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**Research article**

# Cultivating film appreciation and creativity: the development of public film education in mainland China

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## Abstract

Promoting citizens' film literacy has become vital in enhancing public media literacy in today's ever-changing media environment. The public dissemination of film education has gradually become an established trend in China. At present, film education in mainland China focuses on the development of both film appreciation and creativity, involves a wide range of individuals and diverse educational methods, and spreads primarily across three areas: (1) university education; (2) primary and secondary education; and (3) public education. Despite this, teaching activities remain widely dispersed, regional development lacks balance, and there is a shortage of film and television production courses. This article argues that school-based film education in China should focus upon improving the curriculum system, improving the quality of teachers, and developing courses focused on creativity, while more socially focused film education outside of schools should focus upon establishing industry norms and encouraging healthy competition between institutions.

**Keywords** film education; popularisation; mainland China

Film education has become a significant part of China's basic educational priorities. This is an era in which we need words for thinking and creating, but we also need to be able to criticise images, learn through images, and express ourselves in audiovisual language. In the twenty-first century, the ability to

appreciate, analyse and shoot film should arguably become a basic media literacy skill for the public, just like the ability to read and write.

From a Chinese perspective, it frequently seems as if European countries, such as France, Spain and the United Kingdom, have attached greater importance to the public dissemination of film education and developing new film education practices and methodologies, while China has been comparatively slow to devote significant attention to these priorities. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, Chinese governmental policy has begun to emphasise the importance of widely disseminating and promoting film literacy education at a national level. At the time of writing in 2022, alongside the development of new media technologies, improving film literacy has become an important part of media literacy development for Chinese citizens, and the development of widespread public film education has become an increasing priority across the country, as this article will explore.

## The background of promoting film literacy education

Film education in China has been influenced by two important factors: the transition from relatively elite to more widely disseminated forms of film education, and the development of media technologies that have made shooting, editing and distributing film easier.

Since the 1990s, China's professional film education has experienced a significant transformation, which commentators have described as a transition from 'elite education' to 'universal education' (Pan, 2006). The characteristics of the earlier, more restricted, forms of education lie in the meticulous division of educational programmes, small classes of students, and an emphasis upon hands-on practice, communication and discussion. In the more elite forms of education, teachers and instructors (such as Zheng Dongtian and Xie Fei) have tended to draw upon relatively rich, prior creative experiences within the film and television industries, and have frequently delivered lessons in a more stylised way based upon their own experiences, which – as a result – can potentially lack systematic structure. The basic principle of this form of approach is that film education emerges from creativity, and – as such – is directed towards creativity. Such an approach requires highly skilled teaching staff, students with a high level of comprehension, and abundant teaching resources. Here, film education seeks to develop students' ability to communicate visually and audiovisually, so their work has a strong personal touch. Approaches of this sort are frequently effective, and the professional universities following such methods (such as the Beijing Film Academy) have produced the backbone of China's 'fifth generation' of directors, such as Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou and Tian Zhuangzhuang.

During the 1990s, a growing number of colleges and universities opened film education majors, and institutions such as East China Normal University and Beijing Normal University began offering film-related majors. The number of students in professional colleges and universities such as the Beijing Film Academy has grown steadily, as film education has become an increasingly popular subject choice among prospective students. In comparison with the more elite forms detailed above, 'universal education' not only cultivates top-level artistic creative talents, but also competent industry practitioners (Pan, 2006). The result of this transformation is not only that it has opened the doors of professional film education to a growing number of applicants, but also that the approach to film education has changed, through a shift from training only a small cohort of emerging film directors to training a greater number of practitioners who are adapted to the film industry.

In the late 1990s, the use and popularisation of digital video enabled a greater number of people to create videos. Jia Zhangke and others, recognised internationally as Chinese 'sixth generation' directors, began using digital video to make films. The internet and mobile technology have fundamentally changed the media environments facing film education. Moving images have become a ubiquitous presence in our lives. Within such a media environment, improving the ability of audiences to appreciate film has become an urgent task. Simultaneously, the ability to make films has become more accessible, and the

number of people making films has increased. Smartphones can be used for a variety of creative tasks, such as shooting, editing, dubbing and publishing films. Indeed, the increasing popularity of short video apps, such as Douyin and Kuaishou in China, have made video shooting and publishing a daily routine for many people. For 'non-professional' people, too, making films has become significantly more accessible and, although 'micro-films' and 'short films' are of varying quality, they can quickly reach an audience through the internet.

Within such a context of the proliferation of visual media, film education in China has once again been required to expand its educational targets, and to consider again the popularisation – or more widespread dissemination – of film education. Currently, film literacy education in China is mainly promoted through college education, primary and secondary education, and public education, with a variety of people and educational methods involved. The following discussion explores film education practices within each of these different environments in turn.

## The development of film literacy education in colleges and universities

In the 1990s, Chinese universities and colleges began to offer film majors in tandem with another educational reform: during this period, universities began to place a high priority upon cultivating students' cultural literacy, as part of an expanded film literacy education, which was mainly focused within liberal arts departments. During this period, film appreciation courses were offered with the goal of enhancing students' abilities to appreciate film. Since then, film appreciation courses have become the most important course type for colleges and universities seeking to provide more widespread forms of film education.

After 2000, China's film industry experienced a period of rapid growth, particularly following the launch of the film industrialisation reform in 2003. This reform involved multiple stakeholders – including the government, the film and television industry, private corporations and television stations – and it had a series of different impacts: government departments in charge of film development and supervision have introduced a series of policies and regulations in order to promote the development of Chinese film culture, the film production industry has received various aspects of government funding, and private sectors outside of the film industry have gradually become the main force of film production. Further, the Chinese film distribution and exhibition industry has built more cinemas, and has improved the conditions of existing cinemas; many television stations have begun to feature films more prominently, including the launch of various new film channels; and the Chinese government has sought to take actions regarding the legislation of the film industry, the rating system, and anti-piracy initiatives (Yin, 2004). In the following years, China's film box office grew by 30 per cent annually. This expansion of the film market resulted in a parallel increase in demand for talent and – correspondingly – more and more colleges and universities opened film-related majors in response to industry demand. Peking University, Beijing Normal University, Renmin University and Shanghai University all established and developed film departments in the early 2000s, leading to a moment in which film education became significantly more widespread across China. Further, many disciplines outside of film, including pedagogy, history, anthropology and sociology, now offer film education courses to assist students in better recording and reflecting upon the research objectives of their discipline.

Within this context, some colleges and universities with a solid foundation in film disciplines began to offer courses in both film appreciation and film production, open not only to specialised film students, but also to those from other subject areas. For example, Beijing Normal University, which currently ranks first in China in terms of film studies in national academic league tables, offers a Micro-Film Production class for all postgraduate students in the school. In this class, students from different majors are able to learn filming and editing and other film-making skills, and complete their own micro-film productions within the course of a semester. The course takes 36 hours of study, and teaching focuses upon the

learning of audiovisual language, and the use of video cameras and non-linear editing systems. Students who have taken this course since its inception have included those from majors such as law, journalism, physics and education. Students frequently have different demands and goals in the class: according to course evaluations, some students wish to master aspects of technical knowledge related to filming and editing, while others hope to master video shooting and editing techniques in order to become bloggers, in an era when vlogs are becoming increasingly popular, while other students still feel it is simply necessary to expand their knowledge of film within an increasingly multimedia era. Further still, some students majoring in education hope to gain knowledge of film production in order to record and enhance their educational practice.

In recent years, many colleges and universities have begun offering massive open online courses (MOOCs) in film, reflecting the broader development of a MOOC-based approach to education in China. As of 2014, there are three main MOOC platforms in mainland China: XuetangX Online, Good University Online and Chinese University MOOC. XuetangX holds the only official authorisation to offer courses on the edX platform in mainland China. By 31 March 2020, XuetangX's main website had more than 58 million users, and more than 160 million people had enrolled in courses. The platform currently offers 16 film courses, of which only one, Introduction to Film and Television Production, from Tsinghua University, has been designated a course of national excellence by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Beyond these central MOOC platforms, bricks-and-mortar Chinese universities offer a further 37 MOOCs, including 6 courses that have similarly been deemed to be of national excellence, such as Introduction to Film, offered by Henan University, Oriental Film, offered by Wuhan University, Micro-Film Creation, offered by Huaqiao University, Appreciation of Classic Fragments of Chinese Films, offered by Beijing Normal University, Appreciation of World Excellent Films, offered by the Ocean University of China, and Appreciation of Film and Television, offered by Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics.

While Chinese colleges and universities have generally benefited from the growing popularity of film education, such developments have also raised questions. First, the growing proliferation of film education opportunities raises the question of the balance and proportion between film appreciation courses and film practice courses, when promoting film literacy among college students. At present, most colleges and universities mainly carry out the teaching of film appreciation, while there are barriers to developing the teaching of creative film practice courses due to factors such as a lack of teachers with requisite experience. Second, the current education system lacks a unified curriculum and a unified model that could be used by more schools who may wish to offer related courses. Whether the education provision of colleges and universities in regard to film can be fully developed depends mainly upon the teaching traditions, disciplinary advantages and specific staff present within an institution. While some colleges and universities want to develop their own aspects of film education provision, they lack the necessary resources. Third, while MOOCs have the potential to significantly expand educational provision in terms of the students that they are able to reach, the film-focused MOOCs available on major platforms are – at present – relatively simple, and most focus upon appreciation and history, rather than upon creative practice.

## The development of popular education of film literacy in primary and secondary schools

Since the early 1990s, China has recognised the importance of film and television education provision in primary and secondary schools through a successive series of statements and reforms. In 1993, the Central Propaganda Department, the State Education Commission, the Ministry of Radio, Film, and Television, and the Ministry of Culture jointly issued the 'Notice on Using Excellent Films and Television Films to Carry out Patriotism Education in National Primary and Secondary Schools', and decided to use what were considered to be quality films to teach students about patriotism. In addition to cultivating patriotic

feelings in young people, it was simultaneously recognised that such quality films must also serve as an educational tool.

In 2004, the National Radio and Television Administration, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, and the All-China Women's Federation jointly issued the 'Notice on Further Promoting Work on Children and Adolescents' Films', requiring relevant institutions to facilitate the film and television education of children and adolescents. In response to these requirements, on the one hand, the National Coordination Committee for Film and Television Education for Primary and Secondary School Students was established by the Ministry of Education, the National Radio and Television Administration, and the Ministry of Culture in order to provide guidance about film and television education and provide recommendations of films suitable for primary and secondary school students. On the other hand, this notice prompted schools to use auditoriums and lecture halls to show children's films, and to hold seminars and initiatives such as film review competitions in order to help students understand films.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with five other ministries and commissions, published the 'Notice on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools', which required further exploration of the approaches to using film and television works for educational purposes. Every year, the Ministry of Education organises experts to recommend a series of films to primary and secondary school students. These films tend to be those made in China, such as the anthology film *My People, My Country* (Ning Hao, Xu Zheng, Wen Muye, Guan Hu, Xue Xiaolu, Zhang Yibai, Chen Kaige, 2019). As a result of the work of relevant departments, films deemed to be of quality, legal films and public welfare films have entered school campus environments.

In 2015, the General Office of the State Council released their 'Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education', in which 'dance, opera, drama, film and television' are clearly listed as components of aesthetic education in schools, alongside music and fine arts.

In 2016, the 24th Session of the Standing Committee Meeting of the 12th National People's Congress of China deliberated and passed the 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of the Film Industry', in which Article 28 stated: 'The departments in charge of education and film of the State Council can jointly recommend films conducive to the healthy development of adolescents, and take measures to support students receiving compulsory education to watch films free of charge, organised by their schools' ([State Administration for Market Regulation, 2016](#): n.p.). In the same year, the Ministry of Education identified Shaanxi Province as a provincial experimental zone for film and television education in China, focusing on the implementation of film and television education. As an example of activities undertaken in Shaanxi Province, in 2016 an approach to film education was explored within schools across the province, one of 'watching, learning, reviewing, writing, and acting', while trained teachers were seconded to schools for guidance in teaching practice. As of 2018, all 108 counties in Shaanxi Province have established film and television education workstations, which liaise with each other in order to facilitate integrated planning across the whole province.

In 2017, the General Offices of the Ministry of Education and the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television issued the 'Notice on Promoting the Construction of the National Campus Cinema Line', and made the decision to jointly further the construction of the 'Campus Cinema Line' in order to fully utilise the film and television resources of colleges and universities, so that the viewing needs of primary and secondary school students are met. 'Campus Cinema Line' refers to the establishment of distribution networks in schools, both for the whole country, and for different provinces and cities. Companies designated by the government are tasked with sourcing, scheduling and screening, and with the operation and management of campus cinemas. Schools with film screening facilities can apply to join by self-recommendation or by recommendation by others.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China jointly issued 'Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools', which stated that:

it is recommended to use the next three to five years to establish diverse forms and abundant resources to support film and television education at all levels; The working mechanism of film and television education in primary and secondary schools is essentially established on a regular basis, and time is devoted to film and television education activities for primary and secondary students; schools, out-of-school activities for young people, and social viewing resources are effectively used, and a supportive environment for primary and secondary school film and television education is created. (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018: n.p.)

This series of educational policies serves to illustrate the importance attached to film and television education by the Chinese government in primary and secondary schools. Throughout this series of successive policies, the purpose and approach of education are gradually clarified, which many hope will have a direct impact on the development of film education in primary and secondary schools in the future. In particular, the purposes of film education in primary and secondary schools – as detailed in this series of policies – are to arouse children's feelings and educate them through films deemed to be of quality, to enrich teaching approaches, and to improve students' aesthetic comprehension. These policies detailed four specific measures. First, film education should be included in the curriculum and integrated with the teaching of Chinese and mathematics, among other disciplines. Second, the Ministry of Education will select films considered to be of excellence and suitable for teenagers' cognition, and recommend these films to schools. Third, films will be made available in various ways – for example, by schools setting up projection equipment or downloading movies through websites designated by the Ministry of Education. Fourth, various film appreciation activities should be carried out in schools, such as acting, dubbing and the writing of film reviews.

In large and medium-sized cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai, film education is relatively developed in primary and secondary schools. For example, in June 2014, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education launched a project to request the engagement of universities and social resources in the development of primary school students' physical and aesthetic education (Lin, 2017), in which universities and other institutions participated in the pedagogical development of primary schools. In particular, the Beijing Film Academy signed cooperation agreements with five primary schools, including Tan'er Hutong Primary School, Yucai Primary School and Jindian Primary School, enabling the schools to offer art courses. As a result of these agreements, Beijing Film Academy has subsequently offered a Photography course to Tan'er Hutong Primary School, a Micro-Film course to Jindian Primary School, and an Animation Film course to Yucai Primary School, in which young learners explored audiovisual language and the production of cartoons.

There are also distinctive schools and projects in small and medium-sized cities that focus on the development of film education. For example, the film education provision at Hengdian Central Primary School in Zhejiang Province is particularly notable. Hengdian is a popular location for film and television shoots in China. As a result, Hengdian Central Primary School has been trying to integrate film and television resources into its practical activities since 2003, and it has developed a course called Cultural Hengdian, which incorporates the characteristics of Hengdian film and television into the classroom. The course initially focused on the skills required to be a tour guide: hosting, performing and speaking. Further, however, the school has developed a comprehensive training system for students in three areas: film viewing, discussion and production. The curriculum is composed of 'class-based clubs' and 'extracurricular special activities' (Yu, 2019). Various aspects of film and television education are integrated into the five-year teaching plan of primary school, and courses with progressive content are arranged according to the age groups of students (Table 1).

**Table 1. Curriculum content for each grade level (Source: Hengdian Central Primary School)**

Grade	Course	Content
First grade	Physical training course	Combines students' observation of film and television work and trains their simple performance skills.
Second grade	Film and television dubbing course	Students should learn how to recognise and perceive various sounds in films. Through the analysis of film excerpts and simple simulation training in the classroom, students can gain knowledge of sound effects in films and television, and they can integrate sounds emitted by natural objects into the sound effects of cartoons.
Third grade	Character design course	Students should be educated to develop aspects of aesthetic perception, and, in particular, to perceive colour and form. With the help of vivid pictures and real objects (borrowed from filmic representations of Hengdian), the class explores a variety of costumes from Han, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, up to modern times. Additionally, this course helps students develop their cognition and understanding of cultural costume and colour matching.
Fourth grade	Prop-making course	Students are encouraged to visit the film and television props warehouse for a tour, to rent various types of film props and show them in class, and to gain an understanding of historical culture and visual representations. At the same time, through the design and construction of simple props in the classroom, students can explore hands-on practical skills.
Fifth grade	Poster design course	Students will learn how to shoot and appreciate movie posters on their own, understand the design characteristics of various types of posters, use their imagination in designing film posters, and utilise posters to connect characters, colours, props and other elements related to cinema.

Hengdian Central Primary School also holds film viewing and creative activities such as the Colourful Campus Film and Television Festival, Monthly Film and Sitcom Rehearsal. Monthly Film refers to the recommendation of a film per month for students, who are encouraged to discuss it after watching, while Sitcom Rehearsal is an activity in which students re-enact popular sitcoms. Some of the highlights of the Colourful Campus Film and Television Festival include an opening ceremony, a photography exhibition, a film and television open day and a film critic competition.

In summary, while the Chinese government attaches great importance to film education for young people, and several educational programmes are being actively promoted, there are still various significant challenges to be resolved. One particular question is exactly what sort of films young people should be watching during film appreciation activities. Establishing a list of suggested films would seem to be a significant part of disseminating film education more widely for young people. China's film industry does not yet have a rating system, so it is important to be careful when selecting Chinese films that are appropriate for a young audience. A second question is how children should learn to make films. Since the emphasis on nurturing creativity differs significantly from vocational training, the process of developing young people's practical skills arguably should not emphasise the perfection of skill acquisition, but rather the ability to observe the world and to feel one's surrounding environment through cameras and audio equipment. In this respect, film education for young people should arguably be promoted in a way that cultivates their ability to discover and explore beauty.

## Popularisation of film education in public art institutions

Alongside more formal programmes of education at the level of primary, secondary and higher education, certain public art institutions in China also encourage film education for the general public. The work of such institutions tends to cover three main aspects: film screenings, cultivating understandings of film culture and history, and the dissemination of film production skills.

In terms of film screenings, public art institutions often feature classic films from the history of cinema. A notable example in this respect is the China Film Archive, which opened an associated art theatre in 1955. While this cinema initially organised screenings mainly for the researchers working within the archive, these later developed into film education activities and academic screenings when the cinema was subsequently opened to the public as an art theatre.

The films screened by the China Film Archive mainly include, but are not limited to, four aspects.

First, the China Film Archive seeks to celebrate classics of both Chinese and broader world film history. The archive has organised many retrospectives of the films of Chinese and foreign directors, including those of Aki Kaurismäki, Claude Chabrol and Lu Xiaoya. Further, the museum focuses on Chinese films for which original materials may have been lost in mainland China, and for which copies may exist overseas. For example, the museum has screened the 1927 Chinese silent film classic *Pan Si Dong*, discovered in Norway, and the rare film *Little Heroine*, featuring Hu Rongrong.

Second, serving as a window for China's foreign film exchange, the Art Cinema of the China Film Archive has cooperated with embassies and cultural centres from various countries to celebrate the works of other national cinemas, while simultaneously promoting the dissemination of Chinese films abroad. For example, in March 2021, the China Film Archive and the French Embassy in China jointly held the 2021 French Film Festival. China Film Archive also hosts the Brazilian Film Festival, the Iceland Film Festival. Elsewhere, in order to promote Chinese cinema abroad, the Chinese Film Tracing film exhibition was held in Tokyo, Kyoto and Fukuoka, Japan, from January to March 2021.

Third, the China Film Archive works to discover and support emerging directors in China. In March 2021, the archive launched the Young Filmmaker Recommendation Programme in order to advance the films of young people considered to have both artistic expression and market potential, and – in particular – platformed the work of two emergent young directors, Pengfei and Zhang Dalei. The Xiaoxi-tian Art Cinema screened the feature film *The Summer is Gone* directed by Zhang Dalei, and two short films *Day is Done* and *The Night of Canned Peaches* (Chinese Film Archive, 2021).

Finally, in 2016, the China Film Archive launched a long-term social organisation for art films in collaboration with major Chinese cinema chains, leading film creators and online ticketing platforms, which helped to popularise art cinema in China. At present, it has more than one thousand six hundred cinemas nationwide, with more than two thousand screens. Films such as *Manchester by the Sea* (Kenneth Lonergan, 2016) and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (Martin McDonagh, 2018) were introduced to Chinese cinemas through this organisation.

In order to advance film education, other public art institutions beyond the China Film Archive have pursued their own strategies. China Film Museum, for example, carries out various film education activities for the general public, such as Film Lecture Hall and Light and Shadow Knowledge Paradise, in order to share basic aspects of film knowledge with the public through its website (China National Film Museum, n.d.). The Shadow E-Classroom section of the Light and Shadow Knowledge Paradise website also disseminates film-related knowledge online through various forms of social media. Recent content in this respect includes 'Colours in movies', 'When movies fall in love with dance' and 'Stop-motion animation'. Furthermore, the China Film Museum offers Family Day of Film Knowledge, a programme that enable parents and children to participate in film education activities side-by-side, so that children can learn in an enjoyable and relaxed environment. Elsewhere, in September 2019, the China Film Archive set up editor Liao Qingsong's Film Editing Workshop to recruit students for on-site exchanges with professional film-makers. Here, students were able to apply to attend the workshop regardless of their educational background and work experience. However, this workshop represented mainly an opportunity for sharing and knowledge exchange, rather than being a concerted programme of study.

The analysis above indicates that the development of film education in public art institutions in China is concentrated predominantly in large cities. Currently, those public art institutions that offer film education opportunities primarily support audience appreciation of film and television, as opposed to more creative aspects of film education. It is worth noting in this respect that public film education

with a greater practical component is more common in other Asian countries, such as South Korea. For example, there are over fifty video media centres in South Korea. These media centres are embedded within Korea's public culture, and they enable citizens in the community to learn and use media, and to produce and disseminate media content. Such media centres are located all over Korea – for example, the JungNang-Gu Media Center in the JungNang-Gu District of Seoul, and the Daegu Video Media Centre in the eastern district of Daegu. These centres offer courses on topics such as video theory, production workshops and aspects of production practice, alongside various special lectures from film professionals. In addition to providing a platform for individuals and groups to use multimedia through its website (<http://www.krmedia.org/home.php>), these media centres – for example – offer film equipment rental services to professionals and ordinary people alike.

In recent years, however, there have been many commercial training institutions established in mainland China, such as the Cinema Hello and Post Wave (Hou-lang) Film Academy. Many of these schools invite celebrated film-makers from the Chinese film industry to give lectures, and they offer a variety of courses, including directing, acting, photography, colour grading and scriptwriting, with tutoring fees ranging from less than 100 yuan to more than 10,000 yuan. In this respect, through the combination of online and offline modes of learning, ordinary people are able to access professional aspects of technology for the production of films and television.

The well-known organisation Cinema Hello (<https://www.zhipianbang.com/>) has several sections such as Community and Courses, Filming Academy and One Recording Peer. Among these, Community and Courses is divided into several professional groups, such as the screenwriter community and the producer community, with regular webcasts by insiders to increase interaction between participants and sharers. The Filming Academy offers an extensive curriculum that includes Offline training, Today's Film Academy, HOMY Colour School and SC Online Film Academy. Among these, SC Online Film Academy is a platform dedicated to cultivating producers, through a project-based approach to training. Taken as a whole, however, the sector for commercial film and television training institutions is, at present, somewhat chaotic, with a variety of types of training institutions, courses that are not yet standardised, inconsistent fees, varying qualities of educational approach and other issues.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, outside of professional, industry-facing film education, China has been slow as a nation to give sufficient priority to the more universal, educative value of film literacy. In the present era of ubiquitous media technologies and improved access to education, film education has evolved from an elite to a more widely available form of education, where even those not pursuing specialist programmes of study have a growing number of opportunities to study film. In my concluding remarks, I draw upon the survey of film education in China presented within this article in offering certain recommendations as to how the sector might beneficially be further developed. I first present three recommendations for more formal programmes of learning, across primary, secondary and higher education, before presenting three recommendations for less formal programmes of learning, outside these institutions.

Regarding film literacy education in colleges and universities, there remain many challenges to address, particularly pertaining to subject resources and teachers with requisite experience. In order to address these problems, we should arguably seek to learn from those institutions with greater experience and success in opening up early opportunities for more widely available film education. Equally, it would seem to be important to encourage institutions with specialist knowledge of film education to establish knowledge exchange opportunities for others wishing to develop or open up wider access to aspects of film education. With the advent of MOOCs in the age of the internet, colleges and universities in the film education sector have an opportunity to develop a scientific and planned curriculum, which would be to the benefit of the development of film education across China as a whole.

Furthermore, there are opportunities for colleges and universities to host film-related cultural activities. As opposed to primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities have the ability to provide a broader social platform, in order to encourage students to participate in activities on an ongoing basis as adults. These events could – and in certain instances already do – include film festivals and film exhibitions of all sizes, as well as film review and short story competitions, campus television channels and more. It would seem important to create further opportunities for students to organise discussions about film culture activities, such as how to select films for campus film exhibitions, how to write film reviews to comment on and appreciate cinema, or how to organise a team to create short films and develop understanding of film-making.

A further important step is to create a film education alliance in relevant regions for resource sharing. Major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai should seize the opportunity to develop comprehensive approaches to film education, with the help of their superior resources from the city and its colleges and universities. In contrast, most of the colleges and universities in Hebei and similar areas of China do not have sufficient facilities for teachers to carry out film education, and there is still a relatively obvious distance from universities in Beijing, Shanghai and other places. To solve this problem, we could consider utilising the geographical proximity and the advantages of some nearby cities, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta region and the Pearl River Delta region, in order to drive the development of film education with the advantages of the resources from these neighbouring cities.

To develop a unified curriculum system and standardised curriculum materials to stimulate film literacy in primary and secondary schools, I emphasise the importance of first building a unified curriculum system. Many primary and secondary schools do not yet offer film courses, and many schools cannot guarantee the time to do so. Indeed, many schools across China would arguably be unable to start courses in film education, even if the requisite time could be guaranteed. It is important to note that there is no existing course design to refer to, so teachers have to design such courses by themselves. Many schools do not have full-time film teachers, and most of the classroom teachers who do teach aspects of film are part-time teachers from other subjects. Therefore, many classroom teachers have no professional background in film and lack requisite learning, experience and understanding of film culture, history and aesthetics. In these instances, teachers must design curricula based upon their existing knowledge, and it is – unsurprisingly – challenging to achieve scientific and systematic results from teaching. Arguably, in order to support such schools in implementing effective teaching approaches and materials, professional colleges, universities or schools with relatively established approaches to film education need to take the lead in designing usable materials. Only with such support can teachers begin to set normative standards for film education in primary and secondary schools.

Primary and secondary schools located in cities with greater resources in terms of leading higher education institutions can draw upon the expertise within those institutions to assist the development of their own film education provision. In 2014, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission began mobilising resources from universities and broader society to support sports and aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools. A more concerted approach to film education would, I argue, strengthen and improve physical and aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools, and would improve students' aesthetic and humanistic learning. According to an unpublished report by the Beijing Film Academy in 2018, secondary schools in cities such as Beijing, Tianjin and Zhejiang rely on the academic resources of local universities to carry out film education in primary and secondary schools, and in many instances have achieved satisfying results. Such initiatives, I argue, should be further developed: colleges and universities can support and develop film education in primary and secondary schools by providing teachers with expertise in film, as well as helping to support the training of teachers.

A third step would be to organise more campus film and cultural activities. Such activities provide students with further platforms for learning, promoting an atmosphere of film appreciation and film creation, and opportunities for practical film-making experience outside of more formal programmes of

learning. It is recommended that the government actively encourages local film exhibitors to show films to primary and secondary school students, as indeed is required by the Chinese government's 'Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Film and Television Education in Primary and Secondary Schools'. Such an approach to local exhibition should, likewise, be mirrored in television broadcast, where there is also an opportunity to foster the screening of selected aspects of cinema. Furthermore, many schools now use networked resources (such as Smart Education of China [<https://www.zxx.edu.cn/>] and the National Public Service Platform for Educational Resources [<https://www.eduyun.cn/>]) to conduct film and television education, which thus have the potential to become platforms for film education provision in primary and secondary schools, especially for those that lack access to cinemas to watch films.

Beyond more formal programmes of learning at primary, secondary and higher education levels, I argue that Chinese film education in wider society should focus on building diverse platforms, providing a variety of learning paths, and providing learning opportunities and paths for different groups of people. Diversifying communication platforms is a significant measure for major public art institutions in the age of digital media, and this plays an important role in promoting the wider implementation of film education. Currently, social education platforms, such as public art institutions and MOOCs, do provide aspects of relevant knowledge, but they rarely serve the creative needs of the public directly. The advent of the digital age has lowered the hardware requirement for film education. China can learn from South Korea's practice, and can establish media centres in cities. By teaching practical film production courses and providing access to equipment, the Video Media Centre aims to cultivate interest and awareness of cinema, and to develop courses that members of the public without a specialist interest in film can access. As one of the public cultural infrastructures, the Video Media Centre provides a platform for individuals and groups to easily use aspects of multimedia technology in the digital age, and it provides a platform for sharing resources so that professionals and amateurs can rent equipment.

A second recommendation for this sector is to foster learning resources suited to different user groups. Unlike colleges and universities, and primary and secondary education, social education has many audiences and levels, and it is therefore difficult to organise unified approaches to teaching. This means that a multifaceted education system based on socialised education is arguably required. At the time of writing, China's film education for the wider public (beyond more specialised institutions) has just begun. While some institutions have made useful progress, there are still relatively few institutions that provide film education, and the activities that do exist tend to be scattered. As a comparison, in addition to film archives, exhibitions and venture capital, the United Kingdom's British Film Institute places a much earlier priority upon film education, and its work in undertaking aspects of public film education significantly predates that of China. I argue that China, similarly, must prioritise efforts to build a robust film education system in order to encourage more widespread public engagement.

A third recommendation focuses on the value of standardising commercial film education. Today, the overall market for commercial training institutions is relatively chaotic – the criteria by which training institutions measure learning success is highly divergent, different training courses have not yet developed into a coherent system, standards are not uniform, and the number of teachers is uneven. A growing number of commercial training institutions, however, reflect the public's desire to learn professional film and television technology. If such institutions can form a standardised development track, they can make a valuable contribution to film education in China. Such efforts would facilitate the formation of a virtuous circle between personnel training and the development of the education market. Public and private institutions should be encouraged to invest in the film education industry to further its development. If commercial film and television training can be effectively regulated, I argue that it can be considered an effective way to spread film knowledge and education more widely in China.

In conclusion, even though public film education in China must arguably emphasise the cultivation of students' creative capacities, the conception of film education that I argue for in this article is not necessarily a specialised one that aims to cultivate mastery of a particular creative skill, but rather a more generalised education that aims to be as widely accessible as possible to the public. The aim of public

film education, in this respect, should be not only to teach creative techniques, but also to enhance interest in art so that students can be capable of expressing themselves in a manner that is in accordance with today's digital environment.

## Declarations and conflicts of interest

### Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

### Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

### Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

## Filmography

*Day is Done* (CN 2020, Zhang Dalei)

*Little Heroine* (CN 1939, Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Xiaoqiu)

*Manchester by the Sea* (US 2016, Kenneth Lonergan)

*My People, My Country* (CN 2019, Ning Hao, Xu Zheng, Wen Muye, Guan Hu, Xue Xiaolu, Zhang Yibai and Chen Kaige)

*The Night of Canned Peaches* (CN 2018, Zhang Dalei)

*Pan Si Dong* (CN 1927, Dan Duyu)

*The Summer is Gone* (CN 2016, Zhang Dalei)

*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (US/GB 2018, Martin McDonagh)

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