

## Chapter 2

# National Acts for Transmission of Chinese Culture and Heritage in Arts Education

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Chinese culture is the aggregation of the Chinese nation in her 5,000-year history of civilization. It is also the essence of achievements of the Chinese civilization, which is classic, full of vitality, and can best embody the Chinese cultural identity. It is the manifestation of the spirit of the Chinese nation, is the bond of cohesion of the Chinese nation, and the carrier of the common values of the Chinese nation. It includes the fine traditional Chinese ideological and cultural patterns, including diverse cultural art forms.

Chinese culture has a long history, which is broad and profound, rich and diversified. Therefore, the inheritance of Chinese culture necessarily entails a large-scale systematic engineering process. China is a centralized country, and its administrative right on education, including arts education, lies with the Ministry of Education (MOE). In this context, such inheritance at our schools has shown distinctive Chinese characteristics and advantages (i.e., it has been an action of state taken by the MOE through effective measures to promote the fine culture of China). The MOE has finally achieved significantly sound results, and its efforts are considered exceptional in this regard.

In general, the actions taken by MOE are reflected in the following three aspects:

### 2.1 Developing the Documentation of Arts Education to Raise the Inheritance to the Level of Constructing a Spiritual Home of Chinese

At present Chinese education is still examination-oriented while improving the enrollment rate is the main pursuit of schools at all levels. Under such circumstance, music, as a non-exam subject of art education in the entire school education, has

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been marginalized in the school curriculum, especially in some rural schools which even do not offer art classes. In order to promote the development of arts education in schools so that all students can enjoy arts education, the Ministry of Education as the country's highest administrative bureau in education has formulated and issued a number of arts education in schools regulatory documents in recent years. Due to these regulations issued by the policy, the normal development of arts education in schools can be assured. Moreover, since the Ministry of Education possesses the highest educational management rights, Governmental documentation in China at present has undisputable authority and distinct functions. Thus, the inheritance of Chinese culture through arts education requires the MOE to formulate and issue related documents, which are essential for educational administrative offices and schools at different levels to understand the significance of the inheritance, and to macroscopically work out the related guiding ideology, main tasks, and implementation strategy. In recent years, the MOE has established several laws and regulations on arts education at school in which this inheritance is stipulated as a key task and objective; moreover, schools need to highlight the learning of fine culture to fully understand the significant roles that cultural inheritance plays in the construction of a common spiritual home in China.

The so-called "spiritual home" refers to a place for comfort for the soul and the sustenance of the human spirit. Since the reform and opening up, China's economy developed rapidly, the building of material civilization has made great achievements, met the strong spiritual need of people increasingly. It is the aim of the government to maintain the simultaneous development of material and spiritual civilizations, so that people can enjoy the rich material and spiritual life. In this context, the Chinese government put forward the development of the concept of building the common spiritual home, to promote cultural development and prosperity in order to contribute to the construction of cultural power. Building a Chinese spiritual home is the substance and strategic task for establishing a culturally powerful state, boosting the development of culture, and realizing the great rejuvenation of the nation. For a nation, a common spiritual home is where its people may live in peace, support their living and make progress, and ascertain their identifications. In China, such a home will integrate the cultural spirit, values, and emotional attitude that are commonly relied on, carried forward, and promoted by the entire nation. The major element in the home construction process lies in inheriting and promoting the fine traditional culture of China through education, which embody the Chinese people's motivated pursuit for a spirit, a treasure steeped in history yet always brand new. School education, especially education on arts, is a key to spreading the fine Chinese culture, which has special forms and channels that are indispensable and fundamental. Based on this knowledge, the MOE has highlighted in all of its recently issued documents concerning arts education the importance of such an education and believed that schools should take it as historical mission and responsibility to build a spiritual home that is commonly shared by all Chinese.

In September 2008, the MOE issued its *Opinions on Further Strengthening Arts Education in Primary and Secondary School*, clarifying that "arts education is an essential way to let our students be nourished with fine culture of our nation and the

world, develop their profound national emotions, and thus lay a solid foundation for building a commonly shared Chinese spiritual home.”<sup>1</sup> In February 2011, the ministry emphasized in *Notes for National Experience Exchange Conference on School Arts Education* that “[boosting] the school arts education is an essential requirement for fully implementing the educational policy and [ensuring] quality education, an urgent demand for providing richer and more qualified education, an important channel to encourage students in a comprehensive and healthy development of personality, and also an effective carrier to enhance the education on Chinese traditional culture... [It also lays the] foundations in building the [commonly] shared spiritual home for [the] Chinese people.”<sup>2</sup>

Since the twenty-first century, arts education in Chinese schools has gradually moved toward a standardized track. One major indication was the MOE’s formulation and issuance of rules and regulations such as the *Working Procedures on Arts Education in Schools* (Regulation of Ministry of Education, PRC, No. 13), which has the highest authority among the current rules on arts education, and the *National Development Plans for Arts Education in School (2001–2010)*. All of these documents regard the inheritance of fine Chinese culture as their key objective in arts education and the ground to macroscopically put forward their implementation strategies and basic requirements in practical work. For example, the former aims to “spread arts education to help students to understand traditional Chinese culture of arts and fine foreign arts achievement, improve their art qualities and their love for motherland.”<sup>3</sup> The latter emphasizes that arts education in schools shall “vigorously promote those fine Chinese culture” and “art teachers shall make the best of and develop more local and national art resources.”<sup>4</sup> On top of these two documents, the same statements are also clarified in two papers, which indicate that “the after-school artistic activities shall be localized and practical, and encourage small-sized and diversified activities; for schools in minority areas, activities with distinctive minority characteristics need to be developed.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, “[s]chools need to employ experts in the circle of arts and culture and folk artisans as their tutors, [and invite] them to give special lectures, [and] provide [guidance] in after-school activities and art practices, so as to improve the arts education in the school.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the aforementioned documents have provided policy protection and support for the arts education inheritance movement, and the fine traditional Chinese culture can take root in it and grow up at school from generation to generation.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_795/201001/80591.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_795/201001/80591.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_795/201102/114962.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_795/201102/114962.html)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Physical, Health and Arts Education, MOE: *Compilation of Documents about Physical, Health and Arts & National Defense Education at School (1991–2005) (Second Volume)*, High Education Press, 2005, p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Physical, Health and Arts Education, MOE: *Compilation of Documents about Physical, Health and Arts & National Defense Education at School (1991–2005) (Second Volume)*, High Education Press, 2005, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_795/201001/80591.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_795/201001/80591.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_795/201001/80592.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_795/201001/80592.html)

In view of the achievement by primary and secondary schools in developing Chinese culture and art heritage, the MOE plans to extend this activity to colleges and universities. It is aimed to establish institutions of learning Chinese culture and artistic heritage, with focuses on promotion, research, and advocacy of intangible cultural heritage of the country.

## **2.2 Organizing Activities on Arts Education to Widely Spread the Inheritance Movement into Artistic Events Organized by Schools at Different Levels**

After-school artistic activities are not only essential, but are also the most distinguishing features of arts education. In some cases, artistic activities function as a significant impetus for arts education at school, and serve as a major platform to demonstrate a school's arts education performance with the participation of students. Therefore, such inheritance cannot do without after-school activities through which students will have the opportunity to fully know and effectively learn the characteristics of fine Chinese culture. On the basis of this knowledge, the MOE has launched various successful activities concerning the inheritance of Chinese culture.

### ***2.2.1 Creating Art Schools to Inherit Fine Chinese Culture***

In June 2010, the MOE issued the *Notice about Creating Art Schools to Inherit Fine Chinese Culture in Primary and Secondary Schools in China* to spread the inheritance movement among all primary, junior high, and senior high schools (including vocational high schools) nationwide. The movement is aimed at “improving [the quality of young people’s] knowledge of the arts and humanities, developing their emotions for the homeland..., and enhancing their national confidence and responsibility by guiding them to learn and actively participate in diversified and colorful artistic activities, and thus to lay a foundation for constructing a common spiritual home in our nation.” It further states that “through the movement, we will create a number of arts schools among primary and middle schools in China. These schools will shoulder the responsibility of carrying on fine national culture and spirit and perfecting the environment for arts education. It will be an effective way to deepen the arts education reforms and improve the quality of arts teaching, and will also be a good effort toward a ‘sincere, good, beautiful, and positive’ school culture and [adaptation to changing times, characterized] by its distinctive campus and students.” In addition, “[e]ducation on excellent traditional Chinese arts and culture [is] an integral part of aesthetic education, which shall be included in the whole process of schooling... [to] provide in-class arts education including fine traditional

Chinese culture with the support of extracurricular teaching.”<sup>7</sup> According to the notices and regulations issued, these schools have been selected once every three times since 2010. Before applying for inclusion, candidate schools have to review their own qualifications [i.e., if their programs feature Chinese arts and culture (music, dance, drama, Chinese folk art forms, folk art, and traditional manual skills, among others), and if inherited programs are chosen and confirmed in accordance with the rules on arts education and the availability of local resources]. The review and application will be based on the “Evaluative Factors for Schools Inheriting Fine Chinese Arts and Culture” established by the MOE, and the MOE will organize a group of experts to select the winners. In this manner, the first schools of inheritance were chosen.

In December 2011, the MOE announced the first 449 primary and middle schools in China to inherit Chinese arts and culture, and the Beijing Xiyi Elementary School was on the list. As required by related MOE documents, these schools must “[feature] an all-round development in morality, intelligence, physique, and art; develop arts inheritance activities to [develop their students’] national pride, self-confidence, and self-respect, to improve their cultural consciousness and confidence, and to advocate patriotism as the core of national spirit and the reform and innovation as the core of the *Zeitgeist*... [U]nder the guidance of educational administrative offices, [the schools] must develop programs with their own distinctive characteristics and traditional features [by] combining community culture activities and local artistic resources.”<sup>8</sup> The educational administrative offices at different levels are also required to regularly review and promote their good experiences and methods obtained from practical work, and the schools involved will be evaluated by experts appointed by the MOE.

Building schools that will inherit Chinese arts and culture is a creative and significant measure taken by the MOE, with a far-reaching impact on the development of the inheritance. The application and selection of these schools are subjected to voluntary application, self-review and other-rate method, and experts’ recommendation. Thus, the influence of arts education is effectively broadcasted and promoted to the public, and will drive more schools to notice and realize their responsibilities in the inheritance, and thus actively involve themselves in it.

## 2.2.2 *High Art Going into Schools*

Different from the inheritance of Chinese arts and culture, the movement of allowing high art in schools focuses on university and colleges. The activities are conducted for several weeks, and are jointly organized by the MOE, the Ministry of Culture (MOC), and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) once a year. Since its launch in 2005,

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_628/201007/92854.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_628/201007/92854.html)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_628/201112/128626.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_628/201112/128626.html)

the initiative has gained ground and has been welcomed by most students, and has played an essential role in efforts to inherit Chinese culture.

High art going into school is a movement to introduce fine arts into universities with the government paying for the performance of art troupes or studios. The goal is to improve students' aesthetic appreciation and remove their mental shackles, and to meet their demand for cultural life; to clarify the environment for arts education by creating a campus culture characterized by "sincerity, goodness, beauty, and [positivity];" and to lay a solid foundation for spreading our national culture and a commonly shared spiritual home. Different from pop culture and entertainment, the movement focuses on advanced cultures through the performance of classical works from all eras and all countries. Undoubtedly, Chinese culture is essential as indicated in the "Notice of Promoting Fine Art in Campuses in 2012" issued by the MOE, the MOC, and the MOF. The notice highlights the need "(1) to organize state-level and excellent local art troupes to perform [the] classics in universities, such as the Beijing opera, theaters, symphony, opera, ballet, folk music, [dance] and local art forms; (2) to invite arts education experts from national universities and colleges to present seminars about music, dance, theaters (traditional Chinese operas), fine arts and calligraphy (seal cutting) for students [in the] central and western regions of China; (3) to organize freshmen in Beijing to enjoy Weekend Concerts, Classrooms for Classics, and Beauties in Spring and Autumn—Stage Arts Shows in Art Academies, and key plays in China's National Grand Theatre; (4) to organize "Activities to Promote High Arts in Universities and Middle Schools" in different provinces (regions and cities), to organize performances of college art groups in universities and communities, and to invite local art groups to perform symphonies, national concerts, and local operas in universities and middle schools."<sup>9</sup>

This large-scale and widespread movement has benefited a great number of students. In the past 5 years, the project has been estimated to receive RMB 170 million worth of investments from the central finance and benefited approximately 5.5 million students. Furthermore, the movement has been extended to different provinces, having obtained almost RMB 50 million in special funds from the provincial financial subsidies. The 5 years saw 758 performances given by state-level and outstanding local art groups, including Beijing opera, Kunqu opera, and folk music and dance, with an average of more than 150 performances each year, and 612 lectures (about 120 lectures annually) given for university students in central and western regions by arts education experts, and 2,495 shows (at an average of 500 a year) in local universities and middle schools given by different college art bands and local art troupes from different provinces and cities in China.<sup>10</sup>

The movement of high arts in campuses has an incalculable impact on the inheritance of fine Chinese culture, because every year it allows millions of college students to enjoy live and free performances and classics of China presented by famous art groups, which in the past was impossible. For example, in 2012, several art groups brought the following performances to the campuses: "The Red Haired

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6474/201205/136308.html>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6477/201205/136295.html>

Galloping Horse,” “Silang Visiting His Mother,” “Chuncao Making Her Way into the Court,” “Yu Tang Chun,” and “A Story of General and Premier” by the China National Peking Opera Company; “Red Coral,” “Marrying of Xiao Erhei,” “The Red Guards in Hong Lake,” and “The Red Detachment of Women” by the China National Chinese Opera and Dance Drama Company; and “Moonlit River In Spring” accompanied with poem and music, “Ambush On All Sides,” and “Moonlight on the Pond” by the China Central Orchestra. Also featured were several local traditional operas, such as the Kunqu Operas “Ban Zhao” and “Peony Pavilion” by the Shanghai Kunqu Opera Troupe, the Huangmei Opera’s “Emperor’s Female Son-in-Law,” and “Angel Matches” by the An Zaifeng Huangmei Opera Art Theatre, and “Su Wu Herding Sheep” by the Henan Second Yuju Opera Troupe, among others.

### 2.2.3 Other Related Artistic Activities

Beijing Opera is the most influential drama in China; it is called “the quintessence of Chinese culture,” the result of traditional Chinese culture. Given its significance, in May 2008, the MOE issued the “Notice on Experiment with Allowing Beijing Opera [to Enter] the Middle and Primary School Classrooms,” which stipulates that the Beijing Opera should be included in the music program during the 9-year compulsory education, and requested for the subject matter to be added to the revised *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education*. Meanwhile, based on the particular case of their students at different grades, 15 classical Beijing operas are confirmed as the teaching materials in the middle and primary teachings from Grade 1 to Grade 9. To achieve this objective, the MOE conducted experiments from March 2008 to July 2009 in the following 10 provinces (cities): Beijing, Tianjin, Heilongjiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hubei, Guangdong, and Gansu, from where this experiment was expected to be extended to the entire country.<sup>11</sup>

According to the *Working Procedures on Arts Education in School*, the MOE will conduct a nationwide art show among universities and colleges, and middle and primary schools every 3 years. By far, this largest and highest artistic event for Chinese students has been held three times, presenting Chinese students’ artistic performances, art and calligraphic works, and arts education papers for communication. The event is intended to reflect their love of country and courage to seek the truth, their youthful and healthy spiritual outlook, and to promote Chinese culture and communicate these schools’ distinctive features of the age, the campus, and their students. All shows told their themes through the following aspects: (1) reflecting the inheritance of Chinese civilizations from generation to generation, (2) depicting school life, and (3) presenting students’ spiritual outlook.

Thus, all MOE-organized artistic events, whether they are meant to create artistic schools for inheriting fine Chinese culture, allow high arts into campuses, or bring

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_624/201001/80578.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_624/201001/80578.html)

Beijing Opera into classrooms or students' artistic shows and performance, have a common theme, which is to carry on the Chinese culture from generation to generation.

### **2.3 Conducting Reforms on Teaching Methods to Allow the Movement of Different Art Programs into Primary and Middle Schools in China**

In 2001, the government started the reform of the basic education curriculum. A new course was added to the program, which integrated dances, dramas, and others based on the original music and arts lessons. Therefore, the current arts program covers three classes: music, fine arts, and arts. The reform consistently keeps the inheritance of fine Chinese culture as its main topic, because only by integrating Chinese culture into daily teachings supported by extracurricular activities about the arts can the inheritance be put into place.

The *Curriculum Standard* set out and issued by the MOE for arts teaching in middle and primary schools and the compilation of teaching materials has reflected, to a certain extent, the basic situation of arts inheritance in contemporary China. How do these three classes (music, paintings, and fine arts) embody the theme of inheritance in their *Curriculum Criteria*?

#### **2.3.1 Music Curriculum Standard**

The basic philosophy behind the *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education* (2011) highlights the reform during the inheritance of Chinese culture. By putting “promoting national music and understanding the diversity of the musical cultures” as one of the main ideas in music education, the Standard proposes that “music teaching shall focus on the traditional music of all our nationalities; by study, students can be familiar with and love our musical cultures, and improve their consciousness and love for our nation. With the development of times and social life, the excellent [musical] works that reflect the modern and contemporary social life must be included in the teaching as well.”<sup>12</sup> According to the curriculum design, the students are required to “listen to Chinese folk music, understand typical folk songs, dances, and instruments from different areas and nations, as well as Chinese dramas and folk art forms represented by the Beijing Opera, and learn to [appreciate] their differences.”<sup>13</sup> Students at different grades will be able to sing Chinese folk songs

<sup>12</sup>MOE, *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>MOE, *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 16.



and learn Beijing operas or local dramas. The Standard also states that “[as] a vast, [heavily] populated and multi-ethnic country, China sees differences between areas, nationalities, and [between the] city and [the] countryside. Therefore, local schools and teachers will, after considering the concrete situation of the place where they live and study, make full use of local cultural resources and build appropriate music environments both at or beyond school, and enrich the teaching content with regional culture and ethnic features.”<sup>14</sup> As far as the development of program resources is concerned, the Standard requests that “both local government and the school shall fully consider the local humanistic geographical environment and cultural traditions when [developing] the music course materials with distinct regional, ethnic, and school characteristics, and must know how to properly apply the local folk music (especially the music belonging to non-material cultural heritage) into the music classes... to allow a pure and good folk music atmosphere for our students at their early ages and boost their awareness of the importance of the inheritance.”<sup>15</sup>

The Course Standard (experiment) points out that “music is the important carrier of human [cultural] inheritance. Learning our time-honored and profound national music can help our students to know and love our country’s culture.”<sup>16</sup> The Standard highlights the importance of Chinese culture and raises the following requirements in teaching: to learn traditional Chinese music and understand the main clue and achievement of music history; to use folk music resources and organize students to collect folk songs, as well as encourage them to learn to sing and play what they have collected in the field; to arrange more classes for students to collect materials in the areas with rich musical resources, where the students can collect, learn to sing, and play the songs and compositions they collect, as well as apply them as creative sources; and to enable the students to emotionally sing our drama classics and understand the origin, history, school styles, main representatives, and their achievements of these traditional cultures; and give their own opinions on their typical works.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.2 *Fine Art Curriculum Standards*

*The Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education* (2011) stresses that “the fine arts course is guided by [the] socialist core value system, [which aims] to promote our Chinese culture and meet the demand for quality education.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>MOE, *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>MOE, *Music Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup>MOE, *Ordinary High School Music Course Standard (experiment)*, People’s Education Press, 2003, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>MOE, *Ordinary High School Music Course Standard (experiment)*, People’s Education Press, 2003, pp. 8–15.

<sup>18</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 1.

In the “Appreciation and Comments” part, the Standard states the teaching objective “to uphold civilizations, [to] value excellent fine arts and [the] cultural heritage of the nation and among the folk, and to enhance our national pride.”<sup>19</sup> The Standard also describes the teaching criteria for each grade: students in Grade 3 and Grade 4 are requested to describe the fine arts works with Chinese national features in words, and express their own feelings and understandings from different perspectives; to collect fine arts among the folk (such as papercuts, Spring Festival pictures, shadow puppets, and masks), comprehend the features or messages communicated by these works, and share their feelings with the others; and discuss the characteristics of Chinese dwelling houses within the group. Students from Grade 7 to Grade 9 have to apply basic express techniques of brush and ink into Chinese paintings, learn traditional Chinese patterns, and continue designing and practicing the patterns; to understand and study traditional handicrafts among the folk or modern industrial design by visiting various locations, conducting market research or network search, and to use films, drawings, or words to record the local design resources based on which analysis and evaluation may be conducted; by watching videos or inviting local craft artists and folk artisans, understanding the techniques and features of traditional Chinese arts and crafts; to enjoy and analyze worldwide architectural works; and to learn the relationships among buildings, environment, and people based on the local architecture and environment.<sup>20</sup> With regard to the teaching materials, the Standard points out that “when deciding the content in a fine arts book, special attention shall be paid to excellent Chinese traditional fine arts and those arts among different nationalities and people, so as to spread our fine national culture and distinctive Chinese characteristics.”<sup>21</sup>

One basic concept in establishing the Ordinary High School Fine Arts Course Standard (experiment) is to “understand our country’s excellent arts and respect world diversities,” and to emphasize “the importance of guiding our students to deeply comprehend our culture that come from the different nationalities and folks of our country.” The design of the curriculum highlights the significance of inheriting these works of China by setting up a course focusing on “Handwriting and Seal Engraving,” an art form owned by our country. Meanwhile, the curriculum introduces Chinese paintings into the program of “Paintings and Sculptures,” and traditional arts and crafts into “Design and Handicraft.” The “Fine Arts Appreciation” part includes works of fine art from ancient and modern times. Among these four teaching modules, handwriting and seal engraving are distinctly Chinese, and are regarded as two traditional tools to create the artistic image of Chinese characters and embody the emotion of the creator. The activities

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<sup>19</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, pp. 17–25.

<sup>21</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 32.

centered on these two artistic forms can help students to improve their writing and their understanding of the unique charm of Chinese writing, and thus enhance their identification with traditional Chinese culture.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.3.3 *Art Curriculum Standards*

As stated in the Art Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011), “the art course is a new and comprehensive program considering its design objective, structure, content and teaching processes, and others, which inherits and carries on the tradition of music education that integrates our national poems, songs, dances, and drawings, and maintains the artistic features from our minorities, i.e., singing and dancing in tune with the music.”<sup>23</sup> The Standard stresses the basic concepts that “humane connotation of art largely lies in our life, emotions, cultures, and science... [When choosing] learning materials from the [aforementioned] four aspects, priority shall be given to our traditions and cultural heritage.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, students “are required to [develop an interest] in understanding and enjoying our traditional cultures; to learn our unique artistic expressions, and love our cultures during appreciations and analysis.”<sup>25</sup> The standard clarifies the contents to be taught in different stages. Stage 1 involves “having interest in our nation and local arts, and understanding different artistic expressions [from] different cultural backgrounds; participating in local artistic activities of their own nationality, and being able to think about and discuss the reasons behind the diversified expressions from different nationalities and areas,” and Stage 2 involves “being pleased to perceive and experience different classical artistic symbols, expressions and historical and cultural background from different nationalities and areas, and [comparing] these differences and [finding] out the similarities [among] their expression symbols, and being able to think about and discuss the symbolic meanings of the commonly used artistic symbols in classical artistic works.”<sup>26</sup>

The Ordinary High School Art Course Standard (experiment) also states that the “high school art course is full of humanities. Its humanistic connotation will drive our students to further understand, inherit, love, and carry forward our arts and cultural traditions, and arouse their strong desire to contribute to the nation’s

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<sup>22</sup>MOE, *Ordinary High School Fine Arts Course Standard (experiment)*, People’s Education Press, 2003, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, pp. 9–10.

<sup>26</sup>MOE, *Fine Arts Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)*, Beijing Normal University Press, 2012, pp. 18–19.

rejuvenation and social progress.” As described in the Standard, the inclusion of Chinese culture is essential in teaching and learning. For example, the “Arts and Culture” section provides a special place to “national folk music,” which requests students to visit artists and collect folk music, enjoy music-related folk customs and performances given by folk artisans, gather related folk artistic works or typical cultural items to explore different styles, aesthetic tastes, models of action, and cultural values.

In conclusion, whether the concern is music, fine arts, or arts in compulsory education or in the ordinary high school system, these six standards uphold the significance of the Chinese culture in middle and primary schools. The measures taken by the state to promote the inheritance of these excellent cultures are practical and effective.

Since the implementation of the aforementioned curriculum standards in 2001, the practice of art education in China has been changed immensely. One of the important changes is the teaching of Chinese culture receives gradual attention, which is reflected in three aspects. First, the domination of the national curriculum has been changed. At present the curriculum comprises the national curriculum (70 %), local curriculum and school-based curriculum; in the two latter items local folk arts act as the main teaching content with the purpose of strengthening the transmission of Chinese culture and arts. Second, in the compilation of teaching materials, for a long time before the curriculum reform, the Western arts were the main source. Since the curriculum reform, the teaching materials fully reflect the dominant position of the Chinese culture and art. An emphasis on multicultural teaching is observed. Third, specific teaching practices and extra-curricular activities have been implemented to encourage full use of local arts education resources; in particular, the development of folk art project is encouraged to build the characteristics of arts education in schools, to hire folk artists into the campus, to perform for students and part-time teaching.

As shown in this chapter, the MOE, as the most influential administrative department on education in China, has taken three significant measures, and the practice shows that these not only bring about considerable effects but also, as an action of state, guide local governments, schools, and individuals to properly inherit the Chinese culture. Therefore, arts education is playing an increasingly crucial role in the inheritance of Chinese culture.