soft skills than hard skills in employment in the creative industries. With regard to soft skills competencies, the analysis of the statistics identified 13 skills competencies: creativity, innovation, Internet mindset, communication skills, presentation skills, emotional intelligence, aesthetic skills, perceptual skills, planning skills, resistance to stress, self-confidence, socialist values, and methodology approach. These soft skills are also transferable, and transferable skills are also described as generic skills. These skills can be used in a variety of different tasks in life, such as literacy, leadership, problem-solving, physical skills, influence, teamwork, planning, numeracy skills, communication, time management skills, lifelong learning skills, technical training skills, written and interpersonal skills, and skills to handle the vast amount of information available through today's information technology (Keneley and Jackling, 2011; Teo *et al.*, 2012; Ramos *et al.*, 2013). Section 7.8.1 to section 7.8.12 provides a detailed analysis of the demand for different soft skills in the creative industries.

7.8.1 Creativity and Innovation

Of all the soft skills, creativity and innovation are the heart of both the creative industries and Fine Art higher education. Creativity and innovation are two separate concepts. Creativity can be understood as a multidimensional structure involving cognitive variables, personality traits, family, educational aspects, and social and cultural factors (Nakano and Wechsler, 2018). These dimensions interact with each other depending on the individual's thinking and creative style and are therefore expressed and discovered in many different ways (Sternberg, 2010; Wechsler, 2008). Whereas innovation is a concept of multidisciplinary interest, the study of this phenomenon has developed into

multiple fields of knowledge, including management, education, economics, psychology, and sociology (Nakano and Wechsler, 2018). As a concept, innovation has been defined as the development of products or the practice of new and valuable ideas that benefit individuals, teams, organisations, or broader society (Bledow *et al.*, 2009). It then needs to be clarified that innovation does not just provide new ideas but also requires products that can generate value.

Creativity is an essential element of social development, a unique capacity, and a core requirement for the creative industries and Fine Art education (Kloudová and Chwaszcz, 2014; Corazza, 2016). Furthermore, as an increasing number of artists are required to use new technologies in their creations and to create using innovative techniques, the difference between creativity (art) and innovation (science and technology) is narrowing (Legrenzi, 2005) and is being brought together. In interviews with employers in the creative industries, innovation has also been found to be coextensive when talking about creativity.

Angela: “The development of the creative industries is in urgent need of composite creative talents who are skilled in the use of content creativity, product creativity, visual creativity, and technical creativity...Creative industries need to promote comprehensive innovation at the same time. Comprehensive innovation includes conceptual, technological, institutional, model, and business innovation.”

The statistical analysis suggests that art, innovation, and technology are needed simultaneously in the creative industries. The intersection between art, innovation, and technology is mutually inclusive and challenging. Chestney-Harvey (2011) found that as artists and technologists have been opening up new horizons, innovative technologies have opened up new worlds of

expression and creativity for artists and new possibilities for artists' work. Legrenzi (2005) suggests that for Fine Art graduates, technological innovation is mainly reflected in internet thinking, including artificial intelligence, video, computers, and other technologically invented support systems. However, the use of multimedia on the Internet has only gone so far to improve the Fine Art's pedagogical model (Wang, 2015; Gong, 2016). For example, multimedia applications have intuitively increased the sensory reception of arts teaching, making what was once slightly abstract teaching more intuitive (Wang, 2015). Alternatively, multimedia on the Internet can be used to explore and reform the optimisation of Fine Art teaching models (Gong, 2016). These changes are based on the guidance issued by the Chinese State Council in 2015 on actively promoting the "Internet+" initiative.

7.8.2 Internet Mindset

The guidance of the "Internet+" initiative has simultaneously prompted the development of China's creative industries to be entering the "Internet+" phase, emphasising the use of Internet thinking to promote the integration of creative industries (Yang *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, understanding Internet thinking becomes crucial for employment in the creative industries. Angela mentioned that:

Angela: "There is a need for integrated media talent... They need to master the expression and supporting ability of new media... There is an urgent need for "Internet genes" talents who have an Internet mindset, understand product design, know user experience and understand interactive interaction."

According to Jin (2014), the Internet mindset is a new way of thinking in the contemporary practice of integrating high technology and industry and is an inevitable outcome of the paradigm shift in the technological revolution. It

heralds the conception and formation of a new way of thinking that will bring about even more significant societal changes in the future. Therefore, it is not limited to the development of the creative industries; modern technology invades all areas of human life, including learning and teaching (Lepičnik-Vodopivec *et al.*, 2020).

7.8.3 Internet Mindset Development in the Fine Art Higher Education

Today's world has developed multiple media, and Fine Art students' exposure to art information is much richer than in the past (Qiao, 2022). Teachers are no longer the only source of knowledge, and students can obtain information according to various media (such as the internet). Students heavily research the internet, collect data from the internet, and even have classes on the internet. This paper was written when COVID-19 swept the world, and the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing embargo led to a change in behaviour regarding work, collaborative, learning, and the purchase of goods and services. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing blockade led to significant changes in behaviour regarding work, collaboration, learning, and the purchase of goods and services (Elyassi, 2021). We can observe the rapid use of e-learning platforms such as MS Teams or Zoom. Students have a higher awareness of the usefulness and advantages of e-learning (Al-Fraihat *et al.*, 2020).

Wang (2022) argues that as 5G technology matures, big data and digital technologies will develop, and applying new internet technologies to arts education in China will bring more impetus and possibilities to Chinese higher education. However, using the internet as a teaching medium and learning tool alone is not enough to meet the demands of employment in the creative industries; Fine Art students need to have an internet mindset before entering the creative industries. A recent study by Qiao (2022) argues that creativity

should lead contemporary art, using virtual reality technology as a tool and new media as a platform to infinitely extend the artist's imagination and creative space, mindset, and technical means. However, in the internet age, new platforms and technologies are emerging continuously, and it is fluid. Therefore, it is challenging to make different technologies possible to integrate it with Fine Art higher education.

7.8.4 Aesthetic

Stoneman (2008) notes that in addition to technological innovation, the creative industries also engage in aesthetic innovation, which he describes as 'soft innovation.' soft innovation refers to innovation in goods and services that primarily affects sensory perception and aesthetic appeal and can occur in any industry, particularly in the creative industries, including culture, media, and the arts (Stoneman, 2008). From the statistical analysis, aesthetics was mentioned extensively as an employment skill by employers in the creative industries. When referring to the impact of aesthetics on the creative industries, both Monica and Linda refer to 'oriental aesthetics.'

Monica: "A certain level of aesthetic literacy and cultural perception is a basic requirement for employment in China's creative industries... It includes oriental aesthetics and the ability to understand beauty."

Linda: "Oriental aesthetics should serve as the core of the creative industry... How the public receives creative products depends on how well the product aesthetics fit with the public aesthetics."

Oriental Aesthetics

Oriental aesthetics has a unique thinking and theoretical system (Qiu and Xi,

2003). “Yi Xiang,” as the core of Chinese oriental aesthetics, originates from classical Chinese aesthetics and is characterised by “concealment” and “strangeness,” i.e., symbolic, implicit, suggestive, and mysterious, which are also distinctive features of the oriental aesthetic way of thinking (Peng and Li, 2005). “Yi” refers to the aesthetic subject's understanding of everything, while “Xiang” refers to the appearance of the aesthetic object. Peng and Li (2005) argue that oriental aesthetics is more irrational and expressive and reveres a return to the basics of communion with nature. Zhang (2018) maintains that oriental aesthetics is not simply defined as 'beauty' and 'ugliness', but rather the type and nature of the object from the senses. It cares about how people feel and expresses the feelings it wants to convey. Thus, the form of oriental aesthetics, the expression of the creation of the work, is both implicit and explicit.

According to Guan (2017), Chinese painting has long been impacted by oriental aesthetics and carries Chinese cultural and ethnic connotations. Although influenced by the Western world, Chinese Fine Art is constantly developing and innovating in terms of subject matter, content and form (Feng, 2020). However, what cannot be ignored is that Chinese Fine Art has developed from the painting profession and the aesthetic categories it contains still reflect the forms of oriental aesthetics, which are inseparable from the influence of Chinese culture. With the introduction of a 'Neo-moroism' in 2013, the concept and connotations of which have been increasingly deepened through the joint work of Chinese, Japanese and Korean artists and art critics, it has become an aesthetic spirit distinct from that of Western contemporary art (Feng, 2020). The Japanese art critic Toshiaki Mimura (2013) points out that the 'haze' in 'Neo-moroism' is a high level of 'mood', which is similar to the 'qi rhyme' in traditional Chinese painting theory. The 'haze' is not a haze at the level of the image but an overlap of multiple perceptions.

Neo-moroism is more critical than oriental aesthetics and attempts to break away from people's habitual perceptions and explore the possibility of non-objective, non-objectified perceptions, free from the dichotomy of subject-object thinking (Pi, 2015). Therefore, it is again different from the aesthetic forms pursued by oriental aesthetic, but it is also similar to the essential features of traditional oriental aesthetics thought. It shows that oriental aesthetics also innovates and changes with the changing times.

7.8.5 Aesthetics and Market

In addition to the influence of oriental aesthetics in creative industries, Jane and Allen present the relationship between aesthetics and the market. The aesthetics of the creative workers in the creative industries need to be integrated with companies' market plans and marketing strategies, combining personal aesthetics with public aesthetics.

Jane: "As a creator, it is probably more important to have the ability to lead on aesthetics, art, trends, and fashion."

Allen: "When you go into society, it is into a business, you need to adapt your creativity to the market, the DNA of the whole brand, including the adaptation of the differences between public aesthetics and personal aesthetics. It is possible that your audience demographic, the market, the strategy, is contrary to your perceived aesthetic, and we find that this is a time when art students often stick to their guns."

Stoneman (2007) argues that market impact would be a valuable and readily available indicator of the importance of aesthetic innovation. Market impact relates to the experiences of consumers, customers and business partners

(Miles and Green, 2008). These could suggest that the knowledge of oriental aesthetics and the market combine to establish the aesthetic demands of employment in the creative industries. Individual aesthetics or understanding of aesthetics becomes insufficient to meet the demands of employment in the creative industries. The demand for aesthetics in the creative industries is diverse and aesthetic innovation is a central organising process as new product technologies emerge (Eisenman, 2013). The combination of aesthetics and marketing is akin to the commercialisation of artwork, which may be frowned upon by some Fine Art students, for whom creativity itself should be pure and free from utilitarianism. However, understanding the market's needs and creating art should not be in conflict, and the integration of aesthetics and the market can be taught as a knowledge point rather than a creative tool, thus increasing the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries.

7.8.6 Emotional Intelligence

After discussing the impact of aesthetics as a soft skill on the creative industries, another soft skill that came up repeatedly in the interviews is discussed next - Emotional Intelligence. A person's life and work environment are filled with a wide range of emotions (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2020). Ashkanasy and Daus (2020) found a correlation between emotional intelligence (EI), leadership, occupational stress, job performance and conflict management. Statistical analysis suggests that Fine Art graduates do not have sufficient EI for employment in the creative industries. Jane argued that the need to have good EI in the workplace and to get along with different people in the office is a skill that one must-have.

Jane: “At work, especially inside the office, it is more a test of one's ability to be emotionally intelligent than one's ability to be intellectually intelligent. For

example, communication skills, and then there are things to do with people.”

The most common model in Fine Art education is studio-based (Orr and Shreeve, 2017); it is also the working model of many creative enterprises (Mottram and Whale, 2001). Thus, Fine Art graduates should be good at working with others. However, Allen argues that Fine Art graduates have some innate personalities that can make it difficult for them to take on board the opinions of others. Loveland *et al.* (2016) found that the relationship between artists' dispositions and career outcomes existed at an unusual intersection. On the one hand, the value of personality as a tool to measure the potential effectiveness of employees, and on the other hand, art as a field tends to be somewhat isolated, and personality facilitates the development of artistic creativity in terms of talent and ability (Loveland *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, it is inevitable that Fine Art graduates will have a personality, but when that personality is present in the workplace, it reduces their emotional intelligence.

Allen: “...such as emotional intelligence, social skills, and expressive skills, are necessary. However, Fine Art graduates are very individualistic and are not very emotionally intelligent.”

Michelle believes there is an important relationship between emotional intelligence and teamwork. The success of an organisation depends not only on individual performance but also on the work team's performance (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2020). A study conducted by Jordan and Troth (2004) found that teams with higher EI performed better, and performance on specific tasks could be predicted by the team's level of emotional intelligence. In the positive relationship between teamwork orientation and career satisfaction among artists, artists often work independently as individual contributors and tend to be less social and collaborative; however, those good at teamwork report

greater career satisfaction. (Loveland *et al.*, 2016)

Michelle: “Emotional intelligence is primarily related to teamwork. We have found that Fine Art graduates are too assertive in many of their teamwork situations and are unwilling to take advice from others.”

In the research on emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1990) formed the basis of the theory of emotional intelligence, and defined it as “The ability to monitor and regulate one's own and other's feelings and to use feelings to guide one's thinking and action” (p.189). The theory identifies five main areas of emotional intelligence: knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognising emotions in others and handling relationships (Luca and Tarricone, 2001). In the study by Riyanti *et al.*'s (2017), those skills are defined as soft skills of personality, a permanent influential behavioural characteristic of a person. These competencies help in managing one's emotional intelligence in employment and are also applicable in daily life. The statistical analysis suggests there are four soft skills related to emotional intelligence competencies skills. These are communication skills, perceptual skills, resistance to stress, and self-confidence.

7.8.7 Effective Communication Skills

“Listening so people will talk and talking so people will listen.” (Greenockle, 2010: 265)

Effective communication is the key to any relationship, and in the context of EI, practical communication skills include self-disclosure, assertiveness, dynamic listening, judging, and sensitivity-based team communication (Weisinger, 1998).

Emotionally intelligent people can communicate clearly to others what they think, feel, and want while listening to understand, manage conflict (negotiation and resolution), motivate and guide individuals and groups, initiate and manage change, and collaborate and cooperate to achieve common goals (Luca and Tarricone, 2001). However, while conflict is necessary and valuable, it can also be unproductive and therefore needs to be managed in an emotionally sensitive manner (Greenockle, 2010). The statistical analysis of the data also suggests the importance of communication skills in employment in the creative industries, as demonstrated by high levels of emotional intelligence and teamwork.

Jack: “Emotional intelligence, as opposed to IQ, is more important in the creative industry, and creative products require a certain level of communication skills in order to be recognised and perceived by customers.”

Jane: “Communication is essential in the workplace, as well as getting along with people... you cannot just sit there and draw, or do something professionally related, you need to use your social skills, your presentation skills to work with others.”

Michelle: “In the workplace when you need to communicate or work with other departments or other professionals, and this is a significant time.”

Alex: “People in the creative industry are socially inept and are not good at exposing themselves to the public; Fine Art graduates prefer interaction with designers or artists.”

In addition to communication skills with colleagues, teams are very important in any industry when working with clients. Presentation skills are usually included when working with clients as an essential soft skill (Stytsyuk *et al.*, 2022).

7.8.8 Presentation Skills

According to statistical analysis, creative industry employers consider presentation skills an essential employability skill. Alex believes that Fine Art graduates' lack of presentation skills leads to a lack of clarity and a low ability to materialise ideas. Michelle believes that Fine Art education should include a rich experience of presentation skills.

Alex: “There are just times when it feels like they have a good idea, but they do not present their idea very clearly in a presentation; it is this feeling that they are kind of stuck with their idea.”

Michelle: “I think it is essential to have the ability to speak, to articulate, and to articulate an idea...Fine Art itself is a profession that requires self-expression.”

In higher education, presentation organises student activities (Stytsyuk *et al.*, 2022). The teacher does not provide the materials and methods of interaction with students, but the students independently find the necessary information, using a variety of information, and mastering the methods of action planned in the process of solving their own or the team's problems (Stytsyuk *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, in Fine Art higher education, students must make presentations to their peers, professors, and visiting artists or critics at each stage of their studies to present their work; research skills, presentation skills, and critical thinking skills are included (Morley, 2014). As a result, Fine Art graduates have more extensive presentation experience before entering employment.

In the creative industries, the value of products is primarily based on content, and their cultural significance or the unique experiences they can create are co-

produced through the interaction between the creative goods and their consumers, and the experiences are co-produced (Miles and Green, 2008). Therefore, explaining and articulating creative products is complex, and presentations need to describe the known content of the product and the unknown experience. This is also similar to Fine Art education, where Fine Art students are required to articulate their work, and they are equipped to articulate the unknown to an audience.

However, Fine Art students and creative industry employees have different purposes for what they want to communicate in their presentations. In Fine Art higher education, the student communicates and explains their work, and the message they want to convey is biased toward a one-sided output, and each listener may have different ideas and thoughts about that work. In contrast, in creative industry work, the relationship of the presentation is mutual, and the speaker needs the audience to clearly understand the message being expressed for the presentation to be effective. Therefore, even though Fine Art graduates have extensive presentation experience, it may be something different from the presentation needs of the creative industries.

7.8.9 Resistance to Stress

According to the statistical analysis, another soft skill related to emotional intelligence is resisting stress at work. The adverse effects of stress on work behaviour and performance are well documented, for example, reduced productivity, frequent lateness, absenteeism, and high turnover (Sagie, 1998; Noe, 2002; Chang and Lu, 2009). Therefore, enhancing stress resistance can be very helpful for employment, and a series of disruptions to work can be avoided. Stressors and behaviours at work are influenced by the unique characteristics of each occupation (Chang and Lu, 2009). The statistical

analysis suggests that stress tolerance is also an essential soft skill in the creative industries.

Jack: “Working in the creative industries requires a certain level of stress tolerance.”

John: “Working in the creative industries involves a lot of travel and overtime, so being stress-resistant is especially important.”

Fine Art graduates in the creative industries face two kinds of pressure simultaneously. The Fine Art graduates may face the types of stressors that are often large and persistent throughout their careers compared to other professional graduates (Loveland *et al.*, 2016). These include pressure to succeed financially, stiff competition from other artists, a lack of venues to showcase their work, and a lack of public understanding and appreciation of their creations (Watts, 2013). Meanwhile, other pressures that artists often have to deal with include social isolation, a constant need for originality, unresolved personal issues, and structural changes in the art field (Kirschbaum, 2007). In addition, portfolio careers have become a common choice for creative industry workers and Fine Art graduates. However, the diversity and complexity of the portfolio career model make it difficult to identify the skills and knowledge required for employment in the creative industries (Bartleet *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, for creative industry workers and Fine Art graduates, although portfolio careers are a common mode of flexible employment, their unstable and unpredictable nature certainly adds to employment stress.

Some scholars have suggested that being proactive leads to better career outcomes and better mental health, which reduces stress at work (Blustein, 2001; Praskova *et al.*, 2015). In the same vein, Fadli (2020) maintains that good

self-confidence will reduce employee stress at work. Self-confidence, in turn, was also mentioned in the statical analysis.

7.8.10 Self-confidence

Self-confidence equips employees to relate to other employees (Anwar, 2011). Strong self-confidence materialises when the person feels capable, confident, competent, and believes he can achieve because he is supported by experience, natural potential, achievements, and realistic expectations (Fadli *et al.*, 2020). For those who lack self-confidence, every failure deepens their sense of inadequacy. Lack of self-confidence can manifest as despair, feelings of helplessness, and increased self-doubt (Nasution, 2009). The statistical analysis suggests that self-confidence is necessary for employment in the creative industries.

Jack: “In creative industry employment, there is a need to develop self-confidence and frustration regulation at the same time.”

According to Feng (2020), creative activities build confidence and independent learning, while independent learning activities can encourage students' confidence by asking them to use their knowledge to solve problems and seek help when necessary. Hence, confidence is generated when knowledge is applied. Daw-Powers (2022) argues that teachers gain or enhance self-confidence by allowing students to create their artwork; they can also gain or enhance self-confidence by presenting and explaining their work. Thus, building self-confidence in Fine Art learning depends mainly on the degree of knowledge gained and the ability to transfer it.

A study by Beaumont *et al.* (2016) found an interesting perspective on self-

confidence in employment. They found that a person may be confident in making presentations in the workplace but may not feel confident about attending interviews. It suggests that self-confidence is a characteristic that individuals possess in employment but may change depending on the individual, and therefore individuals may feel more or less confident in different situations at work. Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007: 286) argue that self-confidence and self-efficacy are important factors that influence employability, and further explains that "self-confidence could be seen as the way this is projected to the outside world", and 'an increase in self-efficacy should be reflected in an increase in demonstrated self-confidence.'" It is further verified in Harini *et al.*'s (2019) study that self-confidence can also improve self-efficacy in creative industry employment.

Therefore, confidence in creative industry employment can be expressed both intrinsically and extrinsically. The extrinsic function of self-confidence is to gain the confidence of others, i.e., to communicate and convince people of your ability. This is important in the creative industries because creative products are sometimes outside people's perceptions. The inherent function of confidence lies in a person's career goals and vision. A lack of confidence can limit one's employment ambitions, which in turn can limit the actions one may take to improve their employability.

7.8.11 Perceptual Skills

From the statistical analysis, Monica raised the importance of perceptual skills for working in the creative industries.

Monica: "People who work in the creative industries need to be sensitive to new products and ideas and be able to react quickly... They need to have keen

perceptual skills.”

“One can make sensory perceptual contract with the world: one see the tree and hears its leaves flutter. And one makes cognitive contract with the world: One forms beliefs about the tree, memories of how it was in the past, and expectations” (Stokes, 2021:1).

According to Stokes and Nanay (2020), perceptual skills are abilities that we can do better or worse and are often reflected in various perceptually guided actions. Schlegel *et al.* (2015) maintain that, perception to action includes those cognitive processes that involve close interaction between perceptual and motor processes in a broad sense. Thus, perceptual skills can be acquired through extensive training or repeated attempts. In addition, already developed perceptual skills can further encourage the invention and improvement of new techniques and products (Matthen, 2015), and perceptual skills need to be accumulated through experience. Kozbelt (2001) found that artists' superior skills in perception, motor action and perceptual-motor integration contributed to their drawing ability, with the artist's perceptual strengths primarily served drawing skills. However, Seeley and Kozbelt (2008) argue that, unlike non-artists, artists perceive the world differently and that these perceptual abilities are a product of the technical knowledge of working in the art medium. Fine Art graduates can therefore increase their perceptual skills by creating works that develop different techniques in different media.

From the statistical analysis, the skills associated with the soft skills included: emotional Intelligence, perceptual skills, resistance to stress, communication skills, self-confidence, and presentation skills. In addition to these soft skills, the data is related to another category of soft skill competencies defined in the Riyanti *et al.* (2017) study - the soft skill of cognitive style. Furthermore, the soft

skill of cognitive style encompasses two other soft skills that appear in the data, methodological and planning skills.

7.8.12 Creative Methodologies for Understanding Creative Industry

Linda believes that what the creative industries need more than anything else complements the traditional industries, not a certain kind of knowledge, but more of a methodological approach.

Linda: “The methodology that the creative industry needs are in being able to graft two things, concepts, or cultural content that are completely unrelated to each other in a way that is not incongruous, and I think this is the ultimate ability that the creative industry needs to have... the ability to find commonalities between things and to innovate and create new products based on these commonalities.”

The methodology is a theoretical system or system to solve problems, and a methodology will analyse a series of specific methods, systematically summarise them, and eventually propose more general principles (Fuller *et al.*, 2011). However, the collection of specific methods (methodological systems), and the research around methodological systems, have different scopes of application and different research areas, resulting in multiple levels and categories of methodologies (Zhong and Li, 2015). From the above, it is easy to see the similarities between the structure of methodologies and the structure of creative industries, where methodologies are not studied by a single method and creative industries are formed in the integration of multiple industries.

Research by Fuller *et al.* (2011) found that creative industries need to continually innovate and adapt to the processes required to sustain business in a dynamic environment. In particular, it is essential to be aware of the creative

potential of interacting with new sources of ideas, for example, through crossover with other sectors or other networks and communities of practice. However, there is less interaction with other non-art and design disciplines, and students learn knowledge and interact with people in a more homogeneous environment in Fine Art teaching in China. As a result, theoretical and technical teaching is insufficient to prepare Fine Art graduates for success in the creative industries, which are known for their turbulence. The lack of wider-ranging knowledge (section 7.7.1) in Fine Art higher education also has an impact on the methodology of Fine Art graduates.

7.8.13 Planning Skills

Statistical analysis suggests that planning is another essential skill for employment in the creative industries. There are three specific categories of planning skills mentioned in the data: career planning, project planning, and marketing planning. Jack argues that Fine Art graduates can less plan for their careers.

Jack: “The lack of self-career planning among Fine Art graduates leads to a lack of understanding of their capabilities.”

According to De Vos *et al.* (2009), career planning involves setting clear career goals and developing strategies to achieve these goals. Clements and Kamau (2018) maintain that proactive career planning will positively impact employability. Therefore, career planning should be a competency that needs to be met prior to employment and influences employability at work. However, Hendricks (2013) found from his research that higher education does not provide effective career planning for students in creative subjects. He argues

“If a professional artist has a right to a life-sustaining career as other professionals educated in college or university and if it is true that we have a majority of artists in poverty status, is it the fault of the educational system whose purpose is to teach artists how to be artists and yet excludes career planning and management?” (p. 14)

Apparently, there is a gap between the information and expectations that Fine Art students receive during their courses and the information and expectations they need to have at their disposal when they graduate. This gap only emerges once Fine Art graduates enter the job market. Personal career planning skills further affect Fine Art graduates' planning ability for employment, including projects planning and market planning.

John argues that only a sound plan can produce a valuable product from the statistical analysis. Furthermore, Linda argues that plans need to be designed based on market needs. The project planning and market planning test not only the ability to plan but also the understanding of the market. The project planning and market planning test not only the ability to plan but also the understanding of the market.

John: “As important as it is to have creativity in a project, you also need to have the ability to plan so that the product and the idea come together and reach the goal in a reasonable amount of time... project planning and career planning are both very important.”

Linda: “Whether it's new product development or before a project starts, the ability to plan upfront is more important. In pre-planning, we need to understand the demand and acceptance of the market.”

7.8.14 Socialist Values

The statistical analysis does not directly correlate socialist values and other employability skills. However, Angela argues that socialist values need to be considered for employment in China, regardless of industry.

Angela □ “Working in any creative industry company requires, among other things, a certain reserve of knowledge in subjects such as politics, law, economics, society, and history and the establishment of the correct spirit of socialist core values.”

Chinese socialist values are an inheritance and development of Marxist values, a value theory dominated by the Chinese government (Liu, 2022). Zhou (2022) further explains that Chinese socialist values are a relatively stable conceptual model about the value of things, with the general public's best interests as the value standard (Liu, 2022). It is different from capitalist values, and therefore, the creative industries in China are not entirely neoliberalist.

In contrast, capitalist countries have neoliberalist tendencies creative industries, which is mainly reflected in the policies of creative industries that promote or prohibit cultural practices or values by governments, enterprises, other institutions and individuals (Throsby, 2010). According to Flew and Cunningham (2013: 73)

“Neoliberalism as a concept emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as an omnibus term used by activists to critique and protest institutions and forums associated with globalization, such as the World Trade Organization and its inaugural meeting in Seattle in 1999, and summits of world leaders such as the Group of Eight (G8) Summit in Genoa in 2001 and the Group of

Twenty (G20) Summit in London in 2009.”

More critics have subsequently argued that neocapitalism and globalisation as global strategies contribute to human well-being by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by substantial private property rights (Harvey, 2005; Scholte, 2005; Flew and Cunningham, 2013). Western neoliberals have therefore focused on the economic case for promoting competition and the opportunities presented by new technologies and innovations, keeping a relatively open and liberal approach to developing creative industries.

Harvey (2005) describes the development of China since 1980 as neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics. He argues that neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics can increase the flexibility of the labour market. However, Nonini (2008) argues that there is little widespread support for neoliberal policy programmes in China, reflecting the historical weakness of liberalism as a political philosophy in Chinese society. The Chinese government remains the dominant social value in terms of cultural value judgments and cultural consumption (Wang, 2015). O'Connor and Gu (2014) maintain that Chinese government policies still vigorously promote national and socialist values. Statistical analysis also suggests that oriental aesthetics is an aesthetic orientation in China's creative industries and that oriental aesthetics and socialist values are consistent, traditional and national (Liu *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, despite the evolving and unpredictable nature of the creative industries (O'Connor and Gu, 2014), practitioners still need to emphasise Chinese national cultural values, traditions and various Confucian and socialist value systems in their employment in China's creative industries.

7.9 Chapter Conclusion

Overall, the respondents could not be representative of Chinese creative industry employers. However, the statistical analysis shows that respondents come from a relatively wide range of creative industry categories from diverse cities of China, presenting a rich set of data including a multinational technology company, a cultural and creative company, a newspaper publisher, a designer's association, online and offline media, live webcast, a gallery, an audio company and an exhibition company.

This chapter has explored the views of employers in the creative industries on the competencies and skills required for employment. Evidence was generated on 15 qualities, competencies, and skills required for employment in the creative industries. Each of these 15 themes contains 2 hard skills and 13 soft skills. Although these skills all exist independently, they generate a prosperous relationship with each other. According to Riyanti *et al.* (2017), hard skills are the essential competencies required for employment in the creative industries and soft skills competencies are those related to personality and cognitive style aspects. They further explain that the soft skills of personality are a permanent and behaviour-influencing characteristic of a person. There is a direct relationship with the individual's personality, although the soft skills of cognitive style are characteristics of a person who solves problems in specific ways when faced with them (Riyanti *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the 15 employment skills competencies were grouped into four components (see Fig 29).

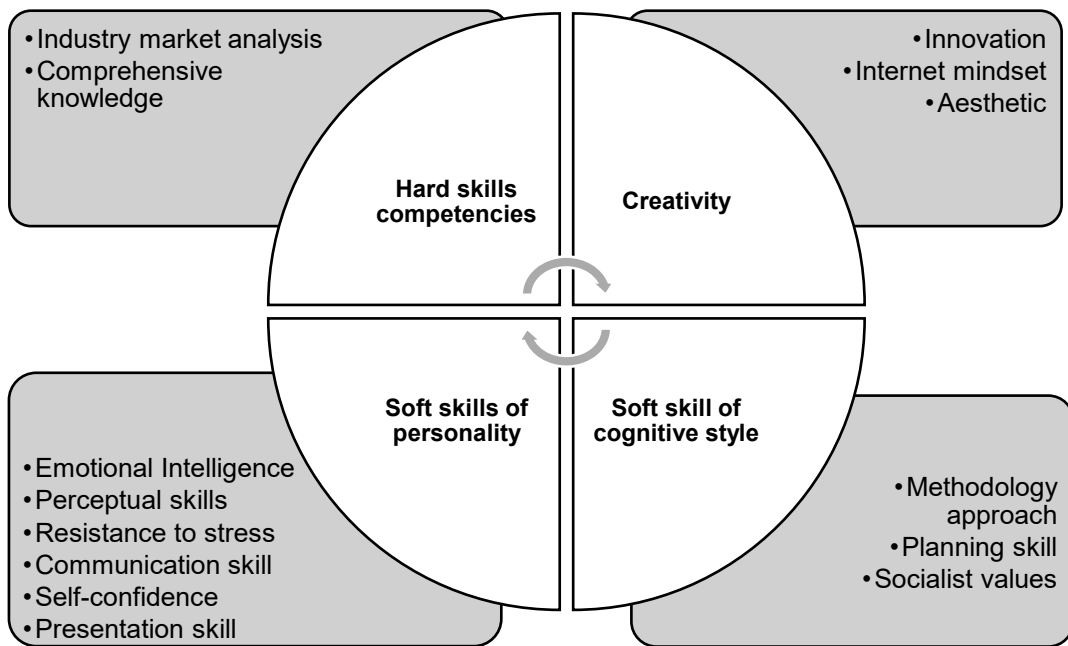


Fig 29. Demand for Employability Skills in China's Creative Industries

The statistical analysis from the second phase revealed that of the 15 employability skills counted, and there were varying degrees of the gap between Chinese Fine Art higher education content and other skills. The gap formation was related to the different teaching objectives of Fine Art higher education and the employment needs of the creative industries. Chapter 8 specifically discusses how to improve the employability skills of Fine Art graduates based on the second theoretical framework of this research - the Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model.

Chapter 8 Overall Findings and Discussion

The aim of this research is to find out the competencies, qualities, and skills Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China. The first phase of the research in an empirical context obtained feedback on the current employment status of Fine Art graduates in China and the impact of the employability factor of Fine Art higher education programmes in China from the perspective of Fine Art graduates. The second phase of the research, in an interpretive context, summarises the 15 employability competencies required by the creative industries in China from their personal experiences and perceptions through interviews with employers from different types of enterprises in the creative industries in China.

8.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the primary empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives of this research, and combines the results of statistical analysis and literature to discuss the career goals and current employment status of Fine Art graduates in China. It then discusses the relationship between the teaching objectives of Chinese Fine Art higher education and the development objectives of the creative industries, the relationship between the content of Chinese Fine Art higher education programmes and the employment needs of the creative industries in China, the differences, and the reasons that exist to influence the employment rate of Fine Art graduates. Finally, the interaction and relationship between China's creative industries, Chinese Fine Art higher education institutions, and globalisation are discussed through the second theoretical framework of this research - The Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model. Ultimately give suggestions on the course proposals for Fine Art to help enhance employability in the creative industries.

8.2 Career Goals and Employment Status of Fine Art Students in China

According to a press release from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China on 28 May 2020, the number of applicants for art and design disciplines in China reached 1.15 million in 2020, accounting for 10.73% of the total number of applicants for China's higher education institutions entrance examinations (Wang, 2020). This statistic indicates that approximately 10% of Chinese university students choose art and design subjects, which undoubtedly challenges students' teaching mission and training for employment in Chinese higher education institutions. According to the 2020 China University Graduates Employment Report, the red card subject for undergraduate careers in 2020 is Fine Art, and the employment rate has declined for four consecutive years. The report points out a gap between Fine Art graduates' professional skills and social demands. But before addressing the employment issue of Fine Art graduates, the first item that needs to be considered is the job destinations for Fine Art graduates in China. What are the careers of Fine Art graduates in China? Therefore, section 8.2 discusses the causes of the career dilemma of Fine Art graduates in China and the employment opportunities for Fine Art graduates in the creative industries based on the career goals of both Fine Art students and Fine Art higher education in China.

As the cultural industry development in China, the demand for traditional art professions grows slowly. Some traditional Fine Art professions are shrinking due to economic development, such as the conventional paper media industry including magazines, newspapers, journals, books (Chen, 2008). In the development of cultural industries, Fine Art graduate careers are also becoming professionally weaker. According to Shipp (2016), many of the technologies and applications in the workplaces of galleries, libraries, archives and museums that correspond to the Fine Art graduate profession have changed the traditional work patterns and the type of professional staff required. As a result, creative

industries seek employees with a combination of multiple skills. This may lead to a devaluation of professional qualifications in the Fine Art and an increase in hiring employees with non-traditional qualifications.

Bridgstock *et al.* (2015) argue that art school pedagogy reinforces the substantial expectations of students to become artists. It is easy to see from the Fine Art higher education curriculum in China that both optional and compulsory courses are closely related to the painting and art professional skills. While such a curriculum has produced a wave of outstanding artists, but most Fine Art graduates do not make a living from Fine Art alone (Mottram, 2002). The result is that most Chinese Fine Art graduates have a high level of painting skills, but these skills are no longer sufficient to meet the employment needs of Fine Art graduate career goals.

According to Mottram (2002), Fine Art offers a broad scope for individual career development and exploration; its multi-skilled development, creativity and critical thinking enables students to pursue a wide range of career paths beyond being an artist. The statistics from the first phase of this research suggest that Fine Art graduates can find employment in a wide range of related and unrelated occupations. The majority of graduates join the higher education institutions, and other Fine Art graduates are found in the private sector and self-employment. The statistics suggest that becoming an artist is not the career path of most Chinese Fine Art graduates. The statistics on the human capital of Fine Art graduates suggest that graduates with better professional results had a more diverse range of workplaces and employment patterns. On the other hand, many Fine Art graduates earn less from artistic practice, they have higher and more stable employment rates and earn more on average. Thus, excellent Fine Art results do not guarantee graduates a level of employment either.

To sum up the above, with the upgrading of traditional Chinese cultural

industries corresponding to employment in the Fine Art, graduates in the Fine Art are no longer able to meet the employment demands of their former profession. While they can still earn from their professional skills, more stable and higher-income employment is available from other jobs. This suggests that the career goals of Chinese Fine Art students are changing, but the market demands and the career settings of Fine Art in universities may be different. Therefore, section 8.3 explores the relationship between the goals of teaching and learning in Chinese Fine Art higher education and creative industry development.

8.3 The Gap Between the Teaching Objectives of Fine Art Higher Education and the Development Objectives of Creative Industries in China

Chapters 4-6 explores the links between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, and found that in terms of work patterns, industry characteristics, and the application of multi-skills, Fine Art graduates are suited to working in the creative industries, and most are involved in creative industries (Mottram and Whale, 2001). However, in the first phase of this research suggested that most Fine Art graduates joined higher education institutions in China after graduating. This aligns with the teaching objectives in the latest edition of the Chinese Ministry of Education's (2005) Guidance Programme for the Curriculum of Fine Art in General Higher Education institutions, which states that “to train art teachers and social art educators.” This suggested that the current objectives of Fine Art courses in higher education institutions meet the Chinese Ministry of Education requirements. On the other hand, the Chinese government's goal for the development of creative industries is to “develop enterprises in cultural technology, music production, art creation, animation and games, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the development of

related services and manufacturing industries” (Cultural Industry Revitalisation Plan, 2009). Although the teaching objectives of Fine Art higher education do not mention employment in creative industries, the development objectives of creative industries include Fine Art.

Therefore, the teaching objectives of Chinese Fine Art higher education and the development objectives of the creative industries are inclusive but incompatible. The underlying reason for this has to do with government decision-making. The Chapter 2 found that, in Chinese Fine Art higher education, political power refers to the socio-political forces that can directly influence the teaching and other academic activities of higher education institutions. Furthermore, Fine Art higher education has gone through two major historical phases, the Soviet art education template and the cultural revolution, before entering the third phase under the influence of globalisation (Zou, 2002). The wave of globalisation triggered by the technological revolution is changing the map of human thinking. In this new context, the structural discipline that Fine Art has built up in the past decades is failing in varying degrees, which becomes an opportunity for curriculum reform of the discipline (Chang, 2016).

There is a proliferation of literature addressing Fine Art curriculum reform, with 210 relevant papers published as of April 2022 (BaiduScholar, Chinese Academic Search platform). However, with many proposals for curriculum content reform, the Chinese government has not changed the teaching and learning objectives of Fine Art higher education. Since 2005, there has been no new update on Fine Art higher education objectives on the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Education. This has resulted in the employment rate of Fine Art graduates in China declining for four consecutive years (2020 employment report of Chinese university graduates). Li (2019) argues that the low employment rate of Fine Art graduates is due to the fact that, compared to

other countries, Chinese Fine Art is still stuck in a painting-based curriculum. The fundamental reason for this is that the cultural industries in which Fine Art used to be employed are undergoing an industrial upgrading process. The creative industries that will result from this development are not fully developed. The employability skills required by the creative industries are subject to a great deal of uncertainty, and the Fine Art higher education curriculum has not been developed. Therefore, the gap between the content of Fine Art higher education courses and the employability skills needed for creative industries in China is discussed in the next section, 8.4.

8.4 The Gap Between the Content of Fine Art Higher Education Curriculum and Employability Skills needed for Creative Industries in China

Chapter 5 explored and identified links between the creative industries and Fine Art education from the literature. The connection is reflected in the 'boundarylessness' of both the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, studio-based learning and working scenarios, and the need for creativity. These connections suggest that Fine Art graduates are suited to working in the creative industries. In the second phase of this research, similarities were also found between employers' employability needs in the creative industries and the content of the Fine Art higher education curriculum. Section 8.4.1 discusses the application of these four areas to the content of the Fine Art higher education curriculum in China to identify the extent to which the Chinese Fine Art curriculum provides students with the competencies, qualities.

8.4.1 Hard Skills Competencies in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education Content

The second phase of this research found that the hard skills competencies that creative industry employers in China require from practitioners consist of two components, industry market analysis and wide-ranging knowledge base. According to Hendarman and Tjakraatmadja (2012), hard skills are about a person's skill set and ability to perform specific tasks or activities. Rainsbury *et al.* (2002) define hard skills as those skills related to technical aspects. This suggests these hard skills need to be met when working in the creative industries. However, in the collation and review of the literature, industry market analysis and wide-ranging knowledge are not well represented in the content of the Fine Art higher education curriculum in China.

According to Xu (2010), the teaching objectives of Fine Art higher education programmes in China are, to varying degrees, between training art teachers and artists. In addition, for social and historical reasons in China, the quality of teaching in university Fine Art department depends mainly on which school's produces more famous painters (Xu, 2010). Such teaching practices have led schools and teachers to focus on developing students' painting skills without any relevant learning about industry market analysis and wide-ranging knowledge. It also narrows down the students' employment horizon focussed on becoming famous painters. Certainly, becoming an artist is the goal of many Fine Art students in China. However, it is essential to consider whether the market can sustain so many artists and how many Fine Art graduates can become famous painters. Industry market analysis and wide-ranging knowledge can broaden the career path of Fine Art graduates, enhancing graduates' employability skills.

8.4.2 Soft Skills of Personality in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education

Content

The second employment skill component in this research is the soft skill of personality. According to John (2009: 20), “soft skills are essentially people skills or personality-specific skills.” Thus, unlike hard skills, soft skills are characteristics and competencies of attitudes and behaviours rather than knowledge or technical skills. According to Riyanti *et al.* (2017), the soft skill of personality is directly related to an individual's personality and is a characteristic of a person who solves problems in a particular way when faced with them (Riyanti *et al.*, 2017). The first and second phases statistical analysis suggested that the soft skills of personality were related to emotional intelligence, perceptual skills, resistance to stress, social skills, communication skills, self-confidence, and presentation skills, which all have a direct relationship and influence each other.

As soft skills related to personality are not learned from a specific curriculum, it is impossible to test the direct relationship of these skills to the content of the Fine Art curriculum. However, scholars have recognised the impact of arts education on personality development in their research (Ayob, 2004; Grosz *et al.*, 2022). According to Grosz *et al.* (2022), arts education programmes contribute to developing personality-specific skills such as extraversion and responsibility. In addition, art activities and projects require teamwork, negotiation, communication and presentation skills (Grosz *et al.*, 2022). These personality-specific skills are related to the soft skills presented in the second phase of this research. These suggest that Fine Art students have the opportunity to acquire personality-related employability skills during their studies.

However, the literature review also suggests that Fine Art teachers may

influence students' personality-related soft skills development. According to Ulug *et al.* (2011), after the family, the university is the first fundamental institution for the socialisation of students. Teachers are crucial in developing students' personalities through educational and teaching activities (Ulug *et al.*, 2011). Teachers enable students to achieve cognitive, sensory and behavioural goals and gains within the boundaries set by the education system (Gundogdu and Silman, 2007). However, in China, any teaching and learning are still influenced by Confucianism (Li, 2005). This influence comes not only from the teacher but also from the students, from their profoundly ingrained teaching and learning styles, which affect the development of the students' personalities in any subject. Kao *et al.* (2021: 64) summarise scholars' views on Confucianism's personality profile characteristics as follows: "traditional, conservative, modest, indisputable, self-esteem and self-respect, far-reaching and moderate, discreet and patience, self-denial and humble, internal cultivation, submit to nature, and converge."

However, the Confucian personality traits of tradition and humility affect the soft personality skills of self-confidence and expressiveness. Tangney (2000) argues that humility may be perceived in the contemporary West as a personal weakness or low self-esteem that runs counter to the psychological state of confidence. However, Kidd (2016) argues that the starting point for the virtue of humility should be self-confidence. Humility is an ethic that exists in the intellectual realm (Rushing 2013). This means that humility somewhat indicates self-confidence. Chawla (2018) maintains that a lack of humility creates severe challenges in the workplace and leads to conflict, poor team dynamics, a hostile work environment and even dismissal. Therefore, combining the Fine Art curriculum and Confucianism reveals that the soft skills of personality development experienced by Fine Art students generally conformity the needs of Chinese creative industry employers in this research.

8.4.3 Soft Skills of Cognitive Style in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education

Content

The third employment skill component is the soft skills of cognitive style. The soft skills of cognitive style encompass two soft skills that appear in phase two statistical skills, and methodological and planning skills. In the second phase of the research, employers in the creative industries argued that the methodology required by the creative industries lies in the ability to bring together two completely unrelated ideas, concepts or cultural content in a disjointed way, to find common ground between them, to innovate and create, grafting together, and finding common ground between them, innovating and creating new products. The application of this methodology is in line with the content of Fine Art teaching. In Fine Art higher education, the curriculum is effectively combined with multiple skills and serves the development of numerous skills (Beech, 2014). However, mixing and grafting skills can only be achieved with the same object.

The second chapter reviews the latest version of the National Curriculum Guidance Programme for Undergraduate Fine Arts Courses in General Higher Education institutions. The total number of Fine Art courses in China is 38, covering a rich range of professionally relevant content (See Table 5 in phase one). This high degree of specialisation, on the one hand, enhances the professional skills of Fine Art graduates, but, on the other hand, it limits the spread of knowledge. However, if the content of the course changed, it reduces the specialisation of Fine Art and is unfair to those who are bent on becoming painters or artists. How can the soft skills of the cognitive style of Fine Art graduates be enhanced without changing the depth of specialisation of the course? The study by Riyanti *et al.* (2017) seems to provide another helpful

insight.

According to Riyanti *et al.* (2017), unlike soft skills of personality, the soft skill of cognitive style encompasses the ability to seek information, plan systematically and solve problems, and these soft skill competencies of cognitive style are relevant to entrepreneurship; where the creative industries revolve around entrepreneurship, innovation and unorthodox collaboration, appropriate entrepreneurial training can simultaneously provide the soft skills and potential needed for the creative industries (Rakib *et al.*, 2018). However, the elements of risk-taking, opportunity recognition and creativity that entrepreneurs need to possess also apply to artists (Jackson and Tomlinson, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Cobb *et al.*, 2011). Thus, a complementary relationship can be identified between the creative industries, Fine Art and entrepreneurship.

Although, in 2015, the General Office of the State Council of China released the Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education in China, which proposed that innovation and entrepreneurship education should help improve the quality of higher education in China in a comprehensive manner and improve the curriculum system of innovation and entrepreneurship education. However, Fine Art subject's entrepreneurship courses are inadequate in terms of curriculum construction, content setting, teaching practices, and lecturers (Liu, 2021). The entrepreneurship development in Fine Art higher education is a complex challenge, and the challenge lies in how to define the concept of Fine Arts entrepreneurship (Pollard and Wilson, 2014). However, the interoperability between the creative industries, Fine Art and entrepreneurship can suggest a new direction for the Fine Art entrepreneurship curriculum development.

Research by Rakib *et al.* (2018: 43) found that entrepreneurship training

through targeting creative industries can simultaneously influence the development of the local economy, including “information and communication technology, garment apparel, arts, building, electrical engineering, electronic engineering, refrigeration, manufacturing engineering.” Therefore, the development of entrepreneurship courses in the creative industries at university can help to enhance the soft skills of cognitive style required by Fine Art students in the creative industries and broaden the diversity of employment.

8.4.4 Creativity in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education Content

The last employment skills component is creativity. Although it is mentioned, there is no doubt that creativity is an essential element, a unique capacity, and a core requirement for the creative industries and Fine Art education (Kloudová and Chwaszcz, 2014; Corazza, 2016). In the first phase of the Fine Art pedagogies employability survey, 78% of Fine Art graduates who took part in the survey considered themselves creative in their work (47 out of 60). None thought themselves not to be creative. The statistical analyses suggest that the Fine Art graduates who took part in the survey apply their creativity well in their employment. In the second phase of interviews with employers in the creative industries, it was found that the creative industries require creativity skills in three specific areas: innovation, Internet mindset, and aesthetics. The following sections discuss the application of these three creative skills in Fine Art higher education in China.

8.4.5 Innovation in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education Content

Of all the soft skills, innovation is the essential element of the creative industries and Fine Art higher education (Yu *et al.*, 2015). In the development of China's cultural industries to creative industries, innovation is the fundamental means

to facilitate the formation of China's creative industries (China National 11th Five Year Plan, 2005). The world is shifting, new problems are emerging, and traditional methods may no longer be applicable and compatible when trying to find solutions to these new-age problems (Dorst, 2015). Instead, innovation becomes a necessary tool to continue developing and growing the development of industries.

According to Yu *et al.* (2015), the innovation of Fine Art graduates is reflected in the ability to use new technologies to create. In addition, technology innovation is mainly reflected in internet thinking, artificial intelligence, video, computers and other technological inventions that support the system (Legrenzi, 2005). A review of the literature on the development of innovation in Fine Art higher education programmes in China reveals that innovation in the development of Fine Art subjects over the past ten years has been mainly on the pedagogical model (Liu and Hou, 2007; Li, 2012). The innovative body of the Fine Art teaching model has mainly influenced group work, project tasks, and independent inquiry, emphasising students' ability to develop their innovations (Zhang, 2020). However, the second phase of the research suggests that creative industries need to promote comprehensive innovation, which includes conceptual, technological, institutional, model, and business innovation. Thus, innovation in the pedagogical model of Fine Art higher education course content is not sufficient to meet the employment needs of the creative industries. A more holistic approach to innovation is needed for employment in the creative industries. In response to this, in November 2020, China's Ministry of Education issued the Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts, which proposes that talent training should keep up with a new round of scientific and technological revolution and the latest trends of industrial transformation, serve the unique needs of national soft power construction and cultural prosperity and development, actively promote the deep integration of

modern information technology such as artificial intelligence, big data, liberal arts subjects, and encourage colleges and universities to set up cross-disciplinary and emerging courses, to promote professional transformation and upgrading, and realize the deep integration of liberal arts and science disciplines.

8.4.6 Interdisciplinary Collaborative Innovation in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education Content

According to Tan and Ye (2021), the cross-border knowledge generated in interdisciplinary integration is a new form of knowledge supply, and it is a new paradigm for reforming the knowledge supply side of innovation education through cross-disciplinary training to enhance students' innovation capabilities. The curriculum of Fine Art can often be seen as interdisciplinary, and can often be effectively combined with multiple skills (Beech, 2014), which have no boundaries (Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). The interdisciplinary nature of Fine Art can truly make Fine Art realise the lack of constraint characteristic in line with the creative industry employment need. Establishing an interdisciplinary collaborative project is conducive to promoting the cultivation of innovation abilities among Fine Art students.

After discussing the development of innovation competency in Fine Art higher education programmes in China, the following discussions focus on the need for creativity in 'aesthetics' raised by creative industries employers' interviews in phase two.

8.4.7 Aesthetic Creativity in Chinese Fine Art Higher Education Content

There are 19 elective courses in the Fine Art undergraduate curriculum in China,

of which aesthetics exists as a separate course. In the first phase of this research, all Fine Art graduates surveyed confirmed the value of the course for employment purposes. The statistical analysis suggests that the aesthetic content of the course is well translated into the required employability skills. At the same time, Fine Art has a solid aesthetic tradition, aesthetic goals, and critical talk about aesthetics (Efland, 2007). Therefore, the other courses in Fine Art also have the capacity for students to develop aesthetic skills. However, Postrel (2002) argues that it is more important not to lose sight of the fact that aesthetic issues are becoming more prevalent and personalised than in the past. With the development of the internet, aesthetics has become more personalised and universal, and information technology is increasingly becoming a tool for providing aesthetics that pleases and liberates the public's aesthetic. As Maslow (1970) suggests, the more aware people are of aesthetics, the greater their need for it. Thus, while the development of aesthetic skills in Chinese Fine Art higher education programmes meets the employment needs of Fine Art graduates in this research, the development of aesthetics needs to keep up with the times, and the solution to the curing of aesthetics happens to be embodied in another creative skill in this research - Internet mindset.

8.4.8 Internet, Education and Creative Industry

According to Yue (2017), the level of technological development in different eras of human society was the basis for changes in production, way of life and ways of thinking during the same period, which inevitably brought about changes and innovations in art forms in the same period. The first UK government document on the development of creative industries was published in 1998 (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1998). In the same year, Google was established as a privately registered company (Flew, 2018). Together, they emerged to drive innovation in product-related media, arts and

entertainment industries. Thus, the Internet and the creative industries have been interconnected from the very beginning. According to Jin (2016), the development of China's creative industries is entering the "Internet+" stage, and creative industries have also adjusted their development mindset to promote the integration of creative industries with the Internet mindset.

In 2013, Baidu CEO Robin Li first introduced the concept of Internet Mindset for the Chinese market at the Baidu Alliance Summit. He explained that the Internet mindset is

"a way of thinking about the market, users, products and the entire business ecosystem based on the rapid development of modern technologies such as mobile internet, big data and cloud computing. The aim is to drive economic growth through reform, innovation, evolution and development in different sectors of the economy."

Thus, the internet mindset is not a hard skill but rather the control of all aspects in understanding the internet ecology. The phase two statistical analysis confirms that the demand for internet mindset for employment in the creative industries is mainly reflected in the need for people who understand product design and innovation and understand interactive interaction. This statistical analysis suggests the same as Chen's (2007) theory on the primary value chain for the creative industries (See Fig 30). Chen (2007) argues that the key profit points for the creative industries are content and channels. Therefore, information technology needs to be considered in content development and distribution channels in the employment of creative industries.

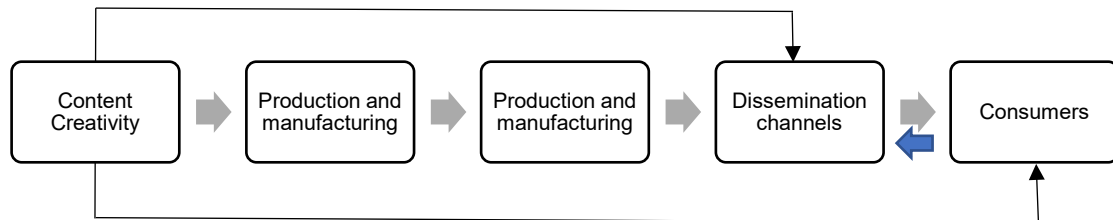


Fig 30. The Primary Value Chain of the Creative Industries

On the other hand, “Internet + education” has also become important, and this has brought many new opportunities for higher education teaching and learning in China (Ding, 2018). As new technologies and devices continue to be introduced, the ways of learning and the connotations and extensions of Chinese education are changing significantly (Dong, 2017). However, in the latest version of the National Curriculum Guidance Programme for Undergraduate Fine Arts Courses in general higher education institutions, there are no courses related to information technology. What information technology has brought to Fine Art higher education in China is likely to be more of a renewal of teaching methods and approaches and student experiences. However, these are not the same as the internet mindset required for employment in the creative industries in China.

8.4.9 Developing an Internet Mindset in Fine Art Higher Education

In the Internet age, one can already create, edit, transmit and receive artistic creations in almost any conceivable field. However, there is a difference

between the use of the Internet and the Internet mindset. Therefore, it is worth thinking about how to reasonably apply the convenience brought by the internet in Fine Art higher education. In an article on improving the Internet mindset of university students in higher education, Wang (2017) mentions the fit and convertibility of the internet mindset and entrepreneurship education and proposes the “Internet + entrepreneurship” as a new entrepreneurship curriculum model. The model provides ideas for this research in exploring how to cultivate Fine Art students' Internet thinking. According to Wang (2017: 100), “The Internet, with its distinctive features of timeliness, low cost, cloud-based and sharing, is gradually becoming an important platform for university students' entrepreneurship.” Thus, internet mindset development in the entrepreneurship curriculum is essential. The Internet + Entrepreneurship curriculum facilitates graduates to start their businesses and develops student internet mindset.

At the 2018 World Congress, Li offered a rebuttal to the Internet thinking he proposed in 2013, stating that “Internet mindset is an outdated mindset, and our way of thinking should be AI mindset.” He argued that AI technology is developing rapidly, and that algorithms, computing power, and data together form a virtuous cycle and will provide new momentum for industrial and economic development in the coming decades (Li, 2018). For Fine Art higher education, both Internet mindset and AI mindset need to align with the way society produces lives and thinks simultaneously (Yue, 2017). Furthermore, they are undoubtedly designed to meet and expand the customer experience and market communication of the moment. Therefore, the learning of internet mindset should be reflected in all Chinese Fine Art courses.

8.4.10 Conclusion

Section 8.4 draws together the primary empirical evidence and literature for this

study. It combines statistical analysis to jointly explore the gap between the teaching and learning objectives of Chinese Fine Art higher education and the employability needs of the creative industries based on the four employability skills competencies developed in phase two: hard skills competencies, soft skills of personality, soft skills of cognitive style, and creativity.

By comparing the content of Fine Art higher education courses in China with the skills for employment in the creative industries, it is found that the hard skills of market analysis and general knowledge of the industry are not well reflected in Fine Art courses. The lack of wide-ranging knowledge also affects the development of soft skills of cognitive style of Fine Art students. Although the curriculum is effectively integrated with a wide range of skills in Chinese Fine Art higher education, the soft skills of cognitive style in creative industry employment require the practitioner to have the ability to graft two completely unrelated things together. The teaching philosophy of Confucianism in China has affected the development of soft skills of personality in Fine Art students' learning process.

Finally, this section discusses creativity at the heart of the creative industries and Fine Art education, encompassing innovation, internet mindset, and aesthetics. In this regard, innovation in Fine Art higher education is mainly reflected in the teaching model and student self-innovation, which cannot meet the comprehensive creative capacity required by employer in the creative industries. However, in the latest document from the Chinese ministry of education, a relevant approach to enhancing student innovation using an interdisciplinary system is proposed, applicable to Fine Art subjects and expanding a richer range of innovation for Fine Art students. In terms of the development of aesthetic skills, the phase one statistical analysis suggests that the content of the Chinese Fine Art curriculum is well suited to meet the

employment needs of Fine Art graduates. However, the aesthetic skills required for employment in the creative industries have become more diverse, and diversity happens to be amplified by using another creativity skill - the Internet mindset. The literature review found that the new entrepreneurship curriculum model of “Internet + Entrepreneurship” helps explore how to develop an internet mindset in Fine Art students providing ideas. The Internet + Entrepreneurship course facilitates graduates to start their businesses while developing students' internet mindset.

After discussing the content of Fine Art higher education courses together with the employability skills required by the creative industries, it is suggested that employability skills might be enhanced by developing an entrepreneurship course. The creative industries revolve around entrepreneurship, innovation and unorthodox collaboration, and appropriate entrepreneurial training can provide the transferable skills and potential needed for the creative industries (Rakib *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the elements of risk-taking, opportunity recognition and creativity that entrepreneurs need to possess also apply to artists (Jackson and Tomlinson, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Cobb *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, a complementary relationship can be identified between the creative industries, Fine Arts and entrepreneurship. By offering entrepreneurship courses in the creative industries at university can be beneficial in enhancing the employability skills needed by Fine Art students in the creative industries, and the interdisciplinary content can help broaden the diversity of employment for Fine Art graduates.

8.5 Enhancing Fine Art Graduate Employability Through Enterprise Education

To better promote higher quality employment for arts subjects graduates, the

Chinese Ministry of Education's 2022 Higher Education Work Highlights proposed implementing the "Employment and Entrepreneurship Promotion Initiative", a plan to use entrepreneurship to drive graduate employment rates. However, Shahzad *et al.* (2021) argue that talented people start businesses every day, but the failure rate is the same for the majority. This research also found that those unemployed Fine Art graduates exceeded the population who started their own businesses. The relatively personal and participatory nature of entrepreneurship suggests that if entrepreneurship is used to increase the employment rate of Fine Art graduates, a significant number of teaching staff will need to be provided by higher education institutions. However, entrepreneurship programmes in the discipline of Fine Art are still in the exploratory stage in China (Jin, 2018). Therefore, promoting entrepreneurship-led employment for Fine Art graduates will not ensure enhanced employment. Entrepreneurship should be more of an employment option than a method of driving a career.

According to Moreland (2006: 2), entrepreneurship can be seen as a particular form of employment, and "when universities promote entrepreneurship, they are also promoting elements of employability." Scholars have summarized the objectives of entrepreneurship education for Chinese university students to develop and improve students' overall quality, knowledge, and ability necessary for future entrepreneurial practice (Wang *et al.*, 2010; Wang *et al.*, 2011; Hong *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurship education needs to provide more than just developing an entrepreneurial idea. Instead, it is about transform the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed in the entrepreneurial process that will assist students in starting a business and enhance their employability.

Existing research recognises the high incidence of self-employment in the creative industries sector (DCMS, 2006b). Clews (2007) suggests that the lack of practical entrepreneurship is a barrier to the future development of world-

class creative industries. Larso and Saphiranti (2016) maintain that entrepreneurs need to be creative and innovative to compete and grow their businesses. According to Larso and Saphiranti (2016: 218), “entrepreneurs are spotting, creating, and looking for new opportunities, realising these opportunities into businesses; more values created are better for the society.” Thus, creativity is a mindset that entrepreneurs must have. As found in section 5.2, creativity is also a core requirement for the creative industries' employment and Fine Art studies (Kloudová and Chwaszcz, 2014; Corazza, 2016). Thus, creativity can overlap between entrepreneurship education, creative industries, and Fine Art higher education. However, unlike the creativity fostered in Fine Art higher education, entrepreneurs need to create products/services with high value to the market (Larso and Saphiranti, 2016). Thus, in the Fine Art teaching and learning process, creativity is reflective learning, a transformative process of knowledge, thought and action (Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 2007; Hetland *et al.*, 2007). In contrast, in the process of entrepreneurship, creativity is presented as achievable innovative ideas that involve reflective learning but are more significantly related to the ability to create something new (Larso and Saphiranti 2016). Therefore, creativity in entrepreneurship education contributes to the production and commercialisation of creativity in Fine Art higher education.

Moreover, the first phase of this research found that self-employment was the third most popular employment option for Fine Art graduates, accounting for 25% of participants. This statistic suggests that self-employment has already become an employment model for Fine Art graduates. A more enriched entrepreneurship programme during the school year will enhance the overall employability of Fine Art students and enhance their entrepreneurial skills. However, as of 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Education has not specified the content of entrepreneurship education courses, and universities are offering them on their own merits (China Ministry of Education, 2021). Therefore, a

search for the design of entrepreneurship courses in higher education revealed that research in the field of business management (Carey and Matlay, 2010), and modern information technology (IT), especially cloud services, play an essential role in the process of arts entrepreneurship education (Holinska *et al.*, 2019).

8.5.1 Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship Programme

Indonesia's Bandung Institute of Technology developed a ground breaking MBA in creative and cultural entrepreneurship in 2011 that could provide advice on the development of entrepreneurship programmes (Larso *et al.*, 2012). The programme covers typical MBA-core courses, creative-core courses, and entrepreneurship-core courses, combining theory and practice to cover entrepreneurs' knowledge, skills, and attitudes when creating and developing new businesses. According to Larso and Saphiranti (2016: 222-223), the course content includes,

“MBA-core courses relate to marketing, operations, leadership and people management, finance, and business strategy; creative-core courses are design thinking, art, design, and culture, and the contextual nature of creativity; entrepreneurship-core courses consist of entrepreneurial modelling, business initiation, new venture management, and business growth management.”

The overlap of MBA-core courses with the employability skills and competencies required by employers in the creative industries in the second phase of this research was identified from the structure of this curriculum and the overlap of creative-core courses with Fine Art higher education curriculum content. Therefore, this MBA in creative entrepreneurship programme could

provide suggestions for developing creative industry entrepreneurship courses in Fine Art higher education in China. In addition to being highly dependent on entrepreneurs, the creative industries are characterised by being project-based (Carey and Naudin, 2006).

8.5.2 Enterprise or Entrepreneurship

In contrast to the Chinese government's proposal of entrepreneurship-led employment, the UK quality assurance agency for higher education (QAA, 2018) considers the characteristics, attributes and skills in enterprise education to be more conducive to enhancing students' employability than entrepreneurship education. QAA (2018: 7) defines enterprise education as (for credit and extra-curricular) activities focused on

“the generation and application of ideas, which are set within practical situations during a project or undertaking...It combines creativity, originality, initiative, idea generation, design thinking, adaptability and reflexivity with problem identification, problem-solving, innovation, expression, communication and practical action.”

Conversely, Jones *et al.* (2020: 2) define entrepreneurship education as “the application of enterprise behaviours, attributes and this can, but does not exclusively, lead to venture creation.” There is a broad overlap between the two forms of education. However, Barnett (2009) argues that entrepreneurship applies to individuals, groups or organisations, and that it refers to the creation of value in the private, public and third sectors and any hybrid combination of the three, and that it is far less risky to create than entrepreneurship education. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is included in enterprise education, widely applicable to all students and with a full range of learning.

Although enterprise education is well established in some Western countries (Fayolle, 2013), it is still relatively new in China. According to Anderson and Zhang (2015), enterprise education may be more appropriate for the future Chinese market than entrepreneurship education. This is because the entrepreneurial environment in China is inherently complex and contradictory, and the Chinese government's planning for the entrepreneurial system is unpredictable (Yang and Li, 2008). However, Yang (2012) argues that the inconsistent government system has contributed to Chinese entrepreneurship. He argues that entrepreneurs are the agents of institutional change. Entrepreneurs have the quality of exploring how to make the most of ambiguous regulations and policies, which entrepreneurs do not have because they are less experienced. Thus, Chinese entrepreneurs can fill the gap between the market and the system, and they are already successful entrepreneurs (Yang, 2012). Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs contain entrepreneurial qualities. Although entrepreneurship education and enterprise education have many overlapping qualities, their values and attitudes, personal goals, creativity, risk-taking tendencies and control points are different. Enterprise education is more achievable and manipulable than the many non-existent elements of entrepreneurship education and can be better implemented.

Owens and Tibby (2014) reviewed 36 high-quality enterprise programmes across 33 UK universities. They confirmed that these programmes offer diverse and innovative approaches to address enterprise education in subjects at university level. However, none of these programmes is specific to Fine Art majors. Fu (2014) proposes an enterprise practice teaching model for art and design subjects. Fu (2014) argues that the operation of this model facilitates the establishment of an enterprise-oriented practical teaching model that introduces company projects into classroom teaching. Although the model provides students with the opportunity to better understand and grasp the

mechanisms of business operations, its usefulness in enhancing student employability is yet to be explored.

The reason for this is that Fine Art higher education has been transformed into a student-centred approach to art teaching and learning, putting new pressures on the development of teaching and learning models (Beech, 2014). Furthermore, Fine Art contemporary practice is increasingly turning to themes of resistance and alternative modes of living and creating, which has a conflicting relationship with the realities of employment.

Section 8.6 discusses the theoretical perspectives on the creative industries in China and the macro perspectives of higher education institutions on enhancing the employability of Fine Art graduates in the context of globalisation. Section 8.5 suggests a more integrated perspective for this research.

8.6 Globalisation, Creative Industry and Higher Education Institution

Globalisation has increased the knowledge economy, the rise of information technology and put enormous pressure on teaching and learning in higher education institutions (Morey, 2003). However, data from several studies suggest that curriculum reform is complex and involves the higher education sector and issues including government policy, population expansion □ academic oligarchy, and market forms (Gornitzka and Maassen, 2000; Jongbloed, 2003; Gebremeskel and Feleke, 2016). Clark's coordination triangle demonstrates how the government, market and institutional forces can be effectively balanced through the state, market and academic oligarchy to ensure academic standards in higher education institutions (Hu, 2016). After reviewing Clark's (1983) coordination triangle model, chapter two provided an extended discussion of the three elements of the model. The model is then

refined concerning the research objectives of this study, suggesting a new coordination triangle model (See Fig 5 in section 2.5.13).

In the coordination triangle model, when one of the points changes, the other two points also change, and coordination will be lost. However, Hugh-Jones *et al.*, (2006) argue that this triad is unbalanced because employability is complex in part. It can be viewed from three different perspectives. The different perceptions and needs of these three parties for employability can lead to different employment outcomes for graduates. Therefore, to answer the research questions with a more comprehensive exploration, section 8.5.1 discusses the expectations of globalisation, the Chinese creative industry and Fine Art higher education institutions regarding graduate employability.

8.6.1 Employment Demand for Fine Art Graduates under Globalisation Development

Since the late 1990s, the contemporary art market has rapidly globalised (Artprice, 2008). The wave of globalisation triggered by the technological revolution is changing the map of human thinking, with developments in science and technology facilitating image-making techniques and art dealers worldwide beginning to sell art works and organise exhibitions via the internet (Feng, 2020), the advent of digitalisation and platforms has significantly lowered the barriers to entry and thus greatly facilitated market competition between producers (Wu and Zhu, 2018). However, Velthuis (2014) argues that globalisation has brought new risks to their artistic careers for some groups. He further explains that globalisation may become a new threshold in their career path for those who may not be adept at online technology, or lack the financial means and artistic prestige to access these online platforms. Similarly, Feng (2020) argues that some jobs that once required painting skills are replaced by

technology, which affects the competitiveness of Fine Art graduates in terms of employability.

According to Duncum (2000), Fine Art courses are an all-encompassing and globalised state. In the learning process, Fine Art students use materials and sources of inspiration that may come from different countries and different media, presenting a state of globalisation. However, in the case of Chinese Fine Art, traditional culture remains a core component of the compulsory curriculum for higher education in Fine Art (see Table 5). Tradition, ethnicity and identity seem to have become a test for Chinese Fine Art higher education in the process of globalisation. However, Zhang (2010) argues that tradition can be defined as flexible and open, people have the right to reinterpret it. Wang (2010) maintains that tradition is something created in the past and, in many ways, has been perpetuated. This permanence can be seen as readable documents, which can be identified and analysed by individuals through methods of interpretation. Therefore, the challenge for Chinese Fine Art graduates in the age of globalisation is to use new technologies to interpret tradition and create works. It is not to say that traditional Chinese cultural modes of expression and techniques will be eliminated, as tradition cannot be avoided by Chinese Fine Art higher education, and it is a constant reminder of its relationship with humanity (Wang, 2010).

8.6.2 Employment Demand for Fine Art Graduates in China's Creative Industry

After discussing the expectations of Fine Art graduates' employment in the context of globalisation, this section continues to discuss the expectations of Fine Art graduates' employment in the creative industries in China. The UK creative industries taskforce introduced the concept of creative industries in

1997 (DMCS, 1998) to revitalise the UK economy and promote employment (Banks and O'Connor, 2009). In turn, the creative industries have been shown to positively impact employment growth at approximately twice the average rate of all industries (Potts and Cunningham, 2008), demonstrating the positive effect of creative industries on promoting employment growth.

In the discussion of the literature review in chapter 3, it is suggested that in addition to the key role played by creative industries in global economic development, creative workers, as creative industry practitioners, also influence regional economic growth and development (Andersen *et al.*, 2010; Mellander and Florida, 2021). However, Bridgstock (2015) argues that creative work is described as being a hazardous occupation, involving long-term unemployment and underemployment. In most cases, creative workers opt for the 'portfolio career' model, typical of employment patterns in the creative industries (Ball *et al.*, 2010). This suggests that while creative industries can provide a wealth of jobs for the job market, there is instability in these jobs. Therefore, with their rapid growth, creative industries can, on the one hand, rapidly increase employment rates, and on the other hand, they may also contribute to unemployment rates. Bartleet *et al.* (2012) explain that the disadvantage of the combined occupational model for studying employment in creative industries is that it is challenging to identify skills and knowledge for employment in creative industries due to the diversity and complexity of jobs in the combined occupational model. However, scholars argue that portfolio careers may be the career form of the future, and they argue that the freedom and adventure element that portfolio work brings is suitable for many young creative workers (Hall, 1996; Howkins, 2001; Morgan *et al.*, 2013).

In the second phase of this research, the statistics suggested that Chinese employers in the creative industries are looking for 'portfolio knowledge' in their

employment. Working in the creative industries often requires a combination of different things. The pattern of portfolio knowledge is related to the development process of China's creative industries, which began with the transformation and upgrading of the cultural industry in response to technological development (Jin, 2012). Employers in China's creative industries need an employee who can demonstrate various knowledge and talents in one position rather than serving in different positions. 'Portfolio knowledge' requires the employee to have comprehensive knowledge and combine knowledge from different fields to create something. A 'portfolio career', on the other hand, is relatively more specialised and is usually based on one of a person's best professional skills and experience, looking for different jobs that are relevant (Greenspan, 2017). Chinese Fine Art higher education is more oriented towards the 'portfolio career' model in the professional curriculum, with a higher degree of specialisation in course content. However, this is not in line with the employment needs of China's creative industries. Therefore, section 8.5.3 discusses the graduate employment expectations of Chinese Fine Art higher education institutions.

8.6.3 Employment Demand for Fine Art Graduates in China's Higher Education Institutions

After discussing impact of globalisation and the creative industry's employment requirements for Fine Art graduates, this section discusses the expectations of higher education institutions regarding the employment of Fine Art graduates.

With globalisation, China's higher education system has undergone a shift from elite to mass, resulting in an increasing number of university graduates seeking work in the labour market (Mok and Jiang, 2017). The number of students enrolled in art subjects has also expanded rapidly, with 1.15 million students enrolled in art and design courses in China as of 2020, accounting for 10.73%

of the total number of students enrolled in China's college entrance exams (Wang, 2020). The statistics suggest that approximately 10% of Chinese university students choose to study art and design subjects, which undoubtedly poses a challenge to the employment task of graduates from Chinese higher education institutions. However, the employment rate of graduates in art and design disciplines has not been promising for many years, with the red card subject for undergraduate employment in 2020 being Fine Arts, and the employment rate has been the subject of high unemployment, low employment rate, low salary and low job satisfaction for four consecutive years (China university graduates employment report 2020). The statistics illustrate a discrepancy between the university's current employment goal setting for students and the market.

In order to better promote higher quality employment for university graduates, the Chinese Ministry of Education's 2022 work highlights implementation of the “employment and entrepreneurship promotion action” for higher education. This initiative aims to establish a mechanism to promote employment and entrepreneurship among university students. However, the entrepreneurship curriculum in higher education Fine Arts programmes is a complex challenge, and the challenge lies in defining the concept of Fine Arts entrepreneurship (Pollard and Wilson, 2014). In the literature review in chapter 3, the traditional career goals of Fine Arts graduates in China have changed in the escalating cultural industries. According to Shipp (2016), many of the technologies and applications that correspond to Fine Art graduate careers in the workplace in galleries, libraries, archives and museums have changed the traditional work patterns and the types of professionals required. As a result, it has become blurred what the direction of entrepreneurship is for Fine Art graduates. However, Phillips (2010) argues that due to the similarities and interoperability between Fine Art and entrepreneurship, such risk-taking, opportunity

recognition, and creativity can be considered a desirable set of entrepreneurial competencies. Fine Art graduate entrepreneurship has gone beyond these similar competencies.

According to Carter and Carter (2020), the marketing model of the art market is difficult to understand and define, even for business experts. They further explain that art products differ from ordinary consumer goods because they have distinctive characteristics, little tangible value, few valuable functions, and are more abstract. As the French sociologist Raymonde Moulin (1967) describes, "The art market is the place whereby, by some secret alchemy, the cultural good becomes a commodity" (Robertson and Chong, 2008: 1). Carter and Carter (2020) argue that for some artists, adopting a market orientation, prioritising clients in the creative process, do not cause artistic conflict and contributes to financial success. However, Fillis and Rentschler (2005) argues that for others, market orientation is inconsistent with the artist's behavioural and philosophical ideas and that the market may limit inspiration and creativity. These orientations are not mutually exclusive, as artists may create multiple products to meet the different needs of their audience groups. Therefore, implementing Fine Art graduate entrepreneurship does not make them abandon their artistic pursuits in this way either but opens up another branch for Fine Art graduates to enhance their employment and income. Thus, employment support for Fine Art graduates in Chinese higher education institutions is mainly based on entrepreneurial employment, which is a viable way to increase the employment rate of Fine Art graduates in China.

8.6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the demand for Fine Art graduate employment from the three parties in the coordination triangle model: globalisation, the creative

industries and higher education institutions. In the coordination triangle model, when one of the points changes, the other two points also change, and coordination is lost. Therefore, the coordination model can only be achieved by determining the balance of power of the three parties in the coordination triangle model. In other words, only when it is clear what the employment requirements of each of the three parties for Fine Art graduates are before truly making suggestions for the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates in the creative industries.

In a tripartite analysis of globalisation, creative industries and higher education institutions, it was found that they have similarities and differences in terms of the employment demands of Fine Art graduates in China. The similarities come from the demand for technological skills. The wave of globalisation was brought about by a revolution in technology that prompted the development of China's cultural industries and the formation of creative industries (Feng, 2020); the development of science and technology facilitated the development of image-making technology, changing the mode of selling artworks and providing a more convenient platform and opportunities for artists to start their businesses (Wu and Zhu, 2018).

However, as the typical employment pattern of creative industries and Fine Art graduates is a 'portfolio career' (Ball *et al.*, 2010), it leads to the fact that, although creative industries can provide abundant employment opportunities for the job market, there is instability in these jobs for Fine Art graduates, which may increase the employment rate of Fine Art graduates. This may also cause an increase in the unemployment rate for Fine Art graduates. Duan (2016) suggests that in an environment based on the equal presence of the three parties, an industry-university collaborative model as an educational model is situated within the higher education development system and is influenced by

state power and market forces.

Therefore, section 8.7 further discusses how to effectively enhance the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates in the creative industries under the industry-university collaboration. The government-led, creative industry-led, and academic-led models of university-industry collaborative education will be discussed. Moreover, suggestions are made to improve the employability of Chinese Fine Art higher education programmes in the creative industries.

8.7 The Collaboration between University and Industry

According to Arshed *et al.* (2022: 1), university-industry collaboration “refers to the next level of advancement and innovations in knowledge, technological improvements and industry objectives.” This collaboration model can effectively contribute to an industry's ability to improve its knowledge, skills, technology, dynamism, and rapid transformation in a globally competitive environment (Wang *et al.*, 2015), and its knowledge, skills, technology, dynamism and rapid transformation in a globally competitive environment (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, for higher education, this collaboration model can improve the quality of research in its related disciplines (Garcia *et al.*, 2020), attract funding opportunities (Philbin, 2008) and increase the employment rate of graduates (Perkmann *et al.*, 2013). Thus, the collaboration between universities and industry promotes the exchange of expertise and industry experience, technology development and innovation (Gertner *et al.*, 2011; Shi *et al.*, 2020). Scholars also argue that this collaborative process ultimately leads to a growing knowledge economy (Maietta, 2015; Arshed *et al.*, 2022).

However, while many researchers have recognised the advantages of university-enterprise collaboration, some scholars have raised concerns about

the practical difficulties of collaboration (Perkmann and Walsh, 2007; Temel *et al.*, 2021). According to Perkmann and Walsh (2007), the rationale and motivation of universities remain different from the objectives of firms, where universities are primarily concerned with creating new knowledge and education. In contrast, private firms focus on acquiring valuable knowledge that can be used to gain a competitive advantage (Mahdi *et al.*, 2019). The relatively fixed and inflexible structure of university programmes may hinder the pace of development of collaborative programmes between disciplines and industry (Temel *et al.*, 2021). However, in China, higher education institutions may be able to develop courses following the Ministry's Guidance Programme for undergraduate Fine Art curriculum development in national higher education institutions, in conjunction with their own school's teaching objectives to design Fine Art courses (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2005). Hence, Chinese higher education institutions of Fine Art still have a high degree of flexibility and manipulability in curriculum development.

Other difficulties with university and industry collaboration include disputes over patents and licensing rights for research results and students as cheap labour (Bruneel *et al.*, 2010). Instead of discussing these additional issues, in section 8.6.1 this research explores the forms of collaboration between Fine Art higher education in China and the creative industries in China that could allow Fine Art students to enhance their employability effectively.

8.7.1 Cooperation Models between Fine Art Higher Education and Creative Industries in China

Although the Chinese government did not open its doors until the late 1970s, it has consciously advocated an application-oriented science policy since the 1950s, encouraging universities to engage in downstream work to improve

industrial capabilities (Hong and Su, 2013). Thus, university-industry collaboration is not a new experience for Chinese higher education institutions. However, a review of the literature in chapter 2 reveals that Fine Art higher education in China has shifted from revolutionary propaganda to the need for industrial development and now to innovation need. Thus, the question of what form of university-industry cooperation can help promote the employment of Fine Art graduates without compromising the creative freedom of Fine Art students is complex.

According to Sun *et al.* (2009), there are two main modes of university-industry cooperation in China, technology transfer and technology industrialisation. In the first mode of cooperation, universities carry out university-industry cooperation with enterprises through technology transfer or collaborative development; the second is that universities carry out technological innovation and use their core technological capabilities to directly run enterprises for technology industrialisation and commercialisation (Sun *et al.*, 2009). However, Wu (2016) argues that with the development of new media, new technologies and changes in the form of industry change, the forms of university-industry cooperation are gradually enriched, and the scope of industry collaborators is expanded from university experts to the whole university community. The content of cooperation involves technical aspects such as intellectual property rights and scientific research results and extends to the category of new marketing models, such as micro-business agents and online shops (Wu, 2016). It is also formally because the forms of cooperation have become more diversified, making the Fine Art profession progressively conducive to the creation of society. In this regard, Wu (2016) summarised the following six forms of cooperation between Fine Art higher education and the creative industries in China□

1. Fine Art higher education institutions carry out research and creative projects according to the needs of the creative industry, and the creative industry transforms the designs, creations and productions made in cooperation with institutions into products to achieve the integration of works and products.

2. Creative enterprises communicate information on the demand for talents and the need for products in society to universities in time to help them improve the Fine Art course content. Universities send teachers as visiting experts to practice in enterprises to help them solve practical problems in creative production.

3. Open 'order class' in university, with enterprises and companies in the creative industries sending professionals to universities to teach the knowledge closer to the production and creation and the qualities needed by the creative industries, and to accept the on-the-job practise of students in the 'order class', with enterprises in the creative industries The companies in the creative industries provide specific bursaries and scholarships.

4. Universities and creative enterprises jointly select and establish groups of teachers for collaborative courses. Through joint development and design of teaching materials, assessment of the quality of education and teaching.

5. Universities and creative enterprises collaborate to organise relevant competitions, events, speeches, and exhibitions.

6. Fine Art students participate in the marketing and promotion of

enterprises through new media.

From these six models above, there are many ways in which Fine Art higher education and the creative industries can cooperate. The cooperation could be based on mutual collaboration, product development in the creative industries, and the employment needs of graduates. It can undoubtedly increase the direct communication between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, bridging the gap between Fine Art higher education and employability skills needed for creative industry. However, as university-industry cooperation involves government, schools and industry organisations, it becomes somewhat complex in content and standards (Duan, 2017).

Therefore, to explore more clearly the respective influence of the government, Fine Art higher education institutions and creative industries on the employment of Fine Art students, the discussion continues with the three driving models of university-industry collaboration proposed by Duan (2017), the government-led model, the market-led model, and the academic-led model. With the employment of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries as the target, the feasibility of the three models and the employment impact of each of the three parties on Fine Art students is explored.

8.7.2 Government- led Industry-University Cooperation Model

According to Wang *et al.* (2008: 39), government-led industry-university cooperation refers to the “government-led, industry-university cooperation mechanism formed by enterprises, universities and research institutions based on their own needs.” In China, government-led industry-university cooperation is directly manifested in the government's efforts to guide universities and enterprises to cooperate through programmes and related policies launched by

central ministries and local governments, with market forces and academic factors in a subordinate position (Hong and Su, 2013; Duan, 2016). However, Wang *et al.* (2008) argue that the government is a guide and a participant in university-industry collaboration but not a leader. In the same vein, Jaffe (2008, 2015) further explains that in government-led university-industry collaboration, the government lacks the basis to decide how to plan and allocate funds for university-industry collaboration projects. Wang *et al.* (2008) maintain that if university-industry cooperation projects are conducted under government leadership, the market mechanism will lack innovation and profit motive and is therefore not applicable to most university-industry cooperation.

However, China's vision for any development, economic or otherwise, requires a government lead. According to the National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020), vocational education school-enterprise cooperation is given high priority by the Chinese government in government-led school-industry cooperation. The plan clearly states that “the model of training talents through vocational school-industry cooperation and on-the-job internship will be implemented. Establish a school running mechanism led by the government, guided by industry and enterprises, formulate regulations to promote school-industry cooperation.” Thus, in government-led school-industry cooperation models, the government takes the central guiding position, and industry guidance is more significant than the school curriculum to ensure graduate employment (Pan, 2017). It is at the same time in line with the pedagogical objectives of vocational education in China, and therefore government-led school-industry cooperation model has been widely implemented in the vocational education sector.

As of 2020, there are 1468 higher vocational colleges in China, but only eight vocational colleges offer Fine Art subjects (Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China, 2020.06.10). This suggests that Fine Art is not a mainstream subject in vocational education and that it is not a priority subject in the government-led industry-university cooperation model. Yu *et al.* (2015) also argue that government policies and regulations are relatively external conditions regarding the implementation process of university-industry cooperation. They further explain that for universities, “the construction of talent development model, talent development programme design, faculty construction, practical teaching base construction, practical teaching organisation and management are the necessary internal conditions that should be completed under the leadership of universities.” (p. 32)

8.7.3 Academic-led University and Industry Collaborative Model

According to Ma (2007), university-industry cooperation is centred on curriculum design, and the curriculum is the core of all educational activities. Yu *et al.* (2015) maintains that, in terms of the division of labour in society, the development of talents is one of the primary responsibilities of universities, while the industry is responsible for engaging in production and business activities, and the government is involved in guiding and coordinating the relationship between the two relationships. In the same vein, Duan (2016) maintains that universities should also lead the development of university-industry cooperation with their robust research strength. However, Mottrama and Whale (2001) argue that the Fine Art curriculum is relatively weakly structured, and the curriculum is more related to students' independent development, thus making it more challenging to set up content for school-enterprise collaboration. An (2009) maintains that university teachers are saturated with teaching tasks, and students are overloaded with coursework and do not have the energy and willingness to carry out and participate in more (An, 2009). All of the above factors suggest that there may be problems

implementing the academic-led university and industry collaborative model.

Nevertheless, when focusing on the Fine Art profession, John-Steiner (2000) argues that collaboration and teamwork are fundamental to the Fine Arts. Gaunt and Treacy (2020) maintain that collaboration and teamwork increase as professional practice in the arts evolves. This suggests that collaboration is inherently beneficial to the practice of the Fine Arts profession and that such interdisciplinary teamwork is the norm in the creative industries.

After discussing the government- led industry-university cooperation model and academic-led university and industry collaborative model, the following discussion focuses on the last model of the university-industry cooperation model, which is the creative industry-led -university cooperation model

8.7.4 Creative Industry-led -University Cooperation Model

According to An (2009), university-industry cooperation is a market and social demand-oriented operation mechanism; the university and the enterprise both participate in the talent training process, using the pooled resources of the school and the enterprise to develop suitable needs of the employer's application-oriented talents teaching mode. The industry-led university-industry cooperation model is already a relatively mature one, with market-based resource allocation the dominant factor driving school-enterprise cooperation. The government transcends the specific partnership (Wang *et al.*, 2008) and creates the conditions for university-industry cooperation and is the mediator of information resources (Duan, 2021). Shu (2012) argues that an interactive relationship between universities and creative industries is formed. On the one hand, universities need to provide talents and research services to the creative industries to meet the employee's needs and social values; on the other hand,

the development of creative industries relies on university education and puts demands on university education for creative industries (Shu, 2012). Thus, compared to the government-led and academic-led university-industry cooperation model, in the creative industry-led -university cooperation model, the industry and the university are collaborative, and the creative industries are not entirely leading.

According to Wang *et al.* (2008), as society progresses and market competition intensifies, there are many industry-led industry-university cooperation collaborations such as joint research bases and industrial technology alliances. As a result, industry-university cooperation is less attractive to industries for technologies that do not yield quick returns. The creative industries are overgrowing in China, and the industry's value is increasing at a rate of 10% per year (Huang, 2020). With regard to the Fine Art profession, Beckert and Rössel (2013) argues that the measurement of the value of a work of art or artist is lengthy and comes from a comprehensive assessment by experts in the art field (such as gallery owners, curators, critics, art dealers, journalists and collectors), who help to establish the artistic value of the work or artist. Therefore, in a creative industry-led -university cooperation model, the formation of the value of artworks and artists may be accelerated under the rapid development of the creative industry.

8.7.5 The “Third Spaces” between Fine Art Higher Education Institutions and Creative Industries

To summarise, university-industry cooperation is implemented under the guidance of government policies, according to market and social needs, with higher education as the primary teaching body. They each have their role to play, and all equally share in university-industry cooperation. The government,

universities and industries in the university-industry collaboration play different roles and have differing capacities in the value of innovation according to their interests (Sun *et al.*, 2009). For the employment of Fine Art graduates in China, which is the focus of this research, the creative industry-led-university cooperation model may be able to better facilitate better employment of Fine Art graduates in the creative industry. It is a cooperation model between the creative industry and employers' needs.

According to Crossick (2006), the creative industries require knowledge that is intangible and difficult to transfer to the classroom compared to STEM subjects, which are associated with experimentation and knowledge innovation in the creative field. Therefore, when creative industries interact and collaborate with universities, it is often associated with 'shared spaces' or 'third spaces' (Comunian *et al.*, 2015). Comunian *et al.* (2015: 15) explaining that "some shared spaces are physical infrastructures (for example, incubation spaces, shared facilities), others are virtual platforms or 'third spaces', where academic knowledge mixes and negotiates with specialist knowledge from the art sector and its communities." Furthermore, Crossick (2006: 14) describes 'third spaces' as a vital component in "embedding people and knowledge and people with knowledge in a region to benefit its industry and its innovative capacity." However, Comunian *et al.* (2015) argue that the informality and creativity of many knowledge exchange projects can create a confusing picture of the real connections that develop between and within institutions.

Moreover, as an unstructured knowledge, Fine Art may have more resistance in the process of collaboration. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the "third spaces" could help create a bridge between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, where intangible knowledge can be discussed, assembled, and ultimately transformed to benefit both parties. However, Mottram and

Whale (2001) argue that the challenge of creating a teaching and learning “third space” that promotes the integration of ideas and practice lies in designing a structure that enables students to understand, assimilate and adapt to new knowledge and acquire transferable knowledge and technical skills.

8.7.6 University-Industry Cooperation - Creative Industries Incubator

After researching the university-industry cooperation of the eight major art and design universities in China (the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the China Academy of Art, the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts, and the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts) in section 5.3.1, it was found that none of the universities had university-industry cooperation projects for Fine Art subjects until 2021. This suggests a gap in China's university-industry cooperation in Fine Art higher education. The possibility of university-industry cooperation to grow the employment of Fine Art graduates in China has not been verified. However, art and design universities have university-industry cooperation in many applied design-related disciplines such as urban design and sculpture design (Zhou, 2014). According to Zhou (2014: 165), implementing school-enterprise collaboration in design majors is “realistic, holistic, dynamic, local, and open.” The design-related disciplines are clearly structured, both in terms of the profession and the school-enterprise cooperation model, which is related to the structured knowledge of the profession. However, as Fine Art knowledge is unstructured, the knowledge required by the creative industries is also intangible and challenging to transfer to the classroom (Crossick, 2006). Therefore, the 'third space' is discussed in section 8.6.5.

According to Comunian *et al.* (2015) 'shared spaces' or 'third spaces' are some

shared spaces that include physical infrastructure, such as incubation spaces, with shared facilities. In 2021, the general office of China's state council issued guidance on further supporting student innovation and entrepreneurship. The council proposed encouraging all kinds of incubators to open a certain percentage of free incubation space for university students and to use entrepreneurship to drive employment for university students. According to de Pinho (2011), there are several ways an incubator can help these students who want to try their hand at entrepreneurship, such as helping them develop a business plan or helping these clients find the capital, if they need to make an initial investment in their new company. Incubators are structures of many forms, and definitions may vary, but all have one thing in common, incubators help create companies and develop in the first years of growth (Grimaldi and Grandi, 2005). However, Mottram and Whale (2001) argue that the challenge for the incubators lies in designing a structure that enables Fine Art students to understand, absorb, and adapt to new knowledge and conduct practice. According to de Pinho (2001: 369), "each business incubator can be classified under one of four different divisions: business innovation centres, university business incubators, independent private incubators, and corporate private incubators."

The concept of the University Business Incubator (UBI) continues to attract the attention of various scholars in the broader entrepreneurship literature as an effective way to promote entrepreneurship among university students, regional economies, plan and improve educational content, and increase employment rates (Rothaermel *et al.*, 2007; Dahms and Kingkaew, 2016; Mirvahedi *et al.*, 2018). According to Dahms and Kingkaew (2016: 44), "a UBI is defined as a university-based institution that supports young business literature." UBI relies on a mixture of funding from public and private sources. Therefore, it is essential to emphasise that UBI does not necessarily have to be technology-focused

(Dahms and Kingkaew, 2016). This is because it allows non-technical higher education institutions to become active in the incubator market and encourages a specific focus on non-tangible services and technology transfer activities. This is also very much in line with the characteristics of Fine Art higher education in this research, as the knowledge of Fine Art higher education is intangible and unstructured.

Thom (2015) found that the oversupply of artworks and the lack of social connections led to a lack of visibility and attention in the marketplace for Fine Artists, which resulted in low income and low employment rates. He suggests that improving social networks and entrepreneurial skills are the focus of incubators for the Fine Art profession. Whereas more than half of the respondents in the first phase of this research identified their weakness in employment as social connections and considered their social connections insufficient, respondents with good social connections had higher annual incomes. Dahms and Kingkaew (2016) suggest that art incubators can use the university's social networks to organise exhibitions and events, support Fine Art students to build social networks and promote their work, and increase their employability.

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter brings together the primary empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives of this research, discussing Chinese Fine Art graduates' career goals and current employment status. The interaction and relationship between China's creative industries, Chinese Fine Art higher education, and globalisation is discussed through the second theoretical framework of this study and suggestions are made on how the employability of Chinese Fine Art graduates in the creative industries can be enhanced.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the career orientation of Fine Art in China. As China's cultural industries developing, demand for traditional Fine Art professions grows slowly, and some traditional Fine Art occupations shrink due to economic development, so the employment orientation of Fine Art graduates' changes (Chen, 2008). Furthermore, the demand for new industries development by cultural industries became employees with a multi-skill type combination, which has led to the devaluation of Fine Art professional qualifications in the job market. This suggested that from Chinese Fine Art higher education curricula that elective and compulsory courses are closely related to the professional skills of painting. As a result, the teaching methods in art institutions reinforce students' expectations of becoming artists (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015). While such a curriculum has produced a wave of talented artists, most Fine Art graduates do not earn a living from art alone (Mottram, 2002), leading to a narrower career path for Fine Art graduates. The first phase of statistics suggests that most current Fine Art graduates enter higher education institutions in China after graduation. Fine Art graduates become teachers in line with the teaching objectives in the curriculum guidance outline for Fine Arts in general higher education issued by the Chinese ministry of education (2005). This suggests that the career orientation of Fine Art graduates in China is to become art teachers or artists.

The Chinese government's goal for the development of creative industries is to “develop enterprises in cultural technology, music production, art creation, animation and games, enhance their influence and drive, and promote the development of related service and manufacturing industries” (Cultural industry revitalisation plan, 2009). Therefore, although the teaching objectives of Fine Art higher education do not mention employment in the creative industries, the development objectives of the creative industries include Fine Art. This related

but not interactive relationship has led to a gap between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education in China.

After identifying a gap between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, the 15 employability skills identified by employers in the creative industries in the second phase of the research were grouped into four main categories: hard skill competencies, soft skills of personality, soft skills of cognition. The application of these skills to the content of Chinese higher education programmes in Fine Arts was analysed to determine the extent to which Chinese art programmes provide students with the competencies, qualities and skills required for successful employment in the creative industries.

By comparing the content of the Chinese Fine Art higher education curriculum with the skills expected by employers in the creative industries, it was suggested that the content of the Fine Art higher education curriculum designed by the Chinese Ministry of Education does not match the requirements of employers need in the creative industries. The underlying reasons for this are the lagging curriculum and the single-mindedness of the professional coverage. The literature review suggests that the entrepreneurship curriculum model of 'internet + entrepreneurship' helps explore how to develop internet thinking among Fine Art students, promotes entrepreneurship among graduates, and enhances the comprehensive knowledge, soft skills and creativity that meet the employment needs of creative industries (Jackson and Tomlinson, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Cobb *et al.*, 2011; Rakib *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, a complementary relationship can be found between creative industries, Fine Arts and entrepreneurship, and a course on entrepreneurship in creative industries at university would perhaps be beneficial in enhancing the employability skills required by Fine Arts students in creative industries. At the same time, the interdisciplinary content would help broaden the diversity of employment for

Fine Arts graduates. The creative industries entrepreneurship course is easier to implement and achieve as a stand-alone course without altering the government-designed Fine Art higher education teaching framework.

Section 8.6 discusses theoretical perspectives, based on the second theoretical framework of the coordination triangle model, on Chinese creative industries and higher education institutions' macro perspectives on enhancing the employability of Fine Art graduates in the context of globalisation. In an environment based on tripartite equality, the university-industry cooperative as an educational model is located in the higher education development system and is influenced by state power and market forces.

After discussing three models of industry-university collaboration, it is argued that for the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates, a creative industry-led university collaboration model may facilitate better employment of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries. However, as Fine Art knowledge is unstructured, a 'third space' could help build a bridge between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education, where intangible knowledge can be discussed, combined and ultimately translated for the benefit of both parties. As a third space between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education institutions, the Creative Industries Incubator can act as a venue for practical training to enhance the employability of Fine Art graduates.

Chapter 9: Research Conclusions

This chapter will present the research findings and reveals the contribution to knowledge. It has become clear relatively early on in the research that within China's creative industries development, there is an imminent need for numerous employees. However, the employment rate of Fine Art graduates in the creative profession has declined for four consecutive years since 2018. This suggests that Fine Art graduates do not meet the employment needs of the creative industries and any specific industries in China. A key hypothesis of this research has been that as creative industries continue developing in China, the content of the Fine Art undergraduate curriculum no longer meets the employment needs of employers in the creative industries. Therefore, this could imply that the Fine Art curriculum could have kept up with the industry in the past. In other words, education did not involve at the same rate as the industry. In addition, this research aimed to explore and determine the extent to which employers in creative industries value the competencies, qualities and skills of Fine Art graduates from China. The key research questions used in the investigation are 1) What competencies, qualities, and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China? Furthermore, it is also useful to explore: How might the Chinese Fine Art undergraduate curriculum be enhanced in order to meet the needs of the creative industries in China?

After discussing the key themes that have emerged from the research in chapter 8, this concluding chapter will examine the findings and the implications of those findings of having the potential to influence perceptions around the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China.

The following section will present findings in relation to the research questions before explaining the contribution of this research to employability. The last part will conclude by reflecting on the limitations of this research and highlighting

avenues for future employability research in Fine Art higher education.

9.1 Reflection on Fine Art Education in an International Context

Globalisation has led to increasing the knowledge economy, the rise of information technology, and has put enormous pressure on teaching and learning in higher education institutions. However, researchers suggest that curriculum reform is complex and involves the higher education sector, including government policy, population expansion, academic oligarchy, and market forms. Since the advent of Industry 4.0, the development of science and technology, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, machine learning, augmented reality, and other digital technologies in the 21st century, the need for creativity is increasing. In Fine Art research, digital technology has driven the emergence of new research areas globally, such as installation art, digital art, and artificial intelligence art. Digital technology extends creativity in Fine Art creation. At the same time, the tactile experience and materiality of traditional Fine Art forms should not be overshadowed by technology. Integrating digital tools can be seen as complementary to conventional methods, enabling students to explore new avenues and extending educational goals to include standard knowledge and skills and creativity-centred competencies.

The rapid development of information technology has reconfigured the behavioural patterns between Fine Art education and students. The question of what Fine Art education can bring to students and how Fine Art teachers can measure and critique students' creativity has become a challenge for educators and scholars worldwide. European countries have developed initiatives to support education development in Industry 4.0, including interdisciplinary learning, multidisciplinary integration, school-enterprise cooperation, and entrepreneurship (Isa, 2019; Marcial, 2020; Xiong and Lehnhardt, 2022).

Due to the development of global labour markets, new technologies, and rapid advances in science and technology, human capital needs to be mobile and translated into skills and expertise in different fields. Fine Art is inherently interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary. Interdisciplinary learning and the merging of other disciplines to discuss the same subject matter not only facilitates the training of students from multiple fields simultaneously, enabling them to work across disciplines, but also broaden the students' knowledge horizontally and the range of skills. Therefore, the content of Fine Art education curricula needs to teach the known and develop the unknown.

Furthermore, an increasing number of artists are required to use new technologies in their creations and to create using innovative techniques, bringing together the difference between creativity (art) and innovation (science and technology). Digital advances have provided artists with new tools and media to work with, while artists have inspired technicians to think creatively about how technology can be used to improve our lives. Creativity, in turn, is a crucial element in the development of technology and Fine Art and is the driving force behind progress and innovation in both fields. Therefore, international research shows that Fine Art education is moving towards interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, and digital technology will become an integral part of Fine Art teaching. Digital technology will enrich the teaching and learning of Fine Art, while digital technology will continue to innovate in this integration.

Technology development has also influenced the direction of school-enterprise cooperation and graduate entrepreneurship in Fine Art. The types of companies that Fine Art schools work with are constantly expanding, making it challenging and borderless for them to take advantage of the diversity of ways education and business can work together. However, it also creates quality control more

difficult. Due to the promotion of various mobile terminals, the fixed education time of the traditional classroom is gradually divided by the fragmented education mode. Establishing a joint school-enterprise practical training laboratory, where innovative projects are embedded in the curriculum and where the company's personnel can guide students remotely, not only enriches the project design in school but also facilitates a variety of training for teaching.

9.2 The Pedagogies Development and Career Paths of Chinese Fine Art Higher Education

It is reasonable to suggest that in China, any development vision, economic or otherwise, requires government leadership. By signing the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship on 28 February 1950(Zhu, 2016), Alliance and Mutual Assistance, China and the Soviets began 30-year strategic cooperation at the national level in the 1950s. With the open doors policy, Fine Art higher education sought to shift from arts and crafts education to art and design education in response to the economic and industrial development needs. Thus, the German Bauhaus education system was introduced to the Fine Art higher education pedagogy because it combined technical and artistic characteristics and values. However, by continuing to draw from and emulate Soviet art and the Bauhaus approaches, Fine Art higher education in China has emerged by borrowing other examples/models from around the world using curriculum templates from other countries as a key reference point. Chinese Fine Art higher education has not yet developed its own education system, and it is reasonable to hold that it has not been able to establish a consistent educational identity that is determined through its cultural interactions.

It is appropriate at this stage to explore in more detail the composition of Fine Art provision in China. The compulsory courses in Fine Art higher education

consist of three main areas: fundamental drawing, fundamental design and fundamental craft. This suggests that the study attitude is linear subject oriented approach focus on the development of the craftsmanship of the hearts and its specialisation instead of a more open, inclusive and interdisciplinary. The fundamental drawing, fundamental design and fundamental craft are based on the Soviet art education model, the Bauhaus model and traditional Chinese craftsmanship. However, the survey in this research suggests that fundamental drawing skills were valued the most by Fine Art graduates from comprehensive universities and art and design specialist universities in their employment. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that Chinese higher education institutions are still producing the same type of Fine Art students, pursuing broadly similar learning strategies and, of course, the outcomes. This is rather expected, presenting no surprises. Although comprehensive universities try to produce Fine Art graduates with more diverse career's potential, drawing skills remain a key learning objective in Fine Art higher education institutions and an essential part of Fine Art graduates' employability skills. The statistics from this research investigated that Chinese Fine Art higher education has not developed significantly in order to support the industry need and change brought about by the rapid development. As discussed in section 8.4.1, Chinese Fine Art higher education remains based on drawing skills, which differs significantly from Fine Art higher education in other countries such as the UK.

With the rise and the dominance of new technologies and rapid advances in science and technology, human capital needs to be translated does some extent and shifted into skills and specialist expertise in different fields. Drawing skills competitiveness has gradually become replaceable by technology, and it is no longer available as an essential competency for employment in the cultural industries. As creative industries merged with cultural and creative industries in China, this research further explored the connection between employment in

creative industries and Fine Art higher education attainment.

9.3 The Gap and Connection Between Creative Industries and Fine Art Higher Education

At an early stage of this research, it has been identified that there is a significant gap between the creative industry and its correlation with fine art education. The Literature Review identified the creative industries and Fine Art higher education as the 'boundarylessness' characteristic. The concept of 'boundarylessness' involves a shift in uncertainty from a risky society, which is a necessary trigger for new industries (Zelenko and Bridgstock, 2014). For Fine Art higher education, the content, the forms of expression, the scope for multi-skilled development and the career paths are all characterised by 'boundarylessness'. This unique characteristic gives Fine Art higher education programmes great flexibility in developing creativity. However, Fine Art higher education in China sets a clear boundary that limits crossover between disciplines. Drawing skills and the ability of depiction is a major criterion for entry requirements and is ultimately determine the destination of students as to which university students can enter or be accepted, what kind of creative work they can experiment with during their studies and what level of employment positions they may have after graduation. As a result, drawing skills are regarded as determining and a limiting factor for Fine Art higher education in China, hindering the scope of its development. Fine Art higher education in China has lost the common approach of Fine Art and been unique in its ability to continuously reinvent itself and, therefore, boundarylessness and in many ways, this is also consistent with the characteristic of the creative industries. It is possible also to reveal, based on extracting findings from interviews with the creative industries employers' interviews, 15 key employability skills and competencies have been concluded, but the drawing skills did not feature as

one of the key employability skills. This suggests a vast incompatibility between the needs for employment in the creative industries and the teaching objectives of Fine Art Higher Education. Chapter 5 was also informed by these skills and competencies and research findings and found that those competencies can be produced while studying Fine Art higher education. However, the contention is that these skills do not translate into the state requirements for work in the creative industries, it has become clear that Fine Art graduates lack transferable skills. The analysis of statistical data also found that the lack of transferable skills was not just for Fine Art graduates but also included other creative subjects graduates, suggesting a much broader commonality with creative teaching and learning in general, an approach that cut across all creative teaching.

The research question: What are the competencies, qualities and skills needed for Chinese undergraduate art graduates to be employed in the creative industries in China? This research suggested transferable skills as necessary competencies for employment in the creative industries.

Therefore, the research question can also be extended to: What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in creative subjects need for employment in creative industries in China? It is reasonable to suggest that the lack of transferable skills is not limited to Fine Art graduates but also other creative subjects. Evidence suggests that graduates cannot meet the demand for employment in the creative industries. Therefore, this research has argued that extending the Fine Art population includes the entire creative subjects graduates.

Transferable skills are best described as working through and cross boundaries to develop different fields, contexts, and situations (Archer and Davison, 2008).

Therefore, how to develop transferable skills in Fine Art higher education represent the key to answering the other research question of this research: How might the undergraduate curriculum of Chinese Fine Art be enhanced to better meet the needs of creative industries in China?

9.4 Proposition of Fine Art Curriculum Transferable Skills Development

In order to address this question and to ensure that the findings are relevant and appropriate, it is essential to describe the findings in chronological order. Transferable skills are generated in at least two scenarios, e.g., school-to-company transfer and company-to-company transfer. This means transferable skills can be more fully practised and developed if they can be transferred in several different scenarios.

Section 8.7 explored and examined existing models for developing transferable skills in Chinese higher education institutions, including the industry-led - university cooperation model, the government-led industry-university cooperation model, and the academic-led university and collaborative industry model. However, there are no Fine Art professional creative industry-university cooperation programmes have been found or identified in any university in China. This is because Fine Art higher education in China is still fundamentally based on a drawing skill-oriented approach, and drawing skills are not necessarily a key employment skill required in the creative industries. Moreover, the creative industries necessitate knowledge that is intangible and difficult to transfer to others, and it is often personal and subjective compared to STEM subjects, which are associated with experimentation and knowledge innovation in the creative field. Therefore, the feasibility of a 'third space' between Fine Art higher education institutions and the creative industries is proposed in this research in order to build and facilitate connections and associations between

the two in order to develop diverse capabilities that can be categorised as transferable skills.

As a third space between the creative industries and Fine Art higher education institutions can be created. Creative industry incubators become a place for transferable skill and potentially promotes development and entrepreneurship maturity. This creates a scenario where teaching and work are integrated and provides a wide range of student employment options. Lecturers work with employers in the creative industry incubator space to build mock company projects and develop business-like, interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial projects related to the Fine Art evolving profession. Research determined that developing transferable skills from multiple perspectives for Fine Art students is necessary. This multi-faceted transferable skills development is designed to enhance students' employability in the creative industries with a multi-sectoral mix. It helps to answer the second research question: How might the undergraduate curriculum of Chinese Fine Art be enhanced to better meet the needs of creative industries in China?

9.5 Theoretical Contribution of this Research

This research focuses on the employability of Fine Art graduates in China's creative industries. There are few empirical studies of efficiency in Chinese Fine Art graduate employability, and no theoretical model was found to be discussed based on the employment needs of the creative industries in China before this research started. Therefore, this research has made an original theoretical contribution to addressing the gap between Fine Art pedagogies and creative industry employment needs. Two theoretical models are suggested for exploring the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries in China.

(1) The Heuristic Model of Employability for Fine Art Graduates (see Figure 2) was developed based on the heuristic model of employability (Fugate *et al.*, 2004).

This research uses Fine Art graduates as the target population to validate the proposed three-dimensional employability structure's applicability in the Chinese employment context, with the dimensions of personal creativity adaptability, creative career identity, and social and human capital.

(2) The Fine Art graduate employability coordination triangle model (see Figure 4) was developed based on the coordination triangle model (Clark, 1983).

The three elements of the coordination triangle model are discussed separately. Based on the unique political environment of China, the state is modified to globalisation; according to the target industry of this research, the market is refined to the creative industry; according to the target group under research, the academic oligarchy is modified to Fine Art higher education institution. The model allows for a targeted discussion of the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates in the creative industries and proposes recommendations to enhance the employment of Chinese Fine Art graduates in higher education in the context of globalisation.

9.6 Limitations of the Research

The numbers involved in this research sample are relatively small. 60 graduates were involved in the first stage of this research, which took a survey approach, and 10 creative industries employers in the second stage used semi-structured interviews to gain rich qualitative data.

Some scholars have argued that a sample that is too small may not provide information that adequately captures the phenomenon and reduces the validity of the findings (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Carlsen and Glenton, 2011). However, many authors have successfully used limited samples to study similar topics, and their research raises broader questions of value than generalisability and impact (Tymon, 2013; Burke, 2015; Finn, 2015). The small sample used in this research was designed to gain authenticity and produce rich data whose interpretation was close to the study participants' meaning (Charmaz, 2006).

It is reasonable to argue that by making all iterations transparent, the reader is aware of how the research process has been structured and conducted and that all decisions have been made with care and thought. The Cronbach's Alpha Confidence Coefficient evaluations provide evidence that the research outcomes provide integrity for the research participants and that the conclusions are robust. In an ideal world, it would be desirable to increase the sample size in a study, work with a more significant number of respondents, and collaborate with other researchers and practitioners on a larger research project. However, for this study, the sample size is realistic, reasonable, open to interpretation and meaningful to the study being conducted.

In a theoretical sense, no theory should be able to provide a complete overview of the employability of graduates of any subject. This is because employability is an intersection of education, behavioural psychology and human resource management, with a wide range of theoretical sources and multiple research perspectives. Thus, the spatial and temporal dimensions dictate the limitations of this research's theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of this research does not give a complete and mature theory of Fine Art graduates' employability development and enhancement. Instead, it reflects on and

expands existing graduate employability theories. This research proposes a more focused theoretical framework for Fine Art subjects, which provides a reference for future Fine Art employment-related research.

The methodological limitations of the study are discussed in Chapter 2. This research used the triangulation methods, which increased the breadth and depth of analysis but may not increase its accuracy. However, the purpose of triangulation is primarily to increase the breadth, depth and dimensionality of research analysis, not validity. This is in line with the aim of this research which seeks to answer the question of what competencies, qualities, and skills are required by Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art for employment in the creative industries in China. This research could provide recommendations for Fine Art higher education in China to enhance the employability of Fine Art graduates in the creative industries. However, it is not valid as testing the validity of this study would be for future research.

9.7 Reflection and Conclusion

This research has addressed the question, “What competencies, qualities and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?” A grounded approach was taken to ensure the research findings were rooted within the data. The methodology for this research used triangulation research methods. It combines qualitative and quantitative research for knowledge construction, following the constructivism model in an ontology. The research process covers literature reviews, the Fine Art pedagogy employability survey and the creative Industries employer interviews. The statistics identify that the reason for the decline in employment of Fine Art graduates is that drawing skills are not an employability skill request in the creative industries. However, it also found that other skills

and competencies acquired during Fine Art studies are related to the employment needs of the creative industries. This suggests that Fine Art graduates have the skills and competencies for employment in the creative industries. However, these skills and competencies are not translated into the state required for employment in the creative industries. This indicates that transferable skills development is missing in Fine Art higher education in China, and it is the skills Fine Art graduates need for employment in creative industries in China.

Fine Art higher education in China has lost the borderless attributes shared by Fine Art and the creative industries due to the walls built around the foundation of drawing skills. The connection between Fine Art higher education and the creative industries are blocked, and the creativity and employability of students are limited. However, in China, the curriculum structure based on government power cannot be altered, the influence of political history on Fine Art is profound, and the Fine Art educators of the Soviet art style remain the leading group of Fine Art higher education in China. Therefore, when the walls of Fine Art higher education cannot be broken down, this research proposes establishing a 'third space' - a creative industry incubator between Fine Art higher education and the creative industry based on the concept of 'third space' from Comunian and Gilmore. According to Comunian and Gilmore (2015: 18), the "third space" refers to "Spaces which are neither solely academic spaces nor solely creative and cultural production spaces but an open, creative and generative combination of the two."

Comunian and Gilmore (2015) identified a total of 128 hubs distributed across 86 institutions in the UK. However, it is a relatively new concept for China's creative industries and Fine Art higher education. Because the Fine Art higher education teaching object is based on drawing skills, it is not feasible to use it

to develop collaborative projects with the creative industry, which can already be replaced by computer technology. Therefore, the creative industry incubator aims to help create a scenario where teaching and work are integrated to enhance the other creativity and transferable skills of Fine Art students by developing collaborative projects with the creative industry. The creative industry incubator integrates teaching space and work projects, contributing to developing transferable skills. More importantly, it is a space where political power is diminished, and the rights of employers in the creative industry are elevated, thereby purposefully enhancing the employability of Fine Art students.

However, more research is needed to examine the practical implementation of the creative industry incubator. How does the creative industry incubator overlap and intersect with research and teaching, and how does the creative industry incubator practice overlap and intersect with existing creative communities of practice in local contexts? As Fine Art higher education institutions, the creative industries and policymakers continue to explore the models and practices of the creative industry incubator in university settings, the balance between the three parties still needs to be explored and researched.

9.8 Areas for Future Research

The creative industries are continuing to proliferate, and there is no way to predict what employment skills will be required in the creative industries in the future. It leads to the possibility that the employment needs of the creative industries are also evolving. Therefore, the emphasis is on a continuous focus on the needs of national policy, higher education, and the creative industries.

Accordingly, this research suggests the following areas for future research. In terms of graduates' employability in the creative industry, future samples could

be widened to different kinds of subject graduates. Further research could also explore alternative course designs that associate Fine Art higher education with employment in the creative industries.

As an added area of interest, research on 'the third space' project, establishing university-industry cooperation incubator, is also an ongoing study between higher education institutions and industries. Although this research makes recommendations for developing transferable skills in the Fine Art curriculum, the feasibility of a creative industry incubator and the criteria for the assessment and transcripts of transferable skills within it deserve further research.

China Education Modernization 2035, issued by the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2019, proposes that China will achieve overall modernisation of education by 2035. The objective is to keep pace with industrial development and meet the employment needs of new industries. Therefore, higher education requires a corresponding modernisation structure from the teaching model, curriculum, and faculty as the organisation that delivers talents.

At the time of writing, Fine Art in China is still wrapped in the essentials of the painting profession. However, curriculum reform is necessary to enhance the employability of Fine Art graduates in today's and tomorrow's technological development. This research's exploration of Fine Art graduates' employability in the creative industries and its enhancement is only the beginning. Because graduates' employability and its enhancement is a complex and contingent matter, no advancement in a theoretical sense can fully encompass all aspects of the practical activities of employment enhancement for university students. Furthermore, new challenges and the generation of ideas will simultaneously appear as part of any scheme of development. This research on Fine Art

graduates' employability enhancement in the creative industries is a step forward in our attempt to explore and understand the employability of Fine Art graduates. This research aims not to provide a complete and mature model or system for Fine Art graduates' employability and its enhancement but to explore the suitability of Fine Art graduates for employment in the creative industries. It reflects on the Fine Art higher education teaching model, considers the employability skills and competencies that meet the employment needs of creative industry employers, more importantly, addresses the research gap between Fine Art graduates' employability in creative industries employment. This research is hoped to be instructive and valuable for future research in related fields.

Appendix One: Ethic consent form - The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability Survey

Aim and background

The aim of this research is to explore the extent to which the Chinese fine art curriculum meets the expectations of fine art graduates, identify the extent to which Chinese fine art curriculum provide students with the competencies, qualities and skills necessary for successful employment. In the meantime find out about the current employment situation of fine art graduates in China.

The researcher is conducting research for a doctoral degree from university for the creative arts.

Confidentiality

Thank you for your interest in this research. Any data and responses that you provide through this survey will be anonymized so that individuals will not be identifiable. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you can inform the researcher that you want to withdraw your responses within 2 weeks of completing the survey and all data relating to you will be deleted and not used in the study. It should take you no longer than 30 minutes to complete this survey. The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer.

What does this survey contain?

Section 1 – Demographic question

Section 2 – Social and human capital

Section 3 – Creative Adaptability

Section 4 – Creative Career Identity

Section 5 – The Fine Art Pedagogies Employability

Participant consent I have read this statement and give my consent for the data

that I provide to be used by the research project.

Contact Details:

For any queries, please contact the researcher by email at:
mimihe1990@126.com

Appendix Two: Survey Questions

Section 1. Participant Demographic

For each statement, please select one response that best matches your view.

1. Your gender:

① Male ② Female Androgyny Prefer not to say

2. Year of completion (Bachelor of Fine Art)

3. Which university did you graduate from?

4. Current workplace type is:

① government agency ② Institution ③ State owned enterprises ④ Private enterprise ⑤ self-employed

5. Current work situation

① full-time ② part-time ③ Self-employment ④ freelance ⑤ unemployed

Section 2. Social and Human Capital

The Social capital interpersonal relationships and social networks that reflect employability provide access to career-related information and resources; the human capital, is the intrinsic value of employees' knowledge and skills. We would like you to evaluate what impact human and social capital have had on your employment. For each statement, please select one response that best matches your view.

6. Your father is/was:

① a government officer ② a worker ③ a farmer ④ a businessman ⑤ an educator Artist Professional practitioners (e.g. doctors, lawyers, technicians, etc.)

7. Your mother is/was:

① a government officer ② a worker ③ a farmer ④ a businessman ⑤ an

educator Artist Professional practitioners (e.g. doctors, lawyers, technicians, etc.)

8. Your parents' highest level of education:

① junior high school or below ② high school ③ college ④ bachelor's degree ⑤ master's degree or above

9. Overall ranking in class:

① Top ② Lower middle Middle Upper middle ⑤ Low

10. Professional ranking in class:

① Top ② Lower middle Middle Upper middle ⑤ Low

11. Your current total annual income (Chinese RMB):

① under 50,000 ② 50,000-80,000 ③ 80,000-100,000 100,000-200,000

⑤ over 200,000

12. What percentage of your annual income comes from artistic practice?

None < 10% 11 – 25% 26 – 50% 51 – 75% 76 – 100%

13. What do you think of your social connections:

① poor ② rather poor ③ general ④ rich ⑤ enriching

14. What is your biggest advantage in employment:

① good academic performance ② Number of certificates ③ personal ability

④ creativity social connections ⑥ family background

15. What is your biggest disadvantage in employment:

① bad academic performance Number of certificates personal ability

④ creativity social connections ⑥ family background

16. What is the most effective way to find a job is:

① campus job fairs ② various social connections ③ talent market ④ network, newspapers and other media

17. The most important channel for you to get employment information is:

- ① campus job fairs, ② school career guidance centre, ③ online job information,
④ job market job fairs, ⑤ relatives and friends

18. Who influences you most when you choose a job:

- ① parents ② teachers ③ classmates friends ⑤ completely on your own

Section 3. Creativity adaptability

creative adaptability refers to a person's ability to respond creatively and adaptively. Please make your choice based on your personal performance at work. For each statement, please select one response that best matches your view.

Creativity adaptability	Not at all like me	Not like me	Neither	Like me	Very like me
19. I can deal effectively with emergencies.					
20. I can relieve stress effectively.					
21. I can tolerate pressure.					
22. I can solve problems effectively.					
23. I can operate and control effectively.					
24. I can translate vision into specific behavioural competencies.					
25. I have a high degree of flexibility.					
26. When faced with an emergency, I think of new ways to solve the problem					

Section 4. Creative Career Identity

Please make your choice based on your personal performance at work. For each statement, please select one response that best matches your view.

Creative Career Identity	very uncharacteristic	uncharacteristic	Neither	characteristic	very characteristic
27.I can propose effective new goals					
28.I can identify and seize opportunities keenly					
29.I can effectively assess organizational needs					
30.I can express complex ideas in an effective way					
31.I can influence or negotiate with others					
32.I will develop a proper plan and schedule for the implementation of a new idea					
33.I can think creatively					
34.I can solve problems effectively					
35.I can provide new solutions to problems					
36.I can proactively seek out new technologies, techniques and/or concepts					
37.I will come up with creative ways to execute work assignments					
38.I am not afraid to take risks					

Section 5. The Fine Art Pedagogies

Does the university course help you develop your employability skills?

For each statement, please select one response that best matches your view.

39. Undergraduate subject in Fine Arts of China National Higher Education

Compulsory Courses	Course name	Is this necessary for your job?				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No such course
Painting	Fundamentals of Painting					
	Fundamentals of design (graphic, three-dimensional)					
	Fundamentals of Craft					
Art Theory and History	Introduction to Art					
	History of Chinese Art					
	History of Foreign Art					
	Chinese Folk Art					
	Art Appreciation and Criticism					
Art Expression and Creativity	Artistic expression					
	Design and Production					
Art and Humanities Education	Guided Reading of Masterpieces of Culture and Art					
Practice sessions	Military training					
	social survey					
	graduation thesis defence,					
	art practice					
	Artistic expedition					
	career guidance					

Optional Course	Colour					
	Perspective					
	Composition					
	Fundamentals of Modelling Language					
	Artistic Anatomy					
	Aesthetics					
	Chinese Painting Theory					
	Western Art Theory					
	Current Contemporary Art Thought					
	History of Modern Foreign Design					
	Chinese Paintings					
	Oil Paintings					
	Watercolours					
	Printmaking					
	Gouache painting					
	Sculpture					
	Photography					
	Multimedia Art					
	Calligraphy					
	Seal Carving					
	Ceramics					
	Papercraft					
	Weaving					
	Art Sociology					
	Art Anthropology					
	Museum Education					
	Art Gallery Education					

	Local Art Education					
	Visual Culture and Communication					
	World Cultural Heritage					
	Heritage Conservation					

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

Appendix Three: Information Sheet – Interview

As part of my PhD study at the University for Creative Arts, UK, I am researching Fine art undergraduates' employability in the creative industry in China. My research attempts to find out, "What competencies, qualities, and skills do Chinese graduates with an undergraduate degree in Fine Art need for employment in creative industries in China?" I intend to conduct interviews and discussions to understand employers' employment satisfaction and employability skills requests of fine art graduates in creative industries in China.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The resulting information may be used as part of my university assignment. This thesis is a public document. I will endeavour to make sure you cannot be recognised from the information I include in my thesis. I will take care of any information you give me; it will be stored in a secure place and may be used in subsequent publications.

You have the right to withdraw from the research up to 10 days after the interview has taken place without giving a reason. Don't hesitate to contact me directly if you wish to withdraw.

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my research.

Thank you for giving your time, this is very much appreciated.

My contact details

Yayi He

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Appendix Four: Ethical Consent Statement – Creative Industry Employer Interview

Researcher: Yayi He

Research Study:

Please indicate your consent by placing a tick in the box against each of the following statements as appropriate.

1. I have read the attached information sheet
2. I understand the purpose of the research and what I am being asked to do
3. I am aware that I can withdraw up to 10 days after the interview has taken place without giving a reason.
4. I give consent for the information collected to be included in the thesis which may be read by members of the public
5. I give consent for the information collected to be included in articles in relevant journals and other publications

Consent given by:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Conditions agreed by:

Name: Yayi He

Signature:

Date:

Participant's contact details:

E-mail:

Mobile:

My contact details

Yayi He,

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Mobile [REDACTED]

Appendix Five: Interview Questions

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

1. To begin this interview, could you please tell us a little bit about your company?
2. What percentage of the total number of Fine Art graduates in your company?
3. For employment and career development in the creative industries in China, what do you think are the main qualities, competencies and skills that Fine Art graduates need to possess?
4. Could you please tell me your views on the existing university's development of graduate's employability? What are the good aspects and shortcomings?
5. How do you think universities should implement the development of a graduate's employability? Please give examples of courses or skills that could be added

Before we conclude this interview, are there any other questions about this interview?

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