



MODEL OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL ART TRAINING FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS IN DEZHOU CITY, SHANDONG PROVINCE

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Abstract

This study aims to: (1) to study and analyze the components of extracurricular art learning management of Generation Alpha in Dezhou City, and (2) to establish an out-of-school art training model for Gen Alpha in Dezhou City, Shandong Province. This research was mixed method research of qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative component involved reviewing relevant literature, books, textbooks, and academic papers on cultural and creative products, conducting field surveys, and carrying out semi-structured interviews. The quantitative component consisted of a cross-sectional questionnaire survey of 300 participants. By integrating these methods, the research combined quantitative data with qualitative analysis, including in-depth interviews with 18 stakeholders and a SWOT analysis, supported by the arts management database and digital technology platform, with Dezhou City as the case study. **The research findings** were found that: (1) The study reveals a systematic framework for extracurricular art learning management in Dezhou City, integrating six elements—objectives, content, activities, resources, assessment, and learner management—to foster creativity and cultural engagement among Generation Alpha students.; and (2) The out-of-school art training model for Gen Alpha in

Dezhou, Shandong Province has five components: 1) Existing programs had low local heritage integration, with only 45.3% of participants recognizing adequate cultural content; 2) Curricula were overly traditional, lacking interdisciplinary and multisensory elements suited to Generation Alpha; 3) The pilot culture-innovation model increased satisfaction from 76.26–79.52% to 93%, with cultural engagement at 89.3% and diversity at 91.7%; 4) Implementation level: How to operate? The five-layer framework combined traditional and modern art, small-class tutoring, closed-loop evaluation, and PDCA-driven iteration; 5) Outcome level: How are the goals achieved? Outcomes progressed from portfolios (short-term) to enhanced creativity (medium-term) and stronger cultural identity (long-term).

Keywords: Out-of-school; Art Training; Primary Students

Introduction

In the context of China's ongoing educational reform, the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities—beyond academic achievement—has become a major priority. As part of this broader transformation, extracurricular arts education plays an increasingly important role in shaping well-rounded individuals with creativity, cultural awareness, and interdisciplinary thinking. Particularly in regions like Dezhou City, Shandong Province, extracurricular arts programs for elementary school students are emerging as essential platforms for fostering students' aesthetic literacy and personal development. Despite this growing recognition, many extracurricular arts training programs still face practical challenges. These include a lack of qualified teachers, insufficient curriculum innovation, and weak integration with local cultural resources. Furthermore, current programs often rely heavily on traditional, skill-based instruction, neglecting the opportunities provided by interdisciplinary learning and the integration of technology and art. Driven by both policy shifts and pedagogical advancements, there is a growing need to explore new models of extracurricular arts education. National curriculum standards and government directives, such as the Arts Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition) and the 2022 Revised Curriculum Standards, emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary integration, task-based learning, and student-centered approaches.

The recent “Aesthetic Education Immersion Action” further calls for a more holistic and immersive approach to arts education.

This research responds to these educational imperatives by examining the current status of extracurricular arts training in Dezhou and proposing an experiential, interdisciplinary model that integrates art with other domains such as music, science, and digital technology. Grounded in constructivist learning theory and core competency frameworks, this model aims to enhance students’ creativity, problem-solving abilities, and ability to connect knowledge across disciplines. By analyzing the existing challenges and exploring innovative teaching strategies, this study seeks to provide theoretical insights and practical guidance for the development of high-quality, localized arts education. Ultimately, it hopes to contribute to the broader goal of fostering creative, adaptable, and culturally grounded learners in the new era of education.

Generation Alpha: Characteristics, Learning Styles, and Cultural Preferences: Generation Alpha, typically defined as children born from 2010 onward, represents the first cohort to grow up entirely in the 21st century—a world dominated by digital technologies, algorithmic content, and rapid social transformation. These children are not only digital natives but also AI natives, as they are growing up alongside voice assistants, personalized learning platforms, and immersive media technologies. Understanding their unique characteristics is essential for designing effective and relevant extracurricular educational programs, especially in the arts.

In terms of learning styles, Generation Alpha exhibits a strong preference for interactive, gamified, and visual learning environments. Unlike previous generations who were accustomed to passive information reception, Alpha learners thrive in environments where they can actively participate, make choices, and receive immediate feedback. This has been facilitated by widespread exposure to mobile apps, video platforms like TikTok and YouTube Kids, and educational games that blend entertainment with learning (edutainment). Their cognitive patterns are increasingly shaped by short attention spans, parallel processing capabilities, and a reliance on multimedia stimuli. As a result, traditional, lecture-based instruction often fails to capture their attention or stimulate meaningful engagement.

In terms of media usage, this generation is heavily immersed in multiscreen and on-demand content consumption. Tablets and smartphones have become primary interfaces through which Alpha children interact with the world. Studies have shown that by age 5, many have already developed habits of navigating apps, searching for content, and curating their own media environments. Social platforms and digital influencers play a formative role in shaping their interests, language, and even career aspirations. This omnipresence of media has also heightened their visual literacy—they are often more fluent in interpreting images, videos, emojis, and memes than in processing linear text.

Culturally, Generation Alpha displays a strong preference for customization, instant gratification, and immersive experiences. Their cultural consumption habits reflect an appetite for narratives that are multimodal, participatory, and emotionally engaging. For example, they may favor interactive storytelling apps over traditional picture books, or prefer creating digital art on tablets rather than using physical materials. Additionally, their exposure to global content—anime, K-pop, Western cartoons, and international video games—has made them more culturally eclectic, but sometimes also less connected to their local heritage and traditions. This disconnection presents both a challenge and an opportunity for educators and curriculum designers.

In the context of extracurricular art education, these traits imply that programs must be sensory-rich, digitally integrated, and emotionally resonant. Merely teaching technical skills such as drawing or calligraphy is unlikely to suffice. Instead, learning experiences must be designed to stimulate curiosity, allow creative autonomy, and incorporate multisensory engagement—including visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory inputs. Moreover, aligning content with familiar media aesthetics (e.g., gamified interfaces or storytelling formats) can enhance motivation and retention. By acknowledging the cognitive and cultural realities of Generation Alpha, educators can better tailor their pedagogical strategies and content frameworks. Integrating local cultural elements into a modern, interactive, and sensory-responsive model not only supports deeper learning but also re-establishes connections between young learners and their community heritage in a way that resonates with their generational identity.

Local Implementation: Regional Strategies and New Opportunities for Arts Education: At the school level, implementation has varied. In January 2024, the Ministry of Education reported significant progress in reducing homework and expanding after-school services, yet highlighted gaps in the supply of quality non-academic programs, including those in the arts. This underscores the urgent need to scale up extracurricular offerings that are creative, inclusive, and culturally grounded. Private training institutions, particularly those in the arts sector, have seen both opportunities and challenges. With academic training heavily restricted, many art centers have shifted toward compliance, curriculum innovation, and the integration of digital technologies. For instance, Guangdong Chunyin Music Education launched an online-offline hybrid model to expand student access and enrich learning formats. This transformation was supported by local education bureaus and aligned with national policy goals.

Scholarly analysis also emphasizes the evolving nature of extracurricular arts education under the policy shift. Zhao Yating (2025) points out that while the Double Reduction policy has freed art education from its test-oriented constraints, issues such as curriculum homogenization, inconsistent teacher qualifications, and uneven access to cultural resources remain prevalent, particularly in rural or underdeveloped regions. In the case of Dezhou City, Shandong Province, the local education authority has actively responded to the Double Reduction policy by promoting a balanced allocation of educational resources across urban and rural areas. Dezhou's rich cultural heritage — including black pottery, Grand Canal traditions, and local festivals — presents a unique foundation for integrating community-based content into extracurricular art education.

By aligning with national policy directives and local development strategies, this study proposes a place-based, multisensory training model that leverages regional cultural assets while addressing gaps in program diversity, student engagement, and cultural identity formation. The model not only supports educational reform but also contributes to the preservation and revitalization of local traditions through experiential learning.

This expanded policy background provides a robust foundation for situating your research within the broader framework of educational reform in China. It demonstrates that your proposed model is both policy-compliant and culturally

responsive, offering a scalable approach to extracurricular art education under the new regulatory environment.



Figure 1: Research Scope of Shandong Province,
Source: Lin Peng, 2025.

Research Objectives

1. To study and analyze the components of extracurricular art learning management of Generation Alpha in Dezhou City.
2. To establish an out-of-school art training and management model for Gen Alpha in Dezhou City, Shandong Province.



Literature Review

The development of extracurricular art training for primary school students in China has followed three main directions. First, skill- and function-oriented programs focus on traditional art training such as painting, calligraphy, dance, and music, emphasizing practicality and technical proficiency. While these programs meet parent's expectations for tangible outcomes, they often lack interdisciplinary integration and cultural innovation (Fu, 2016; Cao, 2018). Second, culture- and aesthetics-oriented projects have gained increasing attention. Many studies highlight the integration of local cultural resources—such as Dezhou black pottery, paper-cutting, and Grand Canal traditions—into curricula to enhance student's aesthetic literacy and cultural identity, thereby strengthening the connection between art education and cultural heritage (Lo, 2023; Gao, 2018). Third, comprehensive and innovative approaches combine traditional arts with modern media, emphasizing project-based learning and the use of digital platforms. These approaches promote multisensory and interdisciplinary learning, supporting both creativity and cultural engagement (Chen, 2019; Mo & Yang, 2020; Huang, 2006; Huang, 2007).

In terms of curriculum management, the ADDIE model has been widely applied in educational resource design and digital transformation. Research demonstrates that ADDIE-based micro-classes effectively support blended learning and provide valuable references for extracurricular art institutions (Bu, 2014; Deng, 2021; Liang, 2019; Mo & Yang, 2020). Furthermore, integrating vocational and professional development into curriculum design has been discussed by Li & Pan (2022), who emphasize the importance of embedding ideological and social competencies into student training. Similarly, Liu et al. (2020) highlight the role of school-enterprise cooperation in cultivating creativity and entrepreneurship, offering insights into how extracurricular art education may align with broader educational and social goals.

Curriculum objectives should not be confined to skill acquisition but should also emphasize cultural understanding, holistic literacy, and creativity. Theories of cognitive developmental stages provide important insights for setting such objectives (Gao, 2018; Tsai, 2022). Additionally, Chen (2021) highlights how integrating artificial intelligence and computational thinking into course design can expand student's problem-solving abilities and interdisciplinary



competence, providing a new perspective for extracurricular art training in the digital era.

Learning activities should highlight experiential and interdisciplinary approaches. For example, combining design thinking with cross-domain aesthetic curricula enables students to achieve self-expression and cultural connection through practice and project-based learning (Lo, 2023). In terms of resources and media, the growing digitalization of education provides new opportunities, with ADDIE-based micro-courses and multimedia platforms supporting blended learning. Assessment and feedback systems must move beyond singular approaches, strengthening process-oriented assessment and diversified feedback (Pan, 2020). Finally, learner management should not only emphasize small-class instruction and personalized tutoring but also integrate psychological care, interdisciplinary innovation, and the fusion of science and art to nurture comprehensive competencies (Wang, 2002; Li, 2004).

In summary, existing studies provide strong theoretical and practical foundations for extracurricular art training in Dezhou. Through the three developmental pathways—skill-oriented, culture-oriented, and innovation-oriented—and the six-element framework of curriculum management, this study aims to establish a localized extracurricular art model that integrates cultural heritage, interdisciplinary learning, and multisensory engagement.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method included (1) reviewing literature, books, textbooks, and academic articles related to cultural and creative products, extracurricular curriculum, and interdisciplinary education. Research on the ADDIE model and instructional design provided methodological references for curriculum construction (Bu, 2014; Deng, 2021; Liang, 2019; Mo & Yang, 2020), while studies on art-science integration highlighted the value of interdisciplinary thinking for creativity cultivation (Chen, 2019; Huang, 2006; Huang, 2007; Li, 2004; Cao, 2018). Other works emphasized the importance of curriculum evaluation and process-oriented assessment (Pan, 2020) as well as the application of digital technologies and emerging models in education (Chen, 2021; Tsai, 2022). (2) Field research was conducted in Dezhou City, observing extracurricular

art institutions and their operational practices. (3) Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 18 participants, including teachers, students, parents, and cultural practitioners, to collect in-depth perspectives on curriculum content, teaching methods, and cultural integration.

The quantitative method consisted of a questionnaire survey with 300 respondents, designed to collect data on perceptions of learning content, cultural engagement, teaching activities, and satisfaction with extracurricular art training. In addition, previous studies on vocational education and school-enterprise cooperation (Li & Pan, 2022; Liu et al., 2020) provided useful insights into how extracurricular art education can be aligned with broader educational and social needs. By triangulating qualitative findings with quantitative evidence, supported by the arts management database and a digital technology platform, this study builds a robust case study of Dezhou City, ensuring that the proposed extracurricular art training model is both empirically grounded and theoretically informed.

Shooting the Five Poisonous Creatures to Exorcise Evil			
1.Students' handicrafts using classical patterns			
Shooting the Five Poisonous Creatures to Exorcise Evil			



Figure 1: Shooting the Five Poisonous Creatures to Exorcise Evil
Source: lin peng ,2025.

Results

Components of Extracurricular Art Learning Management in Dezhou City

The study identified six interrelated components that structure the management of extracurricular art education for Generation Alpha in Dezhou City.

Learning Objectives

Institutions are not limited to cultivating skills and aesthetic appreciation; they also emphasize local history and cultural heritage, community awareness, cultural identity and confidence, cultural dissemination, and creative reinterpretation of tradition as modernized cultural expressions.

Learning Content

Programs integrate both traditional and modern elements, covering local cultural symbols such as black pottery, paper-cutting, folk New Year paintings, calligraphy, and Dezhou Braised Chicken packaging, along with rituals like Jiuda Tianqu and Sulu King' s Tomb festivals. Students transform these resources

through illustration, installation art, and digital media, achieving cross-temporal cultural innovation.

Learning Activities

Adopting a place-based approach, activities include field trips (e.g., Dezhou Museum, Grand Canal, pottery workshops), participation in cultural festivals, and project-based learning (PBL) with design thinking. Students also engage in art camps, community co-creation projects, and cross-disciplinary exploration, fostering deeper creativity.

Learning Resources and Media

Resource use combines cultural sites, tangible heritage, and community partners (elders, artisans, artists). Students employ hand-drawing, video production, and digital exhibitions, supported by platforms such as the Hope Art Education app, ensuring continuity between physical and digital learning.

Assessment and Feedback Mechanism

A diversified evaluation system was observed, consisting of process-based assessment (creative thinking, expression), outcome-based assessment (work completion, originality), and multi-source feedback (teachers, peers, community). Public presentations (art exhibitions, temple fairs) and guided self-assessment further reinforced independent learning and cultural expression.

Learner Management

Institutions generally adopt a “small but effective” approach, maintaining groups of no more than 10 students for personalized instruction. A mentorship and collaboration model, supplemented by student committees and rotating duties, encourages participation and responsibility. Teaching teams undergo regular training and reviews, ensuring instructional quality and student safety.

The Out-of-School Art Training Model for Gen Alpha in Dezhou

1) Local Heritage Integration: The study revealed that existing extracurricular art programs had a low level of integration with local cultural heritage, with only 45.3% of participants acknowledging that the curricula sufficiently reflected local cultural elements. This indicated a significant gap between current practices and the goal of fostering cultural identity among students.

2) Curriculum Characteristics: Most curricula were found to be overly traditional, focusing mainly on painting, music, and dance in isolation. They lacked interdisciplinary connections with other subjects such as history or information technology, as well as multisensory teaching strategies tailored to Generation Alpha' s learning styles.

3) Pilot Model Effectiveness: After implementing the culture-innovation model, student feedback showed significant improvements. Satisfaction rates increased from 76.26–79.52% to 93%, while cultural engagement reached 89.3% and curriculum diversity 91.7%. These results highlight the model's ability to enhance both interest and inclusivity in art education.

4) Implementation Level: The model was operationalized through a five-layer framework (objectives, pathways, content, implementation, evaluation). Its practical application combined traditional and modern art, emphasized small-class tutoring, adopted a closed-loop evaluation system, and integrated PDCA-driven iterative improvement to ensure continuous optimization.

5) Outcome Level: Learning outcomes demonstrated a progressive structure, in the short term, students-built portfolios that reflected skill acquisition in the medium term, they showed enhanced creativity and interdisciplinary competence; and in the long term, they developed a stronger sense of cultural identity and belonging.

Discussions

The thematic analysis of interviews and survey results reveals critical insights into the current status and developmental challenges of extracurricular art training for Generation Alpha in Dezhou City. The findings provide a framework for understanding the barriers and opportunities in developing a sustainable, culturally grounded, and innovative model of out-of-school art education.

Limited Integration of Local Cultural Heritage: The study shows that current extracurricular programs demonstrate a weak integration of Dezhou's cultural heritage, with only 45.3% of participants recognizing sufficient local elements such as black pottery, Grand Canal traditions, and paper-cutting. This aligns with Lo (2023), who argues that many extracurricular curricula fail to



embed cultural identity into their design, resulting in superficial engagement. The result emphasizes the importance of embedding heritage-based content to strengthen cultural identity and foster long-term attachment. Addressing this gap requires balancing skill acquisition with cultural storytelling and functional applications to enable students to experience tradition in everyday learning contexts.

Curriculum Innovation and Multisensory Learning Deficits: The predominance of traditional, skill-based curricula—centered on painting, music, and dance in isolation—highlights the lack of interdisciplinary and multisensory elements tailored to Generation Alpha’s learning preferences. Zhao (2025) notes that Alpha learners thrive in interactive and sensory-rich environments, yet existing programs remain limited in innovation. The criticism of monotonous teaching formats underscores the difficulty of keeping students engaged. The pilot culture-innovation model tested in this study demonstrated that integrating project-based learning and digital media raised satisfaction rates to 93% and curriculum diversity to 91.7%, validating the effectiveness of multisensory and interdisciplinary strategies in enhancing engagement and creativity.

Implementation Challenges in Resources and Evaluation: The interviews revealed that most institutions rely heavily on internal teaching staff, underutilizing community partners such as artisans, cultural institutions, and local festivals. Similarly, evaluation remains largely outcome-driven, focusing on finished works rather than creative processes or collaborative learning. This resonates with Pan (2020), who points out that many school-based programs lack diversified and process-oriented evaluation. After adopting a closed-loop system with multiple feedback channels, students showed improved creativity and independence, suggesting that sustainable implementation requires stronger community integration and comprehensive evaluation mechanisms.

Learner Management and Engagement Gaps: Although small-class tutoring (≤ 10 students) is a common practice, the lack of personalized guidance, psychological support, and digital integration weakens overall learner engagement. Wang (2002) argues that modern education must integrate science and art in learner management, yet current practices in Dezhou remain at a basic level. The introduction of mentorship systems and student committees in the pilot model significantly improved student responsibility and participation, indicating

that expanding self-management mechanisms and digital support tools is critical to addressing the evolving needs of Generation Alpha.

Model Effectiveness and Long-Term Sustainability: The validation of the Dezhou extracurricular art training model demonstrates significant improvements, with student satisfaction increasing from 76–79% to 93%, cultural engagement reaching 89.3%, and curriculum diversity 91.7%. Outcomes followed a progressive trajectory: portfolios in the short term, enhanced creativity and interdisciplinary literacy in the medium term, and stronger cultural identity in the long term. This supports Van Tassel-Baska & Wood (2023), who emphasize the phased development of learners through structured curriculum models. However, the study also indicates the need for longitudinal tracking and cross-regional validation to ensure the sustainability and scalability of the model.

The quantitative findings further substantiate these thematic insights. Female students (73.8%) and younger learners aged 7–12 accounted for the majority of participants, suggesting that extracurricular arts programs hold strong appeal among children with high sensitivity to aesthetics and culture. Strong correlations between Cultural Value (CV), Aesthetic Value (AV), and Innovative Value (IV) confirm that students appreciate cultural heritage when it is presented through visually engaging and innovative formats. Likewise, the positive correlation between Emotional Value (EV) and Social Value (SV) underscores the symbolic role of extracurricular arts in shaping identity and fostering community belonging. Together, these findings affirm that integrating heritage-based narratives with innovative, multisensory approaches is crucial for building a sustainable and effective extracurricular art training model in Dezhou.

Conclusions

Core Elements of Extracurricular Arts Curriculum Management Interviews, surveys, and feedback identified six key elements in Dezhou's extracurricular arts curriculum: objectives, content, activities, resources, assessment, and learner management. Current practices emphasize skill training but neglect comprehensive literacy and innovation. Content remains traditional and lacks local cultural integration. Activities are limited, with little project-based or inquiry learning. Resource use relies mainly on in-house faculty, underutilizing

community culture. Assessment focuses on results rather than process. Learner management provides basics but lacks personalization, psychological care, and digital support. This framework reveals strengths and weaknesses while offering a foundation for model construction.

Dezhou Gen Alpha Training Model: Based on these findings, a new model was built around local culture, interdisciplinary integration, and multisensory learning. It incorporates heritage elements (black pottery, Grand Canal, paper-cutting), project-based learning, and digital media to foster skills, cultural identity, creativity, and collaboration. The framework includes five levels: objectives, pathways, content, implementation, and evaluation. Validation showed student satisfaction rose from 76–79% to 93%, enhancing interest, cultural identity, and interdisciplinary literacy. This confirms the model's practical value and potential for wider application.

New Knowledges

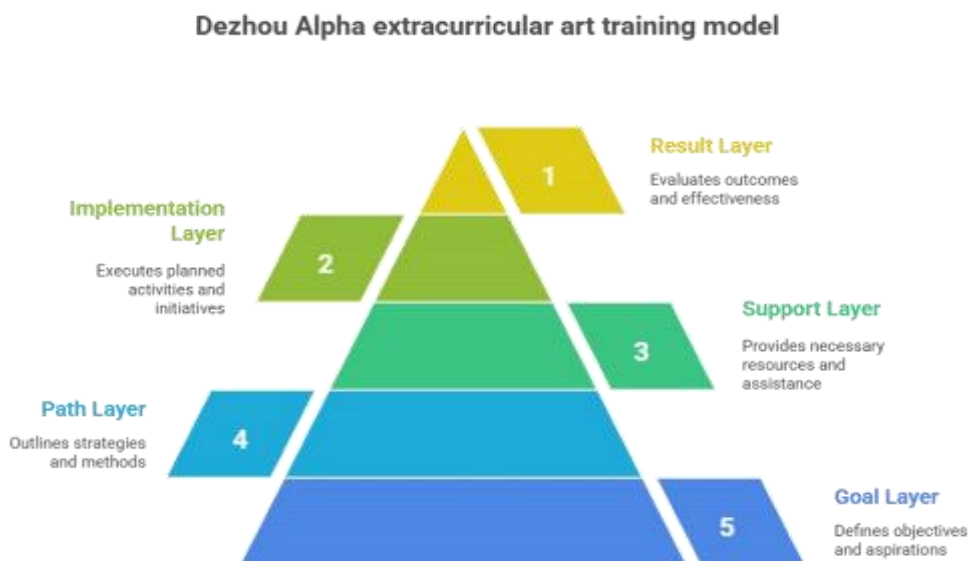


Figure 1: De zhou "Alpha" Extracurricular Art Cultivation Model

Source: lin peng, 2025.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Expand the Research Scope to Verify Model Applicability Future studies should extend the extracurricular arts training model to other cities in Shandong and nationwide, conducting multi-center comparisons to test its adaptability across different economic and cultural contexts. Using a unified evaluation framework and regional data analysis, the model' s stability can be verified, while cross-regional pilot networks with education authorities can support broader implementation and policy adoption.

2. Conduct Longitudinal Studies to Assess Long-Term Impact Long-term (3–5 years) cohort studies should regularly evaluate students' artistic skills, cultural identity, and creativity, combining quantitative indicators with qualitative feedback to assess the sustained effects of local culture-based courses (e.g., black pottery, canal culture). Including control groups and accumulating longitudinal data would provide stronger evidence for curriculum refinement and policy-making in arts education.

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