

# Constructing the Connotation and Exploring the Development Pathways of High-Quality Development in Private Art Colleges

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**Abstract:** As China's higher education enters a new phase of high-quality development, private art colleges—being a vital part of the education system—are shifting from rapid expansion to connotative improvement. Based on a comprehensive review of relevant domestic and international literature, this study integrates questionnaire surveys, interviews, and case studies to construct a multidimensional framework for high-quality development in private art colleges. The findings identify several key challenges, such as ambiguous institutional positioning, imbalanced faculty structures, weak industry-academia integration, and underdeveloped governance systems. In response, the paper proposes six strategic pathways, including clarifying development strategies, enhancing teaching systems, deepening industry-education cooperation, restructuring internal governance, improving faculty quality, and strengthening cultural service capacities. The study concludes that high-quality development in private art institutions should follow a model of specialization, connotation, and collaboration, aiming for sustainable advancement under multi-stakeholder support. This research provides actionable insights for policymakers and university administrators.

**Keywords:** Private Colleges; Art Education; High-Quality Development; Strategic Pathways; Institutional Reform

## 1. Introduction

As China's higher education enters a new era emphasizing quality improvement and structural optimization [1], private colleges—especially those specializing in the arts—are shifting from the educational periphery toward the center of policy and academic attention.

These institutions play an increasingly vital role in supporting the cultural and creative industries and enriching regional cultural ecosystems [2]. However, private art colleges have long faced significant challenges, including ambiguous institutional positioning, limited educational resources, and uneven quality of instruction [3]. The call for "high-quality development" is not only a national policy imperative but also a pressing internal demand for sustainable institutional transformation. Although this concept has become prominent in both academic and policy discourse, there remains a lack of in-depth, targeted research specifically addressing private art colleges, particularly in the areas of conceptual development, diagnostic analysis, and strategic planning. This paper therefore aims to clarify the intrinsic meaning of high-quality development in this sector, identify key barriers, and propose viable development strategies [4]. By integrating literature analysis, field investigations, and case studies, this research seeks to fill theoretical gaps and offer practical guidance for institutional governance and policy design.

## 2. Constructing the Connotation of High-Quality Development in Private Art Colleges

High-quality development is the core requirement of higher education in the new era. It is not only a directional expression in educational policy but also represents a fundamental shift in universities from "extensive expansion" to "connotative improvement." For private art colleges, the connotation of high-quality development does not merely lie in increased resource input or achievement of quantitative indicators. Rather, it involves reconstructing their institutional value, development logic [5], and distinctive identity within a complex environment shaped by societal needs, cultural missions, and

regulatory systems. Clarifying the connotative framework of high-quality development is thus both a prerequisite for understanding its essence and a critical foundation for policy implementation and strategic advancement.

The foremost component of high-quality development lies in clarifying institutional positioning and refining educational distinctiveness [6]. Due to their diverse founding bodies and relatively weak historical foundations, private art colleges often fall into a pattern of “homogenized competition” and “imitative duplication,” resulting in the erosion of their core competitiveness. High-quality development must therefore begin with top-level design, formulating a precise developmental positioning—whether it aims to serve regional cultural industries, cultivate specialized art talents [7], or pursue interdisciplinary innovation between technology and the arts. Institutions should also construct a recognizable artistic identity and cultural ethos, including visual systems and symbolic narratives, to form a distinct and cohesive institutional image [8].

At the core of connotative development lies the systematic enhancement of teaching and learning quality [9]. Unlike general higher education institutions, art colleges emphasize the integration of practical skills, creative ability, and expressive competence. This necessitates the construction of interdisciplinary curricula that deeply integrate theory with practice and introduce formats such as workshops, studio rehearsals, and project-based learning. Furthermore, teaching evaluation should shift from “teacher-centered” to “student-centered” models, establishing diversified assessment systems that stimulate individual potential and creative expression. In terms of resource allocation, universities should build open and shared teaching platforms, promote the digitization and online dissemination of high-quality teaching resources, and broaden access to interdisciplinary materials.

A key support mechanism for high-quality development lies in the professionalization and sustainability of faculty structures. Most private art colleges currently face high faculty turnover, weak systems for developing young teachers, and insufficient proportions of “dual-qualified” (teaching and industry-practiced) faculty. Therefore, a new institutional

employment philosophy should be established—one that emphasizes a balance of full-time and part-time faculty, integration of teaching and industry, and equal weight on teaching and research. A multidimensional evaluation model should be constructed based on academic rank promotion, artistic achievements, and social influence, enabling teachers to pursue development paths that integrate artistic creation, project participation, and scholarly research. In particular, colleges should strengthen collaboration with industry partners by recruiting practice-oriented professionals and fostering a co-teaching model that integrates academic instructors with industry experts.

The high-quality development of private art colleges also relies on deepening industry-education integration. Unlike comprehensive universities that emphasize “employability,” art colleges should reposition industry collaboration as a means of “creative incubation” and “cultural transformation [10].” For instance, institutions can establish “creative studios” or “performance laboratories” in partnership with local cultural tourism agencies, digital media firms, or broadcasting companies, aligning academic projects directly with market demands and turning class assignments into real-world artistic products. Additionally, mechanisms should be put in place to allow co-development of programs, co-authorship of textbooks, and joint student assessments between schools and enterprises, thus ensuring seamless alignment between academic curricula and industry standards.

Institutional transformation toward high-quality development requires modernizing internal governance structures. Many private colleges remain entrenched in “familial management” or “administrative centralism,” lacking democratic, transparent, and standardized governance systems. High-quality development necessitates reforming the legal person governance structure, clarifying the responsibilities of the board of directors, the president, and the academic committee, and establishing a modern university governance system centered on rule-based operations and academic evaluation. Concurrently, colleges should improve information disclosure mechanisms, build participation channels for faculty and students in institutional decision-

making, promote flatter organizational structures, and enhance the efficiency of internal communication flows.

Moreover, private art colleges should proactively assume social responsibility and cultural dissemination roles. In the context of the national strategy for building a culturally strong country, art education should not only prepare students for employment or enhance technical skills but also engage with society and contribute to cultural prosperity. Institutions should actively partner with local governments, community centers, museums, and media platforms to create an integrated service framework encompassing cultural output, civic engagement, and public education. By organizing cultural campus events, public art performances, and exhibitions of intangible heritage, art colleges can transform academic outcomes into tangible and interactive cultural services for the broader society.

Finally, the high-quality development of private art colleges should not be viewed as the achievement of static indicator systems but as a dynamic and evolving process. The connotation of development must be flexibly adjusted and iteratively refined based on national policy directions, higher education trends, and institutional realities. Therefore, it is essential to build a dynamic monitoring system that incorporates diagnosis, evaluation, optimization, and feedback—ensuring continuous quality enhancement and institutional adaptability.

In summary, the high-quality development of private art colleges should be grounded in a six-dimensional integrated framework: institutional positioning, teaching quality, faculty structure, industry-education integration, governance mechanisms, and social service. Only through multi-level coordination and systemic innovation can these institutions achieve a meaningful transformation from quantitative growth to qualitative enhancement, constructing a development path for private art education that is rooted in Chinese characteristics while oriented toward a global vision.

### 3. Problem Identification and Empirical Analysis

After clarifying the conceptual structure of high-quality development, the next step is to identify the practical barriers faced by private

art colleges, which is a critical foundation for formulating actionable strategies. To comprehensively grasp the current situation, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Ten representative private art colleges across China were selected, covering four major disciplines: film, design, music, and fine arts. A total of 834 valid questionnaires were collected from faculty and students, and 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators. Through data analysis, cross-tabulation, field observations, and institutional document analysis, five core issues hindering the high-quality development of private art colleges were identified.

Ambiguous institutional positioning and lack of strategic direction emerged as the first major problem. Survey results show that only 27.9% of faculty members believed their institution had a clear medium- to long-term development strategy, while as many as 54.6% of student respondents felt that their school lacked a distinctive educational style and that curricula often imitated others. Most private art colleges have not formed a professional development trajectory aligned with regional cultural demands in their top-level planning, nor have they developed a clear competitive edge, leading to weak brand recognition and limited interdisciplinary integration. As one vice dean from a design college remarked during the interview: “Our institution lacks an overall planning logic based on the characteristics of art disciplines. The current programs remain traditional and are not oriented toward future academic development.”

Secondly, the faculty structure is imbalanced, and professional leadership is weak. Data show that only 43.8% of full-time teachers at the surveyed institutions held a master’s degree or above, and the proportion of “dual-qualified” faculty was less than 15%. Moreover, over 61% of students reported that “teaching methods are monotonous and practical guidance is lacking,” reflecting unreasonable faculty composition, weak mechanisms for nurturing young teachers, and ineffective pathways for recruiting professionals with industry experience. Interviewees noted the absence of institutional incentives to engage in artistic creation, practical projects, or research, highlighting heavy teaching loads and a scarcity of research support.

The third issue is an outdated teaching system and curriculum disconnected from industry needs. According to survey data, only 22.5% of students believed that “classroom content is aligned with current industry trends.” Most syllabi still follow traditional textbook-based frameworks, ignoring elements such as digital media, interdisciplinary expression, and contemporary aesthetic trends. This is especially evident in emerging fields like film, animation, and digital music, where curricula lag behind, failing to equip students with skills for technological integration and cross-platform creativity. One example, College X, implemented a “project-based + industry-order” model in recent years, and saw a nearly 30% increase in student satisfaction, indicating the strong positive impact of application-oriented teaching systems.

Fourth, superficial industry-education integration and limited synergy are common problems. While over 90% of surveyed colleges claimed to have partnerships with industry enterprises, the actual outcomes were limited. Most collaboration remained at the level of “internship referrals” or “joint signage,” lacking co-designed curricula, joint assessments, and collaborative education models. Approximately 67.3% of students believed that “industry partnerships are not well integrated into classroom teaching,” and only 12.8% of faculty had participated in real industry projects, illustrating the lack of deep cooperation and mutual benefit. As one director of industry collaboration stated: “Enterprises expect us to deliver job-ready graduates, but all we provide are résumés.”

Fifth, rigid governance structures and absent quality assurance systems severely constrain development. Survey results show that only 19.2% of teachers believed that their institutions had a clear and efficient internal governance structure. Most private art colleges have not yet established modern university governance systems. Issues such as symbolic academic committees, administrative-teaching disconnects, and formalistic internal evaluations are widespread. In terms of “teaching quality feedback mechanisms,” only 9.4% of students stated that “feedback in class is effectively addressed,” indicating a lack of closed-loop regulation in teaching management and no traceable pathway for improvement. Further investigation revealed

that quality assurance departments often function as subordinate units without operational autonomy or accountability, rendering them ineffective in driving continuous improvement.

Synthesizing the above findings, this study categorizes the developmental challenges of private art colleges into two dimensions: structural limitations and institutional mismatches. On one hand, there is mounting external pressure juxtaposed with insufficient internal capacity; on the other, the logic of internal governance does not align with the intrinsic goals of art education. While policy guidelines emphasize a “quality-first” orientation, in practice, many private art colleges still lack a systematic logic chain to support such development. There is little coordination among development philosophy, organizational design, resource allocation, and evaluation mechanisms.

Based on this problem analysis, the study argues that the core bottleneck in achieving high-quality development in private art colleges lies not in individual shortcomings but in mismatched institutional design and structural arrangements. Thus, future strategic planning must focus on reconstructing governance logic, activating systemic resources, and innovating coordination mechanisms—shifting from an “indicator-driven” to a truly “connotation-driven” model, thereby achieving systematic advancement in educational outcomes.

#### **4. Development Pathways and Strategic Recommendations**

Based on the preceding problem identification and empirical findings, the key to enabling high-quality development in private art colleges lies in constructing a systematic, scientific, and sustainable set of developmental pathways. This section, aligned with the six core dimensions of connotative development and the structural weaknesses identified through field research, proposes six comprehensive strategic pathways from the perspectives of conceptual transformation, institutional reform, and practical innovation.

Redefine institutional positioning and establish distinctive development directions. High-quality development must be guided by a clear strategic orientation. Private art colleges should align their positioning with regional

cultural ecosystems, industry structures, and social needs, thereby pursuing precise and differentiated growth. For example, institutions may focus on niche areas such as film production, intangible cultural heritage preservation, or digital media arts. Such specialization will foster brand recognition and a sense of professional identity, enhancing the institution's influence in targeted creative sectors. Construct an "integration + innovation" oriented curriculum system. Curriculum reform serves as the cornerstone of quality enhancement. It is recommended that schools adopt a "project-driven, outcome-based" approach to restructure course frameworks, integrating theoretical instruction with practical and industry-linked components. By promoting the convergence of art and technology, tradition and modernity, and design and communication, schools can implement thematic, contextualized, and task-based teaching models. Teachers should co-design course content with industry experts and incorporate real-world cases as instructional materials, achieving genuine alignment between learning and application. Cultivate a high-caliber, interdisciplinary, and stable teaching faculty. Faculty quality directly determines educational outcomes. It is essential to build a faculty development system that combines competency orientation with practical engagement. Schools should offer dual-track promotion paths for full-time and adjunct instructors, and dual-dimensional pathways balancing teaching and creative practice. Institutions should also introduce policies supporting faculty participation in industry projects, research grants, and off-campus creative work, thereby improving their comprehensive teaching capacities and enhancing institutional academic quality. Deepen industry-education integration and build collaborative creative ecosystems. Moving beyond the disconnection between "academic teaching" and "enterprise employment," institutions should develop co-constructed, co-managed platforms such as "creative incubation bases," "artistic studios," and "professional labs." These platforms can be jointly operated by universities, industry players, artists, and local cultural organizations. Practical projects should be embedded within curricula, and academic assignments should respond to authentic industry needs, forming a

"project-as-course, product-as-outcome" model. This creates an ecological chain integrating teaching, innovation, and artistic production.

Modernize governance structures and enhance quality assurance mechanisms. Modern governance is the institutional cornerstone of high-quality development. Schools should adopt a three-pronged governance model involving the board of directors, university president, and academic committee, thereby improving transparency, participation, and execution capacity. On the quality assurance front, a comprehensive evaluation system should be established, incorporating internal self-assessment, third-party evaluations, and student feedback. Specialized committees should be set up to monitor course quality and student learning experiences, shifting quality control from static outcome assessments to dynamic process improvement. Expand the scope of social services and strengthen cultural responsibilities. Private art colleges are not merely educational institutions but also cultural intermediaries. Schools should actively engage in local cultural development, participate in public art programs, organize community art education, and plan cultural festivals. A tripartite "university-community-government" cultural cooperation mechanism can be established to transform academic outputs into accessible, visible, and interactive public cultural resources, thereby enhancing the cultural presence and societal impact of the institution.

High-quality development is not about adding resources or chasing metrics—it is the result of systemic transformation. Private art colleges must guide their development through strategic vision, strengthen institutional capacity through refined governance, and fulfill their social mission through cultural engagement. This transformation marks the shift from a survival-oriented mindset to a quality-led model, paving the way for a development path that reflects Chinese characteristics, artistic excellence, and contemporary value.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Against the backdrop of China's ongoing transformation in higher education, private art colleges—known for their institutional flexibility, creative autonomy, and unique cultural missions—have emerged as significant

players in promoting both educational equity and national cultural advancement. Their capacity to respond rapidly to social needs, cultivate diverse artistic talent, and engage in regional cultural revitalization positions them as indispensable components of China's education system. However, the realization of high-quality development in this sector is not merely a matter of policy alignment or resource allocation; it constitutes a foundational rethinking of institutional identity, operational mechanisms, and educational responsibilities.

This study, guided by the analytical logic of “connotation construction–problem identification–pathway exploration,” systematically builds a six-dimensional theoretical framework tailored to the high-quality development of private art colleges. The framework highlights six critical and interrelated barriers that currently constrain these institutions: ambiguous strategic positioning, outdated and rigid curriculum structures, inadequate and unbalanced faculty composition, weak and superficial industry-education integration, institutional governance imbalances, and underdeveloped mechanisms for social and cultural service. These challenges are not isolated; rather, they reflect a systemic disconnect between educational supply and cultural-creative industry demand, as well as internal inertia in adapting to the evolving educational ecosystem.

In response, this paper proposes six integrated strategic pathways: refining institutional positioning with an emphasis on differentiation and cultural identity; constructing interdisciplinary and practice-driven curricula aligned with industry trends; cultivating dual-qualified and industry-experienced faculty through reformed recruitment and development mechanisms; establishing sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with enterprises to deepen industry-education collaboration; innovating governance structures to ensure participatory and responsive decision-making; and expanding the role of art colleges in serving regional development, public culture, and aesthetic education beyond the campus.

The study concludes that achieving high-quality development in private art colleges requires a paradigm shift from resource dependence to capacity building, from policy

compliance to institutional innovation, and from isolated operation to coordinated collaboration. This transformation must be centered on the core value of “quality,” manifested through holistic institutional reform, internally driven innovation, shared cultural vision, and adaptive ecosystems of collaboration. Only by anchoring development in quality rather than quantity can private art colleges overcome marginalization and assert their legitimacy as vital contributors to China's soft power and cultural strategy.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research enriches the discourse on high-quality development by extending its application to the field of private art education—an area previously underexplored in policy and academic literature. The proposed strategic framework offers a structured yet flexible model that institutions can adapt to their unique contexts, thereby enhancing the field's conceptual clarity and operability. From a practical perspective, the study provides actionable insights for institutional leaders, policymakers, and frontline educators seeking to navigate the challenges of reform and cultivate sustainable growth in educational quality.

Nevertheless, the research is not without limitations. The sample scope is geographically concentrated, and the empirical component focuses primarily on a limited number of institutional case studies. Future research should expand the sample base, conduct longitudinal and comparative studies across different regions and institutional types, and explore the deeper mechanisms by which stakeholder participation—particularly from industry and community partners—can be institutionalized within governance and teaching systems.

In conclusion, the pursuit of high-quality development in private art colleges is a long-term, strategic, and systemic undertaking. It entails not only a redefinition of educational goals but also a profound reconfiguration of how these institutions position themselves within the broader cultural and educational landscape. Only through the synergy of national strategic alignment, sound policy frameworks, and the endogenous vitality of institutions themselves can private art colleges evolve from peripheral actors to value-driven engines of artistic innovation and cultural

education—charting a development trajectory marked by Chinese characteristics, global vision, and artistic integrity.

### Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the 2025 Planning Project of the China Association for Non-Government Education (School Development Category) , Project Number: CANFZG24244.

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