

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

EXPLORATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
DELIVERY OF ARTISTIC SPORT CURRICULUM
IN THE UK AND CHINA

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Preface

This thesis is my original work, and no part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other course/degree of study for any other educational qualification. This thesis was ethically approved by the ethical committee involved in the research.

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Abstract:

This study explored the challenges and opportunities within the realm of artistic sports courses in China, primarily focusing on vocational outcomes for students in Chinese universities and addresses potential implications for enhancement in the context of teaching and learning practices. Through the insights garnered from higher education experts, on-campus students, and social professionals related to artistic sports, this research considered the potential of UK practices to inform the development of Chinese courses, adopting a rigorous and methodical approach to research design, informed by Saunders et al.'s "Research Onion" model. It comprehensively explored philosophical underpinnings, theory development approaches, research choices, strategies, and techniques with procedures.

In addition, the research incorporated an in-depth review of pedagogic theory and contemporary literature to establish context. A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from both China and the U.K. The primary analytical strategy employed was thematic analysis, enriched by a template analysis approach. This comprehensive methodology facilitated a deep exploration, interpretation, and analysis of the data, culminating in a detailed understanding of the current state and potential improvements of artistic sports courses in China.

Key findings from the research illuminate a range of expanded employment opportunities in artistic sports. This includes roles in artistic sports therapy, artistic sports health consulting, careers in health and social care, traditional Chinese artistic sports, artistic sports creativity, academic research, and positions requiring entrepreneurial skills. Further findings encourage a series of research implications for enhancing the teaching and learning practices within artistic sports courses, which span five critical dimensions in higher education delivery: course design, course content and learning experience, course implementation, course assessment, and quality enhancement. Among the key implications, the study highlights the expansion of course objectives, the need for course content diversification to cater to broader

vocational outcomes, effective communication and cooperation strategies to improve course implementation, and comprehensive, diverse assessment approaches, especially including the innovative use of student portfolios. It also emphasises the importance of enhancing quality by updating university policies, enhancing the lecturer team, and shifting teaching methods to more learner-centred approaches.

The above findings presented in this study offer significant contributions to developing artistic sports education in China. By aligning course design with societal and industry demands and addressing the distinctive interests and abilities of students, the study also offers the potential opportunity to enhance the quality, relevance, and impact of higher education in the realm of artistic sports courses.

Key Words/Phrases: Artistic Sport, Course Objectives, Course Content, Course Implementation, Course Assessment, Quality Enhancement, Vocational Outcomes, Portfolios, Active Learning, Pedagogy in Higher Education.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

For over a decade, from 2006 to 2019, I had the privilege of serving as a course leader and senior lecturer at the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Hunan University of Technology, China, where I dedicated myself to, and was passionate about, the development of artistic sports courses. Throughout this time, I was also actively involved in research aimed at exploring the potential of artistic sports activities to enhance people's quality of life and support vulnerable groups, such as left-behind children and older people. One example is my recent publication: Zhou et al. (2023) which explored how artistic sports activities can mentally and physically benefit left-behind children in China. During my career, I have identified numerous challenges associated with the development of artistic sports courses in China.

One of the primary challenges concerns the ambiguity about the definition of artistic sport in Chinese academia, which presents a major hurdle to the identification of relevant references and sources and hinders effective communication and collaboration among scholars and practitioners. As Fang Qi (2018) noted, the variety of terminology currently used in Chinese academia and its lack of clarity can cause confusion among scholars, such as "physical education of art", "sports performance art", "sporting art", "sports-art", "art-sports". Despite Jianshe Zhou (2020)'s efforts to consolidate the concept of artistic sports in China, the confusion surrounding the terminology still poses a significant barrier to disseminating Chinese scholarly achievements and exchanging knowledge internationally. To facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge among Chinese scholars and among those from different parts of the world, it is necessary to establish a common international understanding of artistic sports terminology. Such a shared understanding would foster effective communication, promote collaboration, and facilitate the development of artistic sports courses in China and elsewhere.

In addition to the definitional ambiguity, another significant concern that has been occupying my mind for years is the imperative need to expand the scope of vocational outcomes for students in the artistic sports field to provide a more diverse and comprehensive array of employment and career possibilities. As Zhongquan (2022) revealed, the current focal points in curriculum studies related to artistic sports in Chinese higher education are the advancement of education and performance-oriented training for students to enhance their teaching and performance capabilities. Du Xiru (2020) projected that future research would concentrate on coaching artistic sports activities in primary or secondary schools to identify and foster potential high-level competitors. This longstanding emphasis on developing teaching and performance skills is epitomised in the description (course overview) of the course of the artistic sport from Beijing Sports University - China's highest-ranking sports university, which states that:

Developing students' abilities to grasp solid artistic sports theoretical knowledge and hold strong dance teaching and performance skills in various artistic sports activities, as well as building basic practical innovation ability. Finally, students with high-quality applied skills can perform artistic sports activities in different types of performance groups, schools, clubs, and other units, as well as teaching, coaching, and creative work related to dance performance. Studying majors include Dance, Dancesport, Ice dance, Breakdance, and Creative Dance...(Beijing Sport University, 2022)

It is perhaps not surprising then that MA and Wu (2015) and Wu Dongfang (2018) observed that most Chinese higher education students who undertake artistic sports courses aspire to work in education, performance, or athletic fields, which does not adequately address the actual requirements of society in artistic sports and maximise the potential of learners, resulting in potential limitation of their employment prospects upon graduation.

As discussed in scholarly literature, the constrained opportunities for learners in artistic

sports courses can be potentially attributed to several factors. Wu Dongfang (2018) and Lei (2013) noted that one major issue is the marginalisation of artistic sports courses within the Chinese higher education system, resulting from the absence of standardised course specifications in national education policy documents. MA and Wu (2015) added that artistic sports courses are not included in policy documents such as the "China National Standard for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Curriculum in Higher Education." As a result, universities are required to replicate course content from other related disciplines, such as art education and sports education, and use them to guide the teaching and learning processes for artistic sports courses. This approach has resulted in a narrow range of vocational outcomes for students in the field.

Therefore, my working experience and reflections have led me to recognise that the social and cultural context in which artistic sports courses are developed and taught plays a crucial role in shaping the provision of artistic sports course resources in Chinese higher education. As emphasised by Côté and Pickard (2022), a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural context is crucial to inform course development in higher education. This perspective is relevant to developing artistic sports courses in China, where it is important to consider the broader social and cultural contexts domestically and internationally that influence the provision of resources and the expansion of vocational opportunities for students. Furthermore, obtaining a more profound understanding of national policies and their impact on the development of artistic sports courses is also essential in shaping course objectives, content, and guidelines for higher education in China.

1.2 Social and Cultural Context

Based on China's social and cultural context, the growing domestic demand for artistic sports courses reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of interdisciplinary skills in the social workforce (Dehua LI, 2019). For example, public schools frequently seek graduates who possess artistic sports abilities for teaching or coaching positions

in art and sports fields (MA and Wu, 2015). Also, private educational institutions such as art schools, sports clubs, and fitness facilities are increasingly hiring professionals with artistic sports skills (Huang Bo, 2013). Entrepreneurship skills also seem increasingly important, as some graduates choose to work independently in "artistic sports" by creating job opportunities for themselves (Dehua LI, 2019). Therefore, since 2001, nearly 200 institutions (MA and Wu, 2015, Dehua LI, 2019) in China have begun to offer artistic sports courses, including universities, colleges, and vocational education institutions.

Considering the social and cultural context is crucial not only in China but also internationally for the development of artistic sports courses. In the U.K., Doug Sandle (2013) and his colleagues Long and Sandle (2019) have been working on the "fields of vision: the arts in sport initiative" since 2011, which aims to explore the potential economic, societal, and cultural benefits of merging sport and art through interdisciplinary collaboration with scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. They emphasised that:

The collaboration between sport and the arts can stimulate cultural innovation and take a fresh look at the aesthetics of sport, as well as the potential benefits to the health of greater collaboration, which might address problems generated by modern lifestyles...Not only does it highlight the potential for greater collaboration and interdisciplinarity between the arts and sport in theoretical discourse, social and cultural policy, education, and professional practice, it still presents opportunities for optimism for the future. (Long and Sandle, 2019: p717-719).

Despite there being no courses specifically named "artistic sports" in the UK, my extensive working experience in this field has allowed me to discover related courses offered under different names in the U.K.'s higher education, such as dance movement psychotherapy, physical education with dance, and sports and dance therapy. These courses have developed different pedagogical strategies and approaches based on

the U.K.'s higher education background that could potentially inform the development of artistic sports courses in China and help diversify the vocational outcomes for Chinese students.

Similarly, in India, "The Art of Sport" organisation promotes the development of young girls through a program that combines sports and art therapy, which aims to strengthen their physical, mental, and emotional capacities (Sport, 2022). Its official website states that:

The art of sport is a paradigm shift in its work. It is not developing a sports academy but rather a program designed to help girls from 5-17 who used to love to play and run around but, for whatever reason, have stopped, such as mental or health-related issues.

Based on the international examples outlined above, it is evident that merging art and sports can lead to potential benefits which promote holistic learner development, particularly in addressing physical or mental health-related issues caused by modern lifestyles across various populations. This highlights the importance of integrating diverse perspectives into developing and delivering artistic sports courses.

Obviously, these diverse social and cultural contexts highlighted above have captured my attention, especially in addressing physical and mental health-related issues, which inspired me to believe that this interdisciplinary approach can be applied to re-examine traditional disciplines and explore new avenues of learning and research. Also, this perspective encouraged me to recognise that artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education should not exist in isolation but engage with the wider social and cultural forces that shape our lives.

It is not only the diversity in social and cultural contexts that can potentially inform the development of artistic sports courses in China but also guidance from national policies, particularly in the field of health.

1.3 Policy Guidance

To facilitate holistic learner development, artistic sports courses should also be aligned with evolving national health policy guidance and tailored to embrace diverse social and cultural contexts. By integrating these factors, artistic sports courses can effectively promote the holistic growth of learners.

In China, for instance, the government announced the "Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan" in 2016 to align with the global goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Strategy (GA, 2015)". The plan aims to provide comprehensive, whole-life-cycle healthcare to all citizens by 2030 (Organization, 2017), with a focus on promoting physical activity and sports as a means of improving health and well-being. The main targets of the plan include raising the average life expectancy of the Chinese population to 79 years old.

The plan includes the following targets:

- 1) By 2030, the development of human-health professionals will be strengthened, including specialists in Sport Rehabilitation Science and Movement Mental Well-being Science. The target ratio is 2-3 Social Sports-Health Instructors per 1000 people in every community, and they will be guaranteed employment until 2030 (Zhuang, 2016).
- 2) By 2030, the integration of sport science and medical science will be promoted. The government plans to develop an Exercise Prescription Library for different ethnic groups and genders, across different geographical locations and body types, as a way to underpin a newly created Disease Management & Health Service (Zhuang, 2016).
- 3) By 2030, the maintenance of people's health is expected to be achieved primarily through non-invasive means and without the use of medication. Physical activity will be the key measure for tackling the problems generated by sedentary lifestyles, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, insulin

resistance, atherosclerosis, and others. The plan also includes the development of Apps for the National Fitness Healthy Monitoring System and the conduct of the Sports Risk Assessment (Zhuang, 2016).

Based on the above health policy guidance, I believe that incorporating artistic sports courses into China's national health policy initiative can potentially contribute to achieving the targets set in the "Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan". The plan emphasises the promotion of physical activity and sports to improve health and well-being, and artistic sports activities can be a valuable addition to achieve this goal.

For example, the above policy initiative targets 2-3 Social Sports-health Instructors per 1000 people in every community, which offers potential vocational opportunities for students, especially focused on "tackling the problems generated by sedentary lifestyles". In this social context, artistic sports activities can potentially play a significant role in tackling these health issues. For example, studies have shown that engaging in artistic sports activities can help reduce obesity (Mestek, 2022), manage diabetes (Haryono et al., 2022), lower blood pressure levels (Anca, 2016), prevent atherosclerosis (Marquez et al., 2023), and other associated health problems. Therefore, it is evident that in the social context of national health policy guidance, students who learn such courses have potential opportunities to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, leading to diversified vocational outcomes in social sports-health instruction. This not only expands their employment prospects beyond the traditional pathways of teaching, performing, or competing but also enables them to make meaningful contributions to their communities by promoting artistic sports activity and healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, this could facilitate the growth and development of artistic sports courses by fostering greater innovation, creativity, and diversity in their practice and application.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

In this study, the phrase "Artistic Sports" has been employed to describe a specific

type of social activity within sports culture. These activities involve the demonstration of physical skills, as described by Min LI (2011), combined with the incorporation of artistic elements such as music, choreography, and costumes to enhance the sport's artistic appeal, as noted by Fang Qi (2018) and MA and Wu (2015). This unique combination sets it apart from other non-artistic sports and promotes physical and mental growth in the body and mind (Zhong-bao, 2009). As Fang Qi (2018) described:

Activities in artistic sports require a high degree of sport skill, precision, technical proficiency, and physical fitness and allow participants to express themselves creatively and artistically, making them both challenging and rewarding...which is a unique opportunity for them to develop their physical, mental, and artistic abilities, making it a valuable form of social activity within sports culture...examples of artistic sports activities include Figure Skating, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Aerobic Dance, and Synchronized Swimming. (Fang Qi. 2018: p86-87).

Based on the above definition, this research aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the provision of artistic sports higher education courses in China, with a focus on the vocational outcomes of students in Chinese universities. This will involve identifying valuable implications and recommendations for enhancing Chinese artistic sports courses. To achieve this aim, the research objectives are:

1. To explore pedagogical strategies in literature and gather insights from higher education researchers in relation to experiences of, and perspectives on, artistic sport courses.

As pedagogical strategies play a critical role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, it is imperative to investigate effective, interdisciplinary, and innovative pedagogical strategies in literature and seek insights from higher education researchers, with a focus on relevant and specific pedagogical elements

pertaining to artistic sports. Doing so has the potential to expand and diversify pedagogical practices, thus enhancing the quality of artistic sports education.

2. To explore the experiences of, and perspectives on, educational curricula relating to artistic sport in China, with the goal of building an in-depth understanding.

To fully comprehend the development of artistic sports courses in China, it is essential to examine the social and cultural contexts inherent in higher education domestically. Specifically, building a comprehensive understanding of Chinese artistic sports courses will require a thorough exploration of their current state, including interviews with experts and social professionals and focus groups with students.

3. To examine UK perspectives on artistic sports related education and consider their potential to inform the development of Chinese artistic sports courses.

In the UK, although there are no actual courses under the name of artistic sports, related courses are available under different names, such as dance movement psychotherapy, physical education with dance, and sports and dance therapy. Therefore, they hold the potential to provide valuable insights into the broader impact of artistic sports courses, which may also potentially guide Chinese educators in adapting similar approaches to artistic sports in their context.

4. To explore experiences of, and perspectives on, vocational outcomes of students in artistic sport education.

By exploring the current industry market and specific employment options, the objective has the potential to provide valuable insights into the competencies that are in demand in the current social and cultural contexts. Also, it has the potential to benefit the development of educational programs and assist students in making informed decisions about their career paths.

To achieve the above objectives, a series of semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a range of interviewees. These will encompass Chinese interviewees, such as experts, students, and social professionals, as well as the U.K.'s interviewees, including experts and social professionals, which is to delve into their experiences and perspectives regarding artistic sport-related courses and the artistic sports industry market.

1.5 Structure of The Thesis

Chapter 1 initiates this thesis by sharing my personal and professional experiences and generates the research aim: to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, focusing on the vocational outcomes of students in Chinese universities. Upon reflection on the challenges that emerged from my personal and professional experiences, I realised that the social and cultural context in which artistic sports courses are developed and taught influences the provision of course resources in Chinese higher education. Additionally, policy guidance plays a crucial role in shaping the development of artistic sports courses. Following the introduction, Chapter 1 proceeds to present the study's research aims and objectives, which involve exploring pedagogical strategies in higher education, deeply understanding artistic sports courses in China, examining UK perspectives on courses related to artistic sports, and finally identifying valuable recommendations for enhancing Chinese artistic sports courses and exploring vocational outcomes of students in artistic sports education.

Building upon the aim established in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 explores the heart of the matter: the interplay between curriculum components and pedagogical strategies in artistic sports courses. Recognising that these foundational elements are just as important as the challenges and opportunities aim to explore, this Chapter takes a three-pronged approach. First, it identifies key curriculum components based on the work of Ralph W. Tyler, laying the framework for effective and coherent curriculum development for artistic sports courses in China. Next, it explores the "curriculum

constructive alignment" principles of John Biggs & Catherine Tang, which emphasise the need for alignment between learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Finally, the Chapter reviews various pedagogical strategies in higher education, distinguishing between didactic and active learning and their potential role in China's artistic sports courses. By weaving these theoretical strands together, this Chapter forms a robust groundwork for exploration into developing and enhancing artistic sports courses in China.

Chapter 3, developing from the initial aim stated in Chapter 1 and the curriculum framework introduced in Chapter 2, conducts a comprehensive review of literature related to the development of artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education. The review is structured around Tyler's curriculum framework, considering four key components: objectives, content and learning experience, implementation, and assessment. Employing systematic criteria for identifying relevant literature across six major electronic databases, the review captures both English and Chinese language scholarship within the realm of artistic sports in China. In addition to examining academic literature, this Chapter also analyses university documents to recognise the current content, focus, and structure of artistic sports courses in China. This review not only provides an understanding of the courses' alignment with the industry's job market needs but also contributes significantly to identifying the challenges and opportunities in developing artistic sports courses. This intricate understanding forms a robust foundation for the subsequent research stages to explore this study's overarching aim.

Chapter 4 serves as a transition from the theoretical exploration of the first three Chapters into the practical aspects of the research, focusing on the methodology. Following the "Research Onion" model by Saunders et al. (2012), this Chapter outlines the successive stages of the research design. This process begins with section 4.2 discussing the "philosophical underpinning" of this study, including the ontological and epistemological assumptions, extends through section 4.3.1 which elaborates on the

"approach to theory development", including the reasoning approach, section 4.3.2 covers 'research choices', including the methodological choice, section 4.3.3 discusses 'research strategies', detailing the use of thematic analysis supported by a template analysis approach, and section 4.4 outlines the "techniques and procedures", encompassing the research design, research participants and sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Each section of this Chapter is devoted to one of these stages, creating a detailed and systematic description of the research methodology. This framework ensures the research process is comprehensive, coherent, and clearly presented to readers. The methodology presented in this Chapter lays the groundwork for the following data analysis and discussion, providing a robust foundation for the insights gleaned from this research into the provision of artistic sports courses in China.

Chapter 5, a critical stage in the research, explores the research findings by focusing on the interpretation and initial synthesis of interview data collected from China and the U.K., using the methodologies and tools established in Chapter 4. Drawing upon the foundation of the initial Chapters, this section aims to understand the challenges and opportunities in offering artistic sports courses in China through a focused exploration of data using the structured curriculum framework inspired by Tyler's Curriculum Rationale. In the first two sections of this Chapter, this research applies the "Research Steps of Template Analysis" and the "Research 'A Priori' Themes" to interpret the interview data systematically. This process leads to the finalised coding templates, presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.14, which guide the in-depth interpretation of the interview data. In the third section of this Chapter, an initial synthesis and comparison of views from the two different national contexts are presented based on the interpretation of data collected from interviews, focusing on the similarities and distinctive insights from both China and the U.K.'s interviews. This approach enriches our understanding of the challenges and opportunities of developing artistic sports courses in China. The outcomes of this initial synthesis will serve as the foundation for the comprehensive discussion in Chapter 6. Consequently, this Chapter provides a comparative and contextual interpretation and initial synthesis of the data crucial to

the research objective.

Chapter 6 serves as a comprehensive platform for discussing findings primarily from the interviews of Chapter 5. It reconnects these findings with the existing literature and university document descriptions outlined in Chapter 3 and incorporates new emerging literature to enhance our understanding of the research's significance and implications. This Chapter is structured around the four-curriculum framework from Chapter 2. Also, it introduces a newly emergent theme—"Quality Enhancement Opportunity"—providing a fresh perspective to understand the challenges and opportunities of delivering artistic sports courses in China. The Chapter reveals this through a four-step process: revisiting research findings, discussing findings in context, integrating new literature, and reserving the implications and recommendations for the future for Chapter 7. Each step deepens the understanding of the development of artistic sports courses in China. Therefore, this Chapter bridges the detailed findings from earlier Chapters to the broader implications and future recommendations to be discussed in Chapter 7, offering a comprehensive and enriched understanding of the landscape of artistic sports courses in China.

Chapter 7 extends the dialogue from Chapter 6, highlighting the broader implications of our research findings and detailing the diverse opportunities of vocational outcomes for students, primarily derived from Chapters 5 and 6 and enriched by my professional insights. Meanwhile, this Chapter leverages key principles of "Curriculum Constructive Alignment" and pedagogical approaches extensively explored in Chapter 2, offering a comprehensive perspective on teaching, and learning practices within artistic sports courses, which aim to deepen our understanding of addressing challenges and opportunities in China's artistic sports courses, drawing lessons from the U.K. context. The structure of this Chapter aligns with the discussion in Chapter 6, ensuring a coherent discourse and enabling the reader to connect findings with implications. The Chapter concludes by considering the study's strengths, limitations, and unique contribution to artistic sports, proposing recommendations for future development.

More importantly, the final conclusion revisits my personal motivations for pursuing this research, providing a forward-thinking dialogue that brings the narrative full circle back to the starting point in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 Understanding Curriculum and Pedagogies for Artistic Sports

2.1. Introduction

Chapter One established the aim of this research as developing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China. To effectively address this aim, a crucial initial step is understanding and clarifying the structural elements that underpin the courses, commonly called curriculum components. Simultaneously, pedagogical strategies play a critical role in course development, and Leat and Higgins (2002) highlighted that understanding the pedagogical strategies employed in higher education is equally significant as the curriculum component because it elucidates the role of teachers and the various instructional approaches and techniques they utilise to facilitate learning and achieve educational goals.

Understanding the relationship between the curriculum components and pedagogical strategies is also quite critical, as it has the potential to establish a solid, recognisable foundation for developing artistic sports courses in China. Barnett et al. (2001) emphasised the importance of pedagogical strategies in implementing a curriculum and noted that these strategies cannot be separated from curriculum components, such as specific curriculum objectives, the content to be taught, and assessment feedback, because curriculum components inform the selection, adaptation, and evaluation of pedagogic strategies, while these strategies influence the design, development, and enactment of curriculum components.

By understanding this significant relationship, this Chapter begins by identifying and explaining key curriculum components based on classic curriculum development and design theories, with a particular focus on their potential roles in developing artistic sports courses, as highlighted in section 2.2.5. Drawing inspiration from the influential

work of Ralph W. Tyler, renowned for his contributions to curriculum components' design, the insights provided by Tyler (1949) on course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment serve as a guiding framework, which demonstrates their potential applicability in the domain of artistic sports courses and lay the foundation for the subsequent explorations undertaken in this study. Furthermore, Tyler's rationale and curriculum components' design framework enables the creation of an effective and coherent curriculum for artistic sports education.

The second part of this Chapter explores the principles of “curriculum constructive alignment” proposed by John Biggs & Catherine Tang, which emphasises the alignment of intended learning outcomes (objectives), learning and teaching strategies (implementation), and assessment methods to foster reflective and meaningful learning experiences and encourage student engagement and reflection. It has strong potential to enhance further understanding of how the curriculum components should align to create coherent and impactful learning experiences. Also, by incorporating this perspective, the Chapter addresses the importance of the potential role of constructive alignment practices within the context of artistic sports courses.

Moreover, the final section of this Chapter examines the literature on key pedagogies in higher education. Through a review of relevant scholarly works, this section also distinguishes between didactic and active learning, elucidating the teacher-centred didactic approaches and learner-centred active learning activities. Building upon this foundation, the following section explores the potential role of active learning in facilitating the development of artistic sports courses in China.

This Chapter establishes a framework that combines classic curriculum development and design theory, more recent constructive alignment principles, and pedagogical insights from higher education, all of which serve as valuable theoretical foundations for underpinning the development and improvement of artistic sports courses in China.

2.2. Key Curriculum Components from Tyler's Perspectives

Scholars exploring curriculum research often address several fundamental questions, such as identifying “Who are the learners?” (Boikanyo, 1998, Marshall, 1998), “What is the actual teaching content?” (Kurz, 2011, Loveless, 2004, Wyse et al., 2012, Backlund, 2002), “What teaching experience is most valuable?” (Giebelhaus and Bowman, 2002, Haberman, 1988, Brady, 1989, Schleicher, 2018), and ultimately discerning “What should be taught to whom for which purpose in which situation?” (Dillon, 2009, Pearson, 1991).

Among the numerous educational scholars, Ralph W. Tyler (1902-1994) has been widely recognised for his contributions to curriculum development, design, and assessment (Collister, 2021). Ralph W. Tyler, an American educator, specialised in curriculum theory and made a lasting impact on the field through his influential work known as the "Tyler Rationale" (Miller, 2022). His seminal book, "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction" (Tyler, 1949), initially published in 1949, laid the foundation for curriculum development and provided a comprehensive framework for creating effective educational programs. In this influential work, Tyler outlined four key components of the curriculum framework:

- ⇒ Identifying the Educational Purposes,
- ⇒ Selecting the Learning Experiences,
- ⇒ Organising the Learning Experiences,
- ⇒ And Evaluating the Learning Experiences (Tyler, 1949)

By addressing these four components, scholars can establish a stronger foundation for curriculum research, leading to greater harmony and coherence in educational practices. Fogarty (1976) described that these four curriculum components emphasise the systematic development of “the course objectives”, “the selection of appropriate content”, “the thoughtful design of learning experiences”, and “the use of valid assessment methods”. Also, Fogarty (1976) added that this framework highlighted the importance of aligning these components to ensure meaningful learning outcomes for students, which will also be further discussed in the subsequent section: “Curriculum

Constructive Alignment”.

However, Tyler's framework has faced criticism in various contexts. Hlebowitsh (2021) argued that this framework overlooks the social and cultural dimensions of education, oversimplifies learning by focusing solely on measurable behaviours, and neglects the complexity and diversity of human experiences. Similarly, Samplius (2020) contended that Tyler's framework provides limited consideration for students' individual characteristics, unexpected situations, and the need for adaptation to unintended learning outcomes. Despite these criticisms, Fogarty (1976) believed that Tyler's framework was flexible and adaptable, meant to be tailored to specific situations and purposes rather than rigidly or dogmatically followed.

Tyler's framework maintains widespread application and reference in various educational contexts. For instance, Cruickshank (2018) used Tyler's framework in exploring the design of health and physical education curricula, and Rapp and Corral-Granados (2021) examined how Tyler's framework can be used to understand inclusive education from a social system perspective. Thus, the extensive utilisation of this framework across diverse educational settings emphasises its potential relevance and applicability within the domain of artistic sports education. Moreover, embracing this framework has the potential to empower this research, facilitating a deeper comprehension of the challenges and opportunities associated with providing artistic sports courses. This, in turn, can enable the development of a targeted, effective, and cohesive curriculum tailored specifically to the needs of artistic sports in China.

2.2.1. Identifying the Educational Purposes - Curriculum Objectives

Educational purposes as the starting point of course development have been highlighted in the educational research (López-Alvarado, 2016). Tyler (1949) highlighted that the initial key component of a curriculum framework in course development is the identification of appropriate educational purposes, answering the

question: "What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?". Building upon Tyler's ideas, Zais (1976) distinguished three distinct forms of curriculum purposes: "curriculum aims," "curriculum goals," and "curriculum objectives." Unfortunately, the lack of clear differentiation among these terms in numerous literature sources has created a certain level of ambiguity among scholars when attempting to employ them.

2.2.1.1. Distinguishing Curriculum "Aims", "Goals", and "Objectives".

In terms of curriculum "Aims", Noddings (2007) and Okunloye (2009) explained that curriculum aims to encompass comprehensive descriptions of educational purposes without providing clear outcome standards. They serve as an overarching direction in general education, guiding educational processes and emphasising the ultimate educational results. On the other hand, Wade (2006) suggested that curriculum "Goals" are more precise than aims as they provide specific targets or outcomes. Still, they are not measurable because goals are typically designed to guide the instructional process and provide direction for teachers and learners (Wade, 2006). Wade (2006) added that they are often qualitative and do not lend themselves to direct measurement or quantification. Notably, both aims and goals provide a broad framework for developing specific educational purposes.

Regarding curriculum objectives, Noddings (2007) and Okunloye (2009) further highlighted that curriculum objectives are measurable and achievable tasks that learners should be able to accomplish but were unable to before. Meanwhile, Carpenter (2005) highlighted that developing course objectives is a highly effective means of enhancing the design and development of a course. Also, Orr et al. (2022) stressed the significance of clear objectives in facilitating students' understanding of course activities, improving their performance on assessments, and providing focus to classroom practice and assessments.

However, Iloanya (2019) argues that in certain cases, such as traditional teacher-

centred learning, learning objectives tend to concentrate solely on what students are expected to learn. This approach often overlooks desired student outcomes, wherein teachers anticipate students to demonstrate their understanding of the acquired knowledge. To address this issue, Biggs and Tang (2011) suggested that clarifying intended learning outcomes aligning with curriculum objectives can positively impact student learning and contribute to the effective attainment of course objectives.

2.2.1.2. Students Intended Outcomes

As Marthers (2021) noted, the challenges faced by contemporary higher education have led to the emergence of outcomes-driven education, which encourages student persistence and completion of their studies. Similarly, Stentiford (2022) discovered that outcomes-driven learning approaches are prevalent and prioritised in contemporary higher education. This shift towards an outcomes-driven approach has brought the “Student Intended Outcomes” concept to the forefront. Bowen and Fincher (2018) noted that these outcomes are specific, assessable targets for what a student should know or be able to do by the end of a course or program and serve as a guiding framework for teaching and assessment.

Whether in learning objectives- or outcomes-driven approaches, the relationship between curriculum objectives and student-intended outcomes is paramount. Bowen and Fincher (2018) highlighted that curriculum objectives set the overall measurable and achievable objectives for a course or program, while student-intended outcomes break down these objectives into specific and assessable targets for student-intended learning. This understanding stresses the crucial significance of aligning learning objectives with intended student outcomes and serves as a fundamental element in education, guiding the direction of contemporary higher education in teaching and learning practices.

2.2.2. Selecting the Learning Experiences and Course Content

Tyler (1949) emphasised the importance of selecting learning experiences based on

students' perceptions, interests, and previous experiences once the objectives have been determined. He asserted that creating meaningful and effective learning experiences is crucial for achieving curriculum objectives. Therefore, Phenix (1962) defined learning experiences as the knowledge that should be encompassed within the course content, encompassing a wide range of topics and skills that students are expected to acquire. According to Tyler (1949), these learning experiences are shaped by interactions between learners and teachers in environments where learners have opportunities to engage actively. Tyler (1966) further clarified that learning experiences do not merely refer to the course content of teacher-led activities but rather highlight students' active participation in the learning process.

Building upon Tyler's ideas, Taba (1971), a student of Tyler who conceived the "Taba Model of Curriculum Development," highlighted the difference between course content and learning experiences. Taba (1971) defined learning experiences as engagement in a variety of activities designed for learning, while course content is centred around knowledge acquisition. She argued that content alone is inadequate for fostering critical thinking, shaping attitudes and emotions, and developing essential social and practical skills. In order to attain educational objectives, Taba (1971) advocated for the creation of learning activities engaging in classroom-based experiences, which facilitates active student participation in the learning process, leading to a more profound understanding of the subject matter.

Despite Taba (1971) explaining the distinction between course content and learning experiences, Fraenkel (1992) points out that these two elements are inextricably linked. He emphasised that even though course content offers fundamental knowledge, the design of learning experiences is vital for genuine understanding and internalisation of concepts by students. Fraenkel (1992) further suggested that this mutually beneficial relationship between the learning experience and course content forms the heart of a robust curriculum system: content serves as a roadmap, while experiences enable students to interpret the meaning and build necessary skills

actively. Furthermore, the discussion on the learning experiences of students will be further discussed in a subsequent section: "Active Learning".

2.2.3. Organising The Learning Experiences - Curriculum Implementation

As mentioned earlier, Taba (1971) advocated for developing learning activities that are closely aligned with classroom-applicable learning experiences. Her approach aims to achieve educational objectives and facilitate active student participation in the learning process, leading to a more profound understanding of the subject matter. This idea is reminiscent of a question posed by Tyler in his work on curriculum development: "How can educational experiences be effectively organised and offered to the student by teachers?" (Tyler, 1949). Taba's approach not only offers a potential response to Tyler's inquiry but also underscores the importance of well-designed learning activities in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement.

Tyler (1949) emphasised that education is a long-time transformation in human "behaviour" produced slowly and processed over a continuous period rather than a short time, as well as the teacher should organise the learning experience reasonably so that students can accumulate and strengthen the learning behaviour and finally reach the curriculum objectives. Further, (Tyler, 1975) emphasised that learning experience organisation is a dynamic process in which executors (such as experts) can introduce personal views that contribute to feedback in the learning experience field, leading to different unanticipated learning outcomes. Therefore, what is curriculum implementation?

2.2.3.1. Regarding Curriculum Implementation

Fullan (1977), a prominent Canadian educational scholar, defined curriculum implementation as the essential process of translating theoretical course content into practical application. This practice serves as a reflection of the ongoing course development and reform. According to Fullan, curriculum implementation stands as a critical stage within the broader curriculum development framework. Lewy (1991)

further elaborated on this concept, describing curriculum implementation as a transitional process from theory to practice within the teacher's organisational context. This transition represents both a theoretical and practical challenge in curriculum research. Lewy (1991) emphasised the significant role played by curriculum implementation in the overall curriculum development process and also stressed that the content could move from a theoretical level to a practical level to accomplish the course objectives in the curriculum implementation process, which highlighted the importance of effectively bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical execution to achieve the objectives outlined in the curriculum. Similarly, Ornstein (2016) emphasised that curriculum implementation is a transformative and experiential learning process, emphasising the integration of knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes. This process involves interactive engagement between course creators and participants and aims to facilitate the translation of course content into tangible student behaviours, thus ensuring effective course delivery.

2.2.3.2. Effectively Organise Curriculum Implementation

Nevertheless, the question arises: how does a teacher effectively organise curriculum implementation? Tyler (1966) highlighted a significant flaw in many curriculum research projects conducted in the United States during the 1960s. He observed that these projects, predominantly led by experts, often neglected to consider the interests and needs of the learners, rendering them unreasonable. Tyler (1966) coined the term "Educational Delivery System" to describe the process of transferring knowledge from teacher to student. In response to this issue, Tyler (1966) put forth three key conditions for teachers to organise the learning experience effectively: continuity, sequence, and integration.

- Continuity emphasises the consistent exploration of essential curriculum elements, ensuring a cohesive learning journey.
- Sequence dictates that the order of learning experiences should be based on prior course content.

- Integration entails harmonising students' learning behaviours with the course objectives (Tyler, 1966).

Tyler (1949) further emphasised the importance of logical organisation, advocating for curriculum implementation investigations that align with learners' psychological needs and expectations. Thus, it is crucial to consider the organisational principles that hold psychological significance for students.

Hence, curriculum implementation emerges as a practical educational endeavour driven by effective communication among teachers, curriculum designers, students, and academic researchers. Through this collaborative process, curriculum documents undergo constant revision, leading to continuous improvements in the quality of the curriculum, ensuring alignment with the intended learning objectives.

2.2.4. Evaluating the Learning Experiences - Curriculum Assessment

Regarding curriculum assessment, Poetter et al. (2022) described that Tyler's groundbreaking work "Eight Years Research" was the pioneer in defining the fundamental terminology of curriculum assessment. Tyler (1949) presented that assessment is a method for evaluating the extent to which the curriculum and teaching plan effectively achieves its intended objectives. Echoing Tyler's ideas, Beeby (1977) and Cronbach (1963) highlighted that assessment should play a systematic role in evaluating the value of educational activities, thereby contributing to the decision-making process. Further bolstering this perspective, Wheeler (1969) underscored that assessment is a crucial component in the formation and reformulation of curricula. This process allows for the measurement of curriculum objective fulfilment and necessitates adjustments where required.

Norris (1998), however, introduced a more nuanced view. He argued that curriculum assessment, from the assessor or institutional perspective, is less about delivering a final "verdict" and more about delineating the value, meaning, and purpose of a curriculum. Success, in his view, is assessed by student learning outcomes, thereby

offering valuable insights for curriculum decision-making. Nevertheless, contrasting perspectives exist. Brown (2012) found that students often seek a summative verdict to identify areas for improvement rather than repeatedly practising already mastered skills. Similarly, Luce and Kirnan (2016) noted that employers value a summative verdict as a measure of students' competencies upon completing their education. These differing viewpoints illustrate the need for diverse assessment methods in different contexts.

2.2.4.1. Formative and Summative Curriculum Assessment

Building upon the discussed diverse assessment options above, Tyler (1949) stressed the crucial role of curriculum assessment in providing "evidence" that directs attention towards curriculum objectives and the resulting changes in learners' behaviour. Based on providing "evidence", scholars proposed various assessment models to assist different stakeholders, presenting "evidence" in different forms. Among these models, the most influential and widely embraced are the "Formative" and "Summative" curriculum assessment models introduced by Scriven et al. (1967).

Building upon Scriven et al. (1967)'s insight, Stufflebeam (1971) expounded on their functions and noted that the "formative function assessment" serves as a powerful tool for the ongoing improvement and development of activities, programs, individuals, and products, which offers valuable feedback for learners and educators alike, enabling them to track progress, identify areas for growth, and make timely adjustments to teaching strategies and learning activities. Conversely, the "summative function assessment" plays a crucial role in accountability, certification, or selection processes (Stufflebeam, 1971). It enables the measurement of overall achievement and facilitates comparisons of students' performance against predetermined standards, which is valuable for stakeholders such as educational institutions, employers, and policymakers in making well-informed decisions regarding certification, placement, or resource allocation (Stufflebeam, 1971). However, Buchholtz et al. (2018) stressed that it is crucial to understand that relying solely on formative or summative

assessments could be problematic.

2.2.4.2. Integrating Formative and Summative Assessments

In some cases, Buchholtz et al. (2018) noted that the exclusive use of summative assessments in teaching could create a high-risk testing environment that prioritises outcomes over the learning process itself, which can lead students to feel pressured to perform well on exams, potentially resulting in a focus on memorisation rather than deep understanding and developing critical thinking skills. Similarly, Mottier Lopez and Pasquini (2017) highlighted that exclusive use of summative assessments might not capture the complete range of student's abilities and may overlook individual progress and growth. On the other hand, Elwood (2006) noticed that the sole use of formative assessments in teaching requires careful implementation and ongoing commitment from educators to ensure their effectiveness. Buchholtz et al. (2018) also noticed that formative assessments might only generate the intended outcomes with proper guidance and support and could become excessively time-consuming or burdensome.

Therefore, adopting a balanced approach that combines the strengths of both formative and summative assessments is crucial for comprehensive curriculum assessment. By utilising a combination of these two assessment methods, educators can gather a more comprehensive picture of students' achievements, progress, and areas for growth (Brookhart, 2010). This, in turn, facilitates effective curriculum development and decision-making, enabling educators to develop and design instructional strategies that meet the diverse needs of their students and promote meaningful learning experiences (Dolin et al., 2018).

2.2.5. Potential Role of Curriculum Components in Artistic Sports Courses

As mentioned in Chapter One, artistic sports courses in China face various challenges in delivering high-quality education and providing diverse vocational opportunities and outcomes for students. Understanding the potential roles of curriculum objectives, course content and learning experiences, curriculum implementation, and curriculum

assessment is crucial in addressing those challenges within artistic sports courses and maximising opportunities for students. This section discusses the significance of each component and their interconnections in artistic sports courses.

2.2.5.1. Curriculum Objectives in Artistic Sport Courses

The value of curriculum objectives in developing artistic sports courses is considerable. The role play in shaping the overall course development process has been affirmed by previous research, such as that conducted by Carpenter (2005) and Orr et al. (2022), who found that clear objectives are critical in helping students understand the course activities and improve their performance. By understanding the objectives, students can effectively exhibit their comprehension, which holds in artistic sports. Moreover, aligning curriculum objectives with intended student outcomes prioritises practical skills and techniques application related to artistic sports rather than just content knowledge acquisition, which is crucial to addressing the requirements of artistic sports education. By recognising the relationship between curriculum objectives and intended student outcomes, researchers can create effective curriculum frameworks that foster skills, knowledge, and understanding growth. Thus, understanding the role of curriculum objectives can help navigate potential challenges in China's artistic sports educational context and uncover innovative opportunities for collaboration, thereby enhancing the quality and effectiveness of these courses in Chinese artistic sports education.

2.2.5.2. Course Content and Learning Experiences in Artistic Sport Courses

Course content and learning experiences have the potential to form the foundation for delivering artistic sports courses based on understanding the techniques, principles, and theories. As noted in Taba (1971)'s work, course content and learning experiences form the foundation, providing the essential knowledge that researchers require to navigate the education process. Meanwhile, understanding the symbiotic relationship between course content and learning experiences is crucial for empowering students

to actively participate, apply their knowledge, and improve the skills necessary in artistic sports, all of which are instrumental in achieving an in-depth understanding and fostering the progression of artistic sports education. This integration enables researchers to proficiently navigate the hurdles and exploit the opportunities that arise within the context of artistic sports courses in China, as well as reaffirms the potential role of curriculum content and learning experiences in shaping artistic sports courses' future.

2.2.5.3. Curriculum Implementation in Artistic Sport Courses

Curriculum implementation holds significant potential in understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities of providing artistic sports courses. Incorporating insights from scholars such as Taba (1971), Ornstein (2016), Fullan (1977), and Lewy (1991), curriculum implementation can effectively facilitate the design and organisation of learning activities that align with teaching and learning experiences, actively engaging students in the process. This alignment, within the context of artistic sports courses, not only deepens students' comprehension of artistic sports but also enables identifying and exploring specific challenges encountered in the Chinese context. Through continuous revision and improvement of the curriculum, guided by effective communication among key stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum designers, students, and academic researchers, artistic sports courses can more effectively address the needs and opportunities present in China. This, in turn, paves the way for comprehensive development in the realm of artistic sports within China.

2.2.5.4. Curriculum Assessment in Artistic Sport Courses

Meanwhile, curriculum assessment has the potential to serve as a crucial instrument for understanding and addressing the strengths and shortcomings within artistic sports courses in China. By integrating a systematic, diverse, and inclusive approach to assessment, crucial insights can be gathered regarding the existing strengths and shortcomings within these courses. For instance, adopting formative assessments

enables educators to track students' progress, provide instantaneous feedback continuously, and fine-tune their pedagogical strategies accordingly. This mechanism encourages active participation, stimulates creativity, and facilitates personalised development within artistic sports. Furthermore, deploying summative assessments offers a valuable tool for ensuring accountability and certification. By providing a holistic measurement of students' achievements, these assessments validate students' competencies in artistic sports. By balancing formative and summative assessments, educators can obtain a comprehensive and multifaceted view of student learning. This combination allows them to identify areas of improvement, cater to individual student needs, and uphold educational standards. It can potentially elevate the quality of artistic sports courses in China, nurturing students' talents and abilities while efficiently addressing the diverse challenges and opportunities in these courses.

2.2.5.5. Summary

In summary, the potential roles of curriculum objectives, course content and learning experiences, curriculum implementation, and curriculum assessment are crucial in developing effective artistic sports courses and diverse student vocational outcomes. Clear curriculum objectives provide direction and purpose for course development. They help students improve their performance in practical skill application and growth in artistic sports. Course content and learning experiences can provide a solid foundation for acquiring knowledge and promoting participation, leading to a better understanding of artistic sports. A well-designed curriculum implementation focusing on communication and improvement can tackle challenges and opportunities in China, with the potential for understanding and addressing specific issues. Assessing the curriculum through formative and summative assessments can improve the quality of artistic sports courses by identifying strengths and weaknesses, monitoring student progress, delivering feedback, and maintaining educational standards. The interconnection of these components allows scholars, educators, and stakeholders to tackle challenges, make the most of opportunities, and enhance the effectiveness of

artistic sports courses. Additionally, it can lead to a variety of positive student outcomes in different vocational fields.

2.3. Curriculum Constructive Alignment

Drawing upon an exploration of curriculum components and insights gathered from a comprehensive literature review above, there is a widespread consensus among scholars that a well-synchronised interplay among individual curriculum components is pivotal for their optimal effectiveness. Scholars such as Malewski (2009), Marsh (2009), and Taylor and Richards (2018) have highlighted the necessity for coordinating curriculum components and maintaining internal consistency to enable effective curriculum design and implementation.

This perspective can be traced back to Tyler (1949), who underscored the significance of coherence and consistency among curriculum components in ensuring impactful instruction and meaningful learning outcomes. Building on Tyler's principle, Fink (2013) further amplified the importance of aligning and integrating each curriculum component. This alignment, he posits, cultivates enhanced student learning and fosters active engagement.

Therefore, establishing a harmonious internal consistency among the four curriculum components becomes indispensable. Such coordination not only facilitates mutually beneficial interactions among these components but also supports the holistic and effective development of the curriculum.

2.3.1. John Bigg's & Catherine Tang's Perspectives

Founded on the view of fostering a harmonious internal consistency among curriculum components, the concept of "Constructive Alignment," as introduced by Biggs and Tang (2011) in their book "Teaching for Quality Learning at University," has gained considerable acclaim and broad adoption in curriculum development. This approach provides a robust theoretical underpinning and structural framework for the creation

and design of curricula, resonating with the views of scholars like Malewski (2009), Marsh (2009), and Taylor and Richards (2018) regarding the importance of coordination and consistency within the curriculum.

Significantly, Dean et al. (2022) noted that constructive alignment acts as a key guiding principle for higher education, offering invaluable insights for curriculum development and design research. Similarly, Ali (2018) asserted that constructive alignment enables educators and learners to effectively structure their teaching and learning activities, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum, particularly its implementation and assessment. Both aspects should dovetail with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) - the desired learning objectives.

Regarding the practice of constructive alignment, Biggs and Tang (2011) posited that learners have the potential to be trapped within a learning environment from which it is hard to extricate themselves before mastering the material. This ensures engagement with the learning materials to achieve desired learning outcomes. Similarly, from an educator's viewpoint, Wieser (2020) underscored the advantages of constructive alignment and noted that this approach aligns planned learning activities with the expected learning outcomes, enabling students to establish clear objectives, select suitable learning activities, and receive feedback rooted in well-structured assessment criteria. As such, learners are effectively immersed in a learning environment they must navigate and understand before progressing. There are two key factors in constructive alignment:

- ⇒ Constructive tends to mean the way that students 'construct' or build up their learning by comparing new information that they receive with their existing knowledge and understanding. This is one reason why it is important to understand, as far as possible, the prior experiences of students when teaching. (Biggs and Tang, 2011).
- ⇒ Alignment is the process of establishing a teaching/learning activity that aligns with the intended learning outcomes. This means that this alignment helps to

keep “the intended learning outcomes”, “the teaching/learning activity”, and “the assessment tasks” consistent (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

Also, Biggs (2003) described that there are four key steps to maintaining constructive alignment for learning at university:

- (1) Defining the intended learning outcomes;
- (2) Choosing teaching/learning activities likely to lead to the intended learning outcomes;
- (3) Assessing students' actual learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended;
- (4) Arriving at a final grade” (Biggs, 2003, p.2)

However, constructive alignment has faced criticism from various perspectives. Loughlin et al. (2021) criticised constructive alignment for being misused as a quality assurance tool or administrative requirement, resulting in a prescriptive and inflexible approach rather than one which is flexible and adaptable, and he suggested that constructive alignment can be reclaimed or modified better to suit different teaching and learning contexts and styles. In addition, Burnett (2018) criticised constructive alignment for its incompatibility with the complex and organic aspects of teaching and learning. According to Burnett, learning outcomes should not be predefined but instead emerge from the experiences and reflections of learners, and he proposed using constructive alignment as a starting point but modifying it according to the learners' and teachers' needs and preferences. Furthermore, Burnett (2019) and Loughlin et al. (2021) argued that constructive alignment might disempower learners by imposing predefined outcomes and criteria that do not align with their interests, needs, and preferences.

Nevertheless, Jain and Utschig (2016) stressed that the criticisms could be addressed by understanding constructive alignment as a flexible and dynamic framework that can be adapted to different contexts and teaching styles, and Jain and Utschig (2016) added that constructive alignment should not be seen as a rigid or fixed model but

rather as a tool that accommodates diversity, creativity, and complexity in learning.

2.3.2. Potential Role of Constructive Alignment in Artistic Sports

The principle of constructive alignment has been developed to systematically align teaching activities and assessments with intended learning outcomes, fostering increased student engagement and comprehension of course content. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, achieving this can be challenging for artistic sports courses, which are often categorised within parents' subject areas such as sports education, dance, and music education. Despite this, implementing constructive alignment has great potential for improving and developing artistic sports courses in China by establishing a sense of inherent harmony. By integrating curriculum components, educators can structure courses in a manner that aligns course objectives with teaching and learning activities and assessments. This optimisation of course delivery stimulates student participation and achievement, further promoting coherence and unity in the learning process. Therefore, constructive alignment is a lens to study the complexities of delivering high-quality education in this field and uncovering the challenges of creating a coherent student learning experience. Constructive alignment serves as a powerful tool for research and development in artistic sports education, providing a framework for continuous improvement and innovation in course design. It ensures the relevance, engagement, and effectiveness of artistic sports courses for students in China, ultimately contributing to a harmonious and cohesive educational landscape. Thus, constructive alignment offers a lens to study the complexities of delivering high-quality education in artistic sports while uncovering the challenges and opportunities for creating a coherent student learning experience.

2.4. Teacher-Centred and Learner-Centred Pedagogical Approaches

It is important to understand that constructive alignment should not be the only approach with the potential to build a broad understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing course development. Lipuma and Leon (2020) highlighted

that constructive alignment should not exclude other pedagogical approaches but rather complement them by providing a clear and coherent structure for course development, while striking a balance between constructive alignment and other pedagogical approaches is vital to enrich and diversify the overall learning experience. Lipuma and Leon (2020) further suggested that adopting this flexible and balanced approach empowers educators to navigate the complexities of curriculum contexts effectively; also, it can maximise the potential role of constructive alignment.

2.4.1. Didactic – “Teacher-Centred” Pedagogical Approaches

Kangas et al. (2021) and Gashoot (2022) highlighted that the didactic approach adopts a teacher-centred perspective, combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, which tends to focus on the content to be taught, and the teacher assumes a more authoritative role in delivering information and structuring the learning process. Johnson (2016) noted that this approach could be described as a deliberate and informed educational strategy that emphasises educators delivering highly structured lessons to students.

In the context of higher education, Shah (2021) added that the teacher assumes a central role in transmitting information, while students assume a more passive role as recipients of knowledge, which the focus is primarily on the delivery of predetermined content, often following a rigid curriculum, with limited room for student engagement, active participation, or exploration of diverse perspectives. Meanwhile, Vargas (2022) noted that a didactic approach is a traditional model for higher education, and the notion of a lecture embodies this approach.

2.4.2. Active Learning – “Learner-Centred” Pedagogical Approaches

In exploring pedagogical approaches, one such approach that has gained high attention in academia is “Active Learning”. Czajka et al. (2021) noted that active learning focuses on learner-centred orientation, adapting to student needs. It allows teachers to guide the teaching process effectively, addresses diverse learning styles,

and encourages higher-order thinking skills (Czajka et al., 2021). In terms of higher-order thinking, Jansen (2022) explained that higher-order thinking refers to learners making arguments, brainstorming ideas, contrasting, approaching controversies, and locating implicit assumptions, which involves analysing, evaluating, creating, and solving problems.

By highlighting the learner-centred nature of the pedagogical approach and the significance of active learning within it, Bonwell and Eison (1991) argued that active learning is a cornerstone of effective teaching practices, wherein students are actively engaged in the learning process, collaborating with peers and applying critical thinking skills to construct knowledge, while teachers can create a harmonious teaching and learning environment that facilitates students' acquisition of knowledge and promotes their growth as learners.

2.4.2.1. Key Features of Active Learning

Despite Kovarik et al. (2022) noting that there is no single, universally accepted definition of active learning, numerous studies have identified the essential features common to most active learning approaches. As early as 1989, Barnes (1989) proposed seven key elements characteristic of active learning: Purposive, Reflective, Negotiated, Critical, Complex, Stimulation-driven, and Engaged, which have been reflected in curriculum development research:

- **Purposive:** Bonwell and Eison (1991) stressed that active learning activities should be designed with a clear purpose, while students should know why they are doing the activity and what they are expected to learn from it.
- **Reflective:** Chang (2019) noted that active learning activities encourage students to reflect on their learning, which can be achieved through discussion, journaling, or other reflective activities.
- **Negotiated:** Lombardi et al. (2021) noticed that active learning activities allow students to collaborate among learners or teachers to understand the material

critically, which can be through group work, debate, or other collaborative activities.

- **Critical:** Bean and Melzer (2021) highlighted that active learning activities encourage students to think critically about the taught content, which can be achieved by asking them to analyse, evaluate, or create new knowledge.
- **Complex:** Brame (2016) spotted that active learning activities require students to use more complex thinking in higher-order thinking skills. Lewis and Smith (1993) defined “Higher-order thinking” as cognitive processes that require more complex thinking and involve analysing, evaluating, creating, and solving problems.
- **Stimulation-driven:** Freeman et al. (2014) emphasised that students have the potential to be given immediate feedback on a diverse range of active learning activities, which can stimulate them to identify and consider the areas where they need to improve and to make progress in their learning.
- **Engaged:** Ismail and Groccia (2018) described that active learning activities inspire students to be actively involved in the learning process, which can be achieved by giving students opportunities to talk, write, or create.

2.4.2.2. Diverse Forms of Active Learning

Based on the aforementioned essential features, research has demonstrated that active learning can manifest in various forms, allowing for diverse ways to incorporate it into the classroom. Some typical examples of active learning activities include:

- **Group Work**, where students collaborate in small teams to accomplish a task or project (Lugosi and Uribe, 2022).
- **Problem-Based Learning**, wherein students are presented with a problem to solve and collaborate to find a solution (Cardon et al., 2022);
- **Simulations**, which enable students to apply their knowledge in a real-world context through simulated experiences (Walters et al., 2017);
- **Experiential Learning**, where students engage in hands-on activities that

foster learning through practical experience (Anim et al., 2022).

While it is not possible to comprehensively cover all the active learning approaches that have emerged in academia, Felder and Brent (2009) emphasised that:

If you think of anything a teacher might ask students to do—answer questions in class, complete assignments and projects outside class, carry out lab experiments, or anything else other than sitting passively in a classroom—you will find people who would classify it as active learning approaches.
(Felder and Brent, 2009, p.1)

2.4.3. Potential Role of Active Learning in Artistic Sport Courses

Active learning offers a diverse range of tools that educators can employ to create an engaging and appealing learning environment. Within the realm of artistic sports education, active learning offers immense potential to advance the development of courses in China. As mentioned previously, active learning prioritises a learner-centred approach that caters to the individual needs of students. By fostering engagement and active participation, it cultivates collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Moreover, based on an in-depth understanding of the features, functions, and diversity of active learning mentioned above, active learning in artistic sports courses has the potential to promote creativity and critical thinking. By encouraging students to explore various perspectives, analyse different approaches, and engage in open discussions, active learning stimulates their ability to think critically and develop innovative solutions. These aspects are particularly crucial in artistic sports, where students must adapt, innovate, and express their creativity in their performances, coaching/delivery, and/or choreography.

Furthermore, through an understanding of active learning and its reflective function in teaching, active learning in artistic sports courses has the potential to foster self-

directed learning and lifelong learning skills. By encouraging students to take ownership of their learning, set goals, and reflect on their progress, active learning cultivates independent and self-motivated learners.

Therefore, by applying active learning and other innovative learner-centred pedagogical approaches, teachers have the potential to create a high-quality, harmonious teaching and learning environment that nurtures students' growth as learners. This approach has the potential to enhance the overall quality of artistic sports courses.

2.5. Summary

This Chapter explored the understanding of various aspects related to curriculum components and the pedagogical strategies employed in higher education, with a particular focus on their potential roles in developing artistic sports courses.

The Chapter began by identifying and explaining key curriculum components based on classic curriculum development and design theories. It draws inspiration from the work of Ralph W. Tyler, who provided insights on course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment. These insights serve as a framework for exploring curriculum in artistic sports education. Then this Chapter explored the principles of "curriculum constructive alignment" proposed by John Biggs and Catherine Tang. This emphasised aligning intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment methods to create meaningful learning experiences. Incorporating this perspective helps understand how the curriculum components should align to enhance learning experiences in artistic sports courses. Furthermore, the Chapter examined different pedagogies in higher education, especially distinguished between didactic (Teacher-Centred) and active learning (Learner-Centred) approaches. It also explored the various forms of active learning and discussed its potential role in developing artistic sports courses in China.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this Chapter builds a framework that

combines classic curriculum design and development theories from Ralph W. Tyler, constructive alignment principles from John Biggs, and pedagogical insights from educational literature. This framework offers a theoretical foundation for developing and improving artistic sports courses in China.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

The first Chapter outlined the aim of this research: to develop an understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China. Then, Chapter Two recognised the potential significance of curriculum components and pedagogical strategies in developing artistic sports courses and stressed the importance of understanding the relationship between these two elements. Within this context, the current Chapter explores the research literature regarding the development of artistic sports and its related courses in Chinese higher education, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of this field. Notably, the analysis is structured around Tyler's curriculum framework, as discussed in Chapter 2, with a focus on the four components: course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment. This categorisation facilitates a detailed exploration of the current development of artistic sports courses in academia, laying a meaningful foundation for subsequent academic research in this area.

Having established the context of this literature review in the previous Chapters, it is crucial to elaborate on the specific criteria used to identify relevant literature. The process of literature identification was systematic and employed a range of databases to ensure a comprehensive review (Please see the below Visual Figure 1). Therefore, six electronic research databases were used to ensure a comprehensive review: Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Dissertations of China Database (DoC), EBSCO Information Services, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar. ERIC and CNKI were chosen as the primary databases due to their focus on education research and comprehensive coverage of Chinese character databases, respectively. Also, the DoC, EBSCO Information Services, WoS, and Google Scholar provided supplemental literature reviews to ERIC and CNKI. Other databases, such as ProQuest and Scopus, were

not included in my literature search as their study scope overlapped with the six chosen.

The searches in the selected databases were based on a list of search strings. These search strings combined two clusters of key languages: Chinese and English. The first cluster of Chinese contains four keywords: '艺术体育 (artistic sports)', '艺术和体育 (art and sport)', '体育艺术 (sports arts)' and '艺术体育课程 (artistic sports curriculum)'. However, various other terms were used because the term artistic sport is not the only one used in academia. Thus, in the second cluster of English literature, this study used search strings related to the combination of art and sport: 'sport with art', 'sporting art', 'aesthetic sports', 'art sport', 'athletic art', and 'artistic sports'.

Literature inclusion criteria: include articles on "artistic sports" and "information connected with the combination of art and sport" that must have been published in peer-reviewed journals in China (Chinese Language) or internationally (English Language). **Literature exclusion criteria:** include Chinese and English versions are replicated publications (only focused on one version); studies which focused exclusively on art or sport individually were omitted; or when the full text of the article was unavailable. In screening Chinese language literature, initial screening identified 32 articles and 10 doctoral dissertations, and screening confirmed 21 articles and 6 dissertations for further investigation. Screening English language literature, initial screening identified 2 books and 14 articles, and screening confirmed 1 book and 7 articles. This Chapter also reviews the content and focus of artistic sports courses from university documents, such as programme specifications, to understand current course "content and focus" in Chinese higher education, mainly from the perspective of the curriculum components. Through this exploration, this Chapter makes an understanding of how artistic sports courses are structured in Chinese universities, which can provide valuable insights into the course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment, and the job market needs to be shaped by these industries of artistic sports. This in-depth understanding of the course "content and

focus” in Chinese higher education will serve as a foundation for the later stages of this research, ultimately enabling an enhanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in developing artistic sports courses in China.

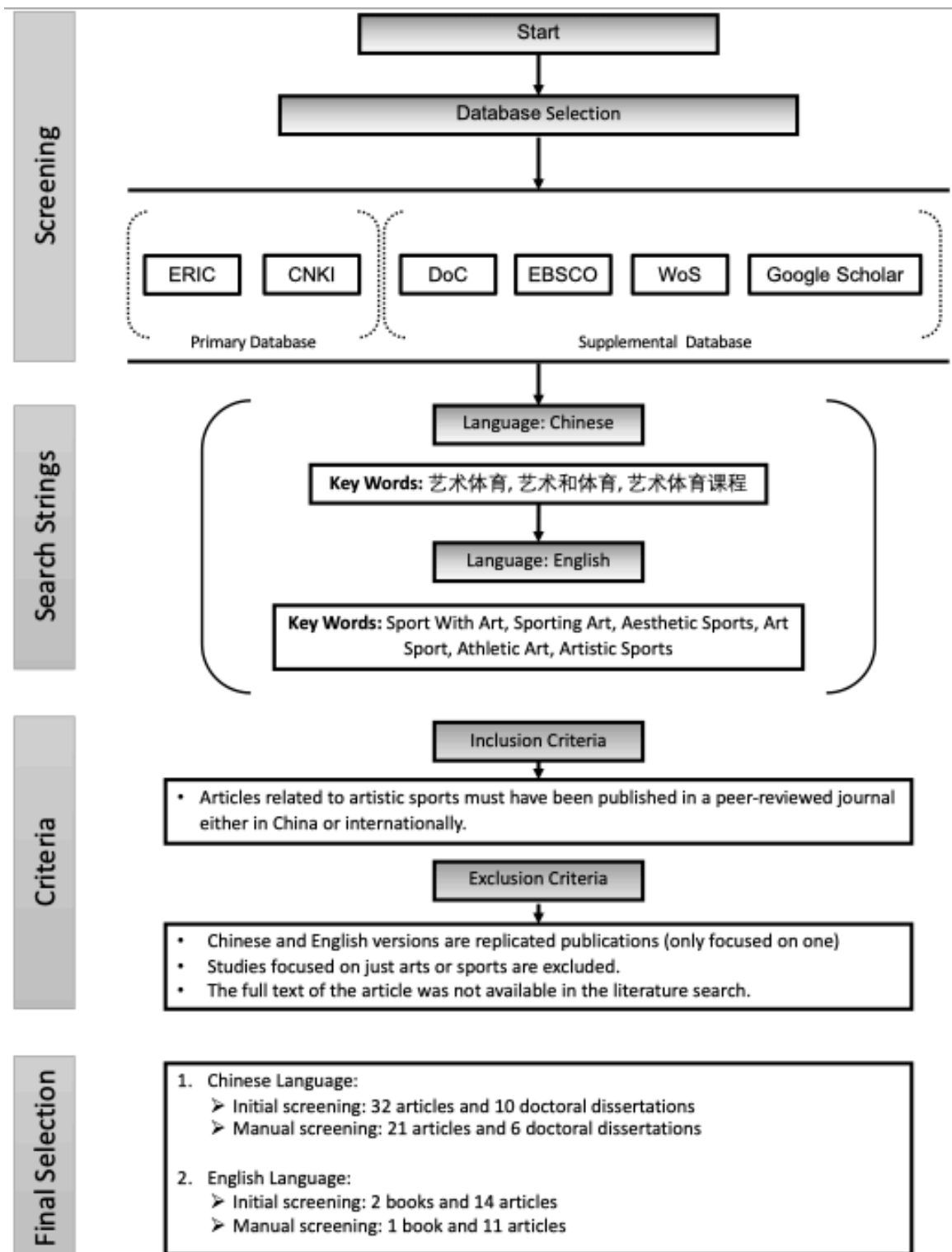


Figure 1 - Visual Diagram of Literature Identify Criteria

3.2. Artistic Sports Courses–Related Research in Academia

With the rise of multiculturalism and educational pluralism, cross-disciplinary research is becoming more popular in the higher education field (Taylor and Medina, 2011). Despite this, focusing on the interdisciplinary subject of "art combined with sport" is still in its infancy (Jianshe Zhou, 2020) and has been struggling to achieve the same status as other prevalent disciplines among scholars (Magdalena, 2010). Kretschmann (2012) further stated that although the integration of sports and arts does not yet constitute a separate sub-field within higher education, the two domains are intrinsically linked, and it has been possible to gain benefits from sporadic integration of sports and arts, which indicates its potential in higher education. Concurrently, exploring artistic sports course-related research has played a pivotal role in shaping the development of artistic sports courses in China.

In the Chinese context, Zhongquan (2022) identified three distinct phases of artistic sports research between 1981 and 2022: a period of relatively slow growth (1981-2003), a period of rapid growth (2004-2015), and a period of relatively stable development (2015-2022).

- From 1981 to 2003, the concept of "artistic sports" had not been proposed in China, and scholars focused their research on the relationship between "arts and sports" and the "artful nature of sports." For instance, Xichun (1986) and Yali (1998) stated that while there are similarities between the meaning of concepts in sports and art, the nature and characteristics of sports and art differ. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate art into sports. Also, MA and Wu (2015) found that most sports universities in China began offering artistic sports courses during this period and starting the initiation of artistic sports research, which centred on defining the terms and expanding the scope of artistic sports courses.
- In 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Education officially announced the "Sports and Art (2+1) Initiative". Wensheng (2005) explained that this initiative aimed to

enable every student in China to master two sports practice skills and one art skill during the nine-year compulsory education period (6-15 years of age), thereby promoting holistic development during elementary and primary school years. This government policy encouraged the integration of sports and the arts within academia. Consequently, researchers embarked on scholarly innovation in artistic sports, leading to an increase in academic achievements alongside the prevalence of "artistic sports course modules".

- From 2015 onwards, artistic sports research in China increasingly focused on higher education development and curriculum enhancement, as noted by Zhongquan (2022), and he highlighted that the current areas of interest in artistic sports curriculum studies revolve around nurturing performance students and improving their abilities. Additionally, Du Xiru (2020) predicted that future research would concentrate on artistic sports in primary or secondary schools; also Du Xiru (2020) underlined that all Chinese sports universities have researchers working on these topics, although limited collaboration exists between them, which means that most papers are individual research projects without collaboration, and none of the university's had formed an artistic sports research team.

Drawing on the work of Zhongquan (2022), this section will provide a detailed review using the perspective of Tyler's curriculum framework, which includes course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment below.

3.2.1. Research on Curriculum Objectives

In 2007, the Chinese government China (2007) implemented a new education policy called: Opinions of the Ministry of Education on further deepening teaching reform of undergraduate education and comprehensively improving teaching quality. Many Chinese universities have responded to the policy guidelines of developing courses by meeting urgent societal needs and emerging interdisciplinary courses, resulting in the incorporation of artistic sports courses within sports science departments to

address the increasing employment needs across various industries. MA and Wu (2015) noted, by the end of 2015, over 200 universities, including all fourteen sports universities, had set up such courses. Meanwhile, this period saw the rise of artistic sports as a novel interdisciplinary field of study in Chinese higher education, accompanied by rapid growth in related academic research regarding the course of artistic sports. Therefore, through literature review, research on the course objectives of the artistic sport can be categorised into three main themes: enhancing employability, enhancing practical abilities, and highlighting distinguishing characteristics.

- **Enhancing Employability:** Zhai Tingle (2006) and Hongtao Ma (2010) emphasised the need for artistic sports courses should aim to develop students' "high quality" and "strong ability" to match the competitive job market. Xi (2009) echoed this point and proposed that the objectives of artistic sports courses should be guided by government policy and the social employment climate, enabling students to develop career capacities in teaching, coaching, and stage performance.
- **Enhancing Practical Abilities:** Liu (2010) and Lei Fu (2015) highlighted the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of theoretical knowledge and improving physical qualities such as coordination, rhythm, flexibility, strength, and stamina through artistic sports activities. Shan (2017) advised that the main purpose of the artistic sports curriculum should be the study of aesthetic sports practice.
- **Highlighting Distinguishing Characteristics:** Wu Dongfang (2018) and MA and Wu (2015) highlighted the need for the training objectives of the course to reflect the characteristics of the artistic sport itself and not merely mimic similar courses (such as dance performance). They emphasised the importance of highlighting physical and mental "exercise" characteristics in artistic sports course objectives to promote physical and mental growth together. Lu (2019) compared the similarities and differences in curriculum objectives between

Chinese sports and art universities, observing that while sports universities focus on “competition abilities” and “coaching/teaching abilities”, art universities cultivate "dance performing abilities" and "dance educational abilities". However, Li Yameng (2009) noted an overlap in course objectives between sports and art universities, suggesting a trend towards course distinctiveness.

Based on the above review, research shows that the objectives of artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education are multifaceted and dynamic. These course objectives, influenced by both the competitive job market and government policy, aim to equip students with essential skills and knowledge for various career opportunities. Also, the emphasis on developing vocational skills is centred on performance, coaching, teaching, and enhancing practical abilities, which reflects the demand for highly skilled professionals in artistic sports. Moreover, the focus on encouraging course diversity and the distinctive benefits of artistic sports highlights the importance of providing a holistic artistic sports education.

3.2.2. Research on Curriculum Content and Implementation

Building on the understanding of artistic sports objectives and exploring how these objectives are operationalised into the course content and implemented in the classroom setting is critical. Regarding course content, most researchers have emphasised the need to highlight the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports courses and integrate them with other disciplines.

3.2.2.1. Highlighting Course Characteristics

MA and Wu (2015) identified how Chinese sports universities had designed artistic sports course content without highlighting the characteristics of sports exercise combined with performance arts and, therefore, the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports course content. Then, Wu Dongfang (2018) observed that although all sports universities in China have combined art and sports topics within one module, the integration process is still in its infancy. Then, he emphasised the importance of

integrating the cross-disciplinary content of the course of the artistic sport with that of "Sports + Aesthetic + Health". In the same vein, Dehua LI (2019) proposed the term "symbolic ability" to describe students studying artistic sports, suggesting that the learning content should be distinctive and integrate students' career practice, including health instruction, aesthetic education and competitive training.

3.2.2.2. Interdisciplinary Integration

Dehua Li (2021) further developed an interdisciplinary curriculum by combining dance performance practice with aesthetic principles of sports and using aesthetics to create a more comprehensive interdisciplinary curriculum to address how the body expresses emotion. Dehua Li (2021) linked the course content of sports life science with the practice context of dance to emphasise how the body expresses that it is efficient, safe and healthy. Other innovative curriculum content includes integrating music-related content (Jiaqi, 2018), employing bilingual instruction (Chinese and English) (Ziqian, 2021), and integrating Chinese traditional culture (Weiwei, 2017, Meishuang, 2019) into the artistic sports course module.

These studies show the need to highlight distinctive characteristics and integrate artistic sports courses with other disciplines, which allows for a more holistic understanding of artistic sports and fosters creativity and innovation in teaching and learning. However, Fang Qi (2018) highlighted the importance of ensuring that the integration of different disciplines should not weaken the core of artistic sports and explained that the challenge lies in achieving a balance between maintaining the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports and incorporating elements from other disciplines to enrich the course.

Regarding curriculum implementation: several studies have evaluated different modes of curriculum implementation. Weixiao (2021) and Yuhang (2021) suggested that in-person and online teaching should be combined, highlighting the distinctive advantages of blended learning. Lixia (2019) created a novel teaching mode

integrating Team-based learning (TBL), Problem-based learning (PBL), and Case-based learning (CBL). Jiazhe (2016) constructed a "2+2" student teaching model for an ice-skating course, where the first two years focus on theoretical knowledge and the last two years on practical knowledge. These blended learning and innovative models could potentially be adapted for other artistic sports courses since they provide different teaching and learning styles and promote active learning. However, Wei et al. (2023) noted that the effectiveness of blended learning and innovative approaches may vary depending on the specific context and needs of the students. Thus, it is important to constantly evaluate these implementation modes based on student feedback and learning outcomes.

3.2.3. Research on Curriculum Assessment

Having explored the research on curriculum objectives, content, and implementation, it is equally important to consider the assessment aspect of the artistic sports' course. In the Chinese context, there has been significant development in assessment practices in artistic sports courses over the years.

In the early development stages of artistic sports courses, assessment methods were primarily summative and quantitative, focusing on the outcomes rather than the learning process, with less emphasis on individual student differences. Jia-li (2008) challenged this approach by comparing the old and newly developed assessment standards of an aerobic dance course module, one of the artistic sports subjects. He proposed the theory of "multiple intelligence" to address teachers' concerns about the focus on summative and quantitative assessments. One example is to remind teachers to pay attention to developing students' individual distinctions, advocate constructing individualised assessment indicators that help realise individual values and emphasises the diversification of assessment content and methods to formulate an effective aerobic dance assessment structure.

Also, as the field developed, researchers began recognising the need for more

diversified and comprehensive assessment methods in artistic sports courses. Zhou (2011) examined the aerobics dance courses module at Shanghai Sports University. He considered four distinct aspects: assessment content, assessment method, assessment criteria, and course assessment weight distribution. Then, he proposed a multi-assessment tool that included "networked testing (conducting online tests)" and "multiple time evaluations (repeat test in one term)", encouraging students to participate in "multi-assessment". Similarly, Feng Yuhong (2011) found that aerobics dance teachers rarely assessed theoretical knowledge and relied heavily on summative assessment methods. To address these issues, Feng Yuhong (2011) recommended peer assessment, and individual difference assessment, promoting diversity in assessment content. Sun (2014) further pointed out the limitations of the single assessment approach, which relies on quantitative or qualitative methods, then he proposed a "Multiple Assessment Approach" explaining a subjective and objective assessment strategy applicable to artistic sports courses, which contributed to the "formative assessment methods" of artistic sports courses. However, based on the diversified and comprehensive assessment methods, Wu (2016) pointed out that the assessment in a rhythmic gymnastics course did not reflect students' learning expectations, and there was no concern for peer assessment. He suggested that the course module assessment should consider students' learning expectations and improve peer assessment, which indicates that assessment methods should consider students' diverse needs and expectations.

The literature regarding the assessment method shows that there has been a shift towards diversified and comprehensive assessment methods. This is due to the shortcomings of traditional quantitative and summative assessment practices. These practices were found to be narrow in their focus, neglecting the complexities of the learning process and individual learning differences. The newer approaches include peer assessment, multi-assessment, and the assessment of theoretical knowledge. These methods offer a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of a student's progress. However, despite these developments, areas for improvement remain, such

as incorporating students' learning expectations and further exploring peer assessment. Moreover, the existing literature has yet to address whether these developments meet industry standards.

3.3. Reviewing Current Course “Content and Focus” of Artistic Sports

Building on the above literature review, this research found that the artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education have experienced significant growth, with distinct phases of development, shifting towards a more integrated approach combining sports and arts. Meanwhile, the above literature review has provided a broad overview of the key trends and challenges in course objectives, content, implementation, and assessment, highlighting the need for a balance between maintaining the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports courses and incorporating elements from other disciplines, as well as the importance of diverse and comprehensive assessment methods.

Given these findings, reviewing the content and focus of artistic sports courses from university documents, such as programme specifications, became a natural extension of this research. This facilitates the identification of whether or how the key trends and challenges outlined in the literature have already or can be practically implemented within existing artistic sports courses. Also, it can be achieved within three detailed aspects:

- First, this university documents review has the potential to offer a comparative understanding of how different sports universities configure their artistic sports courses in China, providing insight into the commonalities and diversity in course objectives, content, and assessment methods.
- Second, the university documents' review has the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice by exploring current practical experiences on the course objectives, content, and assessment of the current artistic sports.
- Third, the university documents' review has the potential to provide insights into

the broader societal and industry contexts that shape artistic sports courses by examining the job market needs that these courses are designed to meet.

The focus of this exploration lies in course objectives, content, and assessment methods. Also, the inclusion and exclusion criteria should be:

The inclusion criteria of the documents: The target universities must be among the 14 sports universities in China; the university documents of “Programme Specifications” must come from the latest 2022 version; and the government documents of the “National Teaching Quality Standards for Undergraduates” must come from the latest 2021 version. **The exclusion criteria of the documents:** Include the university document “Programme Specifications”, which are not accessible due to limitations in data availability and restricted access, or the use of outdated versions of Programme Specifications and the National Teaching Quality Standards for Undergraduates.

Moreover, this study has collated relevant findings into tables to provide a clearer overview of the content and focus of artistic sports courses across different universities. These tables can be found in Appendices 1- 4 at the end of this thesis.

3.3.1. Context of Current Artistic Sports Courses

By following the Chinese government's education policy issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) Department of Higher Education, as illustrated in Section 3.2.1 above, many Chinese universities have pro-actively responded to the policy directives regarding creating courses that satisfy societal requirements and embrace emerging interdisciplinary courses (China, 2007). In 2001, intending to address the demands of the job market, Tianjin University of Sport pioneered artistic sports as a distinct course within its admissions process (Wenrui, 2015). Ma Hongtao (2015) noted that after introducing these new artistic sports courses at Tianjin University of Sport, other universities, especially those specialising in sports, eagerly followed suit, striving to follow this innovative approach.

Based on referenced statistics regarding university courses in China, Jianshe Zhou (2020) revealed that all sports universities in China offer courses in artistic sports. Sports universities play a significant role in developing sports-related courses (Fang Qi, 2018). Consequently, their influence also extends to the growth of artistic sports courses. Presently, there are 14 sports universities in China: Beijing Sports University (BSU), Capital Institute of Physical Education (CioPE), Shanghai University of Sports (SUoS), Wuhan Sports University (WSU), Tianjin University of Sports (TUoS), Shandong Sports University (SSU), Harbin Sports University (HSU), Shenyang Sports University (SYSU), Chengdu Sports University (CSU), Nanjing Sports Institute (NAI), Xi'an Physical Education University (XPED), Guangzhou Sports University (GSU), Hebei Institute of Physical Education (HioPE), and Jilin Institute of Physical Education (JioPE) (For more detailed information, please refer to Appendix 1).

Through a comparative analysis of course modules (please see module category comparison table in Appendix 3), this study has found that all universities exhibit similar course names, mainly focusing on "dance education," "dance performances," and "dance choreography." Based on this understanding, this research will further review course objectives, content, and assessment methods, drawing insights from programme specifications provided by each institution. However, the selection of included universities is based on the accessibility of their information during this study. Therefore, ten (10) sports universities have been selected for this research (as outlined in Appendix 2). In comparison, the programme specifications for four other unselected universities could not be obtained due to limitations in data availability and restricted access.

3.3.2. Course Objectives and Career Focus

Upon reviewing the university documents' programme specifications, specifically the module descriptions and overviews for artistic sports courses, a consistency in course objectives across all sports universities has been observed. The comprehensive review is detailed in Appendix 2 for reference. The universities commonly emphasise

capabilities related to "teaching", "training", "performance", and "coaching", integrated in varying combinations.

The main goal is to provide graduates with the skills needed to teach or coach in various settings, such as public or private schools, clubs, dance studios, or community environments. However, there are differences in the emphasis placed by different universities. While some universities focus on fostering innovation-oriented professionals for roles such as choreography, program development, or educational innovation, most prioritise cultivating application-oriented professionals. This approach emphasises the significance of practical abilities and the immediate application of techniques in various environments.

Furthermore, the career focus for graduates also highlighted by the module descriptions and overviews of artistic sports courses in programme specifications, predominantly includes:

- ⇒ **Teaching in Schools:** Graduates are expected to have the capacity to teach artistic sports courses in public or private schools. This could include roles as physical education teachers or dance teachers.
- ⇒ **Coaching in Clubs:** Another potential route is to become a coach in clubs or dance studios, guiding students in developing their skills in gymnastics, dance sports, martial arts, figure skating, or ice dancing.
- ⇒ **Performance:** Graduates can develop as professional athletes or dancers, potentially performing in various environments, including dance troupes, entertainment venues, or competitive events.
- ⇒ **Community Work:** There may also be opportunities to work within social communities, likely in roles related to community outreach, recreational programs, or local events involving dance and other artistic sports.

The career focus for graduates of artistic sports courses from Chinese sports universities predominantly encompasses teaching, coaching, performance, and

community work, which allows them to become schoolteachers, club or dance studio coaches, professional athletes, or dancers or contribute to community work related to dance and sports.

3.3.3. Course Modules and Content Focus

Regarding the course modules and content focus, Appendix 3 (List of Modules) and Appendix 4 (Specific Contents of Modules) show the specific information about the modules covered in the artistic sports programmes offered by Chinese sports universities.

First, when reviewing the programme specifications, there are two main categories of the course modules: “Basics Course Modules” and “Core Course Modules”. For further details, please refer to Appendix 3.

1. **Foundation Modules:** This category of courses crosses four years and provides foundational knowledge and skills. For example, they could cover basic principles of artistic sports, introductory courses in the different dance forms, and teaching methods.
2. **Specialised Modules:** Over four years, students will delve deeper into the knowledge introduced in the basics course. This category of courses includes advanced training in artistic sports activities, specialised teaching methods, and perhaps internships or practical experiences.

Second, the programme specifications also reveal the main contents that are common across the Chinese sports universities, which fall into four categories. For more detailed information, please refer to Appendix 4.

1. **Artistic Sports Theory Learning:** Introduces students to the theoretical knowledge necessary to understand the principles of artistic sports and its various forms.
2. **Teaching and Coaching Methods:** Gives students the knowledge and skills

to teach and coach effectively in artistic sports-related activities. It could cover lesson planning, student engagement techniques, and assessment strategies.

3. **Music Production:** Given the importance of music application in artistic sports, contents tend to focus on understanding music theory, rhythm, and basic music production skills.
4. **Artistic Sports Activities Learning:** Contents cover a variety of activities programmes, such as Folk Dance, Dance Sports, Aerobics, Contemporary Dance, Artistic Gymnastics, and Martial Arts, and the content not only focuses on teaching the technical skills required for each activity form, but also focuses on clarifying their historical and cultural significance, which is linked to various aspects such as choreography, performance techniques, and effective teaching methods.

Based on the above information, the course modules with their content provide a broad understanding of the artistic sports courses in Chinese sports universities, which demonstrates that students are prepared for a variety of vocational roles upon graduation, mainly focused on teaching, coaching, and professional artistic sports activities practitioner.

3.3.4. Course Assessment Focus

A thorough review of programme specifications of the university documents in China evidenced that there is no specific course assessment approach focused on artistic sports courses, which indicates the need for further consideration of the course assessment approach. However, under the National Teaching Quality Standards for Undergraduates, the research found that all artistic sports-related courses are sub-fields in the category of "Dance Education", "Dance Performances", and "Dance Choreography", which are part of the "Music & Dance Teaching" discipline. According to a review of the document "National Standard for Teaching Quality of Music and Dance" (Dance Major), one section named "Assessment of Teaching Outcome" shows that:

The Dance Subject assessment is characterised by combining "practicalities" and "theory". Therefore, the assessment should be carried out during the teaching process to avoid a single type of final test consisting of an "Assessment of learning behaviour," "Individual and group performances," "Oral presentations," and "Final dissertations." By Considering this, the university should set up a diversified assessment mechanism that could assess the various abilities of students, including "Thinking Ability", "Physical Ability", "Communication Ability", "Teaching Ability", and "Creative Ability", as well as assess the ability to analyse and solve problems based on known knowledge. Also, the "Course Assessment content" includes the following components: (Committee, 2018, p.236).

- *Practical Assessment - Students must master the ability of the "Dance Technique" and "Artistic Performance of Dance."*
- *Theoretical Assessment – Students must master the theoretical knowledge of Dance*
- *Assessment of Creative Ability - Students must demonstrate critical thinking skills creatively and independently.*
- *Assessment of Behaviour - this includes attendance, classroom assignments, and ethics. (Committee, 2018, p.236).*

Based on the evidence presented, the assessment approach for artistic sports courses in Chinese universities appears indistinct, primarily deriving from the National Standards of Music and Dance. These standards lean towards an assessment approach that encompasses both practical and theoretical aspects and places emphasis on the assessment of student abilities and behaviours. There seems to be a lack of an independent assessment plan with distinctive features, which highlights a potential need to refine the assessment practices related to artistic sports courses within Chinese higher education institutions. Such an enhancement would ensure a more holistic and clear assessment of students, potentially improving the quality of education in this field.

3.4. Summary

In summary, Chapter Three provides a comprehensive exploration of artistic sports course-related research within academia and a broad understanding of artistic sports courses' "content and focus", particularly focusing on the Chinese context.

Regarding the artistic sports course-related research, researchers located the growth of artistic sports research in China, highlighting three distinct phases from 1981 to 2022, each characterised by different research focuses and policy influences, focusing on the relationship between arts and sports to its current emphasis on higher education development and curriculum enhancement. It further explored and reviewed the artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education based on Tyler's curriculum framework, examining the objectives, content, implementation, and assessment. This review highlights the inherent link between sports and arts in higher education and stresses the importance of developing vocational skills, enhancing practical abilities, and highlighting distinguishing characteristics in course objectives. It also emphasises the need for course content that reflects the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports, the potential benefits of interdisciplinary integration, and the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles. The Chapter concludes by recognising the growth from primarily summative and quantitative assessment methods to more diversified and comprehensive approaches, laying a solid foundation for further research and discussion on developing and improving artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education.

Despite the promising developments in artistic sports courses, several updated perspectives have emerged in academia. One crucial aspect to consider is securing the core essence of these courses. While integrating different courses, it's essential to maintain their distinctive features. The challenge is to strike a balance between securing the distinctive qualities of artistic sports courses and adding elements from other disciplines to enhance the course. Similarly, it's been noted that the effectiveness of blended learning and innovative approaches are not universally applicable but vary

depending on the specific context and the needs of the students. This observation highlights the importance of continuously assessing implementation modes, given student feedback and learning outcomes. Furthermore, the shift towards more comprehensive assessment methods in artistic sports courses has been noted. However, it is crucial to ensure that these methods are clear, comprehensive, and considerate of students' diverse needs and expectations, thereby ensuring a holistic and effective learning experience.

Regarding the artistic sports course content and focus, on the other hand, current courses associated with artistic sports in China are the sub-fields of dance education, performances, and choreography. These courses, offered by Chinese sports universities, have specific objectives aimed at preparing graduates for various roles in teaching, training, coaching, and performing within educational and coaching settings. This opens up various career options such as teaching, coaching, performance, and community work, depending on the demand and skills of each graduate. Meanwhile, the universities strongly emphasise developing practical abilities that can be effectively applied in diverse industry contexts. Moreover, the modules are categorised into basic and core course modules, with several core modules shared across universities. These core modules include subjects such as artistic sports theory, teaching and coaching methods, music production, folk dance, dance sports, aerobics, contemporary dance, artistic gymnastics, and martial arts. These modules provide a comprehensive foundation for students, enabling them to gain a broad understanding of artistic sports. However, there is a potential need to refine the assessment practices related to artistic sports courses within Chinese higher education institutions. Such an enhancement would ensure a more holistic and clear assessment of students, potentially improving the quality of education in this field.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In the first three Chapters, this research discussed the aim, objectives, course components' framework, and present state of artistic sports-related research and courses in China. Building on this foundation, Chapter 4 will detail the methodology used in this research, which will follow the "Research Onion" model proposed by Saunders et al. (2012). They defined the "Research Onion" as a methodological tool that provides an inclusive and structured approach to research design, which is visualised as an onion with multiple layers that need to be peeled back to understand the core of the research. Saunders et al. (2012) highlighted that the research process is divided into several stages, each represented by a layer, including philosophy underpinning, approach to theory development, research choices, research strategies, time horizons, and techniques and procedures (See the below Figure 2).

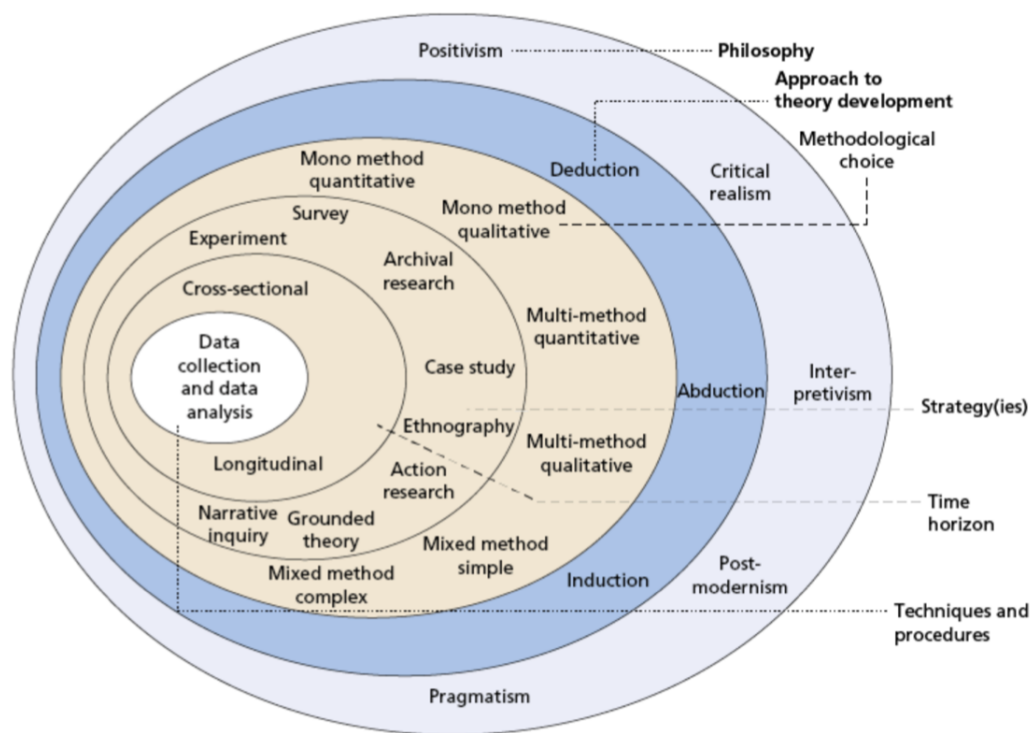


Figure 2 - The Research "Onion" Source: ©2012 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill

Saunders et al. (2012) also pointed out that:

- ⇒ **Philosophy Underpinning:** This layer concerns the nature and development of knowledge, also known as ontology and epistemology. It sets the philosophical grounding for the research.
- ⇒ **Approach To Theory Development:** This layer involves the theory development process, whether it's inductive (building a theory) or deductive (testing a theory)
- ⇒ **Research Choices:** This layer involves the technique used in the research, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.
- ⇒ **Research Strategies:** This layer refers to the plan of action or the approach that directs the research, such as experiments, surveys, case studies, grounded theory, thematic analysis etc.
- ⇒ **Time Horizons:** This layer refers to the time frame of the research, whether it's cross-sectional (at a particular time) or longitudinal (over a period of time).
- ⇒ **Techniques and Procedures:** This is the innermost layer and involves the specific research methods and techniques used for data collection and analysis.

In this research, the research onion model will provide a systematic approach to detailing the research process. The “Philosophical Underpinning” of this study, including the ontological and epistemological assumptions, is discussed in Section 4.2. The “Approach to Theory Development”, including the Reasoning Approach, is elaborated in Section 4.3.1. The 'Research Choices', including the Methodological choice, are elaborated in Section 4.3.2. The 'Research Strategies' are detailed in Section 4.3.3, which discusses the use of Thematic Analysis supported by a Template Analysis Approach. Finally, the 'Techniques and Procedures' are outlined in Section 4.4, which covers the research design, including research participants and sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

4.2 Philosophy Assumptions

Philosophical studies explore fundamental issues related to truth, reason, mind, values, and existence (Dictionary, 2020). These profound questions are often framed as problems requiring in-depth study or resolution (Chalmers, 1995). Within the scope of philosophy, ontology and epistemology are interconnected concepts that mirror the basic dilemmas of human cognition and sentiment (Hathcoat, 2019, Ejnavarzala, 2019).

In scientific research, the triad of ontology, epistemology, and methodology forms an intricate web of interrelated elements (Al-Ababneh, 2020, Hathcoat, 2019). Ontology, the study of being or reality, grapples with the question of what constitutes reality. It seeks to answer the fundamental question, "What is?" (Gruber, 2018). On the other hand, epistemology delves into the nature and forms of knowledge, investigating how knowledge can be created, communicated, and acquired (Cohen Louis, 2013). It poses the questions, "What does it mean to know?" and "How do we know what we know?" (Steup and Neta, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1994) further elaborate that epistemology probes the nature of the relationship between the potential knower and what can be known. Methodology, another philosophical concept, provides a theoretical approach to understanding and transforming the world. It addresses the question of "how and what it is?" from a methodological perspective (Howell, 2012). Moreover, it is a systematic approach to problem-solving, typically encompassing problem stages, tasks, tools, and skills associated with various methods (Novikov, 2013).

In essence, these three philosophical concepts of ontology, epistemology, and methodology form the bedrock of our understanding of reality, knowledge, and the methods people employ to explore and interpret the world around them. They are fundamental to the process of scientific inquiry and form the philosophical underpinnings of this research.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology, as a philosophical concept, concerns the study of what exists or the nature of reality (Novikov, 2013). In the context of social research, it encapsulates the researcher's beliefs about the nature of the social world (Kaminski, 2019), which can be branched into two primary categories: “nominalism” and “realism, also known as objectivism” (Novikov, 2013).

- ⇒ Nominalism considers that social entities are constructed by social actors, and the perception of the world is predicated on individuals' concepts and consciousness (Peck, 2018). This suggests that the world varies based on what people think and feel (Downward, 2002).
- ⇒ Realism, conversely, considers that social entities exist independently of social actors, which maintains that the external world, encompassing nature and human society, exists objectively (Peck, 2018). The existence and changes in this world are determined by their inherent development and are not solely contingent on subjective factors such as people's thoughts and feelings (Jenkins, 2010).

Downward (2002) highlighted that “Realism” further branches into two main forms: Empirical Realism and Critical Realism: Empirical realism employs empirical methods to comprehend real existence. However, it is often critiqued for remaining at the surface level as it fails to acknowledge the generative mechanisms that create observable phenomena (Abela, 2007).

On the other hand, Critical realism, Bogna et al. (2020) noted that existence is grounded in the recognition of natural rules and social phenomena, and it suggests that people can understand and alter existence when they discern how social phenomena are organised (Vandenberghe, 2022). However, this recognition cannot be observed concurrently with the social phenomena (Bhaskar, 2020) and can only be understood through studying the social science (Gilbert, 2022). Therefore, Bogna et al. (2020) stated that qualitative methods and subjective data are deemed appropriate to explore this relationship in the social sciences.

As for this research, “Critical Realism” is the ontological assumption underpinning the study. Due to the nature of this research topic, artistic sports courses in China, as a social and cultural phenomenon (which has been mentioned in Chapter 1), exist independently and objectively of individual perceptions, and their development and changes are influenced by various factors, including curriculum components, pedagogical strategies, and the broader socio-cultural context, which are objective realities. Furthermore, the influence of these factors on the effectiveness of artistic sports courses can be better understood and potentially modified when we recognise how these elements are organised, aligning with the principles of critical realism. Therefore, the ontological assumption of critical realism allows for a broad understanding of the research topic, aligning with the overall research aim and objectives. For instance, teachers' teaching approaches influence students' academic performance, making qualitative data or "narratives" instrumental in exploring the factors contributing to this phenomenon.

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology, another philosophical concept, delves into the study of knowledge and justified belief. It seeks to answer the question, "How do we know what we know?" (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022). In the realm of social research, it concerns the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022). Further, Epistemology can be broadly classified into two categories: positivism and interpretivism, each associated with a distinct ontology and its own epistemological characteristics (Novikov, 2013).

- ⇒ Positivism considers that the social world can be studied in an objective manner, which perceives the world as real and observable (Park, 2020). Consequently, Park (2020) and Junjie and Yingxin (2022) noted that positivist scientific research necessitates observing the world to gather various data, primarily quantitative, and then analysing them to gain scientific knowledge.
- ⇒ Conversely, interpretivism considers that the social world is too complex to be

studied objectively and must be interpreted, which views the world as a subjective construct created by individuals (Peck, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how and why people construct their realities and where differences lie (Peck, 2018). Alharahsheh (2020) noted that to understand these differences and the meanings behind them, interpretive scientific research requires the interpretation of behaviours or perceptions to gather a range of research data, predominantly qualitative, which is then subjected to scientific analysis and discussion to gain insight.

As for this research, interpretivism is the epistemological assumption underpinning the study. Considering the nature of the research topic, the development and effectiveness of artistic sports courses are influenced by a multitude of subjective factors, such as the experiences and perceptions of course participants. These factors are complex, requiring an interpretive approach to grasp and understand them fully. Therefore, this approach allows not only the gain of a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the development and effectiveness of artistic sports courses but also a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China. Meanwhile, it also aligns with the ontological position of critical realism adopted in this study, as it acknowledges the existence of objective realities while recognising the importance of subjective interpretations.

4.2.3 In Summary

Indeed, the ontological assumption of critical realism and the epistemological assumption of interpretivism form the philosophical foundation of this research. These assumptions guide the way of this research to understand the reality of artistic sports courses and how we gain knowledge about them, providing a robust underpinning for this research within a well-established philosophical context.

4.3 Methodology Consideration

Considering the methodology is fundamentally influenced by its ontological and

epistemological assumptions. Also, by following the understanding of Saunders' Research Onion discussed in the introduction section of this Chapter, two key aspects will be discussed in this research to provide a clear consideration of the methodology: the reasoning approach and the methodological choice.

4.3.1 Reasoning Approach

In social research, the reasoning approach describes the process of constructing conclusions based on logical reasoning from a set of available data, which plays an essential role in moving from observations to generalisations or theories (Saunders et al., 2015). Saunders et al. (2015) highlighted that three reasoning approaches are fundamental to analysing information and making decisions in social research: deduction, induction, and abduction.

- ⇒ **Deductive Reasoning:** This is a top-down approach, as described by Skolits (2021), and is an inferential process where conclusions are derived from initial hypotheses (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). It begins with an established theory and examines whether the collected data support that theory, often developed from an understanding of the academic literature (Saunders et al., 2015). Deductive reasoning is often associated with quantitative research, where hypotheses are tested using statistical methods.
- ⇒ **Inductive Reasoning:** This is a "bottom-up" approach Skolits (2021). Saunders et al. (2015) described that it is a process that involves using observations of social phenomena to conclude. Thornberg (2022) stressed that researchers could use induction to identify general ideas based on empirical evidence, and the experience and phenomena come before the appearance of theory. They are often associated with qualitative research, where patterns and themes are identified from the data and used to build a theory.
- ⇒ **Abductive Reasoning:** abduction is a third type of reasoning that combines elements of deduction and induction (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). Saunders et al. (2015) explained that abductive reasoning starts with an

observation or a set of observations and then seeks the simplest and most likely explanation. Syll (2023) noted that abductive reasoning, unlike deductive or inductive reasoning, does not guarantee the final conclusion. Typically, it is used in exploratory research intended to generate new hypotheses and ideas.

In short, deduction starts with a theory and tests it against the data, induction starts with the data and builds a theory from it, and abduction starts with an observation and seeks the most likely explanation. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and is suitable for different types of research questions and contexts.

In the current research, the reasoning approach begins by making a priori theme decisions based on established theory by applying "Template Analysis". A more detailed explanation and discussion of "Template Analysis" will be provided in the subsequent section - 4.3.3 "Thematic Analysis with a Template Analysis Approach." According to Brooks and King (2012), template analysis is a type of thematic analysis method that involves organising and analysing qualitative data by developing a "template" of codes representing important themes identified by the researcher. Considering the reasoning approach in template analysis, Brooks and King (2012) stated that template analysis does not adhere to a fixed position on the deductive-inductive reasoning spectrum, and its application varies depending on the methodology employed. Therefore, Brown et al. (2022) stressed that although no formal research hypothesis was formulated in template analysis, the process of predefining a coding template based on established theory can be identified as a deductive process. Meanwhile, because an interpretative epistemology underpins this study, inductive elements are incorporated into the analysis, which allows for themes to arise from the participant data (Brown et al., 2022). This balanced approach allows for a broad exploration of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, drawing on both established theory and empirical evidence.

4.3.2 Methodological Choice

The methodological choice in social research refers to the decision to use either quantitative or qualitative methods, or a combination of both, to answer the research question (West, 2013). Markauskaite et al. (2010) noted that this choice is guided by the research question, the aim and objectives of the study, and the researcher's philosophical assumptions. It's an important aspect of research design and can significantly influence the outcomes and interpretations of a study (Thornberg, 2022). There are two main categories in social sciences: qualitative and quantitative:

- ⇒ Quantitative analysis, as described by Mohammed (2021), is a research strategy that uses numerical indicators, mathematical analysis, and statistical methods to interpret social behaviours and phenomena. It is often associated with the positivist epistemological stance and is typically used when the research aims to measure or quantify aspects of the research subject.
- ⇒ Qualitative analysis, as described by (Cárdenas and Valcárcel, 2005), is a non-mathematical and non-numerical analysis that involves the inductive interpretation of data, such as interview data, to construct a comprehensive theory regarding a social phenomenon. It is often associated with the interpretivism epistemological stance and is typically used when the research aims to explore and understand the complexities of the research subject.

In this research, a qualitative approach was chosen over a quantitative analysis. Considering the nature of the research subject and the research aims with its objectives, the development and effectiveness of artistic sports courses are influenced by many subjective factors, including the experiences and perceptions of course participants. These factors are complex and require an interpretive approach to understand fully. Meanwhile, the qualitative research approach allows for an in-depth exploration and interpretation of these subjective factors, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China. This approach aligns with the interpretivism epistemological position of this research, which recognises the complexity and subjectivity of the research subject and

the importance of interpreting the experiences and perceptions of course participants.

4.3.3 Thematic Analysis with A Template Analysis Approach

Building upon the above understanding of the methodological choice also affirmed that a qualitative approach is well-suited for this study. Therefore, it becomes crucial to discuss the Template Analysis that will be employed in this research, which is a distinctive qualitative approach within the framework of Thematic Analysis. Doing so can ensure a broad understanding of the methodology employed in this study.

4.3.3.1 Thematic Analysis and Template Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a commonly used and valuable analytical technique in qualitative research for analysing qualitative (textual) data (Terry et al., 2017). It is often considered the "basic" method in the academic research (Clarke et al., 2015), which is widely applied in qualitative organisational research due to its versatility and ability to be applied to various qualitative data sets and research topics. However, "thematic analysis" does not refer to a specific method but encompasses various approaches (King et al., 2018). King et al. (2018) stressed that in qualitative research, there are many different types of thematic analysis, including Framework Analysis (Ritchie et al., 2003), Matrix Analysis (Horn and Johnson, 2012), and Template Analysis (Brooks and King, 2012), (which this study focuses on Template Analysis). Each approach has its way of defining themes and structuring the analysis, but the ultimate goal of all thematic analysis methods is to identify, organise, and interpret themes in qualitative (textual) data to convey important messages (King et al., 2018).

Template Analysis (will be used in this research) Brooks and King (2012) defined it:

Template analysis is a technique for thematically organising and analysing qualitative data. The data involved are usually interview transcripts but may be any kind of textual data, including focus groups, diary entries, text from electronic interviews (via email/web-based chatrooms, social networking sites

etc.) or open-ended question responses on a written questionnaire. (Brooks and King, 2012: p1-2)

Brooks and King (2012) highlighted that the researcher creates a list of codes, called a “template”, that represents the identified themes in the data and is structured hierarchically to reflect the relationships between the themes defined by the researcher. Meanwhile, template analysis features its distinctive qualitative (textual) data analysis approach, including three main aspects.

- ⇒ **Use of A Priori Themes.** King et al. (2018) noted that template analysis allows for using "a priori" themes, which are preliminary themes defined before beginning the analysis process because they are simply a starting point for focusing on certain aspects of the research domain under investigation. Therefore, these themes are based on the researcher's prior knowledge, established theoretical understanding, or assumptions about the research topic.
- ⇒ **Flexibility.** Brooks et al. (2015) highlighted that the technique of template analysis involves hierarchical coding, which provides a structure for analysing textual data while allowing some flexibility to tailor it for a particular research project. The process involves creating new coding themes from a subset of data (allowing new themes to emerge from the data), which also can be continuously revised and improved as needed during the analysis process.
- ⇒ **Systematic Approach:** Brown et al. (2022) stressed that template analysis promotes a systematic and well-structured approach to data handling. Using a template in the analysis process ensures that the analysis is thorough, comprehensive, and methodical, enhancing the overall quality and depth of the research findings.

In short, thematic and template analyses are commonly employed in qualitative research to identify themes within qualitative (textual) data. Template Analysis, a specific approach within the broader framework of Thematic Analysis, features its use of a priori themes, flexibility, and a systematic approach. Creating a coding template

that represents the pre-identified themes enables researchers to effectively analyse qualitative (textual) data from diverse sources, including interview transcripts, focus groups discussion, or open-ended question responses from written questionnaires. More importantly, it also allows new coding themes to emerge from the data. The utilisation of template analysis facilitates a structured and broad exploration of qualitative data, enhancing the understanding and interpretation of the research findings.

4.3.3.2 Research Steps of Template Analysis

Having understood the distinctive features of template analysis above, it becomes clear that these features are not just standalone points but are integral to the process of conducting template analysis. Therefore, to effectively employ template analysis in this research, it's crucial to understand the step-by-step process that transforms raw data into meaningful insights. This process builds upon the above features and provides a practical roadmap for academic research. Brooks and King (2012) indicated below Six main steps that should be included in the template analysis process:

1. **Identifying a priori themes:** Before starting the analysis, researchers may identify a priori themes based on established theories, related literature, or their theoretical understanding, prior knowledge, and assumptions about the topic. These themes are expected to be relevant to the data (Brooks and King, 2012).
2. **Data Collection:** To gather information from research participants, qualitative data can be collected through various means, such as mentioned above: in-depth interview transcripts, focus group discussions, diary entries, text data from electronic interviews (via email or web-based chat room), or written questionnaires with open-ended responses (Brooks and King, 2012).
3. **Developing an initial template:** This is the first step in analysing data. The researcher creates a preliminary set of codes or themes as to develop an initial template based on their initial reading and understanding of the data. Whilst

this initial template can include both expected themes (a priori themes) and any new themes that surfaced during the initial stages of analysis (Brooks and King, 2012).

4. **Refining the template:** As the researcher continues to analyse the data, the template can be updated and adjusted by adding new themes, revising or removing existing ones, and reorganising the structure, which is called an iterative process. However, trying to make minimal revisions to the template as the analysis progresses is essential (Brooks and King, 2012).
5. **Finalising the Template:** Determining when a template is satisfactory or “good enough” depends on the specific project. Essentially, the research team agreed that the current template adequately covers all relevant sections of the text encountered. They then reviewed each interview transcript and any important data not included in the template, which can be labelled as a 'free node' in NVivo, a qualitative research software (that will be used in this research). The team will review these additions during regular meetings (Brooks and King, 2012).
6. **Interpretation and Reporting:** Once the final template is created, the researcher proceeds to interpret the coded data based on the aims and objectives of the study. Then, they use the final template to report the findings, discuss how each theme and sub-theme is reflected in the participants' experiences, and draw conclusions about this research (Brooks and King, 2012).

In this research, the exploration of challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China can benefit from applying the above six steps. However, it is important to recognise that template analysis holds both strengths and limitations. Brooks et al. (2015) highlighted that although template analysis provides flexibility, this element can be difficult for researchers because it requires them to determine which themes to include and how to arrange them, which could introduce bias. Additionally, King (2012) notices that using a priori themes in template analysis can help to

concentrate the analysis, but there is a possibility of overlooking unexpected themes that arise from the data. To address these challenges, researchers often emphasise the significance of reflexivity, being aware of their biases and notions throughout the analysis process (Brooks and King, 2012), which can be fostered through discussions within the research team.

To address the challenges in current research, three strategies were utilised: First, **Using Reflexivity:** Throughout the collection and analysis of the interview data, I remained conscious of my own biases and preconceptions about topic analysis. For example, I had experience in artistic sports course assessment and reflected on how this shaped my interpretation of the data. I maintained a research diary to record my thoughts and reflections prior to and throughout the analysis process (see Appendix 9 for a summary of entries from my reflective diary: data analysis). Second, **Using Iterative Analysis:** I maintained an open approach to revising the template throughout the analysis of the interviews. For instance, when an unexpected theme, such as "Strengthening Quality Enhancement", emerged from the interviews with experts, I adapted the template to incorporate this new theme. Third, **Using Peer Debriefing:** I engaged in regular discussions about the analysis with members of my supervisory team. I presented them with the initial template and actively sought out their feedback to ensure that my analysis was comprehensive and unbiased.

In conclusion, template analysis is a beneficial tool in qualitative research, characterised by its use of a priori themes, flexibility, and systematic approach. These features allow researchers to adapt the method to their specific needs while ensuring a thorough analysis. However, these strengths also present challenges and limitations, as shown above. Despite these limitations, template analysis remains valuable for exploring complex research questions, particularly in the context of current research, in which the template analysis provided an in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China.

4.4 Research Design

In academic research, research design encompasses the overall strategy chosen by the researcher to integrate the various components of the study logically and coherently (Flick, 2022). This ensures that the research questions are effectively addressed and serves as a blueprint for data collection, measurement, and analysis (Dulock, 1993). This research design includes three main parts: Research Participants and Sampling, Data Collection, and Data Analysis. These components are interconnected and are designed to work together to address the research aim of developing an inclusive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China.

4.4.1 Research Participants and Sampling

In this research, participants are chosen from three distinct types of individuals: experts, on-campus students, and social professionals. These individuals are selected based on their knowledge and experience in artistic sports courses. The choice of three types of individuals is grounded in the guiding curriculum framework identified in Chapter 2, which draws inspiration from Ralph W. Tyler's seminal work on curriculum design and development, known as "Tyler's Rationale" and its associated "curriculum design framework". According to Tyler's rationale, Tyler (1949) proposed three primary sources for educational development: the learners themselves, the contemporary life outside of school, and subject specialists. This suggests that students, the social context (be understood by social professionals), and experts are integral components in the process of educational development. Tyler (1949) believed that:

"No single source of information (from three sources) is adequate to provide a basis for wise and comprehensive decisions...in school. Each of these sources has certain values to commend it. Each source should be given some consideration in planning any comprehensive curriculum program." (Tyler, 1949, p.52-53).

This statement highlights the importance of integrating insights from all three sources

to make comprehensive decisions in curriculum development. Considering this, the present study is structured to divide the three types of individuals into two investigational groups: the Chinese and the U.K.'s groups (The details of participant screening are provided in Appendix 6-7). Within each group, interviewees are further divided into sub-groups, including experts (10), on-campus students (37), and social professionals (9), and the pseudonyms and details of participant characteristics are provided below in Appendix 5. Given the study's focus on improving the Chinese artistic sports curriculum based on interviewees' experiences, and after discussions with the supervisory team, the experience of the U.K.'s interviewees are more focused on teaching and working situations. Therefore, on-campus students from the U.K.'s universities were not involved in this study. The sampling structure is detailed further in the following Figure 3.

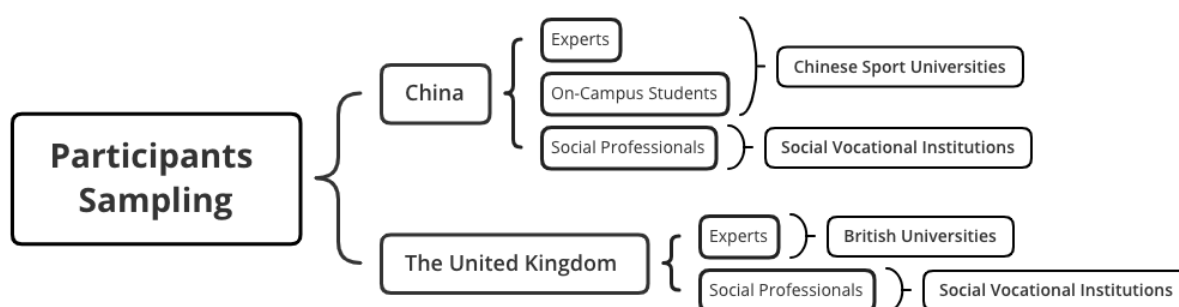


Figure 3 - Sampling Structure

In China, individuals involved in learning, teaching, researching, and engaging in the courses of the artistic sport were interviewed. The expert and on-campus student samples were drawn from five sports universities, while social professionals working in artistic sports industries were selected from two vocational/professional institutions. Detailed criteria for these selections are provided in Appendix 6.

In the UK, the current state of artistic sport-related courses in higher education was examined. These courses were found under different names, such as dance movement psychotherapy, physical education with dance, and sports and dance

therapy. The experts and social professionals involved in this related field for learning, teaching, researching or experience in related “Sports Combined with Art” areas were interviewed. The expert interviewees were chosen from three universities, while social professionals were selected from two vocational/professional institutions. The detailed screening criteria for these selections are provided in Appendix 7.

Participant sampling employed two main methods:

- 1) Purposive sampling: Prospective participants were directly contacted or invited to participate in the study. As described by Cash (2022), purposive sampling is a collection method used in social research where the researcher selects participants based on their knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic.
 - 2) Snowball sampling: Participants were contacted following the recommendation of recruited participants. According to Simkus (2022), snowball sampling is a nonprobability method of sample selection used to locate individuals with specific characteristics of interest, where the sampling strategy relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents.
- Experts – Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

One-to-One Interviews in China: Five experts working in Chinese Sports Universities. Inclusion Criteria: Current working in Chinese Sports Universities; More than five years of teaching or research experience in artistic sports courses. Exclusion Criteria: Experts with experience, but it's unrelated to artistic sports courses. (See Appendix 6)

One-to-One Interviews in the U.K.: Five experts working in the U.K.'s universities. Inclusion Criteria: Current working in the U.K.'s Universities; More than five years of teaching or research experience in related “Sports Combined with Art” areas. Exclusion Criteria: Experts with experience, but it is unrelated to “Sports Combined with Art” courses. (See Appendix 7).

In terms of determining/liaising with these Experts, the following method was used:

- 1) Screening the information from Universities Website (Purposive sampling).
- 2) Through the way of the referrer's recommendation (Snowball sampling).
- 3) Connect by E-mail in advance (Obtaining Consent)
- 4) Interview by online platforms (COVID-19 Strategy)

- Social Professionals - Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

One-to-One Interviews in China: Six social professionals working in the artistic sports industry. Inclusion Criteria: More than five years of experience in the artistic sports industry; Working with one or more of the following four social institutions: "Private Art/Dance Institutions", "Chinese Dance Sport Federation (CDSF)", "Chinese Figure Skating Associations (CFSA)", and "The Chinese Aerobic Association". (See Appendix 6)

One-to-One Interviews in the U.K.: Three social professionals working in "Sports Combined with Art" related areas. Inclusion Criteria: More than five years of working experience in related "Sports Combined with Art" areas; Working with one or more of the following two social institutions: "The Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK (ADMP UK)" and "The Society of Sports Therapists (SST UK)" (See Appendix 7).

When attempting to determine/liaise with these professionals, there were two ways, which are:

- 1) Through the way of above experts' recommendation (Snowball sampling).
- 2) Through screening information from an official website and subsequently contacting the staff who are: 1. Working in Societies and Associations in the UK (Purposive sampling). 2. Working in the Associations and/or federations and/or Institutions in China. (Purposive sampling)

- On-Campus Students - Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Focus-Group Discussion in China: With the focus-group interviews, this research focused on Thirty-seven Chinese students (five groups, six to eight students per group) without mixing university students from different institutions (See Appendix 6). Inclusion Criteria: Artistic sport course students in sports universities; Final-year undergraduate students (Regarding the final-year students, their study experiences should be more abundant than those of non-final-year students, as well as their intended future employment goals should be more defined than those of non-final year students). Exclusion Criteria: Non-final-year students. (See Appendix 6)

In this case, students have been recruited using the relationship of experts from the current university (snowball sampling). Arranging the focus groups, Doodle Poll helped students share time slots to get the best time for all.

4.4.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the main approach to collecting qualitative data in this research. Semi-structured interviews, as described by Magaldi (2020) and Brett (2021), are a respondent-led data collection method. In these interviews, the researcher listens carefully to the respondents and then asks them further questions based on their responses Magaldi (2020). This approach allows respondents to express themselves more freely and explain their views in more detail, thereby providing rich data for analysis (Brett, 2021). Therefore, it demonstrated the following strengths:

- ⇒ Flexibility. Kakilla (2021) noted that semi-structured interviews are flexible and avoid imposing questions on the respondent. In this way, respondents are less constrained, allowing for further exploration of the research subjects, and there is plenty of time for people to think about it.
- ⇒ Deep Thought. Conrad (2018) noted that having a person-to-person discussion can provide a greater opportunity for interviewees to think deeply about a topic

or question.

⇒ Resonance and Harmony. The semi-structured interview facilitates positive communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. Since semi-structured interviews are informal in character, they are more likely to make the interviewee feel more at ease and allow the interviewer to show more understanding, allowing the interviewee to think deeply about the question (Kakilla, 2021).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews also present challenges and weaknesses. They can be time-consuming (Roulston and Choi, 2018), and the interviewer's personal views can introduce bias, and some sensitive topics might not be expressed directly by respondents (Tavory, 2020). For example, many students appeared to be uncomfortable expressing their concerns regarding the lecturers' teaching methods during the focus group interview. To address the weaknesses associated with current research, "Reflexivity" through a reflective diary was utilised (see Appendix 8 for a summary of entries from my reflective diary: semi-structured interviews). As described in section 4.3.3, encouraging the researcher to be aware of biases and notions throughout the analysis process can help mitigate the potential biases introduced during semi-structured interviews (Brooks and King, 2012).

Focus groups, a form of group discussion in which respondents are approached in a semi-structured interview style (Gawlik, 2018), are also used in this research. The main objective of a focus group is to hear the respondents' perspectives on the research question (Kakilla, 2021). The researcher can often make unexpected discoveries from the free discussion, and much information can be gathered in a short period (Gawlik, 2018). However, focus groups also have some limitations. Data quality might be affected by groupthink and participant bias (Laenen, 2021). In this situation, the interviewer should ensure the conversation stays on track to keep the participants engaged.

In this research, semi-structured interviews focused on applying the interview methods

of "participant personal interviews (person to person)" and "focus groups interviews". Audio recordings have been used to record the interviewees' responses, and under the influence of COVID-19, interviews were conducted using "online platforms". In addition, to comprehensively achieve effective responses from interviewees, the questions of this research need to be flexible in design (open-ended questions) to avoid limiting the options for responses (see Appendix 10). Bahreini (2022) stated that open-ended questions allow participants to express themselves more fully since additional information may emerge when participants can freely dialogue with the researcher.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Research data analysis involves examining, refining, converting, and modelling collected data to find helpful insights, make informed decisions, and draw conclusions (Thorne, 2000). Mayer (2015) noted that qualitative research typically involves recognising patterns, themes, and categories in the data and interpreting their significance in relation to the research question.

4.4.3.1 Template Analysis

This study employed template analysis, as mentioned in section 4.3.3 - Template Analysis Approach, which is a method of thematic analysis that allows for a priori themes derived from established theories, the researcher's theoretical understanding, or prior knowledge about the topic. Also, emergent new themes arise from the data during the process of analysis (Brooks and King, 2012). This method is particularly suited to current research due to its flexibility and ability to handle large data sets, allowing this study to explore the richest insight of the data in real depth.

In the first step, the "A Priori Themes" were identified by drawing on the key curriculum components from Chapter 2 and the literature discussed in Chapter 3, which were based on classic course development and design theories from the work of Tyler (1949) and the current literature review. Both focus on course objectives, content and learning

experiences, implementation, and assessment, respectively. It provided a guiding framework for the a priori themes, demonstrating their potential applicability in the domain of artistic sports courses. Based on this theoretical framework and literature review, this research identified four a priori themes (See Table 17):

1. **Course Objectives:** Tyler (1949) stressed the importance of clearly defining the objectives of a course. In the context of artistic sports courses, these objectives might relate to the skills and knowledge that students are expected to acquire. The sub-themes of "Study Motivation" and "Study Expectation" were derived from Tyler's book "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction", as they reflect the learner's objectives and educational purpose for taking the course (Stone, 1985).
2. **Course Content and Learning Experiences:** According to Tyler (1949), the course content and learning experiences should be carefully selected and organised to support achieving the course objectives. For artistic sports courses, the literature in Chapter 3 evidences that this might include both "Basic Learning Knowledge" (the essential skills and knowledge that all students need to acquire) and "Optional Learning Knowledge" (additional or specialised skills and knowledge that students can choose to learn based on their personal interests and objectives).
3. **Course Implementation:** Tyler's framework also includes considerations for how the course is implemented. This involves decisions about teaching methods, course schedules, and other practical aspects of delivering the course. Based on pedagogical approaches considered in Chapter 2, the sub-theme of the "Teacher-Centred" and "Learner-Centred" implementation approach, as well as the "Interactive Approach", was derived from relevant literature.
4. **Course Assessment:** Finally, Tyler (1949) emphasised the importance of assessing student learning to ensure that the course objectives are being met. In the context of artistic sports courses, the literature in Chapter 3 shows that it

is important assessing both book-based theoretical knowledge and practice-based knowledge. The former assesses students' understanding of the theory behind the course, while the latter assesses their practical abilities.

Table 4. 1 Research “A Priori” Themes with Its Sub-Themes

“A Priori” Themes	“A Priori” Sub-Themes	
Course Objectives	Study Motivation	
	Study Expectation	
Course Content and Learning Experiences	Basic Learning Knowledge	Theoretical Course Content
		Practical Experience
	Optional Learning Knowledge	
Course Implementation	Teacher-Centre Implementation Approach	
	Learner-Centre Implementation Approach	
	Interactive Implementation Approach	
Course Assessment	Theoretical (Book-Based) Knowledge Assessment	
	Practical (Practice-Based) Knowledge Assessment	

These a priori themes are a useful starting point for analysing data. They offer a well-structured framework for coding and interpreting interview data. Meanwhile, during the analysis of the research data, this research can create an initial template that includes identified themes and any new themes that emerge, then refine this template through an iterative analysis process to fully capture the complexity and richness of the data. This will enable this research to gain an inclusive understanding of the challenges and opportunities involved in providing artistic sports courses in China.

4.4.3.2 Nvivo 12 – Software Analysis

As mentioned above, King et al. (2018) noted that any data that appears in template analysis could be coded under a 'free node' in NVivo (a qualitative research software). The NVivo software supports both qualitative and hybrid search strategies (Dhakal, 2022). Dhakal (2022) described that it is based on "grounded theory" (qualitative research method) and was developed to assist researchers in organising, analysing, and finding unstructured or qualitative data, such as open-ended interviews, articles,

and social media. Brooks and King (2012) noted that grounded theory could be used for generic forms, such as template analysis. Dhakal (2022) further highlighted that Nvivo 12 could be used for three types of qualitative data analysis:

1. Texting Analysis includes interview notes, manuscripts, and interviewee narrative materials.
2. Media Materials Analysis, such as interview audio/video recordings.
3. Documents Comparative Analysis, from the syllabus, course module description, teaching plan and assessment plan from universities to teaching and learning quality assurance documents from the university, government, and private institutions.

In the current research on artistic sports courses, NVivo software provides significant advantages. It allows for the easy revision, relocation, and coding of nodes (themes) as the template is refined. For instance, template analysis is open to “new themes” emerging from the data. Therefore, when new emergent themes appear in the artistic sport course research, NVivo can readily create new coding themes for the interview results from China and the UK. It also provides tools for visualising the coded data and showing the frequencies of the data appearing, such as how many codes there are in a text or how many different codes there are in the same piece of content, which can assist in the interpretation phase of the analysis in this research. During the “iterative process” of data analysis, NVivo software's search function can easily locate the themes that should be coded. As the coding process progresses, NVivo also allows for synchronous updating of 'theme content'. This not only facilitates the interpretation phase of the analysis, making it easier and more efficient, but also, more importantly, prevents data loss during the lengthy coding process. Building on this, NVivo 12 was utilised, and the "a priori" themes from Table 17 were used for coding. The overarching themes were then explored, and all qualitative data from the interviews were placed into related themes. If there is any other pertinent information or factors that are important for creating artistic sports subjects, they were added to the coding list and

incorporated into the analysis and template as needed.

4.5 Ethical Consideration

In this research, stringent ethical procedures were adhered to, aligning with the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy. Ethical clearance was secured from the University Ethics Subcommittee prior to the initiation of data collection, ensuring the research design, data collection methods, and analysis conformed to ethical standards.

The first critical element was the use of informed consent. Participants were given an Informed Consent Form, Participant Information Sheet (PIS), and an Interview Protocol well in advance. Only those expressing interest in participating and returning the signed Participant Agreement Form were included in the study. This process ensured that participants had a thorough understanding of the research purpose, their involvement, potential risks and benefits, and their rights, including the right to withdraw without penalty.

A fundamental principle adhered to in this study was honesty, ensuring no deception was involved. All participants were made fully aware of the purpose and methods of the study. This transparency extended to debriefing, where key themes and details were reiterated after each interview. Meanwhile, another core ethical aspect was managing withdrawal from the investigation. Participants could withdraw from the study up until 2 weeks after their interview. In such cases, any data collected would be removed, and audio recordings or notes relating to the withdrawn participants would be destroyed immediately. The withdrawal procedure was communicated clearly to participants, specifying that the request must be made via email or telephone.

The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were paramount. Two recording methods were used: summary notes and audio recordings. All interview responses were anonymised for both direct and indirect identifiers, with all specific data quoted in research dissemination pseudonymised. A coded system was used for anonymised

analysis, ensuring the identity of participants remained confidential and known only to the research team. Additionally, data access was strictly limited to myself, my supervisors, and potentially the thesis examiners.

Regarding the protection of participants and interview data, confidentiality was maintained throughout, and due to COVID-19, all interviews were conducted online. A clear process was established for complaints or well-being concerns. Meanwhile, to uphold data integrity, all information from interviews was securely stored and password-protected in compliance with GDPR guidelines. After transcription into qualitative analysis software (Nvivo 12), the recordings were deleted. Transcribed data will be retained until the point of publication, after which it will be responsibly deleted. Harm and risk mitigation were also considered. This research posed no harm or risks to participants. Furthermore, this study is original and free from any conflict of interest.

This ethical approach aligns with not only the university's guidelines but also the broader principles of research ethics in social science. It ensures that the research is conducted respectfully, protecting participants' rights and maintaining the integrity of the research process. Ethical approval was granted by the College of Science and Engineering Research Ethics Committee of the University of Derby, with the approval reference ETH2021-0409, in 2021.

4.6 In Summary

The current Chapter outlines the methodology of this research, following the structure of the “Research Onion” model proposed by Saunders et al. (2012). The philosophical underpinnings are grounded in critical realism in ontological assumption and interpretivism in epistemological assumption, guiding the understanding of the reality of artistic sports courses and the acquisition of knowledge about them. The research approach combines deductive and inductive methods, while the methodological choice favours a qualitative approach for a detailed exploration of course participants' experiences and perceptions. The research strategies employ a template analysis

approach, facilitating a structured analysis of qualitative data. The techniques and procedures section elaborates on the research design, encompassing participant sampling from experts, on-campus students, and social professionals from both China and the UK. Data collection is conducted via semi-structured interviews, either one-to-one or focus groups, and data analysis is performed using template analysis facilitated by Nvivo 12 software. This comprehensive methodology ensures a systematic exploration of the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China.

Chapter 5 Interview Results

5.1. Introduction

This Chapter presents a thematic analysis of the data collected from interviews (One to One and Focus Group) in China and the U.K. It offers some initial insight into the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, which all build upon the foundation laid in previous Chapters.

The first two sections of this Chapter will apply the methodology and tools outlined in Chapter 4, including the "Research Steps of Template Analysis" outlined in section 4.3.3.2 and the "Research 'A Priori' Themes" identified in section 4.4.3.1 to interpret the data collected from interviews in both China and the U.K. It will use the structured curriculum framework drawing inspiration from Tyler's Curriculum Rationale, focusing on the four-course components: course objectives, content and learning experiences, implementation, and assessment.

Following the "Research Steps of Template Analysis", the initial template (See Appendix 18) has been updated and adjusted through rigorous analysis and discussion with the supervisory team. This iterative process led to the development of the finalised coding template, which is presented in Table 5.1 for China and Table 5.14 for the U.K. Given the "Flexibility" of template analysis, as described in Section 4, the new emergent themes that arose from the data have been identified and highlighted as a "new emerged theme" in the finalised coding template of Table 5.1 and Table 5.14. Additionally, Tables 5.1 and 5.14 displays the order of themes identified throughout the interviews based on the interviewees' experiences. This order is determined by how the narrative progressed rather than by the importance of each theme. Therefore, the finalised coding template will contribute to data analysis and guide the in-depth interpretation of the data in each theme.

In the third part of this Chapter, an initial synthesis and comparison of views from the

two different national contexts is presented based on the interpretation of data collected from interviews conducted in China and the U.K. This analysis initially summarises and synthesis each component of the "curriculum component framework." Upon reviewing the interview results between the two countries, it was observed that certain similarities exist between the thematic outcomes identified in the U.K. and the information gathered from Chinese interviewees. The initial synthesis section in this Chapter highlights the shared aspects between the interview results of the two countries while also emphasising the distinct characteristics found in the U.K. context. These distinct characteristics serve as a valuable supplement to the Chinese interview content, enabling a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of developing artistic sports courses in China. Moreover, the subsequent discussion section of Chapter 6 will integrate the thematic results with relevant literature to facilitate a comprehensive discussion.

5.2. Results of The Interviews Conducted in China

As described in Chapter 4, the individuals interviewed in China are involved in learning, teaching, researching, and engaging with the course of the artistic sport, which includes experts, final-year on-campus students, and social professionals. The expert and on-campus student samples were drawn from five sports universities, while social professionals working in artistic sports industries were selected from two professional institutions (Shown in Appendix 6). After collecting data and making necessary updates and adjustments to the initial template, the finalised coding template is presented below as 5.1.

Table 5.1 Finalised Coding Themes in Chinese Interviewees

Themes Areas	Sub-themes Areas
Curriculum Objectives	Students Learning Motivations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic motivation • Extrinsic motivation
	Expected Capabilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Excellent Teaching Capabilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Performance and Competitive Capabilities • Developing Study, Academic and Research Skills • Lacking Healthy Guidance Abilities • Increasing Employability Skills
	<p>Expected Careers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Growth of Teachers and Dancers • Encouraging Entrepreneurship • Leadership • Promoting The Development of Health Consultant • Inspiring Further Education
Curriculum Content and Learning Experiences	<p>Perceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical Knowledge Learning Content • Practical Experience Learning Content • Study, Academic and Research Skill • Optional Course <p>Expectation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving course characteristic • Enhancing academic research • Expanding course resource
Curriculum Implementation	<p>Teacher – centred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Methods • Digital Media Deliver Methods <p>Interactive approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue • Cooperation <p>Student – centred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry-Based Teaching • Teamwork
Curriculum Assessment	<p>Theoretical knowledge assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper-based examinations • Oral presentations • Thesis <p>Practice skill assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus-based practice assessments • Work placement practice assessments
Curriculum Quality Enhancement Opportunity (New emerged themes)	<p>Effective Teaching Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying and strengthening the teaching team objectives • Highlighting the teaching team up to data <p>Effective University Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching the national education policies • Updating Policies for department • Enhancing Policies for lecturers and researchers

5.2.1 Curriculum Objectives

5.2.1.1 Student Learning Motivation

To begin, this part aims to examine the motivation of student learners, which includes exploring and identifying the original ideas and reasons behind students' choice of artistic sports courses. Table 5.2.1 demonstrates the motivations of Chinese on-campus university students. The multiple responses can be divided into "Intrinsic Motivation" and "Extrinsic Motivation" in line with Fischer et al. (2019), which noted that these two types of motivation affect how students behave and act.

Intrinsic motivation is when a person engages in an activity because they find it enjoyable or satisfying, without any external pressure or reward (Fischer et al., 2019). This type of motivation comes from personal interest or enjoyment in the task and can lead to higher engagement, satisfaction, and overall well-being.

In contrast, according to Sheehan et al. (2018), extrinsic motivation is when someone is driven to perform a task or activity to receive a reward or avoid a punishment. This type of motivation comes from external sources, including money, good grades, praise, criticism, or loss of privileges. Table 5.2 shows the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of on-campus students:

Table 5.2 Finalised Coding Themes Regarding "Learning Motivations".

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Motivations	Intrinsic Motivation	Interested in this course
		Attracted to be a teacher, coaches, or trainer in public schools or institutions
		Dreaming to become a professional dancer or athlete.
	Extrinsic Motivation	One of the easiest ways to enter a high-quality university without a higher-quality Chinese GK score (university candidate examination).
		Stable salaries, high income, and no need to consider pension contributions
		Inherit family's industry of Art school, parents let them do it.

5.2.1.1.1 Intrinsic motivation

Many students enrol for this course because they are truly fascinated by the subject

matter. Moreover, they view going to university to improve their career opportunities since having an undergraduate degree is often preferred over not having one.

(Students) There was a great deal of interest in this course for me... and I am interested go to university, I thought it would be easier for me to get a job than those dancers who have not...like college graduates (lower level). (Chang)

In many cases, most students want to be teachers in public schools or educational institutions based on their interests or to improve their professional abilities to become good dancers or athletes.

(Students) My dream is to become a professional dancer, and my dad is an actor and professional dancer...(Gong)

However, it can be quite challenging to become a teacher in a public school, and professional dancers are expected to possess exceptional skills. Some students expressed a feeling of helplessness:

(Students) Erm...I'd like to be a teacher, but public-school positions are competitive...Not being a top competitor, professional dance or acting jobs are tough...I don't see a clear future...I need something that suits my dance background...that's why I came here, but where should I go? (Chang)

Additionally, some students choose artistic or sports courses to get into prestigious universities without high test scores:

(Students) I began dancing at six, leaving little time for study...but I have high-level dance skills...special offers for art or sports let me enter top universities without high exam scores... which opened the path to university. My plan is to become a professional dancer, compete, and earn honours... (Xiao)

It reflects that admission to a Chinese university's undergraduate program is tough. GaoKao tests are mandatory. However, artistic sports courses can be accepted with

lower scores.

5.2.1.1.2 Extrinsic motivation

In mentioning extrinsic motivation, students pointed out that having a stable salary, earning a high income, and not worrying about pension contributions are important factors for choosing this course:

(Students) Teachers in China employed in public schools have stable wages, and the government will pay them pensions throughout their life. Hence, pension consideration is not necessary for teachers who are employed in public schools... My sister is a teacher in a public school, and I deeply wish I were her. (Qin)

In addition, a small number of students stated that their main reason for attending university was to work in their family's art school:

(Students) I have no aims (laughing). My family sent me to study this course...I have no idea what I should learn...my family is running a dance school... maybe after graduation...I will come home and work for my family, simple...(Gong)

Their career goals are focused on something other than specific competencies but rather on working in their family's business. The reflection on the side shows that some family members work in fields related to art and sports through entrepreneurship. They create opportunities for their children by establishing a dance school and providing employment.

5.2.1.2 Expected Capabilities

Developing competencies is essential when creating a course. It equips students with skills and abilities for future work or academic pursuits. Research collected an overview of expected capabilities for artistic sports courses based on student

motivations and interviews. See Table 5.3 for more information.

Table 5.3 Finalised Coding Themes - Expected Capabilities

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Expected Capabilities	Teaching Capabilities	Capabilities of teaching, coaching, and training
	Performance and Competitive Capabilities	Competitive dance technology and performance skills
	Study, academic and research skills	Language use, academic writing abilities and IT skills
		Academic research abilities of artistic sports relevant disciplines
		Self-learning abilities
	Health Guidance Abilities	Healthy guidance abilities
		Related skills of Physical activities and healthy management
	Employability Skills	Events/Activities organising abilities, and dance adjudicator skills
		Leadership
		Business operation and management abilities
		Good communication skills (good relationship with the client)
		Creativity in working position (choreography, art performance, or teaching innovation)
		The ability to solve issues in their working areas
	The capacity of exploiting and developing artistic sports marketing	

5.2.1.2.1 Achieving Excellent Teaching Capabilities

Teaching and coaching skills are highly valued in artistic sports training, according to interviews with three groups:

(Experts) Students' teaching, coaching, and training skills are the focus of the artistic sports course. Society needs talent in this area...we value and cultivate these abilities in students. (Tan)

(Student) I want to learn teaching methods and dance training to teach in public schools...I aim to master teaching-related abilities... (Wen) "Teaching in public school is greatly appealing... (Qin)

(Social professional) In China's artistic sports industry, education is the main job option. Most graduates teach sports or dance in public or private schools.

(Kai)

This consensus shows evidence that artistic sports courses in China prioritise developing students' teaching, coaching, and training skills to prepare them for successful careers as educators and trainers.

5.2.1.2.2 Enhancing Performance and Competition Capabilities

Meanwhile, the performance and competition capabilities were also often highlighted by interviewees, especially all experts and students:

(Experts) Enriching students' stage and competition experiences during learning is necessary. They can strengthen their dance or sports skills by participating in performances or competitions. (Wu)

(Students) I gained much experience during performances and competitions, which will also help me train my future students. (Chang)

Therefore, including stage performances and dance competitions in artistic sports is crucial, as they offer valuable skills and enhance teaching capability. Students are keenly interested in performing and competing.

5.2.1.2.3 Developing Study, Academic and Research Skills

During the interviews, it was highlighted that students should focus on improving their study, academic, and research skills as they are key attributes for success.

(Experts) It's not just about teaching, training, and performance skills... we also consider study, academic and research skills such as self-learning, computer skills, academic writing, and academic research abilities...Self-learning can help me continue studying for a higher degree...(Dong)

It suggests teaching students *academic writing*, computer skills, and research abilities are essential, particularly self-learning abilities that could help them prepare for higher

degree programs.

5.2.1.2.4 Lacking Health Guidance Abilities

Importantly, there is an ability that was emphasised numerous times by both experts and social professionals, namely the ability to provide health guidance to communities:

(Experts) Recently, students teaching in fitness clubs... quite a new trend... we realise the importance of offering basic healthcare knowledge... there are key health factors in fitness clubs that we should focus on... Though not a primary objective of our course, I support this... We must concentrate on broader health safety and helping people with various health problems... (Zhen)

Specifically, the social professional stressed that:

(Social Professional) What's more important, Money or Health? ... We're missing a critical area in Artistic Sport... physical health activities and health management... It's an overlooked opportunity to aid public communities and a potential student job source... (Dian)

(Social Professional) I'm not sure if I should say this... but my company's health manager, who has a medical background, doesn't quite grasp the value of artistic sports for the public, especially the elderly... The first solution for illness is often medication, but it should only sometimes be... Older people can benefit from physical activity, improving their physical and mental health... So, the focus should be more on activity, social interaction, and less formal medical intervention, but more on natural well-being... (Huang)

Interviewees emphasised the importance of "health guidance abilities" for managing physical and mental health. However, universities have yet to offer dedicated courses in this subject. This has led to a shortage of graduates with health guidance-related

knowledge, causing a mismatch between supply and demand in society.

5.2.1.2.5 Increasing Employability Skills

In the interviews with experts and social professionals, employability skills were discussed. One important point emerged:

(Expert) Some students look at employability skills from a broader perspective...some students are interested in business and its operation and management... but the university does not offer these kinds of...so I try and encourage them to look at the business side if they are interested (Tan)

It highlights that graduates expect “business operation and management” skills despite universities not offering courses. Also, social professionals outlined their expectations:

(Social professional) their art and sports background give them an edge over pure management graduates...It is useful if the university offers management-related courses, especially to improve employability skills, like communication and problem-solving. (Dian)

(Social professional) we consider students' employability skills. First is leadership. Artistic sports graduates are potential leaders due to their unique backgrounds compared to graduates from other majors. Second, creativity sets a graduate apart. (Kai)

It shows that “communication”, “problem-solving”, “leadership”, and “creativity” are crucial skills in the artistic sports industry job market. Being proficient in these competencies, acquired through practical experience and learning, can increase graduates' employability and lead to better job prospects and promotions.

5.2.1.3 Expected Career

Expected career refers to the professional paths or job roles that students anticipate or aspire to pursue after completing a course or program (Conklin et al., 2013). Table 5.4 displays the five primary expected careers from the Chinese respondents.

Table 5.4 Finalised Coding Themes - Expected Career

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Expected Career	Enhancing The Growth of Teachers and Professional Dancers	Teacher, Coach, and Trainer Professional Dancer or Athlete
	Encouraging Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneur- Running Own Business
	Leadership	Manager of Sport Relevant Corporations
	Promoting Development of Health Consultants	Social Fitness and Health Consultant
	Inspiring Further Education	Researcher (Master's Degree and PhD Degree)

5.2.1.3.1 The Growth of Teachers and Professional Dancers

Most participants agreed that being a teacher or coach in an educational institution was a popular career choice. This aligns with the capability goals mentioned in section 5.2.2.

(Experts) Around 80% of graduates aim for teaching jobs, especially in public schools... but realistically... only about 30% secure such roles [considered among the best jobs in China]... It's highly competitive... Unfortunately, many don't land public school jobs... Consequently, they resort to teaching in private schools or continue as professional athletes... (Dong)

(Students) my career goal is to work as a teacher in a public school, which is why I wish to gain more knowledge and experience in teaching methods and dance training...(Qin).

Not all graduates are able to secure teaching positions in public schools and this limited availability of jobs is a major concern for students. As a result, some graduates pursue other career paths, such as becoming professional athletes or working in private schools.

5.2.1.3.2 Encouraging Entrepreneurship

Experts believe that current artistic sports course objectives do not meet industry demand, for example:

(Experts) The setting of artistic sports course objectives seems to be a lag [behind the development of industry], which is a real concern... the industry market is changing rapidly... especially the traditional industries are constantly being updated, so we cannot meet all the student's needs. (Tan)

Therefore, experts encouraged students to be more entrepreneurial.

(Experts) Many of our graduates are starting businesses, like private dance schools, fitness centres, etc. Given the competitive job market, this is reasonable...and their incomes are impressive. I encourage such entrepreneurship (Wu).

This was echoed by the students and social professionals interviewed. Students expressed their interest in entrepreneurship. Some students shared their aspirations to start their own businesses after graduation. They expressed a desire for more support in this area, including courses or workshops on business management and entrepreneurship.

(Student) I've always been interested in starting my own dance school. I've seen how successful some of our alums have been, and it's really inspiring. But I wish we had more resources and courses to help us understand how to start and run a business. (Qin)

Social professionals already working in the field also highlighted the opportunities for entrepreneurship in the artistic sports industry. They noted the growing demand for specialised fitness centres and dance schools and the potential for graduates to create successful businesses in these areas. However, they also emphasised the challenges

of entrepreneurship and the need for a strong foundation in business management skills.

(Social Professional) The entrepreneurship potential in our industry is high. Graduates are succeeding with their own dance schools and fitness centres. However, besides artistic sports knowledge, business management understanding is vital. Universities should offer more courses in this domain to equip students for entrepreneurial challenges (Dian).

Therefore, the theme of encouraging entrepreneurship is prevalent among all interviewee groups, and it is a potential area for course development to better prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of starting their businesses in the artistic sports industry.

5.2.1.3.3 Leadership

Experts and students mentioned a popular career aspiration - becoming a business manager or leader. The students particularly emphasised this:

(Students) I have a friend who majored in aerobics at university, and after graduation, he became a manager in a private company... he is leading more than 20 team members... I admire her for being so successful (Ken).

Students considered that individuals with a background in artistic sports are more suitable for managerial roles in artistic sports-related fields. Also, experts suggest that possessing management skills, particularly leadership abilities, can broaden students' job opportunities:

(experts) I have a student who is now working in a private fitness club and doing management-related work... it's a very good job with a high income. I really think this area should be focused on because it can extend graduates working opportunities (Dong).

5.2.1.3.4 Promoting The Development of Health Consultants

In the interviews with experts, they consistently emphasised the significance of having health consultants.

(Expert) The market demands Health Consultants... according to national health policy, cultivating community sports health instructors aligns with our students. (Dong)

(Expert) Our university faces obstacles in training health/social care students. We need successful cases to guide our objectives. Our sports-focused teachers require further health training. To cultivate health professionals, we need to enrich our team with health-specialized lecturers. (Zhen)

Also, the students showed an interest in becoming health consultants, understanding the positive impact this career could have on their community's health and well-being.

(Student) I've always been interested in health and fitness, and becoming a health consultant appeals to me. I think this field has a lot of potential, but we need more guidance and training to prepare us for this role. (Wang)

Professionals also noted the same potential:

(Social Professional) There's a growing demand for health consultants in our society. People are becoming more aware of the importance of health and fitness, and they're looking for professional guidance. I think graduates with a background in artistic sports could fill this gap, but they need the right training and skills. Universities should consider offering more courses in health consultation to meet this demand. (Huang)

All the interviewee groups emphasised the importance of promoting the growth of health consultants. There is a significant need for more courses and resources focusing on health consultation. Therefore, enhancing courses to equip students

better for the expanding field of health consultation is an opportunity.

5.2.1.3.5 Guiding by Policies and Inspiring Further Education

Finally, when considering future careers, guidance from national education policies is important. Zhen said:

(Expert) the course cannot be viewed only from the current career prospects... It should consider multiple career options...thus, the guidance of national education policy is indispensable...needs to ensure that we have a better chance of developing our course. (Zhen)

Meanwhile, becoming a researcher is something experts want graduates to pursue, but few students are interested in a higher-level degree.

(Experts)...As a teacher, I encourage graduates to continue their studies... Master or PhD, and eventually an opportunity to become a researcher. Cultivating high-quality researchers is another goal of our university...(Long)

During the focus group, this topic caused debate among the students:

(Students) I want to continue studying for a master's degree or a doctorate after graduation (Gong). [One student argued that] Why do you wait until you graduate with a master's degree or a PhD to start a business? Isn't it a waste of time and money? (Wen)

(Students) It would be helpful if I could continue my master's degree so that I can increase my chances of getting into a public school (Xiao).

(Students) The way I think is different from yours. I just want to be a dance teacher. Continuing study is wasting my time...It's important to know that if graduates from our course are getting older, it will be difficult to find employment. Who would want an older dance teacher? (Qin).

From the above dialogue, it is evident that considering national education policies is beneficial for students' future careers. However, students have different opinions about "continual learning", shaped by the needs of graduates and their own choices about further studies.

5.2.2 Curriculum Content and Learning Experiences

5.2.2.1 Perceptions (Basic/ Optional Learning Knowledge)

In this subsection, the perceptions of experts and students are illustrated to demonstrate views about the current course content of Chinese artistic sports courses. However, social professionals did not provide a specific list of course contents, but most mentioned the content corresponding to "What they need?". As a result, table 5.5 provides the coding data from the perceptions of Chinese university experts regarding the course content of "What essential course content have students accessed?" and Chinese university students regarding the information of "Which courses were useful to you?".

Two groups and four types of learning content in this table have been identified: books-based learning content, referred to as theoretical knowledge in the table; practical knowledge learning content; study tools-based learning content and optional courses.

Table 5.5 Finalised Coding Themes of Perceptions regarding "Curriculum Content".

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content	
Perceptions	Basic Learning Content	Theoretical Knowledge	Focusing the knowledge on teaching, performance, and choreography
			Enhance on literature and history related content
			Limited content about sports life science and therapy
	Basic Learning Content	Practical Experience	Emphasizing the practice of dancing and the stage performance
			The importance of placement practice
			Lack of practical content on physical health and mental well-being
	Study, Academic and Research Skill		Course content related IT skill and English skill is essential
		Enriching sport science research methods and academic writing skills	
Option	Optional Course	Educational training module	
		Performance training module	

5.2.2.1.1 Theoretical Knowledge Learning Content

Most Chinese experts indicated that theoretical knowledge about teaching, coaching, performing, and choreography is one of the most important content categories in courses:

(Experts) The content of theoretical knowledge courses is centred on teaching, coaching and performance. Still, it also encompasses other related topics... also the theoretical knowledge of dance choreography also falls into this category as it is closely related to teaching and performance. (Wu)

Based on the above course content categories given by experts, students expressed the names of the different modules within the course categories:

(Student) Most of the theoretical knowledge courses are related to teaching and performance, such as pedagogy, education theory, teaching and coaching theory, aerobics teaching theory, and dance education theory...Our teacher said this is the basic knowledge we should master. (Cheney)

(Student) The school emphasised teaching, coaching, and choreography as part of the learning process. Just like sports training theory, choreography theory, and teaching and coaching theory... Err... no doubt we should be trained to be teachers; thus... universities need to pay more attention to this aspect of content. (Xiao)

It shows that experts and students agree on the importance of pedagogy, education theory, coaching theory, aerobics teaching theory, dance education theory, sports training theory, and choreography theory for artistic sports.

Further, more than half of the interviewees mentioned that literature and history are also common subjects in artistic sports courses.

(Experts) Of course, to enrich students' cultural literacy and professional

background knowledge, our university will also offer related course content regarding the literature and history course module in our programme. (Zhen)

(Students) I really like theoretical courses related to history and literature... especially history, which attracted me a lot. For instance, Western ballet, Chinese and foreign dance, and the history of artistic sports...(Chang)

Literature and history courses could help students develop their basic knowledge, including “the history of western ballet”, “the literature introduction to Art”, “the history of Chinese and foreign dance”, “the history of artistic sports”, and “the basic theory of dance performance”, etc. Despite this, experts have noted that there is limited course content related to sports in the context of life science and therapy, despite advising students to learn about it.

(Experts) Erm, as an interdisciplinary subject, we are surviving between art and Sports discipline...At sports universities, students in artistic sports course programs should learn basic exercises in life science, such as sports/dance anatomy, psychology, physiology, nutrition, and rehabilitation...But they are limited now due to the limited time or course resources limitation... (Tan)

Also, some students believe that the theoretical courses in sports life science and therapy are not useful for their careers:

(Students) In our opinion, the courses we offer are not deep-understanding enough, such as physiology, which is only a one-semester course and cannot be applied to real life, even careers. So, what is the point for us? (Wang)

(Students) Several such courses have been taught to us in the classroom, such as anatomy, psychology, physiology, etc..., but they could have been more interesting... These are all things that medical graduates do, so how does it apply to us in the workplace? (Wen)

Despite experts advising that students take courses related to "sports life science and therapy", most sports universities do not offer such courses widely. From the student's perspective, these courses are unpopular with the majority as they are not deemed useful for their career.

5.2.2.1.2 Practical Knowledge Learning Content

When asked about practical knowledge learning content, most interviewees cited dance teaching and dance performance as their most valuable practice-related course experiences:

(Experts) We provide numerous practical courses, both "on-campus" and "off-campus". On-campus focuses on teaching dance and dance performances. Off-campus offers real-world experiences.

(Students) We learned many artistic sports programmes like folk dance, ice dance, aerobics, jazz dance, and street dance, including their teaching methods and essential performance skills. Ballet, the foundation of all dances, was particularly important (Ken).

Experts and students emphasised the importance of practical course content like teaching various dance styles. Also, they commented on practical content gained during work placements:

(Experts) We generally arrange students' work placements in local primary and secondary schools; some are also placed in local dance associations. These placements are conducted under university teachers' supervision to give the students a better sense of society. (Wu)

Although experts emphasise the importance of work placements, students have differing opinions on their value:

(Students) I am still looking forward to the placement arranged by the

university...Erm, I heard that it is going to the designated primary or secondary school to teach children learning dance...[The students around whispered: this is boring]" (Qin)

(Students) I think the designated working placement the university promoted was rather boring... the learning spaces [environment] and facilities were poor, and so boring to follow the tutor anyway without any working [teaching] opportunities. (Cheney)

(Students) Ideally, I would like to find a placement on my own. We can use updated training facilities and a more friendly learning environment, which will give me much more freedom, and perhaps the place where I work will hire me after completing the internship [placement working]. However, we cannot do that... (Chang)

Most students found the designated work placement to be dull with inadequate learning environments and strict adherence to rules, resulting in dissatisfaction with the course content and conduct. They preferred to locate a placement on their own. Experts, on the other hand, focused more on the content of the placement courses offered.

5.2.2.1.3 Study, Academic and Research Skills

Experts, students, and social professionals have different views on the importance of study tools and academic research-related course content in interviews. Experts perceived that:

(Experts) A basic understanding of learning tools is essential, especially at the undergraduate level, such as English, academic reading, and academic writing... (Wu)

(Experts)...especially the academic research, including academic reading

and writing, but not too many courses related to them...that is essential for students to learn...(Zhen)

English learning and academic research should be of great importance to students as experts said, but few courses related to them. Also, students expressed that:

(Student)...self-learning related courses broaden my learning experience, and academic research-related courses can be helpful for my future career development... at least broadens my employment options. (Qi)

(Students)...It might be very important for me to learn courses related to academic research to raise my education level, like PhD and increase employment competitiveness during my university study...However, it was quite a few courses related to these areas...(Gu)

Most students prefer self-learning skills and academic research-related courses. However, they also mentioned that these courses are few. Social professionals prefer:

(Social professional) I prefer graduates with strong IT and language skills who can use them in our business independently. (Huang)

Strong background in IT and language skills who can work independently is what social professionals prefer. Therefore, English and academic research are crucial for learning. Students prioritize relevant courses and view academic research as beneficial for their education and career. Social professionals value candidates with strong IT and language skills who can work independently.

5.2.2.1.4 Optional Course

Experts said that students can take optional courses in “education” and “performance” during their first three years of university, depending on their individual interests and the course offerings of their specific school:

(Experts)...Our major optional courses: education and performance, depending on students' interests... Education includes ice dancing, aerobics, dance sports, etc. Performance encompasses theatre, competition, stage performances, etc. Education students can choose performance options and vice versa. (Dong)

However, this arrangement does not necessarily broaden the scope of their knowledge beyond artistic sports. Experts noted that incorporating interdisciplinary learning from other fields could greatly enhance the content of elective courses in artistic sports:

(Experts)...In my opinion, in the optional course, interdisciplinary cooperation is one of the most effective ways to contribute to the innovation of disciplinary knowledge, like collaborating with engineering disciplines, medical disciplines, and social sciences (Dong)

Meanwhile, the students showed enthusiasm for the optional courses. However, they wished for a broader range of courses that overlap with other fields of study.

(Student) I appreciate the optional courses; they let me explore various artistic sports areas. But I'd prefer more diverse options, like courses merging artistic sports with business or health sciences. It would make our learning more varied and engaging. (Wang)

Experienced social professionals emphasised the significance of taking optional courses and asked about the need for additional interdisciplinary options:

(Social Professional) Optional courses are a great way for students to broaden their knowledge and skills in artistic sports. But I think universities could do more to offer courses that intersect with other disciplines. For example, a course that combines artistic sports with business management could be really beneficial for students who want to start their own businesses in the future. (Dian)

Therefore, interviewed groups expressed strong interest in more diverse and interdisciplinary course offerings. Current options provide some education and performance choices, but there is significant demand for further development to equip students with the skills needed to excel in artistic sports.

5.2.2.2 Expectations

During an interview, participants were asked about their expectations for artistic sports content. Experts, students, and social professionals shared their experiences and thoughts on the matter. After analysing their responses, the expectations were grouped into three categories: improving course characteristics, enhancing academic research, and expanding course resources. See Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Finalised Coding Themes of Expectations regarding “Curriculum Content”

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Expectation	Improving course characteristic	General characteristics: "education", "coaching", and "performance"
		Specific characteristics: Health guidance
		Considering China's cultural characteristics
	Enhancing academic research	Enhancing content to improve students' "academic research skills"
		Expanding course resource by high level lecturer team
	Expanding course resources	Developing entrepreneur skill-related course content
		Creating Artistic Sports management-related course content
		Enriching optional courses modules-related course content

5.2.2.2.1 Improving Characteristics of Course Content

Experts and social professionals agree that the distinctive characteristics of course content are vital in developing an artistic sports course.

(Experts) It is challenging to develop a course by considering the distinctive characteristics of the content. (Wu)

(Social professional) Course distinctive characteristics play a very substantial role in the success of the development of a course to match the social demands. (Xiao)

The interviewees highlighted the importance of teaching, coaching, and performance as the primary characteristics.

(Experts) It is important to strengthen the teaching and performance content of existing courses... It is the foundation for artistic sports-related courses.

(Tan)

(Students) I look forward to learning proper teaching abilities at university, so I can get into the education profession after I graduate from university... This is what I would like to do in the future. (Chang)

(Social professional) Teaching and performing are undeniably the two most desired jobs on the job market for graduates in the artistic sports field. (Kai)

However, teaching, coaching, and performance in artistic sports have yet to undergo any significant updates in the past two decades, and they should have distinctiveness, experts noted:

(Experts) Our course (artistic sports) has a clear content direction [teaching, coaching, and performance]. Somebody said it is a characteristic of our course... but I don't think so... characteristics mean the things that cannot be replaced... but the current graduates we have cultivated are replaceable by other subjects, such as the subject of "dance education" and "dance performances". (Zhen)

Moreover, developing health guidance abilities as a distinctive characteristic in artistic sports course content was emphasised. Interviewees said:

(Experts) One of the irreplaceable distinctive characteristics of the graduates is their ability to guide health under the guidance of artistic sports-related movement expertise. (Tan)

(Social professional) It is rare to find a graduate with healthy guidance ability

*who has a deep understanding of art and familiarity with sports experience
guide skills. (Kai)*

Meanwhile, experts suggest expanding our expectations for artistic sports beyond mainstream Olympic activities:

*(Experts) Another need... to update the course content...is the combination
of artistic sports with Chinese characteristics and mainstream artistic sports
programmes... to meet the needs of a local Chinese audience interested in
artistic sports...Examples: dragon and lion dances, dragon boats, Tai Chi, Qi
Gong, and Chinese martial arts. (Long)*

Therefore, to develop artistic sports programs that meet the needs of Chinese communities, it's crucial to consider traditional activities like lion and dragon dances, dragon boats, martial arts, Qi Gong, and Tai Chi, which are deeply rooted in Chinese culture.

5.2.2.2.2 Enhancing Academic Research

Additionally, interviewees mentioned a need to strengthen and expand academic development. First, enhancing content to improve academic research skills:

*(Experts) Developing a student's academic research skills has benefits for
the student...In this way, the student can improve their academic level
[master's or PhD] ...discover their scientific research interests...and help find
a job. (Zhen)*

Another way to enhance course content is by utilising scientific research to expand available resources. Experts recommend assembling a team of proficient instructors who conduct research, as this can result in the development of varied course content:

*(Experts) ...as you know, expanding course content by academic research is
very (emphasis) important...in the current circumstance, course content is*

narrow, which only focuses on one or two main points, and results in the industry market have been saturated... in this way can expand the course resource and expand the opportunities for students in the field of employment as well...(Long)

In addition, several experts also commented that the academic development of artistic sports should be in line with the development of sports science:

(Experts)...in the artistic sports area, it is important to keep up with the development of sports science in sports universities...as you know, the mainstream of sports science research is "Exercise and Health"... (Tan)

Based on the information provided above, enhancing academic skills can increase job prospects. Experts recommend adding a research team for artistic sports science to explore the crucial functions of art and sport. Also, academic research in artistic sports should align with sports science, focusing on exercise and health, and diverse resources can help develop course content in this field.

5.2.2.2.3 Expanding Curriculum Resources

According to experts, the growth of artistic sports courses is being hindered by incomplete course coverage and a limited selection of course resources:

(Experts) An adequate expansion of course resources is crucial to the development of artistic sports ... With it, the current complete course coverage and a narrow selection of course resources could ensure the development of artistic sports. (Zhen)

Meanwhile, interviewed data shows that up-to-date content is needed to meet the developing speed of changes in market demand:

(Experts) Of course, the current is incomplete...from the perspective of the industry climate, the current course content is far from meeting the changing

needs of the industry. (Wu)

Consequently, experts believe that expanding current resources is an essential step to be considered. Also, based on the needs of the current job market, the interviews highlighted the following three categories to expand course resources.

First, students indicated that they are interested in entrepreneurship courses.

(Students) I want to start a business after graduation...I wonder if the university will offer entrepreneurship-related courses that would be very nice.

(Wen)

(Students) It would be very helpful if there were an opportunity to learn entrepreneurship at university...Unfortunately, there are no entrepreneurship-related courses at the university... (Bai)

Second, experts and students emphasised the course content of artistic sports management:

(Experts) I still look forward to the management-related content set in the current course module...Erm, you know it will enrich the employment resources of students...(Dong)

(Students) like me, if I want to create my dance school after graduation, of course, Erm, the knowledge of business management is still necessary to learn, just Erm... (helpless laugh), you know, our university doesn't have any courses regarding this area (Qi).

Social professionals also repeatedly said:

(Social Professional) graduates should learn sports management... In the current artistic sports management market, over half of the managers lack artistic sports learning experience and knowledge... These non-professionals

have lost sight of the inherent benefits of artistic sports... I believe our students should acquire this relevant knowledge. (Huang)

Further, expanding "optional course modules" were mentioned by experts:

(Experts) ...you know, enriching optional course modules is also a good way to enrich course content... we recommend that lecturers play their professional expertise in optional course modules and encourage them [students] to apply for new optional modules based on their interests...(Dong)

The above description shows that three extra course contents were most expected by interviewees, including developing entrepreneur skill-related course content, creating artistic sports management-related course content, and expanding optional courses. However, the university does not currently offer these courses, but they are resources graduates can use to expand their job opportunities.

5.2.3 Curriculum Implementation

This section examines the current course implementation strategies employed in Chinese sports universities based on interviews with Chinese interviewees. The strategies are categorised into three types: teacher-centred, student-centred, and interactive approaches, and include perceptions from experts and students.

5.2.3.1 Teacher-Centred

It is commonly believed by interviewees that teacher-centred approaches are the most widespread method of teaching. These approaches can be grouped into two categories: "Traditional Methods" and "Digital Media Methods". This is particularly prevalent in courses that emphasise theoretical knowledge.

Table 5.7 Finalised Coding Themes of Teacher-Centred Approach

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Teacher –	Traditional Methods	Presenting with teaching materials

Centred Approach		Demonstrating with whiteboards or blackboards
	Digital Media Deliver Methods	Demonstration with slideshow Pre-recorded video

5.2.3.1.1 Traditional Methods

Most interviewees highlighted "presenting teaching materials" and "demonstrating with whiteboards or blackboards" as common teaching techniques. These methods were labelled as traditional by some experts.

(Experts) In theoretical knowledge-related teaching courses, the traditional implementation methods are still the mainstream of artistic sports course implementation. For instance, explanations, presentations with teaching materials, and demonstrations with whiteboards or blackboards. (Long)

Despite being the mainstream approach, these methods are not well-liked by students.

(Students) Most of the time, the teacher gave the presentation with a book [teaching materials] ...I was sleeping (laughs)...I don't think it's good, but this teacher really makes me uninterested in learning theoretical knowledge...and doesn't make me feel that it is important to me. (Wang)

The student's statement suggests that traditional methods have some negative effects, like making students bored, sleepy, and disinterested in learning.

5.2.3.1.2 Digital Media Deliver Methods

Then, the participants mentioned digital media equipment as a tool that can provide teachers with increased flexibility in delivering course content. According to experts, this is an important consideration:

(Experts) ...Teachers can use digital media equipment to showcase course content, offering flexibility in their presentation methods...example, playing slideshows... (Zhen)

(Experts)...Digital media can help teachers go beyond course content by using pre-recorded or online videos to improve student understanding. Experts agree on the benefits of using digital media in teaching... (Dong)

As stated above, digital media encompasses a range of presentations such as slideshows, pre-recorded videos, and online demonstrations that are convenient and flexible for teachers compared to traditional methods. However, students expressed:

(Students) Can I honestly say it? (Looked around secretly) ...Erm, the lecturer, played the slideshow and meaningless videos...then read the text faced the book...Erm, you know, I cannot bear it...it was too boring...is there any way to replace it? (Qi)

From the student statement, some students do not enjoy slideshows as they find them to be boring. They have expressed a desire for alternative options to be considered. Despite experts emphasising the importance and benefits of digital media technology in traditional teaching methods, they recognised these approaches have significant limitations:

(Experts)...in traditional methods, teachers take the lead but ignore the self-initiative of students...resulting in educational activities lacking feedback that doesn't match students' expectations...we prefer to avoid this method (Wu)

(Experts) In traditional education, teachers are over-emphasised or over-demonstrated, and students' self-initiative and potential are limited or overlooked... (Long)

The above interviews have shown that teaching that only focuses on the teacher can make students overly dependent. While digital media technology has the potential to enhance education, experts do not advise relying on it exclusively.

5.2.3.2 Interactive Approach

Moreover, the interviewees stressed the significance of interactive approaches that involve the responses of both teachers and students. The data gathered from the interview has been divided into two sub-approaches, which are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Finalised Coding Themes of Interactive Organising Approach

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Interactive Organising Approach	Dialogue	Exchanging and Discussing among Teachers and Students.
		Masterclasses
	Cooperation	Cooperation across each course implementer
		Collaboration between on-campus learning and work placements

5.2.3.2.1 Dialogue

During the interview, “Dialogues” as a crucial aspect was highlighted by interviewees many times, which they more focused on the interactional communication between teachers and students.

Experts said:

(Experts) communication with students and co-joint discussions with students are very common...after this process, teachers can deeply understand what students want and need. (Dong)

(Experts) ...it is crucial to communicate with students to let them [students and teachers] have more opportunities to exchange their ideas and solve problems with each other (Tan)

Students said:

(Students) I want to share my studies' confusion with my teachers after class, but...I don't believe the teachers will be interested in answering my questions...while I have no opportunities to get in touch with them...(Hu)

(Students) in some classes, a good teacher can communicate a lot, while we

can discuss and exchange opinions based on special study topics...I am happy when the teacher agrees with my point of view...(Qi)

The quotation highlights the significance of "dialogues" between teachers and students, which helps teachers understand what students want and allows them to work together on ideas and problems. However, students are worried that despite their eagerness to communicate with their teacher, they may not receive a response to their questions or have limited chances to interact with the teacher.

Under this circumstance, students expressed their interest in a new method of teaching entitled "masterclasses", another significant way to reach students.

(Experts) ...students of a particular discipline can attend a masterclass taught by a higher-level expert in their field - typically performance, dance, sport, and games...to improve their skills. (Wu)

(Students) Masterclasses were easier for me to relate to them [teachers] because they were more communicative and guided me to think about the study questions, and they are "experienced" and "knowledgeable". (Cheney)

Masterclasses engage students with interactive activities and personalized feedback. Teachers are selected for their expertise and praised for their communication skills and knowledge. Students have high expectations and are satisfied with their learning experience.

5.2.3.2.2 Cooperation

In addition, cooperative teaching methods were also discussed repeatedly in the interviews. The most important aspect of them is the cooperation between teachers and students:

(Experts) Teachers encouraged students to co-join the study project research and cooperate with them... while students also chose what they were

interested in study projects and cooperated with their teachers...(Tan)

(Students) I enjoyed the co-joined sessions in the practice experience course... Erm... because the lecturer cooperated with us during class...yes, we practice together ... I like this feeling (gratified)...Erm, I did not know if the teacher was tired (laughs). (Wang)

According to experts, students can actively participate in research projects with their teachers, while students appreciate practice-based courses. Additionally, some experts believe collaboration between teachers and students can enhance the course's efficiency:

(Experts) ...by collaborating with each course implementer, such as among related teachers or with social professionals, teachers have fully exploited each participant's potential... this has created a more positive learning experience for students... (Dong)

Meanwhile, collaboration between teachers and other implementers is crucial for enhancing the learning experience and helping students reach their potential. Social professionals have been shown to have a significant impact on course implementation.

(Experts) Through social working experiences with social professionals at a work placement to cooperate with on-campus learning, students could better understand the on-campus course's functions, importance, and value. (Wu)

This quotation highlighted the importance of collaboration between “on-campus learning” and “work placements practising”, particularly the role of social professionals who guided students to gain a deeper understanding of the on-campus course's functions, importance, and value.

5.2.3.2.3 Experts Expectations

When it comes to teaching artistic sports courses, experts suggest using an interactive

approach "dialogue and cooperation":

(Experts) Teachers play a vital role in "communicating" and "dialoguing" with students...yet, passive communication may not always yield the best results [students desire subjective opportunities for dialogue]... I believe teachers can explore alternative ways to communicate with students as appropriate. (Dong)

(Experts)...this cooperative learning can make a significant contribution to improving student learning, but it is still being used by relatively few teachers in practice...more be used could benefit students (Tan)

Experts suggest that communication between teachers and students and promoting cooperative learning can enhance the interactive learning experience.

5.2.3.3 Student-Centred

During the interviews, participants emphasised the importance of a student-centred approach, particularly in courses that include practical experience. The data collected was categorised into two groups: inquiry-based teaching and teamwork.

Table 5.9 Finalised Coding Themes of Student-Centred Approach

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Students- Centred Approach	Inquiry-Based Teaching	Collaborative discussion among students
	Teamwork	Independently critical and divergence thinking in special learning topic
		Group practice
		Dance competition
		Dance choreography/practice game

5.2.3.3.1 Inquiry-Based Teaching

Experts mentioned that inquiry-based teaching, along with pre-set questions, can enhance students' innovative abilities through group discussions:

(Experts) in many cases, teachers use an optimised method of teaching

called...inquiry-based teaching. this is an effective method...using this method, students can find innovative answers by discussing the premade (pre-set) questions among themselves... new knowledge could be acquired... (Wu)

Further, interviewees highlighted that promoting self-initiative using "critical thinking with a specific learning topic" is an effective way of teaching through inquiry-based methods:

(Experts)...getting students to think critically about a specific learning topic is also an effective way of organising...it can stimulate students' self-initiative... (Zhen)

(Students)...our teacher will let us think independently, especially about creative thinking...for example, training dancers with different heights in jumping techniques. (Qi)

The quote highlights the importance of incorporating critical and creative thinking in practical courses as teaching methods, which can help teachers to structure their courses in a more significant way.

5.2.3.3.2 Teamwork

On the other hand, most interviewees cited teamwork as crucial to implementing the artistic sports course, which focused more on practice-related courses. Many different methods of the teamwork-related course were mentioned during the interview process.

Experts said:

(Experts) ...especially in practice experience courses, some teachers use a group dance practice game to divide students into groups and teach dance movements during the game...it's worth advocating... (Dong)

(Experts)...whole dance practice course might be achieved by participating

in group dance competitions...students can join or create different types of dance competitions during the period of classes... (Wu)

Moreover, students said:

(Students) I love practical lessons, especially because our teacher organised the team practice work...most of the time, we [students] game together and separated into different groups to do the group practice...(Xiao)

(Students) I like the dance competition among students in the classroom. The teacher divided the class into three or more groups and then had a dance battle between the groups based on a specific dance theme... (Chang)

(Students) But, one thing, which I wouldn't say I like doing these classes by myself [along], I like the team connection, and the team choreography practice games made me feel involved...(Ken)

The quotes above indicate that during their practice courses, the interviewees participated in various team-based activities such as dance practice games, class team dance competitions, group practice, and team dance choreography games. These teamwork exercises are commonly used in Chinese sports universities as a popular method of implementing dance movement practice.

5.2.3.3.3 Concerns From Experts

Overall, the results show that most students prefer student-centred approaches to learning. However, experts have expressed their concerns about the potential risks associated with these approaches while acknowledging their benefits for student learning:

(Experts) Erm... it has the risk factor of teaching if students do not have the right guidance from teachers... which means students could be misleading by over-emphasising on the students' autonomy while ignoring the original

course objectives from teachers ... (Zhen)

However, experts believe that the most effective way to successfully implement a student-centred approach is by enhancing teachers' skills in implementing the course.

(Experts) student-centred approaches were helpful because they encouraged students to think independently... However, this method demands very high teaching implementation skills from teachers, but it is beneficial for student learning ... need to be aware of both the important role of teachers in leading and the self-initiative of students... (Wu)

Experts warn against students deviating from their academic path without guidance from teachers, also student autonomy is important, as well as experts noted that diverse teaching methods are crucial for effectiveness:

(Experts)... Encouraging diversity of the teaching approaches is an effective method for developing course implementation... However, how to achieve the goal of diversity is a major challenge that requires researchers to think deeply. (Dong)

(Experts) Interdisciplinary is an obvious characteristic in artistic sports courses... learning from different disciplines is meaningful... they might have some effective course implementation methods worth learning... (Tan)

The quote highlights the importance of using varied methods for course implementation to enhance its effectiveness. It suggests that interdisciplinary methods are one of the most effective ways to achieve diversity in the approach but also acknowledges that it can be challenging and requires scholars to think creatively.

5.2.4 Curriculum Assessment

During the interview, the participants were asked about the methods used to assess their knowledge and skills in the course. They gave their responses, which were

categorised into two types: theoretical knowledge assessment and practical abilities assessment. Finally, experts shared their thoughts on the current assessment of the curriculum.

5.2.4.1 Theoretical Knowledge Assessment

To assess theoretical knowledge, three common methods were identified: completing written exams, giving oral presentations, and writing a thesis.

Table 5. 10 Finalised Coding Themes of Theoretical knowledge assessment

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Theoretical knowledge assessment	Paper-based examinations	Short answer
		Single/Multiple choice
	Oral Presentations	Individual presentation
		Group Presentations
	Thesis	Course essays
		Final term dissertation

5.2.4.1.1 Paper-based examinations

Interviewees often cited paper-based exams, which are timed and unseen, as a common method for assessing theoretical knowledge.

(Experts) ...most final assessments in theoretical courses are conducted through paper-based examinations...Erm, our examinational papers have various questions...made up 70% of the final grade [in one-course assessment]...like short answer and multiple-choice questions. (Zhen)

It appears that short-answer and multiple-choice questions are the primary types of paper-based exams. Experts also confirmed:

(Experts) paper-based exams can systematically assess students' internal knowledge from different aspects... I think this is the easiest and fairest way to assess students. (Wu)

(Experts)... paper-based examinations are the most effective way to adhere to the universities' grading strategies. (Dong)

Experts believe that paper-based exams are the easiest and fairest way to assess students and align with the universities' grading strategies. However, some students had different perspectives:

(Students) Erm...I do not want to complain (shakes his head)...but, you know...after classes, you have to recite the useless words...the paper examination was tedious... too hard, and meaningless...(Gong)

(Students) I think it [paper-based examinations] tested my memory, not my professional ability... wasted time to do it...not just me, you can ask them [looking at others]. (Ken)

Many students dislike traditional paper-based exams for theoretical courses. They find them tedious, challenging, and a waste of time. These exams are generally unpopular among students.

5.2.4.1.2 Oral Presentations

Participants mentioned that oral presentations are common in the classroom, including both individual and group presentations.

(Students)I prefer a method, but it might be a bit nerve-wracking at first, which is an individual oral presentation show. This show allowed me to practice my oral speaking, express my ideas clearly and effectively, and express my thoughts on the subject at hand...(Gong)

Individual oral presentations can assess a student's ability to communicate and hold discussions independently while providing a chance to practice clear and effective expression of ideas. Group presentations were also mentioned:

(Experts) ...in some cases, the ability to work as a team member may be tested by requiring students to present as a group...It can be both challenging and rewarding to work within a team. (Dong)

(Students) ...we presented in small groups under the guidance of our teacher...we each presented on a topic and then cooperated in the group... It is great. (Gu)

Group presentations are another effective way for students to improve their teamwork skills. Based on the given information, students generally respond positively to this method.

5.2.4.1.3 Thesis

In addition, some participants emphasised the importance of the assessment method of writing a thesis:

(Experts) The writing thesis is the best way to assess a theoretical course, which can reflect the student's critical thinking and assess their academic ability. (Wu)

Based on this idea, two types of thesis appeared in interviewed data. One was the “after-course thesis”:

(Experts)...some assessments used the “after-course thesis” to assess the quality of students' learning...then; student performance levels can be determined by this method, and it was quite effective. (Dong)

Another one was the final-term dissertation:

(Experts) There is no doubt that the final dissertation is an extremely valuable assessment link at the end of the study. This link can reflect the actual situation of students' learning and assess their critical thinking ability in the

process... (Tan)

The quotes provided show that the course of artistic sport includes an after-course thesis and final-term dissertations, which assess academic skills and critical thinking ability. Those interviewed endorsed both types.

5.2.4.2 Practice Abilities Assessment

Interview data indicate that interviewees mentioned two types of practice skills assessments: one is the campus-based assessment, which includes all kinds of practical skills courses, and the other is the work placement-based assessment.

Table 5. 11 Finalised Coding Themes of Practice Skill Assessment

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Practical skill assessment	Campus-based practice	Assessing dance practice skills
	assessments	Assessing art/theatre performance skill
	Work placement practice	Work placement daily reports (Portfolio)
	assessments	Case practice assessment

5.2.4.2.1 Campus-Based Practice Assessment

Two practice skill assessments were emphasised in the campus course by interviewees, including dance practice skills and art/theatre performance ability.

(Experts)...assessing students' practice skills in our course (on-campus course) is one of the critical aspects of assessment...there are two main assessments, the first being a dance skill assessment...the second part focuses on art/theatre performance. (Dong)

Then, the majority of students found the campus-based practical assessment methods to be beneficial during their course:

(Students) I like the assessment way of practice curriculum on campus.... the teacher helped us complete the test in class...and they also used it in a lovely way...(Chang)

It is evident that most students prefer the assessment provided in campus-based practical courses as an alternative to paper-based examinations.

5.2.4.2.2 Work Placement Practice Assessments

Several interviewees have stated that work placement assessments are more effective than on-campus practice assessments and serve a different purpose:

(Experts)...There's a big difference between the work placement assessment and the practice assessment on campus...then on-campus practice assessments focus on the assessment of dance/performance skills, while work placement assessments focus on the assessment of work practice experience...(Zhen)

Meanwhile, experts identified two main methods of assessment based on work placements - the first is work experience daily reports (portfolio), and the second is case practice assessments.

(Experts) For work placement practice assessments, we usually arrange them in schools or educational institutions...in these places, students learn dance teaching and dance performance work experience, so work experience reports are key evidence for them...(Tan)

(Experts)...assessors will assess the practice information through a case study, such as simulation teaching (Dong)

According to these two assessment approaches, the following concerns were expressed by students:

(Students) we all like work placement, but can the assessment be fairer? ...you know...Erm, for example, in a placement case practice test, the subjective assessment resulting me being unhappy...our assessor knows everybody...Adding the objective assessment factor is beneficial to the

improvement of fairness. (Qi)

The students felt the assessor needed to be more objective during the work placement assessment because they could easily recognise who they were. One of the students mentioned this.

(Students) to find someone [Third Part] to provide us with a final assessment... a person with assessment experience who doesn't know all of us...to finalise the assessment. (Xiao)

Students believed that third-party assessments are effective and helpful tools that should be utilised in the current artistic sports course.

5.2.4.3 Experts Perceptions

Experts perceived that the assessment of participants in current Chinese sports universities involves three types, one of them said:

(Experts) At present, internal assessment participants in my universities are divided into three types: university assessment departments, teachers, and students... two responsibilities are shared between these three types: the "university assessment department" assesses the "teachers", "teachers" assess the "students"...(Tan)

Therefore, when evaluating artistic sports courses, three primary parties are involved: the university assessment department, the teacher, and the student.

5.2.4.3.1 One-Dimension Assessment Process

However, there are other distinct factors involved in the assessment process, which is the one-direction assessment, relying too heavily on top-down assessment methods.

(Experts)...It can be said that the "university assessment department" assesses the "teachers", and then those "teachers" assess the "students" in

the single-direction assessment method...(Tan)

Meanwhile, experts highlighted that:

(Experts)...This method [single-direction assessment] does not benefit the improvement of assessment methods since it cannot provide feedback for each type of assessment participant at the end of the assessment process... therefore, the opportunity to use reflection to improve the assessment method further is lost...(Wu)

Experts indicate that single-direction assessment does not provide feedback to each assessment participant, preventing students from reflecting on their performance. The experts also anticipated that all course participants would be able to provide feedback to each other during the course assessment.

(Experts) In some cases, students should be considered as an assessor. However, teachers must be precautions to prevent students' unfair and incorrect assessments due to their [students] low assessment abilities...(Dong)

(Expert) Teachers could try to plan a combination of quantitative and qualitative assessments... enabling them to assess students' abilities in multiple dimensions so that assessment results will be broader...(Tan)

To ensure a comprehensive assessment approach, it is important for students, teachers, and assessment departments to all be involved in the process, which can avoid relying solely on one-direction assessments. Additionally, experts have emphasised the value of reflection in assessments during interviews:

(Experts) The most effective way to update the one-way assessment is for the participants to review and reflect on each other...one-way assessments can be transformed into multiple versions...which can help develop

assessment strategies. (Wu)

According to the expert's suggestion, to improve the single-direction assessment process, participants such as students, teachers, and the university assessment department should review each other's work and reflect on it.

5.2.4.3.2 Diversifying The Assessors

In addition, some experts recommend diversifying assessors to improve the one-dimensional assessment process based on the current situation.

(Experts) The diversity of the assessor's in-course assessment is one of the most beneficial aspects of the process...(Zhen)

(Experts)...the "assessment results" given by the "assessors" of a single-direction assessment are more likely going to be inaccurate, and the "diversity assessors" can reduce such inaccuracy in the results...(Wu)

Therefore, some experts suggest that diverse assessors should include:

(Experts) In schools, experts and teachers are essential to traditional assessors...in work placements, a social professional's assessment is very important and effective...(Long)

(Experts)... the students themselves are also important. For self-assessment to be effective, this assessment should be reinforced...(Tan)

(Experts)...Yes, erm...third-part assessment is very important...it can reduce subjective factors of assessment...you know, Erm can only be reduced, not eliminated. (Dong)

Experts suggest utilising different types of assessors, such as teachers, social professionals, students, and third-party assessors, to improve the assessment process. Peer assessment is also significant:

(Experts)...the key is to diversify the assessment form...what it's called? Assessment among assessors themselves...yes, "peer assessment"... it is a very effective method...(Wu)

(Experts)...Peer review can be a helpful assessment tool for students and teachers, but it wasn't often used in our courses [artistic sports course]. (Zhen)

It is shown that peer assessment in Chinese sports universities can be divided into student and teacher. But it is currently a practice that has been practised previously. Experts have commented specifically on the issue of peer assessment among students.

(Experts)...students can develop lifelong assessment skills by learning to assess others (peer assessment) and offering constructive feedback...(Tan)

(Experts)...peer assessment enhances student learning...because it shares knowledge and enhances idea exchange among students...(Long)

Experts also mentioned the peer assessment of teaching:

(Experts)...teachers can gain valuable insight from peer assessment of teaching...these assessments can help teachers increase their work experience and be more successful in their careers...(Wu)

Therefore, peer review of teaching can enhance communication among teachers and assist them in enhancing the quality of their practice. Experts highly value peer assessment.

5.2.5 Quality Enhancement Opportunity (New Emerged Theme)

During the analysis of interview data, a new distinctive theme emerged that required attention in this research. This theme is "Quality Enhancement Opportunity." During the interview, Chinese experts mentioned that:

(Experts)...quality enhancement could be the set of advice aimed at ensuring and improving the quality of education provided by the university...(Wu)

Based on the insights provided by experts, it has been identified that there are two potential opportunities for enhancing the quality of education: an "Effective Teaching Team" and "Effective University Policies":

5.2.5.1 Effective Teaching Team

Interview results show evidence that a competent teaching team plays a significant role in ensuring the successful implementation of artistic sports courses. Most of the interviewees agreed with this:

(Experts) Lecturers are the soul of higher education...sometimes...if the quality of lecturers is not high, it will directly affect the teaching of students... in higher education, students not only need good individual lecturers, but they also need a strong team of lecturers... by using everyone's strength of the lecturer's team, we can better benefit students... (Zhen)

While interviewees highlighted that "clarifying and strengthening the objectives" and "staying up to date" are the most effective ways to improve the abilities of the teaching team.

Table 5. 12 Finalised Coding Themes of Quality Enhancement – Teaching team

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Teaching team	Clarifying and Strengthening Objectives	National education objectives
		Student intended objectives
		Reflection on teaching process
	Highlighting staying up to date	Lifelong learning
		Wide range of theoretical knowledge
		Equip with strong practice abilities

5.2.5.1.1 Clarifying and Strengthening Objectives

First, a clear and common understanding of the objectives of the teaching team has been frequently considered by experts. There are two points that the teams should focus on. One of them is:

(Experts)...having a clear objective is the first step to running an effective teaching team... the current situation should be objectively analysed along with the current educational background of our nation to find clear objectives... (Dong)

Regarding the second point:

(Experts) Students may have different intended objectives [expectations], so "Teaching teams" should identify the commonalities between them... After that, they analyse their personalities through team analysis and then develop them accordingly. (Wu)

As the quotes above suggest, to establish clear teaching objectives, it is important to consider both the students' intended objectives (expectations) and the actual situation the university is facing. In addition, experts emphasised strengthening the team objectives through reflection.

(Experts) It's really helpful that the teaching team's objectives are constantly strengthened, which enables lecturers to take time to reflect during the teaching process...that is also very helpful. (Dong)

Therefore, strengthening objectives involves teachers reflecting on what they teach. Therefore, reflecting on teaching as a team is an effective method to enhance their objectives.

5.2.5.1.2 Staying Up to Date

Furthermore, staying up to date is an effective strategy to strengthen the development of the teaching team, which experts repeatedly stressed in interviews. Among them,

two aspects should be given special attention: acquiring the latest theoretical knowledge and improving practice skills for the future.

In terms of continuing to store the latest theoretical knowledge:

(Experts) Knowledge is constantly developing...the industry climate is becoming increasingly competitive...Our teaching team must learn and constantly develop to teach and guide our students to meet various societal and industry challenges. (Long)

The quotation indicates that "competitive industry climate" and "development of the teacher" are two aspects of experts considering teaching teams that need to maintain a wide store of teachable theoretical knowledge.

Furthermore, regarding continuing to improve practice skills for the future:

(Experts)...teachers with high-quality practice [sports] skills are also very welcome in our courses...continuing to improve practice abilities is key to achieving a high-level teaching team...because we need teachers who can maintain high-quality practice abilities...(Tan)

The quote above highlights the significance of enhancing practice skills to form a competent teaching team. Therefore, such a team can contribute to students' success by imparting the most up-to-date theoretical knowledge and practical abilities required to thrive in a competitive field.

5.2.5.2 Effective University Policies

Regarding opportunities for quality enhancement, most interviewees referred to "university policy". Experts highlighted three aspects of university policy that could improve the quality of teaching: aligning with national education policies, updating policies for departments, and enhancing policies for lecturers and researchers.

Table 5.13 Finalised Coding Themes of Quality Enhancement Opportunity– University Policies

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
University Policies	Matching the national education policies	Well-establishing university policies
		Updating university policies real-time based on national education policy
	Updating Policies for department	Updating and optimising staffing structure
		Clarifying working implementation plan
		Establishing communication and consultation mechanisms
	Enhancing Policies for lecturer and researchers	Lecturer Training
		Academic Research
		Assessment

5.2.5.2.1 Matching The National Education Policies

During interviews, it was widely agreed that national education policies could greatly affect the development of university policies and the quality of learning in artistic sports courses:

(Experts)...traditional education often ignored or underestimated the government education policies [national education policy] and lacked well-established university policies, which impacted the development of an artistic sports course...(Long)

(Experts)...some university's policies often lag the real-time update of national education policy, causing a challenge in updating the operating course...(Zhen)

Experts identified two key issues affecting artistic sports development, including ignoring or underestimating national education policies and failing to keep up with them. To address these issues, experts suggested:

(Experts) The "National education policy" identifies the professionals needed today, prioritising their cultivation... Understanding and aligning with the national education policy is a prerequisite for the artistic sport courses. It's crucial to update university policies accordingly. (Long)

It indicates that national education policy is crucial in determining the necessary professionals for society. Therefore, universities should promptly develop and update their policies based on the national education policy.

5.2.5.2.2 Updating University Policies for Department

In addition, the department's policies must be aligned with the universities. Each department has its own set of policies and regulations for various administrative functions:

(Experts) Things like updating and optimising the staffing structure with its implementation plan are crucial...it should make department policies flexible, timely, and operable...(Wu)

(Experts)...department policies (in university) should function on regulating "teaching behaviour" for lecturers and service for "learning process" of students... updating it is crucial... (Zhen)

The quote suggests that department policies aim to regulate the behaviour of lecturers in teaching and support the learning process for students. Experts further recommend updating and optimising the staffing structure and clarifying the implementation plan in current policies to ensure clear responsibilities and duties. One expert suggested three staffing levels: manager (leader), lecturer, and researcher (professor).

(Experts) A clear staffing structure is essential...with managers, lecturers, researchers, with professors...each level has clear duties ...managers lead course operations, lecturers prepare and deliver courses, and researchers focus on course development. These roles have well-defined duties...yet, their interconnection is also crucial. (Dong)

It shows that each level of staffing structure needs to have distinct functions. Furthermore, an expert expressed concern regarding the disorderly implementation of

his department's work. He stated:

(Experts)...department work tasks need to be clearly defined in my workplace...For example, department managers participate in the teaching process; lecturers do not focus on teaching but join the manager working; some researchers give up scientific research to participate in department management or course teaching, causing no one to do the academic research... (Dong)

Under this situation, this expert proposed that clarifying the working implementation plan can help to optimise this situation and highlighted two update suggestions. The first one is the design of a clear task-based working implementation plan:

(Experts)...in department policies, clarifying the implementation plan is a key aspect that can help [chaos situation] ...such as clarifying tasks for each level of staffing structure in different semesters or teaching periods... (Zhen)

For the second one, several experts stated that establishing mechanisms to improve communication and consultation between teachers and students would be beneficial:

(Experts)...creating an effective communication pathway between teachers and students throughout the education process is a critical component of department policies... (Wu)

(Experts)...effective consultation system setting in department policy... allowed students to open a dialogue between them and faculty members... creating a platform for students to ask for help and a channel for faculty members to receive feedback from students... (Dong)

The above quotation implies that implementing communication and consultation mechanisms between faculty members and students is crucial for the entire education process. These mechanisms serve as a means of facilitating effective communication.

5.2.5.2.3 Enhancing University Policies for Individual Lecturers and Researchers

During the interview, interviewees discussed several aspects of university policies regarding lecturers and researchers. Among them, three key aspects are emphasised: strengthening the training of lecturers, improving researchers' academic abilities, and enhancing the assessment measures for teachers and researchers. Firstly, experts believe that lecturers' training needs to be strengthened:

(Experts). Lecturer training is a crucial part of the policy for lecturers, as lecturer training can enhance the lecturer's performance and ensure more effective course implementation...(Long)

Therefore, experts proposed that the following components regarding lecturers' training should be considered:

(Experts)...a skilled lecturer with excellent practice skills is always welcome. Whether it's aerobics, dance sport, or ice dancing...the lecturers' ability to exercise needs to be improved... some lecturers could be better than students. Therefore, we need to train our lecturers to equip them with excellent artistic sports exercise abilities (Long)

(Experts) ...training lecturers' teaching abilities, including better teaching of theoretical knowledge and practice skills, better communication with students, and better reflection on the teaching process. (Wu)

(Experts) ...develop lecturers' ability to plan and organise appropriate artistic sports and physical activities based on the characteristics of the course of artistic sport... (Dong)

There are three key points for training lecturers: excellent artistic sports exercise abilities, training teaching abilities, and ability to organise artistic sports activities events, which are the key factors to consider when preparing for lecturer training.

Based on this, the experts stated:

(Experts)...create a training management system and emphasise teaching process reflection...a reflective process should be used to determine whether the policy was effective and feasible. (Wu)

(Experts)...setting some reward rules for lecturers can help strengthen individual lecturers' abilities... (Dong)

Experts suggest that to ensure quality training for individual lecturers, it is useful to establish a training management system and prioritise reflection on the teaching process. It is also recommended to implement reward policies to acknowledge outstanding contributions made by teachers. Furthermore, experts highlight:

(Experts) As a policy regarding researchers, encouraging researchers to invest in scientific research is very beneficial in developing artistic sports courses. (Wu)

(Experts)...making research plans and creating academic research teams can be made easier based on university policies... ". (Dong)

(Experts)...creating systematic research working manuals and clarifying the responsibilities of all researchers are crucial parts of university policies. (Zhen)

According to experts, researchers' academic research skills are valuable for developing artistic sports courses. Additionally, lecturers should assess their job performance through self-assessment and peer review, and their research outcomes should demonstrate their job performance.

(Experts)...most teachers are assessed based on their performance, and self-assessment and peer reviews are usually used...in terms of researchers, research outcomes are the most reliable indicator for assessing them... (Tan)

According to the quote, teachers are assessed through self-assessments and peer reviews. The research outcome measures the researcher's abilities, which is considered the most important indicator.

5.2.6 In Summary

The first Section of this Chapter provided a thematic template analysis and interpretation of the data gathered through one-on-one and focus group interviews conducted in China. The analysis and interpretation offer insights into the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, which centre on four main course components: course objectives, content and learning experiences, implementation, and assessment. Furthermore, a new emergent theme that surfaced from the interview data has been identified, highlighted, and interpreted.

In the following Section 5.3, this research will extend the thematic template analysis and interpretation to interview data conducted in the U.K. Employing the same methodology and tools outlined in Chapter 4, along with the finalised coding template (Table 5.14) to analyse and interpret the semi-structured interview data to gain further insights into the possibilities and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China.

5.3. Introduction Results of The Interviews Conducted in The U.K.

As discussed in Chapter 1, despite no courses explicitly labelled as “artistic sports” in the UK, my extensive professional experience in this field has enabled me to identify related courses offered under different names within the U.K.’s higher education. Such courses include dance movement psychotherapy, physical education focusing on dance, and sports and dance therapy. These courses have implemented diverse pedagogical strategies and approaches rooted in the U.K.’s higher education context, which can potentially serve as valuable insights for understanding the challenges and opportunities in developing artistic sports courses in China. Incorporating these approaches also has the potential to broaden the vocational opportunities available to

Chinese students.

Furthermore, as explained in Chapter 4, the individuals interviewed in the U.K. are involved in learning, teaching, researching, and engaging with artistic sport-related courses. These individuals encompassed experts and social professionals, with five experts selected from three universities and three social professionals chosen from two professional institutions. The detailed selection criteria for these participants are provided in Appendix 7. After collecting data and refining the initial template, the finalised coding template is presented in Table 5.14.

Table 5. 14 Finalised Coding Themes in the U.K Interviews

Themes Areas	Sub-themes Areas
Curriculum Objectives	Expected Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse, identify and solve health issues. • Creativity • Therapeutic area practice abilities • Student “study, academic and research skills”
	Expected Careers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Social care • Education
Curriculum Content	Theoretical knowledge Learning Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life science • Analysis methodology • Academic research
	Practice-Based Learning Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic area placement • Coaching and demonstration
Curriculum Implementation	Traditional teacher-centred approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations with slide show • Demonstrating with whiteboards • Pre-recorded video
	Interactive approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Dialogue • Cooperation
	Student – centred approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing essays and thinking critically • Problem-Based Independent Study and Research
Curriculum Assessment	Theoretical knowledge assessment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essays or dissertation • Multiple modes of presentation
Practice abilities assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance practical course assessment in university • Case practice assessment in work placement
Portfolios
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning reflection • Placement experience record

5.3.1 Curriculum Objectives

In interviews conducted in the UK, the coded data were divided into "Expected Capabilities " and " Expected Careers".

5.3.1.1 Expected Capabilities

According to interviewees, it is recommended that university learners develop four types of capacities, which are listed in Table 5.15.

Table 5. 15 Finalised Coding Themes - Expected Capabilities

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Expected Capabilities	Identify, analyse, and solve health problems	Identifying and addressing health issues appropriately in professional contexts using theoretical knowledge.
		To analyse working materials in multidisciplinary ways.
		Evaluating a client's emotions or behaviour, then making a therapeutic plan.
		Monitoring different movement activities and evaluating them.
Expected Capabilities	Creativity	Creative Dance movement to promote healthy emotional expression
		Creative Physical activities to promote healthy body performance
Expected Capabilities	Therapeutic area practice abilities	Mental therapeutic
		Physical therapeutic
	Student "study, academic and research skills"	Presentation skills
		Independent working skills
		Group facilitation skills
		Research skill

5.3.1.1.1 Identify, Analyse, and Solve Health Problems

A consensus was reached among most interviewees that the ability to identify, analyse,

and solve health problems is a valuable skill that students should acquire:

(Experts) So that theoretical understanding aspect, I think the most important objective is that they [students] can identify problems after the learning process and address them in special theoretical disciplines...for example, ethical considerations, health issues, and safety concerns...(Wendy)

Experts emphasised that using theoretical knowledge to identify and address problems in professional contexts is an important objective. Moreover, social professionals believe that students should be capable of analysing information in a multidisciplinary way to achieve a high level of proficiency:

(Social professional) For advanced competence, it is crucial to analyse working materials in multidisciplinary ways, such as retrieving, evaluating, and interpreting health promotion information from different disciplines. (Ben)

Furthermore, experts believe that assessing and monitoring competency in therapeutic spaces is a highly effective way for students to improve their problem-solving skills:

(Experts) they [students] may get to be very aware of their [clients'] body movements...this is because we want them to be able to evaluate and manage therapeutic client' emotions or behaviours within the therapeutic space...as well as making therapeutic intervention plans... (Leo)

(Experts)...they can monitor different movement activities and evaluate the activities of target clients with or without a background in exercise, which will enable empathising with them, supporting them with a positive and calm presence, and regarding them in an unconditional positive manner... (Diane)

Therefore, evaluating target clients' emotions and behaviours within the therapeutic space is a crucial objective for students. Additionally, monitoring different movement

activities for target clients/participants with no or limited fitness backgrounds also plays an important role for students. As a result of both skills, students can solve clients' health problems successfully.

5.3.1.1.2 Creativity

On the other hand, social professionals argue that creative skills are essential, and students should prepare themselves to develop them for future work and personal growth. During interviews, interviewees emphasised the importance of fostering creative abilities.

(Experts) Our trainees [students] must be quite creative when looking for work... (Noah)

(Social professional) Erm, graduates are developing...So, creativity is important, and our social organisations are now identifying a need for dance movement psychotherapists who, with creativity, and those graduates are becoming more recognised and valued in the current industry. (Oscar)

During interviews, two types of creative skills have been distinguished: "creative abilities in dance movement" and "creative abilities in physical activities". Experts said that:

(Experts) Developing their [students] creative skills in dance movement within experiential aspect is important to promote healthy emotional expressions for clients, such as body-image (behaviour image) skills, innovative dance or exercise games...at the end of the day, the most important thing is that they are competent psychotherapists. (Diane).

(Experts)...students' creative abilities in physical activities can effectively improve the interest of their target clients, which is a helpful way to promote their healthy body performance...(Jack)

As this quotation indicates, creative dance movements that encourage healthy emotional expression and creative physical activities that promote healthy body performance play a crucial role in course objectives.

5.3.1.1.3 Therapeutic Area Practice Abilities

The topic of "therapeutic practice capacities" was discussed, with mental and body therapeutic capacities being identified as primary forms of practice. Specifically, when discussing mental and psychological therapeutic capacities, interviewees emphasised:

(Experts) As a part of psychotherapy, sports psychotherapy is a commonly used method in our courses, mainly guided through various physical activities... (Noah)

(Social professional)...psychological diagnosis and treatment are necessary, including psychological rehabilitation ability, emotion and behaviours identification skills... especially behavioural analysis... (Ben)

(Experts)...dance movement psychotherapy is one of the most effective methods for psychological diagnosis and treatment... (Leo)

According to the quote, Sports and dance psychotherapy are effective in enhancing mental health. Sports psychotherapy involves physical activities, while dance psychotherapy promotes mental strength through movement.

In terms of body therapeutic capacities, they said that:

(Social professional) in clinical circumstances, students should demonstrate an ability to deliver health and exercise advice to client populations with a solid understanding of their movements since they aim to learn what it's like to work as a therapeutic consultant... (Olivia)

(Experts)...our students need to participate in work placement aiming to

experience clinical practice activities...as a trainee, students should deliver health and exercise advice and demonstrate multi-sports practice, such as with various physical activities in the local community. (Leo)

The above quote stresses the significance of the body's therapeutic abilities, which allow students to concentrate on giving health and fitness guidance. It also highlights various physical activities that can enhance the overall health of different groups of people.

5.3.1.1.4 Study, Academic and Research Skills

In the interview, all the experts and social professionals agreed that study, academic and research skills are what students must master to be successful in their degree programme. Experts have identified four “study, academic and research skills”, including presentation, independent working, group facilitation, and academic research skills.

In terms of presentation skills, interviewees highlighted that:

(Experts)...presentation skills must be developed during students' learning process...as to develop their cognitive and expression skills, and effectively communicate ideas orally in group or individual based on academic and non-academic backgrounds... (Diane)

It shows that mastering presentation skills is important for developing cognitive and expressive abilities. Also, effective communication can positively impact employment potential. Additionally, independent working abilities also should be highlighted:

(Experts) Independent working skills are a big part of the student's “study, academic and research skills” ...we support students as best as we can...part of that support is making sure that they can be independent learners within the course and work independently... which allows them to be more creative

and be more independent when they leave university to look for work. (Wendy)

According to the above information, teachers support students as they strive to become independent learners and work independently. Therefore, students can achieve even more creativity and independence in their future careers. In addition, group facilitation skills as a key role have been mentioned in “study, academic and research skills”:

(Experts)...another crucial part of student “study, academic and research skill” is group working and facilitating, which requires them to work effectively in groups and participate constructively...(Leo)

(Social professional)...I pay more attention to the potential of employees. So I think that team cooperation, group facilitation, and team organisation skills are the most important basic abilities since they reflect employees' potential.

(Oscar)

Most interviewees mentioned the “academic research skills” based on the above three “study, academic and academic research skills” types. One of them said:

(Experts)...of course, academic research skills should be reinforced in the course... since that is a keyway for students to integrate theoretical knowledge with practice experience ... students who will have critical thinking to create new research areas or content... (Jack)

This quotation indicates that academic research skills are key for students to integrate theoretical knowledge with practice experience and encourage students to develop new research areas or course content.

5.3.1.2 Expected Careers

Based on the coded interview data, it was clear that expected careers play a crucial role. The data revealed two main career categories: health and social care, as well as

education (Table 5.16).

Table 5.16 Finalised Coding Themes - Expected Careers

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Expected Careers	Health & Social care	Mental & physical health improvement Exercise referral and lifestyle management
	Education	The schoolteacher, gym instructor, or lecturer and researcher

5.3.1.2.1 Health and Social Care

Interviewees found that graduates seeking job opportunities in health and social care can find employment in organisations such as the NHS, community or charity groups, and schools. These institutions offer a range of related working opportunities.

(Experts) Our students are asked to work with particular client groups as sports and exercise psychologists... It is being used a lot more than before... It can be anything, even within the NHS or a community, charities, or schools.
(Leo)

(Social professional) We are mainly engaged in health consulting...we work a lot with the National Health Service (NHS), community services... (Ben)

Two types of jobs are typically available to graduates, experts explained:

(Experts)...our role (working role) is being seen more widely...we get a lot of trainees [students] working with target clients as to promoting health...still, there's work in many different areas... quite often, people are referred to exercise styles for mental and body health improvement and lifestyle management by our graduates. (Noah)

(Social professional) most work connects with mental and physical health improvement, community development, and lifestyle management. Erm also has some vulnerable people, such as children and older people. (Ben)

The above quotation reveals that "mental and physical health improvement" and "exercise referral and lifestyle management" are typical jobs graduates qualify for, especially working with children and older people.

5.3.1.2.2 Education

The U.K.'s universities that offer courses that combine art and sport place high importance on the career area of education. This includes teaching, coaching, and training:

(Social Professional) training and teaching abilities are also important in work positions...which are mainly used to provide treatment services. First, we should teach...so the client can move according to our instructions. Therefore, our staff must master teaching or coaching skills...like teaching dance movements and the choreography of sports movements. (Olivia)

It highlighted that teaching dance movements and choreography of sports movements are essential educational skills for graduates. Also, education-related careers, schoolteachers, gym instructors, lecturers and university researchers are other potential options available to students:

(Experts)...some students who work in various institutions...schoolteachers, gym instructors, or lecturers and researchers in university in the sports and dance area are more popular now...through the movement and sports skills learned in the university, they [students] teach these skills to their client groups ...(Jack)

(Social professional) we also have some business cooperation in education, such as...Erm...fitness guidance in primary and middle schools and arranging staff to fitness institutions, which depends on the interests of staff. (Oscar)

This indicated that graduates aiming to work in education-related places are like

Chinese students' expected careers, which include preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, universities, and gymnasiums.

5.3.2 Curriculum Content and Learning Experiences

Regarding curriculum content and learning experience of the artistic sports courses in the U.K., the interview data were divided into two categories: theoretical knowledge and practice-based learning content.

5.3.2.1 Theoretical Knowledge Learning Content

As for theoretical course knowledge, experts cited three areas: life science-linked content, analysis methodology, and theoretical course-related academic research, see Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 Finalised Coding Themes - Theoretical Knowledge Learning Content

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Theoretical Knowledge Learning Content	Life science	Mental promotion theory
		Body health promotion theory
	Analysis methodology	Movement analysis systems
		Psychological analysis system
Academic research	Research principles and methods	

5.3.2.1.1 Life Science-Linked Knowledge

Two-course content related to mental well-being and body health promotion were identified in life science-related theoretical course modules.

Experts emphasised the importance of improving mental well-being:

(Experts) ...it is crucial for students to grasp the basic principles of psychotherapy theory for promoting mental health...the 'Psyche Soma' module focuses on the mind-body relationship and includes neurological aspects like the influence of the mind on the body, the impact of the body on the mind, and neuroplasticity... (Wendy)

(Experts) ...Students need a strong understanding of movement-based psychotherapy theories, including abnormal movement psychology, sports psychological illness, psychiatric diagnosis, and medication's impact on movement... (Diane)

It shows crucial for students to possess a theoretical comprehension of diagnosis and physical and psychological treatment methodologies to effectively provide improved treatment to individuals and groups through movement-based psychotherapy.

Experts also highlighted the importance of theoretical knowledge in promoting body health:

(Experts)...the important practice theoretical knowledge is the things that like principles to guide health promotion or public health work... just like principles of physical activity and health, which make students be able to guide better what clients should do in practice...(Wendy)

In the above quotation, experts emphasised the significance of putting theoretical knowledge into practice to guide public health and health promotion work.

5.3.2.1.2 Analysis Methodology-Linked Knowledge

Experts agree that students can benefit from learning about various analytical methodologies, including movement and psychological analysis.

One specific example of a movement analysis module was provided:

(Experts)...Also, we have an analysis module on 'Movement Observation and Analysis'... this is where we incorporate aspects of Laban and aspects of the Kestenberg Movement Profile...erm...we don't cover it all because it's massive, but we cover some of it... (Leo)

(Experts)... they can also get insight into Laban Analysis and the Kestenberg

Movement Profile. If they become very interested in either Laban or Kestenberg Movement Profile, they can further train after completing their undergraduate/master's training. (Wendy)

It is evident that the movement observation and analysis module is the primary method used for analysing movement. This consists of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and Kestenberg Movement Profiling (KMP). Students who want to learn more about LMA and KMP can participate in additional learning opportunities.

Additionally, an expert mentioned that psychological analysis is also a part of this program:

(Experts) ...working with individuals who struggle to talk or prefer silence can still yield valuable insights...even in moments of silence and stillness, there is much to observe. It can be challenging to remain completely still, but one can observe the breath or subtle movements...noticing changes in the breath or finger fidgeting can provide valuable psychological analysis, including the analysis of the body-mind relationship and the nature of relationships, such as transference, countertransference, and intersubjectivity. (Diane)

As stated in the quotation, the expert described the sensorial movement from emotion and stressed that psychological analysis is an effective method to help clients, including "body-mind relationship analysis" and "nature of relationship analysis".

5.3.2.1.3 Academic Research-Linked Knowledge

In addition, interviewees mentioned academic research-related theoretical knowledge, similar to the Chinese interviewees, who stressed the importance of strengthening and expanding academic research. The U.K. experts said:

(Experts)...in the final year of the course, we will emphasise the knowledge that students need to engage in academic research...which includes research

principles and methods, such as personal reading alongside academic research...academic presentation and writing... (Noah)

Experts emphasised that students should master research principles and methods in their final year to achieve independent academic research. Moreover, emphasising "academic writing" and "academic presentation" is also crucial.

5.3.2.2 Practical Experience Learning Content

Additionally, it found that the practice-based curriculum can be separated into two groups: "therapeutic area placement" and "coaching and demonstration," as indicated in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18 Finalised Coding Themes – Practice Experience Learning Content

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Practice-Based Learning Content	Therapeutic area placement	Becoming a real psychotherapist in placement
		Working in specific therapeutic environment
	Coaching and demonstration	Contemporary dance
		Martial arts
		Other dance and sports forms

5.3.2.2.1 Therapeutic Areas Placement

Students can gain valuable practice experience through appropriate placements in the therapeutic area, this includes understanding safe practices for physical, mental, and emotional experiences, therapeutic diagnosis, and psychotherapy, and acquiring knowledge in a therapeutic environment:

(Experts) Students undergo practical supervision...support in their clinical placements...experience what it's like to be a real psychotherapist, including the safe practice for physical, mental, and emotional aspects...experience clinical diagnosis and psychotherapy. (Leo)

The information above explains that students can become actual psychotherapists or

at least gain some experience in the work of a psychotherapist by participating in a therapeutic area placement. This opportunity allows them to assist individuals with health diagnoses and therapy.

5.3.2.2.2 Coaching and Demonstration

Coaching and demonstrations are crucial in dance and sports education in the U.K.'s universities, according to the U.K.'s experts. Chinese interviewees share this belief, seeing education as the core learning content for artistic sports curriculums:

(Experts) "...based on student needs, we have important course resources... practical experience related to education... includes dance and exercise movement coaching..." (Jack)

(Experts) "...some students are interested in teaching, coaching and performance. I prefer teaching...we arrange visits to schools, clubs, and institutions for more practice opportunities..." (Noah)

Education related to dance and sports is also an important course resource (content) for U.K. students. This practical experience not only enhances students' skills but also provides them with a platform to apply their theoretical knowledge.

5.3.3 Curriculum Implementation

During the interviews in the U.K., different implementation methods were discussed and mainly focused on three approaches: traditional teacher-centred, interactive, and student-centred approaches.

5.3.3.1 Traditional Teacher-Centred

Traditionally, teacher-centred methods were usually centred around theoretical knowledge implementation, including:

(Experts)... traditionally, students should learn through slideshows and show

the key points of the course content on the whiteboard, as is our common practice way... (Leo)

(Experts)...sometimes...preparing my presentations, doing the slide, and putting in an incredible amount of time...as well as presenting through video or animation, which is also a common method (Diane)

It can be found that presentations with slide shows, demonstrations with whiteboards, and pre-recorded videos or animations are traditional forms for teachers. However, the teacher, as well as the students, dislike it:

(Experts)...finally...I still get plenty of students who get their mobile phones out or fall asleep in class. That was bloody awful...Sometimes...students willing to learn will listen...we're expected to entertain, but I see myself as an educator, even though students want entertainment. (Jack)

(Experts) ...I don't consider myself the best lecturer...while I strive to make the class interesting, it's important to recognise that certain theoretical course modules must be taught in the classroom, even if they may be perceived as somewhat boring... (Noah)

It is clear that the traditional approach of putting the teacher at the centre of the classroom leads to students misbehaving by using their mobile devices or dozing off during class, which can make them feel uninterested. Additionally, it's important to acknowledge that while teachers do their best to prepare course content for students, they may still feel powerless when dealing with disruptive behaviour and may not want to have to entertain students during class.

5.3.3.2 Interactive Approach

Two types of interactive teaching/learning approaches emerged in interviews: dialogue and cooperation. These approaches are like the ones used by Chinese universities,

as shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5. 19 Finalised Coding Themes - Interactive approach

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Interactive teaching/learning approach	Communication and Dialogue	Personal reflection (Introspection)
		Dialogue between the teacher and the students
		Discussions with external and internal experts
	Cooperation	Cooperative learning between teacher and student
		Cooperative learning on campus and in work placement

5.3.3.2.1 Communication and Dialogue

Interviewees agreed that communication and dialogue are part of common course implementation methods in U.K. universities. The focus was placed on three areas: personal reflection (introspection), dialogue between the teacher and students, and discussions with external and internal experts.

In terms of personal reflection, experts said:

(Experts)...by using introspection primarily in written reflection journals, individual learning processes will be understood, and dance movement profiles can be developed...(Diane)

(Experts)...under teacher's guidance...we encourage students to engage in personal reflection [introspection]. This way, students can better understand themselves in the learning process...such as to do a better reflection...(Leo)

It is clear from the above information that reflection is one of the most effective tools in enabling students to understand themselves in the learning process.

Furthermore, the dialogue between the teacher and students:

(Experts) In our teaching process, the interactive activities between teacher and student are often visible in the classroom, such as dialogue...which

involves students' oral presentation and topic discussion...more crucial is discussing the observation of movement and analysis of it...(Wendy)

The importance of interactive activities between teachers and students is evident in how they can promote dialogue through oral presentations, topic discussions, and movement analysis.

Experts also emphasise discussing with internal and external experts:

(Experts)...providing students with more opportunities to engage in conversations is also an important part of our teaching practice... for example, offering a "Conversation Room" would enable students to communicate face-to-face with internal experts by setting up an appointment with them...(Noah)

(Experts) Communication with experts off-campus is crucial when working in a field study environment. Visiting field experts or social professionals are good examples... (Leo)

It suggested that students and experts engage in on-campus discussions through "Conversation Rooms," while off-campus conversations typically occur as field studies or placements.

5.3.3.2.2 Cooperation

The interviews also revealed that the interviewees emphasised the significance of collaborating with students to implement the curriculum:

(Experts)...cooperatively teaching/learning with students can be an effective means of enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the content in the course... (Jack)

This approach is considered an effective method to assist students in acquiring knowledge in a more profound and meaningful way. Furthermore, the incorporation of

internal learning in university with external placement learning between students and social professionals is another noteworthy aspect that needs to be highlighted:

(Experts)...Placement learnings from external teachers (social professionals) incorporated with university learnings are another way to experience the teaching content for students...students can get in touch with external sports clubs, healthcare institutions, and other organisations. (Noah)

Collaborating with industry-based organisations is a great way for students to acquire additional knowledge, skills, and experience beyond their academic curriculum.

5.3.3.3 Student-Centred

In terms of student-centred approaches, experts listed "writing essays and thinking critically" and "inquiry-based learning (IBL)" as two primary methods for organising students' learning. See Table 5.20.

Table 5. 20 Finalised Coding Themes - Student Centred

Relevant topics	Types
Student-centred approaches	Writing essays and thinking critically
	Problem-Based Independent Study and Research

5.3.3.3.1 Writing Essays and Thinking Critically

Most experts agreed that students should be guided to complete the research essays by themselves and use critical thinking in the writing process:

(Experts)...writing the essays, students will have the opportunity to express their inquiries through their independent thinking...then they can absorb the knowledge more readily. (Wendy)

(Experts)...through the writing of their essays, the students can strengthen what they have already learned....also can explore unknown knowledge that

the teacher may not have taught in class...this is one of the effective methods for implementing curriculum... (Leo)

It shows that writing essays by thinking critically is not only a way of strengthening knowledge, but students will express their ideas through independent thinking and exploring. This will make it easier for them to actively absorb updated information that the teacher may have yet to teach in class. Therefore, experts believe this is an effective method of implementing a curriculum in U.K. universities.

5.3.3.3.2 Problem-Based Independent Study and Research

In the meantime, some experts have also emphasised the importance of students doing independent research and problem-based study based on their experiences to improve their learning:

(Experts)...the ways of problem-based self-study and self-research on students are still quite used in my course modules...(Diane)

(Experts)...we can let students have "questions" about the content involved in the course... and according to the way of "finding answers" to organise the learning experience, which could let students easy understanding and faster master the knowledge by both teacher's guidance and self-research...(Noah)

(Experts)...guide students in the conduct of "problem-based" independent studies or research can develop positive habits of lifelong learning that will be helpful in their future careers... (Jack)

It shows that problem-based study and independent research under the guidance of a teacher are common course implementation methods in U.K. universities. In this way, students can better understand the learning material and develop a positive habit of lifelong learning. This will be much help in their future career.

5.3.4 Curriculum Assessment

Interviewees shared their views on assessment methods used in U.K. universities, which have been classified into three categories: "assessment of theoretical knowledge," "assessment of practical skills," and "assessment of portfolios."

5.3.4.1 Theoretical Knowledge Assessment

During the interviews, the participants discussed two theoretical knowledge assessments: dissertations/essays and multiple modes of presentation. See Table 5.21.

Table 5. 21 Finalised Coding Themes -Theoretical Knowledge Assessment

Relevant topics	Types	Related Interview content
Theoretical Knowledge Assessment	Essays or dissertation	Research projects with independent study
		Students' case study based upon the student's interventions with an individual or client group.
	Multiple modes of presentation	Verbal presentations
		Poster presentations

5.3.4.1.1 Essays or Dissertation

The U.K. universities commonly use essays and dissertations as course assessment forms. According to experts, this method is effective and popular.

(Experts)...usually, we use types of assessments and are mainly concerned about the paper, essays or dissertations...(Jack)

Then, experts identified two distinct types of essays: "conducting special research projects" and "case studies with client groups":

(Experts)...you know...students should learn abilities to demonstrate their expected research projects through independent study, which connects with their career, social life, living context, etc. (Wendy)

(Experts)...in their studies, students can participate in an interventional

research project with an individual or a client group as a case study. Then, they demonstrate critical thinking to finish a course essay, such as submitting an analysis after completing a dance movement therapeutic practice. (Diane)

To improve their learning and critical thinking skills, students can undertake a research project or case study with an individual or client group. This enables them to demonstrate their ability to independently conduct research and think critically, which is assessed through their essay or dissertation.

5.3.4.1.2 Multiple Modes of Presentation

Several experts have pointed out that using multiple modes of presentation is a useful method for evaluating students' theoretical knowledge:

(Experts)I special like our students to challenge the subject-based presentation; you know... they can present their ideas during verbal and poster presentations. We can discuss it together, which is a common assessment method I could process. (Wendy)

The quote distinguishes between verbal and poster presentations, which are both commonly used methods of assessment according to experts.

5.3.4.2 Practice Abilities Assessment

During interviews, two methods were mentioned for evaluating practice abilities: on-campus (university) practice and off-campus (work placement) practice (Table 5.22).

Table 5. 22 Finalised Coding Themes - Practice Abilities Assessment

Relevant topics	Types
Practice abilities assessment	On-campus: Dance/Sports practical course assessment in university
	In work placement: Case practice assessment in work placement

5.3.4.2.1 Dance/Sports Practical Course Assessment in University

Regarding on-campus (university) practice, the interviewees agreed that dance and sports practice are essential abilities to be assessed:

(Experts)...a practice assessment is being done in our courses as well...as part of some of the classes, teachers will teach the students some useful dance movement skills...we will also need to assess students' progress regarding learning and mastering these skills. (Leo)

(Experts)The practice of sports skills is very important for students to learn in university...we will also assess their sports exercise skills at the appropriate time, to ensure they can master them properly...(Noah)

As mentioned in the quotes above, the assessment of dance movement skills and sports exercise skills are included in the dance/sports practice assessment. Experts agree that this assessment is a crucial component of the course assessment.

5.3.4.2.2 Case Practice Assessment in Work Placement

During an off-campus (work placement) practice, case practice is a type of learning content which should be assessed during the placement, as was pointed out by interviewees:

(Social professional)...especially during the practical courses, the practical experience in some areas is an essential part of what students will learn in the workplace (Oscar)

(Social Professional) ...during placements, students can engage in dance movement therapy with special cases under teacher guidance, such as working with disabled children...this practical experience is integral to their learning...thus, assessing students' therapy quality level based on their practical experience with special cases becomes crucial...(Ben)

This quote highlights the value of practical experience and its relevance in dance

movement psychotherapy. It emphasises how case practice can aid the therapy process and help teachers assess the quality of their students' learning during work placements.

5.3.4.3 Portfolios

According to most experts, requiring students to develop portfolios has several educational advantages. This includes promoting personal reflection on their learning experiences and keeping a record of their placement experiences.

Table 5. 23 Finalised Coding Themes – Portfolios

Relevant topics	Types
Portfolios	Learning reflection Placement experience record

5.3.4.3.1 Learning Reflection

During expert interviews, it was discovered that portfolios were the most commonly used assessment form for students' reflections on their learning:

(Experts) ...upon completion of the course, we will review student portfolios to evaluate their learning performance...portfolios serve as tools for personal reflection and as evidence of the student's reflections...this encourages a continuous understanding of their learning experiences...(Jack)

(Experts)Our students might like personal reflection...such as a portfolio, which is good...they can use this method to prove their step success, such as learning experience. (Leo)

As mentioned above, teachers often use portfolios to assess students, allowing them to reflect on their learning and gain a better understanding of the material. This practice encourages repeated engagement with learning activities.

5.3.4.3.2 Placement Experience Record

Experts also indicated that one of the methods for assessing learning from work placements is to use a form called a placement experience record:

(Experts) Upon completion of the placement study, students are encouraged to maintain detailed records of their work as part of their professional experience...this includes a work record manual with relevant photos, videos, and promotional materials...assessing the placement experience record aims to monitor the quality of the student's work during the placement term...(Leo)

(Social professional)...by doing placement experience, students who record their experience will find it easier to check their previous work records when faced with the same job in future and helping them be more competitive in the job market... (Ben)

It shows that the placement experience record is a working manual containing a performance record with photos, videos, and promotional materials. It allows students to conveniently access their previous work records when they encounter similar jobs in the future, enhancing their competitiveness. Furthermore, evaluating the placement experience record is crucial to monitoring the quality of a student's placement work.

5.3.5 In Summary

This Section also utilised thematic template analysis and interpretation to explore the interview data gathered on the four main course components of artistic sport-related courses in the U.K. As previously mentioned, these courses implement diverse pedagogical strategies and approaches, distinctive to the U.K.'s higher education, which could provide potential valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in developing artistic sports courses in China. Also, by implementing these methods, there is potential to broaden the vocational opportunities available to Chinese students.

Based on the interpretation of interview data from the four main course components, some similarities have been revealed between the thematic outcomes from interviews

in China and the U.K., which can lead to a convergence of viewpoints expressed by interviewees from both countries. To avoid repetition, next Section 5.4 will conduct an initial synthesis and comparison of insights from the two different national contexts presented in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. This will help gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the situations in both countries.

5.4. Interviews Initial Synthesising and Analysing

As mentioned above, this section will initially synthesise the key results from both national contexts based on five aspects: course objectives, content and learning experiences, implementation, assessment, and quality enhancement opportunity, which offers an initial analysis by identifying the similarities and differences in perspectives between China and the U.K.

5.4.1 Course Objectives

The course objectives of artistic sports courses, as derived from the interview results in China and the U.K., show a significant focus on developing a range of skills and competencies to cater to diverse career paths in artistic sports. Both countries demonstrate a wide range of course objectives, focusing on teaching capabilities, performance skills, academic skills, research skills, creativity, and therapy-related abilities.

It was found that Chinese students enrolled in artistic sports courses for a combination of personal interest and external factors like potential job prospects and social status. The primary expected capabilities can be divided into three categories: teaching and performance abilities, academic and research skills, and employability skills in business operations and management. The focus is on developing exceptional teaching and performance skills that align with the needs of students and society. Academic and research skills are also important for pursuing higher education and promoting lifelong learning. Additionally, healthy living guidance abilities and business operation skills are critical yet underrepresented areas of current courses, indicating

the need for improvement. Moreover, the primary expected career paths include roles as teachers, professional dancers, entrepreneurs in artistic sports, leaders in business management, and health consultants. Notably, the entrepreneurial spirit is evident with the idea of starting a business in artistic sports being particularly prevalent among students. It is also indicated that current courses could support these broad aspirations to a greater extent.

In the U.K., interviews revealed that the primary expected capabilities encompass identifying, analysing, and solving health problems using theoretical knowledge and practical skills, fostering creativity in dance movement and physical activities, mental and physical therapeutic area practice abilities, and academic and research skills. The capabilities are designed to prepare students for various career paths in the health and social care sector, education, and even roles as gym instructors, lecturers, and university researchers. The artistic sports-related courses in the U.K. appear more geared towards developing therapeutic practices and preparing students for roles in organisations such as the NHS, community or charity groups, and schools.

When comparing the thematic outcomes, both countries show shared objectives in developing teaching capabilities, creative abilities, and academic and research skills and the objective of preparing students for a diverse range of career paths. These shared aspects suggest a universal understanding of essential skill sets in artistic sports. However, distinctive aspects are also present. The U.K. interviews highlight the objectives of creativity and therapeutic practice abilities, which need to be more pronounced in the Chinese context.

Therefore, although the course objectives in both countries show significant overlap, the U.K. appears to have a more holistic approach to incorporating therapeutic practices into its objectives. On the other hand, China seems to focus more on the practical aspects of employability, highlighting the need for business operation skills and healthy guidance abilities. This difference suggests potential areas for cross-cultural learning and course enhancement. By blending the strengths of both

approaches, it might be possible to create a more holistic and comprehensive artistic sports course that caters to diverse student interests and career paths.

5.4.2 Course Content and Learning Experiences

The interview analysis above found that both countries emphasise theoretical knowledge-based learning, practical knowledge learning, and academic research skills. However, they differ in their specific areas of emphasis and detailed content.

For China, there are four main areas of focus in the artistic sports course content and learning experiences: “theoretical knowledge-based learning”, “practical knowledge learning”, “study tools and academic research skills”, and “optional courses”. However, students and experts have varying perceptions of the importance of certain aspects. While experts advocate for sports life science and therapy courses, students show less interest. Practical knowledge, especially in dance teaching and performance, is highly valued by students, although their views on work placements are mixed. More interdisciplinary learning opportunities are requested by all interviewee groups, which suggests an area for potential course development. Regarding expectations, experts and social professionals agreed on the need to update and expand the courses’ primary teaching, coaching, and performance aspects. Emphasis is placed on enhancing academic research, expanding curriculum resources, and introducing entrepreneurship and management courses to meet market demands and enhance graduates' employment opportunities.

For the U.K., the theoretical course content and learning experiences of the artistic sport-related course are divided into three main categories: life science-linked knowledge, analysis methodology-linked knowledge and academic research-linked knowledge. The content is designed to equip students with broad skills and understanding to apply theoretical concepts in practical scenarios and conduct independent research. Practical experience learning content involving placements in therapeutic contexts, coaching, and demonstration is considered vital. It provides

students with real-world exposure, allowing them to assist individuals with health diagnoses and therapy, thereby honing their skills as future psychotherapists for all students. Furthermore, coaching and demonstration in dance and sports education play a key role in the course, providing a platform for students to apply their theoretical knowledge, preparing them for their future careers.

When comparing the thematic outcomes, both China and the U.K. emphasise the importance of balancing theoretical and practical knowledge. While China leans more towards practical dance teaching, coaching, and performance, the U.K. leans towards movement-based psychotherapy, movement and psychological analysis, and practical experience in therapeutic settings and coaching. Both highlight the importance of academic research skills, but the U.K. focuses more on life science-linked knowledge and its practical application. Also, the shared aspects between the two countries include the need for courses that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Both countries emphasise the importance of developing academic research skills in different contexts. They also recognise the significance of practical knowledge learning. Additionally, they highlight the need to update and expand course content to meet market demands and improve employment opportunities.

Distinctive characteristics of the U.K. include a more substantial emphasis on mental well-being and body health promotion as part of life science-linked knowledge. There is also a significant emphasis on analysis methodologies in Laban Movement Analysis and Kestenberg Movement Profiling. In practical learning, the U.K. places students in therapeutic settings for real-world exposure, unlike in China, where students' views on work placements are mixed.

Therefore, although China and the U.K. provide a blend of theoretical and practical learning in their curriculum, the U.K.'s focus on therapeutic practice, mental well-being, and body health promotion distinguishes it from China, which has more diverse focus areas. Both countries recognise the need for updates to their curriculum to meet changing market demands and better equip students for their future careers.

5.4.3 Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation in artistic sports courses varies across the two national contexts due to cultural, societal, and educational distinctions.

In China, curriculum implementation in artistic sports courses revolves around three central pedagogical themes. Firstly, the Teacher-Centred Approach remains a common method, employing both traditional and digital teaching tools, yet it has received criticism for potentially limiting student engagement. Secondly, the Interactive Approach emphasises dialogue and cooperation between students and teachers, which includes teacher-student interaction, "masterclasses," and collaboration in research projects. Lastly, the Student-Centred Approach is deemed vital, with inquiry-based teaching and teamwork being integral components. However, experts in China have raised concerns about students losing focus of the main goals of their course.

In the U.K., curriculum implementation of the artistic sport-related course similarly revolves around three pedagogical themes. The traditional Teacher-Centred Approach is prevalent, but students and teachers need more engaging teaching methods. The Interactive Approach is valued, with communication/dialogue and cooperation being central. It involves personal reflection, internal and external expert dialogue, and combined internal-external learning experiences. The Student-Centred Approach is highly regarded, focusing on essay writing, critical thinking, and problem-based independent study and research. This approach aims to foster students' independent thinking and problem-solving abilities while developing a habit of lifelong learning.

When comparing the thematic outcomes, China and the U.K. emphasise the need for a more balanced pedagogical approach, highlighting similar thematic outcomes. These outcomes centre around three shared themes: teacher-centred, interactive, and student-centred approaches. The shared aspects between the two countries emphasise the importance of using various teaching tools, including traditional ones like whiteboards and blackboards, as well as digital media like slideshows and pre-

recorded videos. They also both recognise that the effectiveness of the traditional teacher-centred approach is questioned due to the perceived lack of student engagement. Meanwhile, both highlight the importance of interactive approaches encompassing dialogue and cooperation, though the forms differ slightly. Similarly, the student-centred approach in both regions fosters students' independent thinking, with slight variations in inquiry-based teaching and teamwork (China), compared to essay writing, critical thinking, and problem-based study (U.K.).

Distinctive characteristics of the U.K. include the role of personal reflection in the interactive approach and the integration of learning within and outside the university. In the student-centred approach, the U.K. prioritises essay writing to deepen knowledge and understanding, integrating critical thinking and problem-solving into independent study and research.

Therefore, the curriculum implementation for artistic sports courses in China and the U.K. shares some broad pedagogical frameworks; however, each country interprets and implements these according to their cultural and educational contexts. While both nations have acknowledged the shift towards more interactive and student-centred approaches, the U.K.'s distinctive emphasis on personal reflection, external expertise integration, and essay writing, adds a distinctive layer to curriculum implementation. These findings highlight the importance of contextually relevant pedagogy in education.

5.4.4 Curriculum Assessment

In China, theoretical knowledge in the artistic sport courses is commonly assessed through written exams, oral presentations, and thesis writing. Practical skills, on the other hand, are assessed through campus-based and work placement-based assessments. In both scenarios, however, concerns exist regarding the relevance of assessments, and the need for more comprehensive and reflective methods was highlighted. Experts proposed a differentiated feedback system involving multiple assessors and peer assessments.

In U.K. universities, theoretical knowledge in the artistic sport-related course is assessed predominantly through essays, dissertations, and presentations. Practical skills are assessed on-campus and off-campus, focusing on students' dance movements, sports exercises, and real-world therapeutic applications. A distinct characteristic of the U.K. system is using portfolios, which encourage student personal reflection and provide a valuable record of students' experiences and competencies.

When comparing the thematic outcomes, both countries shared the assessed theoretical knowledge in the artistic sport-related course through written assignments and presentations. Practical skills are assessed based on on-campus assessments and work placement experiences. However, the U.K. emphasises essays and dissertations, which promote critical thinking and research abilities. Meanwhile, the distinctive characteristics of the U.K.'s curriculum assessment stand out in its use of portfolios, which serve as an assessment method and a valuable record of students' practical experiences. This tool promotes personal reflection and a deeper understanding of the learning material, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market.

Therefore, although there are similarities between China and the U.K. regarding theoretical knowledge and practical skills assessments in the artistic sport course, each also has distinctive characteristics. The U.K. emphasises critical thinking, personal reflection, and comprehensive record-keeping via portfolios. China, however, relies more on traditional exams and presentations, with a suggestion to enhance the differentiate feedback and diversify the pool of assessors. Each could benefit from learning from each other's distinct practices to improve assessment processes.

5.4.5 Quality Enhancement Opportunity (New Emerged Theme)

As previously mentioned in Section 4, the “Flexibility” of the template analysis allowed for new themes to emerge from the interview results. This research identified "Quality Enhancement Opportunities" as the new emergent theme that arose in the interview

results in China. The analysis of the results identified two key factors necessary for the successful implementation of artistic sports courses: the effectiveness of the teaching team and the implementation of effective university policies.

The teaching team's effectiveness is predicated on their clear understanding of their objectives and ability to stay updated with the latest developments in their field. Objectives need to be defined and reinforced, considering the prevailing national education context and student expectations. It is crucial for the teaching team to reflect on their teaching practices continually. Additionally, they should stay informed about the competitive industry background to equip students with up-to-date theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

On the other hand, university policies play a key role in course quality. These policies need to be aligned with national education policies, as they significantly influence the development of artistic sports courses. Departmental policies also require updates, specifically regarding the implementation plan and staffing structure optimisation. Experts suggest a three-tier staffing structure and clear task-based working implementation plans to improve intra-departmental communication. Lastly, policies for individual lecturers and researchers need enhancement, focusing on training, academic ability development, and robust assessment measures.

Therefore, interviews show that the quality of artistic sports courses has the potential to be substantially improved through a concerted effort on the part of the teaching team to refine their objectives. It is also important for universities to keep their policies up to date to meet the developing needs of the industry.

5.5. Chapter Summary

This Chapter served as a crucial exploratory phase of the study, focusing on the interpretation and initial synthesis of interview data collected from China and the U.K., which helps in understanding the challenges and opportunities in the development of artistic sports courses in China, building upon the insights from Chapters 1-4.

The methodology with its research approaches introduced in Chapter 4 was diligently applied in the first two sections of this Chapter, leading to the systematic exploration and interpretation of data. Meanwhile, the process of template analysis involved repeated iterations and adjustments, leading to the creation of finalised coding templates for China (Table 5.1) and the U.K. (Table 5.14). These templates incorporated newly emerged themes that surfaced during the analysis, further enriching the narrative progression of the themes.

Meanwhile, an initial synthesis, analysis, and comparison of views from the two different national contexts were conducted in the third section of this Chapter, which summarises and analyses each component of the course framework. Also, shared aspects and distinct characteristics were found in interviews from both countries. Notably, distinct characteristics from the U.K. interviews offered valuable supplementation to Chinese interview content. The congruence in viewpoints among interviewees from both countries was also acknowledged.

Therefore, Chapter 5 offered a full understanding of the interview data through careful interpretation and initial analysis, providing essential groundwork for the subsequent comprehensive discussion in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This Chapter discusses the findings that have emerged from the preceding Chapters, especially the interview results presented in Chapter 5, connecting them back to Chapter 3, including sections 3.2 and 3.3, as well as aligning them with new literature to provide a comprehensive literature-based discussion and explore possible implications.

The curriculum component framework guides the structure of this discussion Chapter, specifically Tyler's Curriculum Rationale, as discussed in Chapter 2. This framework, consisting of four components - course objectives, content and learning experiences, implementation, and assessment - will provide a systematic framework for discussing the interview data in this Chapter. In addition to these four components, this Chapter will discuss a new emergent theme identified from the interview data - "Quality Enhancement Opportunity". This theme offers an extra lens to reflect on the challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China. Therefore, this research will focus on considering the below four aspects to gain a better understanding of the data discussion strategy in this Chapter.

Aspect 1: Revisiting the Research Findings, which will revisit the research findings (interview results) from Chapter 5, which focuses on interpreting and analysing interview data collected from China and the U.K. **Aspect 2: Discussing Findings in the context of existing literature and the programme specifications of Chinese sports universities**, which will reiterate interview findings and discuss them in the context of the "existing literature in section 3.2" and "university document description in section 3.3" in Chapter 3, considering how the findings align with or expand upon the existing literature in the field of artistic sports courses in China. **Aspect 3: Integrating New Literature**, which will integrate new related literature that has

emerged since the writing of Chapter 3, discussing how the findings relate to this new related literature and providing additional context and understanding for the findings.

Aspect 4: Implications of the Findings and Recommendations for the Future.

The broader implications and recommendations based on the findings will be reserved and discussed in the next Chapter 7. This will provide valuable insights into the further practising of teaching and learning artistic sports and diversifying vocational outcomes for students by understanding the challenges and opportunities identified in the findings for providing artistic sports courses in China.

Therefore, the following sections will deeply discuss each finalised coding template theme in detail and serve as a bridge to Chapter 7 (Aspect 4), where this research will identify the broader implications for the development of artistic sports courses in China.

6.2. Discussion - Curriculum Objectives

This section discusses students' learning motivation, expected capabilities, and potential career paths for graduates.

6.2.1 Students' Learning Motivation

Students' motivation in choosing artistic sports courses emerged as a significant theme. This motivation can be broadly categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic, which are important in shaping a student's learning experiences and future career paths. This aligns with the work Sorayyaei Azar (2021), who emphasises the significance of motivation in achieving personal goals and points out that a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors influences a student's motivation to learn. Meanwhile, current research reveals how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations work in tandem to shape students' decisions to pursue artistic sports courses. Upon analysing the interview results and comparing them to the existing literature in Chapter 3, it was discovered that no research was available on the motivation behind students enrolling in artistic sports courses. However, new related literature has been discovered that supports and expands upon the results of the current study.

Intrinsic motivation in this research, characterised by personal interest or enjoyment in the task, is a significant driver for many students in artistic sports. This is reflected in their genuine interest in the subject matter and the prospect of better job opportunities, such as becoming public school teachers, professional dancers, or athletes. Interestingly, some students view artistic sports courses as a pathway to gain admission to prestigious universities without the need for high scores on the Chinese university candidate tests. These findings resonate with the work of Thomson (2016), who differentiates between intrinsic motivation (driven by the personal interest or challenge of the task) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external objectives or rewards). Also, four types of intrinsic motivation emerged from the results discussed in Chapter 5. These clusters align with various studies in the literature.

- ⇒ In the first type, “interest” is helpful intrinsic motivation during students' learning process. Bai et al. (2022) revealed that interest could promote English language learning, and Bakhromovich (2022) highlighted that "personal enjoyment" can enhance students' reading abilities, which reflected in artistic sports subject shows that “enjoy it” is the most common form students' motivation.
- ⇒ In the second type, students expect to gain high qualifications based on their interest in teaching to obtain desired high-quality jobs, especially teaching jobs in public schools and becoming professional dancers and athletes, which is consistent with Thomas (2009) study that demonstrate high-quality jobs can positively influence employee motivation.
- ⇒ In the third type, students experienced that applying to work in public schools is highly competitive. Being a professional dancer or athlete might be another option for graduates. However, it also requires high skill levels, which places much pressure on students.
- ⇒ In the last type, artistic sports are one of the courses to get into a high-quality university without scoring highly on the Chinese university candidate tests. "Gaokao" plays a significant role in getting into a high-quality university (Muthanna, 2016, Howlett, 2022). Also, scores on this exam are a major factor

in determining their eligibility for higher education in the university (Liu, 2016). However, students who choose arts and sports-related majors usually have lower admission scores (Wu Dongfang, 2018) than those who choose non-arts and sports-relevant majors; artistic sports-related courses are a type of arts and sports-related major that can be accepted with a low score (Fang Qi, 2017).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or punishment avoidance and plays a significant role in students' career choices (Thomson, 2016). Thomson (2016) suggested that extrinsic motivation is a motivation to engage in an activity to meet an external objective, to earn praise or approval, to win a competition, or to be rewarded or paid. Students pointed out that having a stable salary, earning a high income, and not worrying about pension contributions if they can work in public school are important factors in choosing their course. This opinion matches Балеева et al. (2022), who noted the influence of various factors such as professional competence, job stability, residence stability, service, lifestyle integration, and entrepreneurship on career orientations. These factors could be considered extrinsic motivations that influence students' career choices.

Meanwhile, a few students chose their course to enable them to work in their family's art school, as requested by their parents. These students' career goals are focused on something other than specific competencies but rather on working in their family's business. Family businesses are characterised by the transfer of leadership across generations (Shanine et al., 2022). They pointed out that the family business owner (parent) needs to motivate their children to be successful heirs if they want the business to have longevity. In this regard, working in their family's business, as an extrinsic motivation for students, can influence their choice of artistic sports courses.

Therefore, understanding students' motivations in choosing artistic sports courses is crucial for tailoring the course to meet their needs and interests. This research illuminates the complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in shaping students' learning experiences and career paths in the context of artistic sports

courses.

6.2.2 Expected Capabilities

The expected capabilities of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. encompass a broad range of skills and competencies. These capabilities reflect the diverse demands of artistic sports and the evolving needs of the job market.

In China, the primary objectives of artistic sports courses are excellent teaching capabilities, performance and competitive capabilities, study, academic, and research skills, healthy guidance abilities, and employability skills, particularly in business operation and management.

Regarding excellent teaching capabilities, literature from Chapter 3, including works by Zhai Tingle (2006) and Hongtao Ma (2010), emphasises the need for artistic sports courses to develop students' teaching abilities to match the competitive job market, fostering career skills in teaching, coaching, and stage performance. Yan (2022) supports these findings, stating that "innovation, teaching, performances, competitions, scientific research" is the main direction for China's art-related professional training system. This aligns with current interview findings on the importance of teaching and performance capabilities in this research.

Furthermore, the interview results also underline the importance of developing study, academic, and research skills in China and the U.K., which are crucial for success in high-demand and higher-degree programs, and for fostering lifelong learning. This aligns with Zhai Tingle (2006)'s and Hongtao Ma (2010)'s assertions that artistic sports courses should foster "high quality" and "strong ability" in students to meet the competitive job market's demands and personal development. (Hassanbeigi et al., 2011) echo these opinions, affirming that enhancing students' learning abilities, particularly in academic writing, positively impacts academic performance (Wingate, 2006), which also aligns with experts' expectations to develop students' academic research abilities in this project. These study skills should encompass basic writing

language, computer usage, academic research, and organising sports activities.

However, this research also reveals a gap in the current course concerning healthy guidance abilities. Despite the strong emphasis on these skills by experts and social professionals, they need to be more prevalent in the current course modules. This difference between the needs of society and the current practice in universities suggests an area for improvement in artistic sports provision. Liu and Li (2022) and Yang Jue (2011) support this, suggesting that students in a sports university should have a broad knowledge of health-related disciplines and that artistic sports courses should be developed with a fitness focus. Interviews from the U.K. highlight the value of capabilities such as identifying, analysing, and solving health issues in artistic sports-related courses. These abilities include using theoretical knowledge to address professional issues and analysing work materials from various disciplines to improve proficiency, such as movement analysis, which includes Laban movement analysis (LMA) and Kestenberg movement profiling (KMP), and assessing clients' emotions and behaviours within a therapeutic space while monitoring their movement activities. Vieira et al. (2014) posit that identifying potential psychological issues in troubled youth is a common and effective assessment method. Similarly, Denneboom et al. (2006) detail the efficacy of using a multidisciplinary panel to analyse pharmacotherapy's reliability in primary care for older clients.

The results also reveal increasing employment opportunities within business operations and management in the artistic sports industry, directly responding to market demand. Giel et al. (2022) argue the importance of enhancing sport management education to foster the industry's development. However, a clear absence of content related to artistic sports business management skills within sports management education is problematic. Significantly, experts and social professionals strongly advocate for course content covering "Healthy Guidance Abilities" and "Healthy Management Abilities," in line with the "Outline of the Program for Health China 2030" (Liu et al., 2022). This support is aligned with findings from the literature

review in Chapter 3, in which Liu and Li (2022) recommend that sports university students receive education in health-related disciplines alongside physical education knowledge.

Insights from the U.K., on the other hand, highlight distinctive characteristics that offer further opportunities for enhancing artistic sports courses in China. Findings from the interview in the U.K. shows four types of expected capacities, including "identify, analyse, and solve health problems", "creativity", "therapeutic practice abilities," and "student study, academic and research skills". Two types compared with the Chinese interview results have been discussed above: "identify, analyse, and solve health problems" and "student study, academic and research skills".

Regarding "creativity", however, creative dance movements fostering healthy emotional expression and inventive physical activities promoting bodily health are integral to U.K. course objectives. Hilliker (2022) emphasises that 21st-century students must display high creativity levels, generating innovative ideas and fostering collaborative innovations. Patphol (2022) identifies four crucial skills of creative thinking: initiating and developing ideas, thinking divergently, effectively exchanging ideas, and improving ideas. Therefore, nurturing creative skills within arts and sports-related courses is vital for a positive learning experience.

On the topic of "therapeutic practice capacities," U.K. interviewees spotlight "mental therapeutic capacities" and "body therapeutic capacities" as core practices. In mental therapeutic capacities, sports and dance psychotherapy are effective tools for students. Reimer et al. (2022) stated that sports psychotherapy is a potent method for boosting mental health. Also, Karkou et al. (2022) posit dance psychotherapy as an effective means of preventing psychological issues and improving mental health. As for body therapeutic capacities, providing health and exercise advice and encouraging multi-sport skills to promote physical health in diverse populations are primary objectives for students. Dou et al. (2022) stated that therapeutic practice abilities are critical for health-related course students. They further contend that fostering practical

skills and therapeutic competencies are essential objectives of therapeutic training. Yildirim-Hamurcu (2021) further advances that high therapeutic abilities in students correlate with greater feelings of accomplishment and professional identity.

6.2.3 Expected Careers

The research findings in Chapter 5 highlight a diverse range of expected careers for graduates of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. These potential career paths were identified not only through interviews conducted in both countries but also via the literature review in Chapter 3 and exploration of program specifications in Chinese university documents.

In both countries, teaching and coaching are significant career prospects. Chinese university documents emphasise the anticipated roles of graduates as artistic sports course instructors in public or private schools, such as physical education or dance teachers. Moreover, coaching in clubs or dance studios emerged as another viable career route. These findings echo Lu (2019)'s assertion in Chapter 3 that most sports university graduates aspire to education-related careers in primary/secondary schools or private art schools. In the U.K., education-related careers, including teaching, coaching, and training, are also highly valued. Stage performance, particularly as professional dancers, presents another common career pathway. In China, graduates can showcase their talents in various settings, such as dance troupes, entertainment venues, or competitive events. Although U.K. data does not explicitly mention performance, it can be found within the context of therapeutic and dance education areas.

Community work emerges as a career path in China, with opportunities to work in roles related to community outreach, recreational programs, or local events involving dance and other artistic sports. In the U.K., health & social care-related careers are prominent, with the National Health Service (NHS), community or charity groups, and schools offering related employment opportunities to graduates. The National Health System

in the UK has grown to become one of the world's largest healthcare systems (Grosios et al., 2010), attracting many health-related graduates throughout the country (Walker, 2004). Regarding community healthcare services, the government website of the National Health Service (NHS) in England describes that:

Community health services cover a wide range of services and provide care for people from birth to the end of their life. Community health teams play a vital role in supporting people with complex health and care needs to live independently in their homes for as long as possible (England, 2022, p25).

Clearly, from the above description, community health groups (teams) play a vital role in supporting people's well-being, indicating the importance of fostering healthcare professionals to promote community health. Meanwhile, "mental and physical health improvement" and "exercise referral and lifestyle management" are typical careers that graduates can qualify for, especially for children and older people. This suggests a potential area for course development in China, preparing students fully for roles in health consultancy.

On the other hand, the emergence of entrepreneurship and business management as significant career paths is distinctive to the Chinese context. Students expressed interest in starting their businesses in artistic sports, and leadership roles in business management were identified as a popular career choice. In interviews, social professionals echoed these sentiments, underscoring the rising demand for specialised fitness centres and dance schools. This finding resonates with Xin (2019), who suggested that adding entrepreneurship-related courses to art-related courses in Chinese sports universities will widen students' employment prospects. Prabandari (2022) highlighted that entrepreneurial education in higher education supports countries' economic growth. Regarding leadership, Smart et al. (2002) noted that leadership development plays a prominent role in higher education in enhancing student growth.

In contrast, the distinctive practical experience of the U.K. universities in developing health consultants also is a key expected career that Chinese universities could reference. Van Hoye et al. (2022) highlighted the idea of the health consultant and emphasised the importance of learning in sports and physical activity-related courses. Unfortunately, experts revealed that there have been few successful examples of this kind of employment in the current Chinese artistic sports industry. Therefore, it has not become a mainstream course objective in current sports universities. Still, it has the potential to help to broaden the career opportunities for Chinese students and better align the course objectives with the evolving job market.

The diverse range of expected careers reflects students' varied interests and aspirations in artistic sports courses. This underscores the need for a comprehensive and flexible course that can cater to these diverse career paths and prepare students for the opportunities and challenges they may encounter in their careers.

In conclusion, the expected careers for graduates of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. highlight diverse opportunities. The similarities and differences in these career paths offer valuable insights for future course development. Further research and collaboration between Chinese and U.K. universities could enhance these opportunities and contribute to the ongoing development of artistic sports courses in both countries.

6.2.4 In Summary

The course objectives for artistic sports in China and the related courses in the U.K. aim to foster versatile abilities in students. Notably, in China, these objectives focus on enhancing students' artistic abilities and physical fitness, teaching abilities, competitive skills, and research and study skills. Similarly, in the U.K., there is a significant emphasis on academic learning, research, and career development. This indicates that course objectives are indeed a balancing act, having to be adaptable to societal demands, industry needs, and student expectations in the ever-changing job

market landscape.

Moving on to expected capabilities, they encompass a broad range of skills and competencies, which reflect the diverse demands of the artistic sports field and the evolving job market needs. Important skills such as excellent teaching abilities, performance and competitive capabilities, research skills, healthy guidance abilities, and employability skills have been identified in the study. These capabilities are critical in fostering capable students who can confidently navigate the complexities of the competitive job market. However, a distinct gap has been identified in providing healthy guidance abilities within the current course structure in the Chinese context. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for improvement in the course. Consequently, it underscores the necessity for course objectives to address societal demands better, align with industry standards, and cater to the unique needs of the students.

Lastly, when it comes to expected careers, a broad spectrum is anticipated for graduates in both countries. Teaching and coaching have emerged as significant career prospects in China and the U.K., aligning with societal needs and industry demands. Particularly in China, there is a distinctive emphasis on entrepreneurship and business management, a direction that echoes student interests and the drive for economic growth. However, the U.K. presents a different focus, with health and social care-related careers standing out prominently, indicating a potential area for course development in China.

6.3. Discussion - Curriculum Content and Learning Experience

This section discusses the interpreted and analysed interview results on course content and learning experiences in artistic sports in China and the related courses in the U.K. It includes the perceptions of current practices and expectations for future advancements in the curriculum.

6.3.1 Perceptions of Course Content and Learning Experience

The perceptions of course content and learning experience in artistic sports in China and the related courses in the U.K. reveal intriguing similarities and differences, which can be further understood in the context of existing literature in Chapter 3, the programme specifications of Chinese sports universities, and new literature.

In China, interview results identified four main areas of emphasis in course content and learning experience: theoretical knowledge-based learning, practical knowledge learning, study tools and academic research skills, and optional courses. Theoretical knowledge-based learning is seen as essential by both experts and students, aligning with the findings from the programme specifications review, which highlighted artistic sports theory learning as a key component of Chinese courses. However, a debate exists around the inclusion of sports life science and therapy courses, with experts advocating for their inclusion and students expressing less interest. This contrasts with the U.K. context, where life science-linked content is seen as crucial, which emphasises the importance of integrating the cross-disciplinary content of artistic sport with that of the "Sports + Aesthetic + Health" (Wu Dongfang, 2018). New literature further supports this, with Murray (2022) noting that life science and therapy with dance is a catalysts for reconnecting dance to physical education.

Practical knowledge learning, particularly in dance teaching and performance, is highly valued by students in China. This aligns with the programme specifications review, which highlighted Teaching and Coaching Methods as a key component of the artistic sports courses. However, experts' and students' perspectives on work placements were mixed, suggesting a need for improvements in the quality of placements and accompanying rules/procedures. This is consistent with the findings of Zhao et al. (2022), who suggested that improving the quality of work placements could enhance students' learning experiences. In the U.K., students have the opportunity to work in therapeutic environments, suggesting a potential area for development in the Chinese artistic sports courses.

Experts in China emphasised the importance of study tools and academic research

skills, particularly in English and research-related courses. This is consistent with the literature in Chapter 3, which highlights the importance of academic research and the use of bilingual instruction (Ziqian, 2021, Dehua LI, 2019). In the U.K., theory-related academic research course content and learning experience are seen as important, suggesting a shared recognition of the importance of these skills, but perhaps different approaches to teaching them. The literature further supports this, with Huisman et al. (2019) describing academic reading and writing as core to the learning process and Andayani (2022) highlighting the importance of English learning for students in different countries.

Optional courses in China allow students to explore areas of interest beyond their main course of study. However, all interviewee groups expressed a desire for more varied and interdisciplinary courses, indicating a need for further developments in this area. This aligns with the literature in Chapter 3, in which Fang Qi (2018) and Dehua Li (2021) highlight the importance of interdisciplinary integration and the integration of music-related content and Chinese traditional culture into artistic sports course modules (Weiwei, 2017, Meishuang, 2019, Jiaqi, 2018).

In conclusion, the discussion of perceptions of course content and learning experiences in artistic sports in China and the related courses in the U.K., as well as the insights from existing and new literature, highlight several challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China that could be addressed. Firstly, there is a clear demand for more interdisciplinary learning opportunities in China. The U.K. experience, where life science-linked content is seen as crucial and is integrated into the course, offers a valuable model for China. The Chinese artistic sports courses could benefit from a greater emphasis on life science and therapy courses, which would not only enrich this course but also potentially increase rates and/or expand opportunities for students' employment after graduation. Secondly, the quality of work placements in China could be improved. The U.K. experience of therapeutic area placements, where students can work in therapeutic environments,

offers a potential model for China. Enhancing the quality of placements and ensuring placement opportunities are of a good standard could increase students' satisfaction and better prepare them for their future vocational options. Thirdly, there is a need to focus more on study tools and academic research skills in China. The U.K. experience, where theory-related academic research course content and learning experience are seen as important, could guide China. Enhancing the teaching of academic reading and writing skills, and English language skills, could better equip students for the demands of the 21st century.

Therefore, while Chinese artistic sports already cover a range of areas and prepare students for various vocational roles, there is room for further development. The U.K.'s experience and insights from the literature offer valuable guidance for addressing these challenges and opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, which will be further explored in Chapter 7.

6.3.2 Expectations of Course Content and Learning Experience

The expectations of course content and learning experience in artistic sports in China were a central theme in the research findings in Chapter 5. Interviewees expressed the need for a more broad and dynamic course content and learning experience that not only maintains the primary characteristics of artistic sports, such as teaching, coaching, and performance, but also expands and updates these areas.

A recurring theme in these research findings in Chapter 5 and the existing literature in Chapter 3 is the importance of highlighting the distinguishing characteristics of the artistic sports course. This finding resonates with MA and Wu (2015), who identified that Chinese sports universities had designed artistic sports course content and learning experience without sufficiently highlighting the distinctive characteristics of sports combined with arts. Similarly, interviewees in this research emphasised the need to maintain the primary characteristics of artistic sports while also expanding and updating these areas to meet changing market demands. Dehua LI (2019) proposed

the term "symbolic ability" to describe students studying artistic sports, suggesting that the learning content should be distinctive and integrate students' career practice, including health instruction, aesthetic education, and competitive training. This aligns with Woo et al. (2012), who explained the importance of determining the characteristics of the course in higher education to aid in the design of curricula.

Another significant expectation is the enhancement of academic research within the course content and learning experience. This includes improving students' academic research skills and expanding resources based on scientific research. This emphasis on academic research also resonates with existing literature from Chapter 3, where Jianqiang (2021) noted that the development of the artistic sports course content should be viewed as a process of developing "expanded content" based on the original (existing) course content with its academic research. Meanwhile, experts highlighted that a research team dedicated to artistic sports scientific research could enrich the course and align it with the development of sports science. Damşa (2022) and Placklé et al. (2022) noted that research team members come together to generate new ideas for teaching and learning practices that have direct value to the development of courses and that the growth of the research team could also more effectively improve students' achievement.

The need to expand course resources was also highlighted in interview findings. This included introducing entrepreneurship courses, artistic sports management content, and a wider range of optional courses. These additions were seen as essential to meet the changing market demands and enhance employment opportunities for graduates. In the literature, Mei et al. (2020) and Erlangga (2022) highlighted that students with higher levels of entrepreneurship education had a higher level of self-efficacy in making entrepreneurial decisions and a higher level of entrepreneurial intention. Brown (2022) found that education can effectively develop entrepreneurship skills in young people through teaching business management skills and proposed "educational simulations" as an effective tool for teaching students problem-solving,

critical thinking, and business management.

On the other hand, experts highlighted that it is important to include health guidance and traditional Chinese artistic sports activities in artistic sports courses. Health guidance is an essential learning component, allowing students to combine their career practice with a focus on health instruction. This is supported by Tozer (2015) and Fortin (2018), who pointed out that arts and health are a growing interdisciplinary field that promotes health guidance, such as a healthy lifestyle, disease prevention, and enriches scientific research. Edwards and Rowe (2019) described that sport exercise is an effective means of achieving positive health outcomes for people. On the other hand, traditional Chinese artistic sports provide a distinctive cultural perspective and enrich the course content and learning experience, making it more appealing. Huang (2021) and Zhu (2018) noted that “Chinese traditional artistic sports” culture differs from that of the West, as well as higher education with Chinese characteristics differs from Western models and concepts. However, Yu (2017) noted that Chinese sports education showed a willingness to learn from the West but neglected to prioritise the promotion and preservation of traditional Chinese sports, which emphasises that it is important to focus on developing traditional Chinese sports.

Hence, the discussion above indicates a need for more multifaceted and dynamic course content and learning experience aligned with market needs, effectively preparing students for successful careers in artistic sports. This would involve highlighting the distinguishing characteristics, enhancing academic research, and expanding course resources in artistic sports courses. Additionally, striking a balance between the distinctive characteristics of artistic sports and incorporating elements from diverse disciplines could enrich the course. This wider approach to the course would not only bring it in line with market requirements but also equip students with the essential skills and knowledge to succeed in the varied field of artistic sports.

6.3.3 In Summary

The investigation into the curriculum content and learning experience of artistic sports courses in China, informed by comparisons with the U.K. and existing literature, has provided valuable insights into the potential vocational opportunities options available to students and highlighted several key areas for development to meet current and future demands.

In the perceptions of course content and learning experiences, four main areas were identified: theoretical knowledge-based learning, practical knowledge learning, study tools and academic research skills, and optional courses. A recurring finding theme was the need for greater integration and diversification of the course, addressing different aspects of artistic sports, such as life science-linked content and therapy courses. The importance of work placements also was recognised, though improvements in their quality and regulatory oversight were suggested. It was also emphasised that a stronger focus on academic research skills, specifically in English and research-related courses, could better equip students for a wide range of vocational roles.

In the expectations regarding course content and learning experiences, the need for a broad and dynamic course content and learning experience emerged as a central expectation. The key recommendations for developing a distinctive and diversified course are included below, with further elaboration provided in Chapter 7.

- ⇒ Highlighting the distinguishing characteristics of artistic sports, such as course content incorporating both Chinese characteristics and global perspectives to equip students with a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the field. This requires integrating traditional Chinese artistic sports and health guidance into the course, making it more distinctive and culturally relevant.
- ⇒ Enhancing academic research among teachers and students is also essential. This could be achieved by improving academic research skills and expanding resources based on scientific research. This would not only enrich the learning experience but also contribute to the advancement of sports science.

⇒ And expanding course resources, such as including entrepreneurship courses and artistic sports management content, can also open more vocational opportunities for students, help meet the changing market demands, and better prepare students for a wider array of career paths in the artistic sports field.

Furthermore, broad vocational opportunities for Chinese students in artistic sports courses can be significantly diversified and expanded by making the course content more distinct and varied. In particular, the course content should reflect the unique combination of sports and arts that characterises artistic sports while also addressing the need for more interdisciplinary learning experiences. Incorporating various knowledge areas, such as sports, life science and therapy, could broaden the range of potential career paths for graduates.

6.4. Discussion – Implementation

This section discusses three pedagogical approaches with their characteristics, strengths, and challenges to implementing in artistic sports courses: teacher-centred, interactive, and student-centred approaches.

6.4.1 Teacher-Centred

Research findings from China and the U.K. in Chapter 5. highlight the prevalent use of teacher-centred (didactic) approaches in delivering artistic sports courses. These approaches, which include traditional methods such as presentations, whiteboard demonstrations, and pre-recorded videos, have been found to limit student engagement and initiative, leading to lower learning outcomes. This is consistent across both contexts, suggesting that the challenges associated with teacher-centred approaches are not confined to a specific cultural or educational setting.

Several studies in the literature support this observation. Al-Balushi et al. (2020) found that teacher-centred approaches are commonly used in university teaching, particularly in science classes. Similarly, Dimitrios et al. (2013) noted that traditional

teacher-centred teaching methods include lectures, blackboards, homework, and teaching materials. However, these methods can lead to student disengagement, as evidenced by Akramovna (2022) and Souleles (2013), who found that students perceive these methods as boring and of low value, which echoes the research findings in Chapter 5.

Despite these challenges, some studies suggest that teacher-centred learning strategies can be effective in certain contexts. For instance, Fatima (2022) revealed that teacher-centred learning strategies facilitate adult learning more effectively than student-centred learning strategies in medical studies. However, Jessica (2022) pointed out that the teacher-centred approach often ignores the role students can play in the feedback process, which aligns with the findings that these approaches can limit students' initiative.

The existing literature in Chapter 3 provides valuable insights that can help address these challenges. Weixiao (2021) and Yuhang (2021) advocate for the combination of in-person and online teaching, a form of blended learning, which could enhance student engagement by providing a more diverse and flexible learning environment. Similarly, Lixia (2019) proposes an integrated teaching mode that combines Team-based learning (TBL), Problem-based learning (PBL), and Case-based learning (CBL). This model promotes active learning, which fosters student initiative and interest.

To make learning experiences more engaging, interviewees in this research suggested a need for more interactive and student-centred teaching methods. In the literature, Dimitrios et al. (2013) and Lazar (2015) suggest the use of digital media education methods and multimedia technology Sun (2022). These tools provide a more flexible approach to course content and learning experience delivery, potentially making the learning experience more interesting and engaging for students.

Considering these findings, while teacher-centred methods have their place, they need to be balanced with more student-centred and more engaging teaching methods.

This aligns with the broader shift in education towards more student-centred learning. Integrating these models into the implementation of artistic sports courses can enhance student engagement, foster student initiative, and ultimately improve learning outcomes.

6.4.2 Interactive Approach

The interactive approach, which encompasses dialogue and cooperation, is a critical component in the implementation of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. This approach not only enhances the learning experience but also prepares students for future professional engagements.

In China, the interactive approach is seen as crucial. Dialogue involves interactional communication between teachers and students, allowing for mutual understanding and collaborative problem-solving. This aligns with Galiakberova (2022)'s description of interactive teaching methods of dialogue are the most effective technological approaches to learning. However, concerns in this research were raised about limited opportunities for interaction and unresponsiveness from the teacher, who behaves as if he doesn't care about the students' questions. Amini (2021) revealed that the emotions of students and the responses of their teachers have a significant impact on the student's willingness to communicate. Meanwhile, the implementation approach of masterclasses and collaboration between teachers and other course implementers were seen as positive developments, enhancing the learning experience and maximising students' potential. This is in line with the findings of Iqbal et al. (2022), who reported that using an interactive approach to teaching promoted better communication among all participants in the educational process, as well as boosted student participation and motivation.

In the U.K., the interactive approach is highly valued, with communication and dialogue being integral parts of this approach. This includes self-reflection, dialogue between teachers and students, and discussions with both internal and external experts. Silius-

Ahonen (2014) noted that dialogues between students and teachers could contribute to the enhancement of education. Meanwhile, cooperative learning between teachers and students, as well as integrating internal university learning with external placement learning, are also key aspects of the interactive approach in the U.K.

Hwang et al. (2005) showed that cooperative learning and teaching were more effective than traditional lecture methods. Arantes do Amaral (2018) and Eckardt et al. (2020) found that project-based learning could help students gain a rich understanding of content and foster supportive learning communities. Also, Billett (2010) revealed that practice-based learning could be improved by using interactive project research as a strategy. These findings highlight the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

Regarding integrating internal university learning with external placement learning, Martin et al. (2010) showed that on-campus learning is mostly about acquiring theoretical knowledge, while off-campus learning (work placements) focuses more on developing behavioural skills such as communication. Fleming (2017) stressed that the two types of learning need to be integrated to enhance student performance.

In conclusion, the interactive approach, with its focus on communication (dialogue) and cooperation, are a critical component in the implementation of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. The literature provides valuable insights and strategies for enhancing this approach, but they also highlight the need for flexibility and adaptability in response to the specific context and needs of the students.

6.4.3 Student–Centred

The student-centred approach, as revealed in Chapter 5, is a critical element in the implementation of artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. This approach, however, manifests differently in these two contexts, reflecting the unique educational landscapes and pedagogical strategies employed in each country.

In China, the student-centred approach is characterised by inquiry-based teaching and teamwork, particularly in courses that include practical experience. This approach encourages students to develop their innovative abilities and promotes self-initiative. This aligns with the findings of Lixia (2019) from Chapter 3, who proposed a novel teaching mode integrating Team-based learning (TBL), Problem-based learning (PBL), and Case-based learning (CBL). Shah (2020) further supports this by noting that by focusing on inquiry-based learning strategies, students could be empowered to take self-initiative. Zhang (2018) and Murray (2012) also found that collaborative learning can help to develop students' cooperative awareness and innovation ability and improves communication skills, which matches the Chinese experts' opinion that inquiry-based teaching can develop students' innovative abilities by encouraging collaborative learning to build a strong sense of teamwork. Teamwork is a crucial aspect of the student-centred approach in both contexts. Interviewees in this research cited it as being critical to the implementation of the artistic sports course. (Kapp, 2009) indicated that students preferred to work collaboratively. Yang et al. (2022) also revealed that team-based learning was associated with higher academic performance among students.

In the U.K., the student-centred approach involves writing essays, critical thinking, and problem-based independent study and research. This approach fosters students' independent thinking and problem-solving skills, promoting a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the development of lifelong learning habits. This aligns with the findings of Wei et al. (2023) from Chapter 3, who noted the importance of fostering independent thinking and problem-solving skills. Smit et al. (2014) showed that in student-centred learning environments, students have higher levels of perceived autonomy, competence, relatedness, and motivation.

Despite the differences in implementation, the student-centred approach in both China and the U.K. shares a common goal: to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter and promote active learning. However, the effectiveness of this approach is

contingent on the specific context and needs of the students, as well as the guidance provided by teachers.

In conclusion, a student-centred approach, encompassing inquiry-based teaching, teamwork, and problem-based learning, is crucial for effective course implementation. However, this approach requires careful guidance from teachers and the use of varied and creative teaching methods to ensure its success and mitigate potential risks.

6.4.4 In Summary

This section has illuminated the understanding of the various pedagogical approaches employed in the implementation of artistic sports courses in China and the U.K., encapsulating teacher-centred, interactive, and student-centred methods. Each approach presents distinct challenges and opportunities.

The teacher-centred approach, prevalent in both countries, often leads to student disengagement due to the limitations on student initiative, despite some studies advocating their efficacy in specific scenarios and a clear call for more engaging, interactive, and student-centred approaches that could potentially enhance learning experiences. Incorporating blended learning models and digital media education methods were highlighted as potential ways to augment student engagement and improve learning outcomes. These findings highlighted the need for pedagogical evolution and more diverse and flexible teaching methods to enhance student engagement and participation in artistic sports courses in China.

The interactive approach is critical for enhancing the learning experience and preparing students for professional engagements. Communication and cooperation, both within the learning environment and beyond, are key to this approach. The use of dialogue, masterclasses, collaboration, and integration of on-campus learning with external placement learning has been shown to promote better communication between students and teachers, enhance the broad learning experience, and foster supportive learning communities. These strategies underline the necessity of

cooperation and communication, enriching the learning experience and providing the foundation for future professional engagements of students in artistic sports courses.

In the student-centred approach, the discussion focused on the distinct methods employed in China and the U.K. In China, inquiry-based teaching and teamwork were prioritised, fostering innovation and promoting self-initiative. In contrast, the U.K. approach emphasised essay writing, critical thinking, and problem-based independent study to develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills. Regardless of the differences, both approaches shared a common goal of fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter and promoting active learning.

Therefore, the discussion of these three pedagogical strategies offers useful insights into the challenges and opportunities of providing artistic sports courses in China. The discussion especially identified two important aspects: Communication and Cooperation. Communication, whether between course designers, lecturers, and learners, or between course implementers and beneficiaries, is vital for a productive learning environment. Also, cooperation, especially between teachers and learners and between social professionals and learners, is essential for exchanging ideas and resources, thus leading to an enhanced learning experience and ultimately improving learning outcomes and expanding potential vocational opportunities for students in artistic sports.

6.5. Discussion – Assessment

This section discusses different assessment methods and practices used in artistic sports courses in China and the United Kingdom. Each of these approaches provides valuable insights to enhance learning outcomes and overcome challenges in the Chinese context.

6.5.1 Theoretical Knowledge Assessment

The assessment of theoretical knowledge in artistic sports courses differs between

China and the U.K., each employing distinct methods that reflect their distinctive pedagogy and contexts.

In China, the assessment of theoretical knowledge typically involves written exams, oral presentations, and thesis writing. Written exams, often featuring short-answer and multiple-choice questions, are viewed by experts as the most straightforward and equitable method of assessment, aligning with universities' grading strategies, as noted by Zhou (2011) in Chapter 3. However, this perception contrasts sharply with the students' view, who often find these exams unreasonable, tedious, and overly challenging. This disconnect suggests a need for a clearer approach to written assessments, one that aligns more closely with student preferences, learning styles, or their intended industry-related focus. Recent literature supports this view, with Perry et al. (2022) advocating for the modernisation of traditional paper-based exams, and Valentine et al. (2022) and Nardi (2019) suggesting that paper-based exams could be replaced by well-designed computer-based exams to enhance student learning engagement, and motivation.

Oral presentations and thesis writing, on the other hand, are generally well-received by students. These methods not only assess students' understanding of theoretical knowledge, but also their communication skills, teamwork abilities, and critical thinking capabilities. This aligns with the literature, with Suliman (2022) and Bayne et al. (2022) all highlighting the value of oral presentations in equipping students with professional skills and improving their teamwork experience. However, as noted by Feng Yuhong (2011) in Chapter 3, teachers in China rely heavily on summative assessment methods. This finding underscores the need for a more balanced approach to assessment that includes both summative and formative methods. "Thesis Writing" is also emphasised as an effective way to assess the understanding of theoretical knowledge in China. This aligns with the recent literature of Spencer (2022) and Navés et al. (2022), who explained that the purpose of a thesis is to assess the student's ability to integrate their abilities, theoretical knowledge, and research, as well as to demonstrate their

academic capabilities.

In the U.K., theoretical knowledge assessment in artistic sports courses often involves essays, dissertations, and various forms of presentations, including verbal and poster presentations. These methods are designed to assess students' ability to conduct independent research, think critically, and apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios. This approach aligns with the multi-assessment tool proposed by Zhou (2011) in Chapter 3, which includes networked testing and multiple time evaluations, and the Multiple Assessment Approach proposed by Sun (2014) in Chapter 3, which combines subjective and objective assessment strategies. The emphasis on poster presentations is common in the academic and public health fields (Ilic and Rowe, 2013, Kapp, 2009) and is a distinctive characteristic of the U.K. approach not mentioned by the Chinese interviewees.

Discussing these findings and the related literature, assessing theoretical knowledge in artistic sports courses can benefit from a more balanced and multifaceted approach. This approach should incorporate various assessment methods, including written exams, oral presentations, thesis writing, and practical applications, and should consider both teacher and student perspectives. Furthermore, it should strive for a balance between summative and formative assessment methods, as suggested by Jia-li (2008) and Sun (2014) in Chapter 3. When comparing these assessment methods, it becomes apparent that both place a significant emphasis on independent research and critical thinking. However, the approach utilised in the U.K. is more multifaceted, focusing on using theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios and presentation skills.

In conclusion, although there are some differences in the assessment of theoretical knowledge between China and the U.K., there are also shared challenges and opportunities. By learning from the U.K.'s experiences and incorporating the insights from the related literature, it is possible to develop more effective and inclusive assessment methods for artistic sports courses in China.

6.5.2 Practical Abilities Assessment

The assessment of practical abilities also is a critical component of artistic sports courses, both in China and the U.K. In both countries, these assessments occur both on-campus and during work placements, with each type of assessment focusing on different aspects of students' skills and experiences.

In China, campus-based assessments primarily focus on dance practice skills and art/theatre performance ability. This aligns with the findings of Jia-li (2008) from Chapter 3, who emphasised the need for diversified assessment content and methods in practical abilities assessment. Similarly, literature from Ross (1994) and Phillips et al. (2009) indicated that the main campus-based assessment content for dance majors consisted of the practice and performance of dance. Xibian et al. (2015) further proposed that dance practice, dance performance, and dance competition should all be integrated into one assessment mechanism in the practice course assessment of artistic sports in China. This suggests a potential area for improvement in the Chinese assessment system of artistic sports courses, which currently separates these elements.

Meanwhile, the work placement-based assessments in China focus on assessing work practice experience, with two main methods of assessment identified: work experience daily reports (portfolios) and case practice assessments. However, students expressed concerns about the objectivity of these assessments, suggesting that third-party assessments (assessments that are marked by people who don't know the students) could be a more effective and fair method. This is in line with literature from Jackson (2018) and surveys conducted by Bostock (2004) and O'donovan (2018), which revealed that students thought third-party assessment would be more honest and accurate during both class learning and work placement. Fulton et al. (2021) also found that third-party assessment tools may increase students' satisfaction and achievement when used in conjunction with other assessments. This suggests that the introduction of third-party assessments could address students' concerns about

objectivity and improve their satisfaction with the assessment process.

In the U.K., according to the interviewees, on-campus assessments primarily evaluate students' dance and sports practice abilities. This is consistent with the findings of Ross (1994) and Phillips et al. (2009). As Rugh et al. (2022) pointed out, dancing exercises can help to preserve and improve human health physically and mentally in a variety of ways, underscoring the importance of assessing these skills. This highlights the value of the U.K.'s focus on dance and sports practice abilities in their on-campus assessments.

Off-campus assessments in the U.K. focus on case practice during work placements, assessing students' practical experience and their application of dance movement psychotherapy in real-world scenarios. This aligns with the views of Fitzgerald et al. (2022), who stated that the use of well-established methods of reflective case practice, performance appraisal, and e-portfolios could better assist in assessing students' work placement performance. The U.K. experts also believe that asking students to create portfolios to get more feedback from self-reflection is beneficial for students learning. This suggests that the U.K. approach to work placement-based assessments is well-rounded, incorporating multiple assessment methods to provide a comprehensive assessment of students' practical experience.

In conclusion, the assessment of practical abilities, both on-campus and off-campus, provides a broad assessment of students' skills and their application in real-world therapeutic contexts. However, there is important to consider student feedback and experiences during the assessment process. This may involve promoting students' preferred methods, such as practical assessments without written exams, and potentially introducing third-party assessments for work placements, as the literature suggests.

6.5.3 Chinese Expert's Perceptions Of Course Assessment

Chinese experts' perceptions of course assessment revealed significant concerns

about the current assessment processes in Chinese sports universities. The experts identified three key internal participants in the assessment: the university assessment department, teachers, and students. However, they noted that the current assessment process is largely one-directional, echoing the findings of Wu Dongfang (2018). This pathway from the university assessment department to teachers, and then from teachers to students, is seen as limiting feedback and hindering the ability of students to reflect on their performance and improve.

Experts suggested that a broader assessment approach should involve all course participants reviewing each other's work. This would not only provide valuable feedback but also encourage reflection, which is seen as a crucial part of the learning process. This suggestion aligns with the work of Fitzgerald et al. (2022), who emphasised the importance of a three-way collaboration between students, universities, and industry in designing workplace assessments at universities.

In addition to this, experts recommended diversifying the assessors involved in the process. They suggested that various assessors, including teachers, social professionals, students, and third-party assessors, could contribute to a more effective and well-rounded assessment process. This recommendation is supported by the work of McNamara (2013), who encouraged universities to broaden third-party assessors to collect additional evidence of student performance, and by Zegwaard et al. (2003) and Jackson (2018), who highlighted the effectiveness of combining students' self-assessments with third-party assessments.

Finally, experts highlighted the potential benefits of peer assessment among students and teachers (both students reviewing the work of other students as well as students providing feedback on/assessing teachers). Despite not being a common practice currently, peer assessment is a valuable tool for developing lifelong assessment skills, improving the learning process, and enhancing understanding of course content. For teachers, peer review could foster communication and help improve teaching practice. This aligns with the work of Harris et al. (2008), who noted that peer assessment of

teachers is a process of critical observation and review that involves staff from similar or different disciplines providing constructive feedback to each other regarding the teaching, which enhances teachers' understanding of student learning experiences (Bell, 2018) and improved teaching quality (Hyland et al., 2018).

Therefore, the research findings from experts suggest a need for reform in the assessment processes of Chinese sports universities. This could involve promoting a more multi-directional and reflective assessment process, diversifying the assessors involved, and encouraging peer assessment. These changes have important implications for developing artistic sports courses in China.

6.5.4 Portfolios

Portfolios have emerged as a significant tool for assessment and reflection in the context of artistic sports courses. Research findings from Chapter 5 highlighted the use of portfolios in both China and the UK, albeit with different emphases. In China, portfolios primarily assess work practice experience through work experience daily reports (portfolios) and case practice assessments. In the UK, portfolios serve a dual purpose. They are used as a tool for learning reflection, encouraging students to engage with learning activities repeatedly, thereby enhancing their understanding of the material. They also serve as a placement experience record, acting like a work manual that includes a performance record with photos, videos, and promotional materials.

Using portfolios in dance education is common practice, as supported by various studies. Wagner (1998) noted that portfolios involve students in the assessment process and document their achievements, although they also raise issues of reliability, time consumption, objectivity, and authenticity of the work. This is particularly relevant to the findings from China, where portfolios are used to assess work practice experience.

In the UK context, using portfolios for learning reflection and as a placement

experience record aligns with the benefits highlighted by Lu (2021), who suggested that e-Portfolios can generate transformative learning experiences and significantly impact students' academic achievements, they also support students' professional learning and development as a continuous and lifelong process. The research findings also resonate with Oh et al. (2020) study, which suggested that portfolios, particularly e-portfolios, can enhance students' motivation in project-based learning environments. Creating and maintaining a portfolio could motivate students to engage more deeply with their dance projects, thereby enhancing their learning experience. Furthermore, portfolios provide a flexible environment for students to reflect on their progress and exchange ideas and feedback (Namaziandost et al., 2020). Also, Abu-aisheh et al. (2016) suggest that portfolios can help maintain student engagement throughout a course. This is particularly relevant to the UK context, where portfolios are used to assess students' reflections on their learning and serve as a record of their placement experiences.

In conclusion, portfolios, encompassing learning reflection and placement experience records, not only foster self-reflection and a deeper understanding of the learning material but also serve as a valuable record of students' practical experiences, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market. It serves as a tool for reflection, feedback, motivation, and engagement, helping students document their learning journey, reflect on their progress, receive feedback, stay motivated, and remain engaged with the course. They also have the potential to help students develop a broader perspective on their learning and practice in artistic sports courses learning.

6.5.5 In Summary

This section discusses several assessment approaches and practices in artistic sports courses in China and the related courses in the U.K. Each section has contributed valuable insights to improve learning outcomes and address various challenges and opportunities in the Chinese context.

Regarding the assessment of theoretical knowledge, there is a strong emphasis on evaluating theoretical knowledge and practical abilities in China. This is done through various assessments that test academic abilities, including written and oral exams, presentations, and academic work. However, it was revealed that China's course assessment processes appear to lean more towards a theoretical assessment, which students have expressed concerns about, favouring more practical examinations over written tests. This insight offers an opportunity for further course development to meet student preferences, learning needs, or their intended industry requirements and objectives. Also, the discussion suggests that the assessment of theoretical knowledge needs to facilitate students' comprehensive learning, including traditional sports science, artistic sports knowledge, and a thorough understanding of the health and fitness industry.

In practical abilities assessment, discussion shows that the assessments focus both on-campus and during work placements, reflecting different facets of students' skills and experiences. On-campus assessments primarily aim at dance practice skills and art/theatre performance ability, whilst work placement-based assessments concentrate on work practice experience, assessing students' practical experience and their application of dance movement psychotherapy in real-world scenarios. This offers potential opportunities for Chinese students to develop diverse skills. The discussion suggests the potential benefit of introducing third-party assessments to improve the fairness and satisfaction of the assessment process.

Chinese experts voiced concerns about the one-directional nature of the current assessment process. They called for a more multi-directional approach involving all course participants and diversifying assessors, which points towards broader assessment objectives and implementers, including teachers, students, social professionals, and third-party assessors, potentially leading to a more effective and well-rounded assessment process. Meanwhile, encouraging peer assessment amongst students and teachers could also enhance understanding and improve

teaching quality.

Finally, the discussion identified the role of “portfolios” as a critical tool for reflection and assessment, primarily for work practice experience in China and as a dual-purpose tool in the UK. Despite their proven benefits in enhancing self-reflection, engagement, and deeper understanding, allowing students to document their progress, receive feedback, stay motivated, and remain engaged with the course, portfolios also present challenges related to the authenticity and reliability of the work. Improvements in using and managing portfolios could address these challenges, potentially providing a more comprehensive learning and assessment tool.

Therefore, while there are considerable strengths in the current assessment system for artistic sports courses in China, there are also clear opportunities for enhancement. Greater emphasis on practical assessments, third-party assessments, diversification in both the aspects of the course assessment objectives and the assessment implementers, and utilising tools like portfolios for self-reflection and deeper learning. This multi-faceted approach could enhance students' practical abilities, better prepare them for the job market, and ultimately contribute to developing artistic sports courses in China.

6.6. Quality Enhancement Opportunity (New Emerged Theme)

During the discussion of the new theme of enhancing the quality of artistic sports courses in China, two major aspects were revealed: the need for an effective teaching team and effective university policies.

6.6.1 Effective Teaching Team

An effective teaching team's role in successfully implementing artistic sports courses cannot be overstated. These research findings underscore the importance of two key factors in the effectiveness of such a team: a clear understanding of their objectives and their ability to stay up to date with the latest developments in their field.

The concept of a "teaching team," as defined by Kruse (1995), involves gathering a group of teachers from different courses or grade levels to teach a specific part of a student's education. This aligns with current findings in Chapter 5, which suggest that an effective teaching team clearly understands its objectives and can reflect on its teaching practices. Having a teaching team brings benefits beyond the classroom. According to Flowers et al. (1999) and Supovitz (2002), teachers in schools with a "teaching team" reported that their work environment is more positive, rewarding, and satisfying compared to those without such a team, and it also benefits student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics. This is consistent with the findings, which suggest that an effective teaching team not only enhances the quality of teaching but also equips students with the necessary skills to succeed in their future careers. However, the limitations of the "teaching team" approach still exist. Baldwin and Kraus (2019) found that in many schools, "teaching teams" consist of only a few "core" course subjects, such as maths, science, and social studies, but exclude "special" course subjects, such as art, sport, and music. This highlights the need for a more inclusive approach when forming teaching teams for artistic sports courses. In the context of artistic sports courses, a multi-disciplinary approach is particularly beneficial. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, drawing from various fields of knowledge and expertise. Therefore, the inclusivity of the teaching team becomes even more crucial.

Regarding clarifying team objectives, the research findings suggest that these should be based on the current national education background and student expectations (including students' intended industry needs), requiring an understanding of students' commonalities and individual differences. This aligns with the literature, which suggests that course designers and teaching team members should consider the intended objectives of the students when setting course objectives (Heilbronn et al., 2019, Aithal, 2020). Reflection is also a key tool for strengthening these objectives, as it can help teachers keep up with innovations in educational science, apply what they have studied appropriately, and track their growth in line with the latest academic

knowledge and practical experience (Orakci, 2021).

Staying up to date is another crucial aspect of a competent teaching team. This involves continually acquiring the latest theoretical knowledge that can be taught and improving practical skills for the future. Staying up to date enables teachers and students to gain the latest knowledge, skills, and values relevant to leading to long-term positive social change (Fischer et al., 2022, Öztürk, 2020). Initial teacher training can also help address the current shortage of professional skills required to develop university education for staying up to date, especially in the teaching practice skills area (Del Carmen Pegalajar-Palomino et al., 2021)

In conclusion, an effective teaching team understands its objectives, stays current with the latest theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and reflects on its teaching practices. This not only enhances the quality of teaching but also equips students with the necessary skills for their future careers.

6.6.2 Effective University Policies

The results show that effective university policies are crucial in enhancing the quality of artistic sports courses. Research findings, supported by the literature, have identified three key areas for improvement: alignment with national education policies, departmental policy updates, and policy enhancements for lecturers and researchers.

The findings underscore the importance of aligning university policies with national education policies. Experts in this study emphasised that national education policies significantly influence the development of an artistic sports course. This aligns with the findings of O'Connor (2013), Barnes (2021) and Cheng et al. (2021), who noted that national education policies should influence university decision-making and impact the everyday practices of teachers and students. Tamrat (2022) further highlighted that a lag in higher education sectoral practice behind national education policy could increase the challenge of promoting quality higher education at the national level. Therefore, universities must keep pace with national education policies to ensure

effective course implementation.

The findings also highlighted the need for departmental policy updates. Experts suggested a three-tier staffing structure, a clear task-based working implementation plan, and mechanisms to improve communication and consultation between teachers and students. Literature supports this, such as Smith (2002), who discussed the challenges faced by university department leaders, including managing staff and dealing with students' issues. Zhang (2021) emphasised the importance of updating staffing structures, while Veza (2021) outlined the benefits of a learning implementation plan. Väjätaga et al. (2020) and Mehta et al. (2022) stressed the importance of communication and consultation between faculty and students.

Finally, the findings highlighted the need for policy to enhance the abilities of individual lecturers and researchers. Experts proposed strengthening lecturer training, improving researchers' academic abilities, and enhancing performance review processes. This aligns with the literature Kiggundu (2007) recommended supporting, guiding, and empowering teachers through training. Mahanal et al. (2019) noted the significant role of university teachers in students' learning, and Schut et al. (2020) highlighted the value of teacher assessment feedback. Additionally, Douglas et al. (2021) also advocated for peer review as an effective method for assessing teachers and researchers.

In conclusion, effective university policies are integral to the quality enhancement of artistic sports courses. By aligning with national education policies, updating departmental policies, and stronger policies for the development of lecturers and researchers, universities have the potential to improve the quality of teaching significantly.

6.6.3 In Summary

The discussion of quality enhancement opportunities within the context of artistic sports courses in China revealed two major facets: the importance of an effective

teaching team and the role of effective university policies.

Regarding the effective teaching team, the discussion highlighted the pivotal role of a well-structured teaching team in successfully implementing artistic sports courses. Research findings emphasise two major elements that contribute to the effectiveness of this team: their clear understanding of their objectives and their commitment to staying abreast with the latest developments in their field. With an understanding of both their collective and individual roles and a commitment to ongoing professional development, the teaching team is equipped to deliver a robust and effective course. This approach not only enhances the quality of teaching but also provides students with the necessary skills to succeed in their future careers, thereby opening a diverse range of vocational opportunities.

Regarding effective university policies, the discussion highlighted the integral role of university policies in ensuring the successful implementation and enhancement of artistic sports courses. Three key areas have been identified for improvements: alignment with national education policies, updating departmental policies and enhancing policies for individual lecturers and researchers. By aligning with national policies, universities can stay in sync with changing educational landscapes and standards. Updating departmental policies, including changes to staffing structures and improved communication mechanisms, can help foster a more conducive environment for teaching and learning, ultimately leading to quality enhancements. Enhancement policies aimed at lecturers and researchers ensure that they are supported, including strengthening lecturer training and enhancing performance review processes, which empower, and give opportunities for professional development, improving the quality of education students receive.

6.7. Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 serves as a crucial point in this research study. It engages in an in-depth discussion connecting the interview findings from Chapter 5 to the existing literature

and university document exploration from Chapter 3. This connection helps offer a comprehensive understanding of the importance and implications of research findings. Meanwhile, the discussion structure in this Chapter is underpinned by the curriculum component framework from Tyler's Curriculum Rationale, offering a systematic basis for discussing interview data. Additionally, an emergent theme, "Quality Enhancement Opportunity", is discussed, which provides a distinctive perspective to view research findings and to explore implications for developing artistic sports courses in China.

Finally, to reiterate the "Four Aspects" of the data discussion strategy outlined in Section 6.1 of this Chapter's introduction: Aspect 1: Revisiting the research findings; Aspect 2: Discussing findings in the context of existing literature and the programme specifications of Chinese sports universities; Aspect 3: Integrating new literature. The fourth and final aspect, "Aspect 4: Implications of the Findings and Recommendations for the Future", will be addressed in Chapter 7, where the broader implications of the findings and proposed recommendations for future artistic sports courses in China will be considered.

Chapter 7 Implications and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This Chapter seeks to extend the analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6 to reflect upon the broader implications of the current research findings. In Chapter 6, this research revisited the research findings from Chapter 5 and discussed the interpreted and analysed interview data from China and the U.K. by incorporating the existing literature and programme specifications from Chapter 3, as well as new related literature. In contrast to Chapter 6, this Chapter will incorporate my personal and professional experiences described in Chapter 1, along with valuable insights from all interview participants detailed in Chapter 5 and the associated analysis in Chapter 6 to explore and discuss how the current research findings can impact/influence teaching and learning practices in artistic sports courses. Ultimately, this Chapter will more clearly address the vocational outcomes and employment opportunities potentially available to Chinese students.

Moreover this Chapter will consider the key principles of "Curriculum Constructive Alignment" as proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011) and the "Pedagogical Approaches in Higher Education", both extensively explored in Chapter 2, to discuss the implications of the current research findings on teaching and learning practices within the context of artistic sports courses. Also, the experiences gathered from my professional journey will help me to reflect on the practical implementation of these theoretical principles, thereby providing a comprehensive perspective on the artistic sports courses.

Building on these, this Chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of addressing the challenges and connecting the opportunities in providing artistic sports courses in China, particularly drawing upon the lessons learnt from the U.K. context, which might be valuable for China to explore the potential for diversifying vocational outcomes for

students in artistic sports. The insights shared in this Chapter could make a potential contribution to developing artistic sports education in China and enhance the quality of higher education in this area.

The structure and content of this Chapter align with the framework of the discussion section in Chapter 6, which is designed to ensure a logical and coherent continuation of the discourse initiated in Chapter 5. It also helps the reader draw connections between the discussion of the findings in Chapter 6 with their implications. Additionally, towards the end of this Chapter, it is important to consider the strengths and limitations of this study and its unique contribution to the field of artistic sports. Recommendations for future research are also offered.

7.2 Course Objectives: Demand and Characteristics

Clearly understanding the course objectives is paramount to effectively understanding the development of artistic sports courses in China. Current research findings reveal that this understanding should be comprehensive, accounting for societal/industry demands, students' expectations, and the distinctive characteristics inherent to artistic sports. A clear understanding of these objectives is critical to creating a well-rounded and effective course. Every component of the curriculum should connect in a coherent and purposeful manner, aligning with the principles of "constructive alignment" proposed by educational theorists Biggs and Tang (2011). Constructive alignment emphasises the critical need to align learning outcomes (the knowledge and skills students should possess upon course completion), teaching methods (the pedagogical strategies employed to facilitate learning), and assessment tasks (how students' learning is assessed). Ensuring this alignment, the course structure becomes a cohesive system, where each element complements the others and contributes to the intended learning outcomes.

However, clarifying artistic sports course objectives needs the right approaches. Chinese experts and social professionals indicated two essential aspects could

support this effort: the “societal and student demand” and the “distinctive characteristics of academic development” in the context of artistic sports.

7.2.1 Societal/Industry Demands and Students' Needs

Developing artistic sports students at universities aims to equip them with the necessary skills to secure employment post-graduation and swiftly assimilate into the industry.

- Current and Future Societal/Industry Demands

The insights from Chinese interviewees and my personal experience reveal the popularity of artistic sports education in China, with many graduates aspiring to become teachers or dancers. Yet, as identified in both interview results and my observations, this focus does not necessarily address the evolving needs of the industry/economy, limiting graduates to fewer career options and leaving potential fields such as business management of artistic sports and artistic sports therapy untapped.

Regarding current societal/industry demand, this research has highlighted the gap between graduates' career paths and societal/industry demands, suggesting the need to diversify and extend course objectives. Cultivating students who excel in therapeutic and business management areas, fostering innovation, and aligning course objectives with current societal demands are crucial steps towards this goal. For instance, aligning with the "Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan" (Organization, 2017) could address such societal demands. Interestingly, the U.K. context offers insight into meeting these demands, as graduates working in therapeutic areas commonly align well with the needs of the U.K.'s communities.

Regarding future societal/industry demand, the courses should be designed to reflect not only the present demands but also those of future societies. Meir (2022) highlighted that universities should anticipate and incorporate both present and future

societal needs into their course objectives, a concept echoed in the findings from Chapters 5-6. Influences on the future of society/industry often stem from national policy, necessitating course planners to align their programs with societal needs under the guidance of industry trends and national policy. For instance, the "National Fitness Program in China 2021-2025" (China, 2021) could create demand for future artistic sports industry areas such as "Health Management and Therapy" and "Fitness Industry Market Development and Management", thus enriching the original course objectives and course resources for artistic sports. Universities should guide graduates on matching future societal demands with their career aspirations, ensuring employability and their commitment to the artistic sports industry.

- Students Need

Accommodating societal and industry demands is vital. However, an overemphasis on such requirements while overlooking the individual student needs could result in a state of "over-sociocentrism," a concern pointed out by Toma (2022). As Chapter 2 of this research noted, this is where students' intended learning outcomes (ILOs) play a pivotal role, representing their distinctive needs and aspirations.

The alignment of course objectives with students' needs, as interviewees proposed in Chapter 5, can significantly optimise students' learning outcomes. In the context of artistic sports courses, the interviewee's responses highlighted the necessity to first identify and analyse students' needs before formulating course objectives. This perspective aligns with the principle proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011) in Chapter 5, which stresses that students' prior experiences and understanding should be thoroughly assessed to set appropriate course objectives. Ultimately, a balance needs to be struck between meeting societal/industry demands and catering to the distinctive needs of students to offer a holistic and rewarding learning experience.

7.2.2 Distinctive Characteristics of Academic Development

Expert insights from the interviews highlight the importance of academic development

and distinctive characteristics in artistic sports courses. This approach fosters the training of high-quality students capable of navigating the dynamic and competitive job market. Also, interviewees in both China and the U.K. emphasised the significance of developing academic research skills in formulating course objectives.

Additionally, experts highlight the distinctiveness of artistic sports research, which demands a different research requirement compared to other academic research areas. Understanding these distinct research requirements can aid teachers and students in clarifying the correct approach during the teaching and learning process within artistic sports courses. To achieve this, experts in China recommend understanding and considering the distinctive differences and research requirements between artistic sports and other academic disciplines, which will enable teachers to suitably position artistic sports within the artistic sports courses, thereby enriching its contribution and relevance.

Building on the personal and professional insights, and backed by interview results in Chapter 5, it is clear that Chinese students in artistic sports courses predominantly aspire to become teachers, coaches, or performers. These existing ideas have shaped the course objectives in China, focusing predominantly on teaching and performance skills. This focus, however, risks limiting students' employment prospects, as graduates could easily take these roles from sports and dance education. Therefore, to expand course objectives and enhance students' capabilities, it is recommended that course planners identify distinctive characteristics of the artistic sports courses, ensuring a distinct focus that separates it from other disciplines.

Contrasting this, the U.K.'s experience highlights the integration of life science with health and well-being knowledge with artistic sports subjects, offering a distinctive direction for the development of artistic sports courses in China. These distinctive characteristics allow students to learn how to identify, analyse, and solve health problems, broadening their study areas or paving the way into the academic research domain. This focus can offer a pathway for students in China to diversify their career

prospects in the health consultancy or health and well-being research sectors beyond the conventional roles of teaching, coaching, or performing, suggesting an area where Chinese courses could be developed further to diversify students' vocational outcomes.

7.2.3 Summary and Practical Implication in Teaching and Learning

Based on the interview results and my personal experience, current research findings in this section suggests that it is necessary to expand course objectives beyond the traditional aspirations of graduates (teachers, dancers) to areas such as business management in the artistic sports domain and artistic sports therapy with a focus on health and well-being, which align with current and future societal demands. Especially in the U.K. context, integrating life science in health and well-being knowledge within artistic sports courses is highlighted, which is a potential avenue for course development in China, further broadening the range of potential career outcomes for graduates. Additionally, it is essential to balance industry demands with individual student needs to prevent an overemphasis on societal requirements that could lead to "over-sociocentrism".

On the other hand, the practice of teaching and learning in artistic sports courses should be driven by a comprehensive understanding of the course objectives. The implications include **Course Design Aligned to Societal and Industry Demands:** Teaching and learning activities should consider the present and future societal/industry demands. To do this, educators should stay informed about industry trends, national policies, and job market requirements. **Addressing Student Needs:** Pedagogical strategies should consider the students' intended learning outcomes, which reflect their distinctive needs and aspirations. **Distinctive Characteristics of Academic Development:** The teaching practice should also recognise the distinctive characteristics of academic development within artistic sports, which promote research skills among students, understand the distinctive research requirements of artistic sports, and ensure the course's proper positioning within the broader course structure. **Incorporation of Life Science in Health and Well-Being Knowledge:**

Integrating health and well-being knowledge with artistic sports courses can offer a distinctive direction for developing teaching and learning practices, which can diversify students' vocational outcomes.

7.3 Course Content: Diversification and Distinctiveness

According to the research conducted, most experts suggest that the course content selection process should be guided by the course objectives. As highlighted in the previous section, it is important to adapt the course content to meet the needs of both society and students while also developing its distinctive characteristics. Meanwhile, the principle of "constructive alignment", as proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011), can aid in defining course content and learning experience based on intended learning outcomes and aligning them with teaching strategies and assessment methods. This helps to ensure that the distinctive aspects of the course content are instrumental in achieving the learning objectives. Current research findings have shown that incorporating diversity and distinctiveness can be beneficial in enhancing the content of artistic sports courses.

Regarding Courses Content Diversification, experts in the interviews stressed that diversifying the course content (e.g., towards health and entrepreneurship) is one of the most effective ways to help students face vocation-expanding challenges and create a more inclusive learning environment that considers the backgrounds and abilities of each student.

In the context of artistic sports courses, diversification can mean incorporating a range of artistic sports activities, drawing from different cultural contexts, and offering varied modes of engagement, including practical exercises, theoretical discussions, collaborative projects, and self-reflection activities. By diversifying the course content, teachers can cater to the diverse interests, aptitudes, and learning styles of students, fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

This ties back to Biggs and Tang (2011)'s principle of constructive alignment, wherein

the learning process is seen as a dynamic interactional environment between the educator and the learner, and the course itself is structured to facilitate this interaction. By diversifying course content, educators not only enrich the learning materials but also provide paths to achieve the desired learning outcomes. In parallel, the "Learner-Centred" pedagogical approach emphasises tailoring teaching strategies to the needs and preferences of students. In particular, active learning underscores the importance of course content diversification as it allows students to engage with the material in multiple ways, stimulating higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and problem-solving.

Regarding Courses Content Distinctiveness, on the other hand, current research findings emphasise that course content distinctiveness plays a pivotal role in artistic sports courses, especially in equipping students with the skills and knowledge to meet community demands and excel in their careers. Through interviews, it has been observed that the course content in artistic sports courses often closely mirrors that of sports education and dance education disciplines. This similarity creates a significant challenge as it can limit job and career opportunities for graduates by not providing them with a distinctive skill set that sets them apart in the job market.

To contribute to the distinctiveness of the course content in artistic sports, Chinese experts underlined that graduates should possess not only just basic dance knowledge and techniques but also should have abilities that can meet various societal needs, such as positions like health consultants, artistic sports business managers, and other roles that require a combination of sports, arts, and management skills, which can provide a competitive advantage in the job market.

Additionally, from a pedagogical standpoint, both "Teacher-Centred" and "Learner-Centred" approaches can also contribute to the distinctiveness of the course content in artistic sports courses. In a "Teacher-Centred" approach, the distinctiveness could stem from the distinctive expertise and instructional methods of the teacher. On the other hand, in a "Learner-Centred" approach, the distinctiveness could arise from the

emphasis on active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking, allowing students to take ownership of their learning and contribute their distinctive perspectives.

Therefore, to effectively promote the development of artistic sports courses, it is vital to focus on course content distinctiveness. This focus on distinctiveness can lead to graduates with distinctive skills and competencies, preparing them for a broader array of career paths and making them more competitive in the job market.

7.3.1 Integrating Global and Chinese Characteristics

During the interviews conducted in both countries, the interviewees discussed a diverse range of potential course content that would greatly benefit the Chinese artistic sports courses. These specific ideas are highly valuable and can serve as a point of reference for Chinese sports universities, including integrating global and Chinese characteristics and diversifying course resources.

In the increasingly interconnected global village of today's international economy, cultural exchanges and integration are essential to its development (Featherstone, 1990, Pretty et al., 2009). Just as Olympic culture transcends borders and is celebrated universally, the domain of artistic sports is a social and cultural phenomenon without national boundaries. Various artistic sports, such as Ice Dance, Rhythmic Gymnastics, and Dancesport, featured in global events like the Olympics, contribute significantly to people's mental and physical well-being worldwide.

However, as the current research findings show, artistic sports should be wider than mainstream Olympic artistic sports. Instead, they should consider and offer practical experience of traditional Chinese artistic sports activities, such as Chinese Martial Arts, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Dragon Dance, and Lion Dance. These activities are incredibly effective for promoting physical fitness, mental well-being and offer high entertainment value.

Reflecting on my personal and professional insights, there is an increasing need to

address the diversity of vocational outcomes for graduates and align these outcomes with societal demands, industry needs, and student expectations. Interview findings show that while the course objectives for artistic sports in China and the U.K. aim to foster a broad range of abilities in students, various career prospects have been identified. Yet, in the context of China, current research findings show a gap in healthy guidance abilities and a need to diversify the focus from the predominant career prospects in education and stage performance. As aligned with the current research findings above, traditional Chinese artistic sports activities significantly promote mental and physical health and provide high entertainment value. These traditional practices could serve as crucial elements in broadening the vocational outcomes for graduates in artistic sports courses in China.

Additionally, Chinese interviewees have provided crucial insights, emphasising that updating the content of the artistic sports courses in Chinese sports universities requires integrating the latest mainstream course content and China's traditional artistic sports theoretical knowledge popular in Chinese culture. This integration is vital to meet the needs of the current developing society, especially for local Chinese communities. Meanwhile, reflecting on my personal and professional insights, this integrating approach can positively impact the inclusion of a broader spectrum of artistic sports activities and help address the challenge of course marginalisation within the Chinese higher education system, as well as the identified gap in providing health guidance abilities within the current course structure, thereby expanding the scope of potential career prospects for students.

7.3.2 Diversifying Courses Resources

Given that artistic sport is a developing interdisciplinary subject in the context of China, the Chinese experts and social professionals emphasised the need for expanding course resources to enhance the current course content, aligning with the insights from my personal and professional experiences shared in Chapter 1.

As described above, the course objectives and expected capabilities highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6 reflect societal demands, industry standards, and student needs, indicating the importance of diversifying course resources. Chinese interviewees identified a need for entrepreneurial skills-related courses, artistic sports management-related content, and optional leadership or business management-related courses. These additions resonate with my professional experiences and concerns about expanding the vocational outcomes for students in the artistic sports field.

The U.K. interviewees suggested exploring therapeutic areas such as "mental well-being and body health promotion theories" and "movement and psychological analysis", areas which could expand the breadth and appeal of Chinese courses to the emerging health and social care sector.

In order to adapt to this change, Chinese experts emphasised that university experts, frontline teachers and current students should all play a significant role in enhancing the development of resources for artistic sports.

- **University experts**, pivotal in higher education course development, should improve communication and collaborate with external or internal university experts to enhance university course resources.
- **Frontline teachers** should strive to understand their students deeply - their interests, sports skills, learning abilities, and more. This understanding could allow teachers to tailor the course of artistic sports to their student's specific needs, fostering their role-switching abilities, such as from being a teacher to being a friend during instruction and becoming key resources for course development.
- **Current students** can contribute to the course of artistic sport through their reflective learning and creativity. Teachers should foster an environment that encourages exploration and independent creativity.

This strategy can help bridge the identified gap in healthy guidance abilities within the course and expand the breadth of career opportunities for students, thereby aligning the course with the diverse demands of the job market.

7.3.3 Summary and Practical Implication in Teaching and Learning

Based on the interview results and my personal experience, the research findings in this section proposes an innovative way to redefine and enrich the course content to cater to broader vocational outcomes for the students. It underscores diversifying the course content, moving beyond traditional courses and incorporating a more inclusive range of content aligned with health, entrepreneurship, and students' distinctive interests and abilities. It also highlights the necessity of enhancing the distinctiveness of course content to equip students with distinctive skills in the competitive job market and effectively bringing traditional Chinese artistic sports activities into the course to broaden the vocational perspective, ensuring students are well-prepared to meet diverse societal demands.

In the practice of teaching and learning in artistic sports courses, strategic alignment should be prioritised, linking course content with defined learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Additionally, it's necessary to expand vocational outcomes to align with societal demands, industry needs, and student expectations to provide a more diverse and inclusive learning environment. This environment prepares students for various vocational pathways beyond the traditional routes of education and performance. To achieve this, educators should strive to diversify course content, including traditional Chinese artistic sports activities such as Chinese Martial Arts, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Dragon Dance, and Lion Dance. Finally, it is also crucial to continuously develop and diversify course resources. Given the interdisciplinary nature of artistic sports, possibly integrating elements related to entrepreneurial skills, artistic sports business management, life science in health and well-being knowledge, and optional leadership-related courses. To ensure this expansion is successful and relevant, all stakeholders – including university experts, frontline teachers, and current

students – should play significant roles in developing course resources. Their involvement can help bridge the identified gaps in the course content, contributing to more comprehensive and diversified artistic sports courses that better align with the job market's diverse demands.

7.4 Course Implementation: Communication and Cooperation

In the context of course implementation, interviewees identified two important elements - communication and cooperation. These are intertwined, and their interplay contributes significantly to the successful execution of a well-aligned course, whether viewed through the lens of Biggs and Tang (2011)'s "constructive alignment" principles or the diverse pedagogical approaches prevalent in higher education.

7.4.1 Communication

The interviewees mentioned three types of individuals involved in implementing the course: the course designer, lecturer, and learner. As highlighted in the principles of "course constructive alignment" proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011), the concept of alignment suggests the need for communication to be transparent and meaningful in the context of achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, Biggs and Tang (2011) stress that communication plays a pivotal role in ensuring that teaching and learning strategies, assessment methods, and course outcomes align and create meaningful learning experiences. For example, educators must articulate the intended learning outcomes clearly to students, and in turn, students need to understand these objectives to guide their learning process. Then, educators and students should maintain ongoing communication to facilitate the assessment of actual learning outcomes and identify any differences from what was intended. Therefore, in this research, both experts from China and the U.K. also agreed that the interactive approach of communication and dialogue between everyone who participates in the artistic sports courses is a dynamic method of implementing the learning process that can immerse students more deeply into it.

Moreover, in considering the pedagogical approaches discussed in Chapter 2, effective communication is key to both teacher-centred (didactic) and learner-centred (active learning) approaches. In a didactic approach, the educator takes a central role and therefore needs to communicate theoretical knowledge and practical experience effectively to students. Additionally, active learning pedagogies encourage learner engagement, which requires open lines of communication between students, peers, and teachers to facilitate collaboration, critical thinking, and knowledge construction. This learner engagement aligns with interview results from experts in both China and the U.K. who advocate for enhancing teachers' ability to communicate effectively and encouraging teacher-student collaboration to improve course implementation quality, which shows it is essential to develop strategies that encourage such communication in artistic sports courses.

7.4.2 Cooperation

The principle of "course constructive alignment" from Biggs and Tang (2011) underlines the necessity of cooperation between different course elements to enhance learning experiences. In this research, data collected from interviews indicate that the individuals responsible for implementing artistic sports courses can be categorised into two groups: "University Teachers" and "Social Professionals". Also, both experts from China and the U.K. added that cooperation between the course implementer (teachers and social professionals) with the learner (students) is the key method to maximise the full potential abilities of each course participant.

Meanwhile, learner-centred pedagogies, such as active learning, necessitate cooperative learning environments. Students are encouraged to collaborate with their peers, engage in group activities, and solve problems collectively. Such cooperative learning environments can cultivate teamwork and social skills, as well as enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

In the context of the artistic sports courses, interviewees from China and the U.K.

repeatedly stressed the importance of supporting teacher-student cooperation. This approach is beneficial for teachers and students in identifying and addressing course-related issues within the classroom. It is also essential that teachers cooperate with students, helping them achieve the learning objectives and adjust teaching strategies according to students' feedback and performance. On the other hand, interview findings also highlighted that cooperation could be interpreted more broadly to include coordination among different stakeholders (educators, students, course developers, and administrators) and between different course components (teaching strategies, assessments, and learning outcomes).

To conclude, efficient communication and effective cooperation are pivotal to successful course implementation. By integrating the principles of "course constructive alignment" and different pedagogical approaches, communication and cooperation can be effectively leveraged to deliver high-quality, harmonious teaching and learning experiences. Given the preference for a learner-centred approach, as evidenced in the literature and interviews, and the central role of communication and cooperation within active learning, these two elements can significantly enhance course implementation.

7.4.3 Summary and Practical Implication of Teaching and Learning

Based on the interview results highlights that the practice of teaching and learning in artistic sports courses should consider the pivotal role of communication and cooperation in the successful implementation of the course. Therefore, the implementational activities should **Prioritise Strong Communication**, which should involve effective and transparent communication among the course designer, lecturer, and learner and clearly articulating course objectives to students and maintaining ongoing dialogue to track learning outcomes. It's a necessary step to bridge potential gaps between achieved and intended outcomes. Then, **Promote Cooperation**, which means facilitating collaboration among all course stakeholders - university teachers, social professionals, and students - to foster social skills and critical thinking. It also

implies creating a collaborative learning environment where students actively engage in problem-solving tasks. Additionally, **Aligning Communication and Cooperation with Pedagogical Approaches has been emphasised**, including learner-centred pedagogies like active learning. This means that effective communication is not only essential for didactic approaches, where the educator transmits knowledge but also for active learning, where students participate in the knowledge construction process. As a practice, educators need to communicate effectively in all teaching scenarios and ensure students actively engage in their learning journey. Meanwhile, **Engaging Different Stakeholders in the Course Implementation** shows that cooperation should not only be limited to the classroom but should also include coordination among all stakeholders (educators, students, course developers, and administrators) and between different course components. Finally, teaching and learning practices should create a **Diversity and Inclusion** learning environment that values and includes all students, contributing to course success.

7.5 Course Assessment: Comprehensiveness and Diversity

From exploring the interview results, two critical aspects of improving course assessments have emerged: Comprehensiveness and Diversity. These aspects serve as guiding principles to shape the assessment process in artistic sports courses, ensuring alignment with the key tenets of effective pedagogy and course design. One striking element, revealed from both the Chinese and UK interviews, is the emphasis on the innovative use of “Portfolios” as a tool for assessment and reflection in artistic sports courses, which have the potential to contribute to the richness of the assessment process.

7.5.1 Comprehensiveness

Tyler (1949) stressed that comprehensiveness is a holistic approach in course assessment encompassing various facets of a student's learning journey, not just content mastery.

The interview findings highlighted that a comprehensive assessment approach would involve the assessment of creativity, critical thinking, and active learning experiences for students, as well as theoretical knowledge and practical experience in work placement. It includes not only the understanding of core concepts but also the application of these concepts in performance, collaboration, problem-solving, and creative expression, which are essential in artistic sports. Therefore, course assessments need to be designed to capture these aspects, presenting a complete picture of the student's learning progress and achievement.

However, interviews with experts in Chinese artistic sports education reveal an issue with the prevailing assessment method, which is largely one-directional or top-down, as outlined in Chapters 5-6. In this system, assessments move from the university assessment department to teachers and subsequently from teachers to students, which effectively limits the feedback process. This restriction hampers students' ability to reflect on their performances and make necessary improvements. While there have been attempts to implement reverse or bottom-up assessment strategies, such as having students assess teachers, these methods are generally deemed ineffective. Consequently, this one-directional approach does not encapsulate all stakeholders in the assessment process, limiting opportunities for reflective improvements in students' academic performances.

To truly foster comprehensive assessment, therefore, Chinese experts recommended that it is vital to facilitate an interactive feedback loop among all internal assessment participants—students, teachers, and the university assessment department. Students should have opportunities to assess and provide feedback on their learning experiences to teachers, thereby enabling the university assessment department to review the effectiveness of teachers' teaching activities more deeply.

As per Biggs and Tang (2011)'s model of constructive alignment, one of the primary purposes of assessment is to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning, understand their progress, and subsequently refine their learning

experiences. They further highlight the value of assessment outcomes for teachers. By reflecting on the outcomes of these assessments, teachers can collect valuable insights into the effectiveness of their teaching methods, thereby improving their pedagogical skills and broadening their teaching experience.

Based on the understanding of “constructive alignment”, such a multi-directional feedback system would effectively counteract the limitations of a one-dimensional assessment, promote reflective learning and teaching, and ultimately result in a more comprehensive assessment of students' performance. This all-encompassing feedback loop is a more constructive approach for improving course assessment in artistic sports, which not only examines the students' theoretical knowledge and practical abilities but also considers their learning experiences and the teaching methodologies employed in the course.

On the other hand, a comprehensive course assessment in artistic sports courses should also capture the extent of active learning, or learner-centred approaches, that have taken place. For instance, assessments should be able to assess higher-order thinking skills which are fostered by active learning. They can involve formative assessments, such as reflective essays, group projects, presentations, and peer reviews, which promote learner engagement, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Therefore, comprehensive assessment in artistic sports courses is about establishing an integrated, multi-faceted, and reflective feedback system that provides a holistic picture of a student's learning journey. Enabling all stakeholders to participate in the feedback process can foster an environment conducive to continuous learning and improvement, aligning closely with the principles of constructive alignment as outlined by Biggs and Tang (2011).

7.5.2 Diversification

The diversification in assessment methods for artistic sports courses involves a

balanced integration of traditional (teacher-centred) and experiential (learner-centred) assessment formats, as discussed in Chapter 2, each designed to assess specific learning outcomes in distinctive ways.

In an artistic sport course with a teacher-centred approach, assessments mainly concentrate on the student's capacity to comprehend and reproduce the theoretical knowledge obtained during the course. This is usually done through written exams that test the student's understanding of both the conceptual and technical aspects of the subject. While teacher-centred assessments are crucial for assessing knowledge-based learning outcomes, the distinctive nature of artistic sports calls for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to assessment. This is where the learner-centred approach proves to be invaluable. In an artistic sport course with a learner-centred or active learning approach, assessments extend beyond the traditional formats to encapsulate the multifaceted and dynamic nature of artistic sports. These methods emphasise practical application, creativity, and critical thinking - essential aspects of artistic sports often not captured in traditional exams.

During this research, two ways to diversify the assessment of artistic sports courses were collected: the diversity of assessment objects and implementers, as identified from the interview data in this study.

Diversifying the Assessment Objects, which includes the active involvement of students, teachers, and the university assessment department.

- ⇒ Students' involvement in assessments, either of teachers or the university assessment department, can foster a sense of responsibility and agency in their learning process. However, to ensure unbiased and correct assessments, educators must guide students to understand the assessment principles and criteria accurately.
- ⇒ Teachers remain the primary assessors, adopting quantitative and qualitative assessments to provide a comprehensive picture of students' abilities. These

varied dimensions ensure a fairer, more accurate assessment, encapsulating different facets of learning, from knowledge acquisition to skill application and creativity in artistic sports.

- ⇒ The university assessment department plays a significant role in coordinating the overall assessment process. Their function includes developing flexible assessment strategies, managing risk, and ensuring the fairness of assessments. Their involvement also extends to coordinating with external assessors and identifying third-party assessment bodies, thus providing a comprehensive, well-rounded assessment of students' learning.

Diversifying the Assessment Implementers, which involves a variety of stakeholders, both internal (students, teachers, university assessment department) and external (social professionals, third-party assessment bodies).

- ⇒ Teacher assessments remain the most common form of assessment, offering students detailed, instructive feedback, thus guiding their learning journey.
- ⇒ Social professionals can provide practical assessments, offering valuable insight into students' readiness for the workplace or community engagements, especially crucial in artistic sports.
- ⇒ Self-assessment encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and engage in reflective practices, fostering self-awareness and improved performance. As highlighted by the U.K.'s experts, portfolios can be effective tools for capturing these reflections.
- ⇒ Third-party assessments bring relative objectivity to the assessment process, which is important for achieving a level of relative fairness. However, it is important to keep in mind that bias and challenges can still occur with assessors who are not affiliated with the university. So, it would be beneficial for assessors to acquaint themselves with the university's grading system and standards. These could involve external experts or agencies providing an alternative student performance perspective.

⇒ Peer assessment, particularly highlighted by Chinese experts, can promote communication and mutual understanding among students, fostering a democratic and harmonious learning environment. Peer assessments can take the form of student peer assessments or teacher peer reviews, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of students' performance.

Therefore, a diverse range of assessors enriches the assessment system, proving to be a crucial step towards the overall development of artistic sports courses.

7.5.3 Portfolios

Portfolios, as an innovative tool for assessment and reflection, were identified by both interviewees in China and the U.K. They align with Biggs and Tang (2011) constructive alignment principles by helping to connect the learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment activities effectively. In the portfolio creation process, students engage in active learning, contributing to the constructive aspect of the alignment, wherein they construct their understanding of the material through experience and reflection.

In the Chinese context, the interviewee emphasised that portfolios should primarily focus on work practice experience and authentically assess learners' practical skills. This approach mirrors the teacher-centred pedagogical approach, in which portfolios allow educators to set specific objectives and guide students towards those goals. Teachers can assess students' knowledge and skills by reviewing their portfolios, which provide a record of their achievements, challenges, reflections, and growth over time. However, portfolios shine the most when viewed through a learner-centred lens. On the other hand, in the UK context, interviewees highlighted that portfolios are utilised not only for assessing practical skills but also as reflective tools for learning. This approach aligns with the learner-centred pedagogical approach and active learning, which enables students to take charge of their learning journey and reflect on their learning experiences and progress, including academic and placement

experience. Additionally, it helps them develop self-regulation skills. Also, the portfolio creation process involves critical thinking, problem-solving, and even collaboration when students are asked to give and receive feedback on each other's work. Therefore, this dual purpose enriches the learning experience and encourages repeated engagement with the material, enhancing understanding and facilitating deeper learning.

In the context of artistic sports courses, portfolios can be effectively utilised to document and assess both the practical and theoretical aspects of the course. They can contain multimedia elements (electronic portfolios or e-portfolios) such as photos and videos of performances, written reflections on techniques or pieces learned, evidence of participation in workshops or competitions, and any feedback received. Meanwhile, portfolios can also include elements of project-based learning, such as planning and organising an artistic sports event, documenting the process, reflecting on the outcome, and using this experience to inform future projects. This way, portfolios allow students to actively engage with the material and contextualise their learning in real-world scenarios. Additionally, portfolios can serve as a tangible record of students' progress and achievements in the course. They allow students to demonstrate their growth and proficiency in artistic sports, making them a valuable asset when seeking employment or further educational opportunities in the field.

7.5.4 Summary and Practical Implication in Teaching and Learning

Based on the interview results, the practice of teaching and learning in artistic sports courses should embrace a comprehensive and diverse approach towards assessments. This means considering not only students' theoretical knowledge and practical abilities but also their learning experiences and the teaching methodologies employed in the course.

Therefore, the assessment activities should have an **emphasis on comprehensiveness**, which should be designed to capture all facets of a student's

learning journey, not just content mastery. This means assessing creativity, critical thinking, and active learning experiences. Also, assessments should encapsulate core concept understanding and their applications in performance, collaboration, problem-solving, and creative expression, which are key in artistic sports. Then, **establishing an interactive feedback mechanism** is essential for all participants involved in internal assessments - students, teachers, and the university assessment department. This feedback loop will enable students to share their learning experiences with their teachers, allowing the university assessment department to understand the teaching activities' effectiveness better. Implementing this system can help overcome the limitations of one-directional assessment and encourage reflective learning and teaching.

Additionally, **embracing diversity in assessments**, which highlights the assessment process, should involve various entities, both internal (students, teachers, university assessment department) and external (social professionals, third-party assessment bodies). Especially to diversify the assessment objects and implementers. Finally, **the innovative use of portfolios** should be encouraged for both assessment and reflection. In the context of artistic sports courses, portfolios can document and assess the course's theoretical and practical aspects, providing a comprehensive record of students' academic and practical experiences. This approach can enhance understanding, facilitate deeper learning, and prepare students for future success in the field.

7.6 Strengthening Quality Enhancement

The interviews revealed two major aspects: the importance of having a strong teaching team and effective university policies.

7.6.1 Strengthening the Lecturer Team

A well-equipped and competent lecturer team is a significant foundation for establishing and delivering high-quality artistic sports courses. The principles of

curriculum constructive alignment and the adoption of learner-centred pedagogical approaches, such as active learning, can influence the lecturer team's capabilities.

In the context of artistic sports courses, lecturers should be well-versed in the principle of constructive alignment, incorporating this in their teaching and assessment strategies, and focus on aligning their teaching strategies and assessment methods with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the course, promoting a coherent and effective learning environment. Training sessions should be conducted to ensure that the lecturers understand and effectively apply the principles of constructive alignment in their course design and delivery.

Further, strengthening the lecturer team requires adopting teacher- and learner-centred approaches, striking a balance between the two. While a teacher-centred approach can provide a structured, coherent delivery of content, a learner-centred approach can encourage active engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The latter is especially crucial in artistic sports, where innovation, creativity, and adaptability are vital skills for students to develop.

According to current research findings, Chinese experts highlighted that strengthening the lecturer team in artistic sports courses requires a multifaceted approach and suggest that academic research should inform and actively shape the learning environments for artistic sports. This involves enhancing teachers' academic skills, developing high-quality research teams, and fostering students' research skills.

Firstly, Chinese experts stressed that teachers' academic skills should be enhanced to provide students with a broader perspective from academic research. In the interview results, Chinese students have indicated their desire for this breadth of knowledge, as they believe it would make them more competitive in the job market. Therefore, continuous professional development programs should focus on enabling teachers to integrate the latest academic research into their teaching and also to give teachers the time to read and review current research, thus providing students with a

comprehensive and current understanding of artistic sports.

Moreover, developing high-quality research teaching teams is essential to ensuring that students develop robust research skills. A research-oriented teaching team can foster a culture of inquiry and critical thinking, providing students with the necessary tools and guidance to conduct their research projects.

Chinese experts also offered two key suggestions to strengthen the lecturer team further: "Clarifying and strengthening working objectives" and "Staying up to date".

Clarifying and strengthening working objectives involves aligning the teaching team's objectives with the current national education context and the expectations of students. This alignment ensures that the team's efforts directly contribute to achieving key educational outcomes. Reflection plays a crucial role in this process, as it allows the team to assess their strengths and areas for development.

Staying up to date is crucial in a field that is constantly evolving. The teaching team should strive to stay abreast of the latest theoretical knowledge in the field of artistic sports and continually update their industry-related practical skills. Also, it is important to ensure that the education provided to students is up-to-date and relevant to the current industry standards, which will help prepare them effectively to succeed in a highly competitive field.

7.6.2 University Policy

According to Chinese experts, artistic sport-related research needs to pay more attention to discussing university policy, which is crucial to achieving effective strategies for improving quality. In this case, universities should prioritise promoting and encouraging constructive alignment when designing and delivering courses. To achieve this, policies can be created to ensure that all courses, including those related to artistic sports courses, have well-defined objectives for learning, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks that are appropriately aligned.

In addition, universities should promote a shift from traditional teacher-centred teaching methods to learner-centred approaches in their policies. Encouraging active learning should encourage teachers to implement practices that promote student participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

In the context of this research, Chinese experts pointed out the challenges faced due to the slow updating of university policies compared to national ones. Based on the interview findings, three primary focuses for university policy updates were identified: aligning with national education policies, updating department policies, and enhancing policies for lecturers and researchers.

Matching National Education Policies. There was a consensus among the interviewees that national education policies significantly impact university policies and, consequently, the quality of learning in artistic sports courses. In Chapter 1, I shared my personal experiences and discussed the limited vocational opportunities available to students in artistic sports that were impacted by national education policies. Meanwhile, it is observed in the literature review that the marginalisation of artistic sports courses within the Chinese higher education system results from the absence of standardised course specifications in national education policy documents. Therefore, the necessity to align university policies with national education policy cannot be overstated. National policies assist course planners in identifying society's current professional needs, thus dictating the areas of emphasis in university policies.

Updating University Policies for Departments. Experts recommend updating the staffing structure and providing a clear implementation plan to optimise university policies. The staffing structure should be three levels: manager (leader), lecturer, and researcher (professor). Each role has distinct responsibilities. The interconnection between these roles is crucial to the success of the department. Furthermore, having a clear working plan can help optimise the situation in two ways: it provides clear direction and accountability and ensures efficient resource allocation and utilisation. Also, my personal experience has underlined the importance of regulations that

govern teaching behaviours for lecturers and provide a supportive learning process for students.

Enhancing University Policies for Lecturers and Researchers. To enhance policies for lecturers and researchers, Chinese experts highlighted the need for more robust lecturer training, an emphasis on academic research, and improved assessment measures, which means university policies should emphasise improving the training of lecturers, with a focus on enhancing artistic sports exercise abilities, teaching skills, and the capacity to organise artistic sports activities. Creating a training management system that rewards outstanding contributions can help to achieve this. Additionally, researchers' academic skills are critical to developing a course that expands the scope of vocational outcomes. Encouraging scientific research and forming academic research teams should be central to university policy.

In summary, a focused update of university policies, aligning with national education policies, optimising department policies, and enhancing policies for lecturers and researchers can potentially improve the quality of education within artistic sports provision.

7.6.3 Summary and Practical Implication in Teaching and Learning

The practice of teaching and learning in artistic sports courses should focus on both strengthening the lecturer team and revising university policies to bolster quality enhancement. These suggestions are proposed based on the newly emerged theme, "Strengthening Quality Enhancement", and are connected to my personal and professional insights.

Therefore, the research findings in this section propose **Strengthening the Lecturer Team**, which aims to expand the scope of vocational outcomes for students in the artistic sports field. Lecturers need to be well-versed in the principle of constructive alignment, incorporating this in their teaching and assessment strategies. The lecture team's strength can also be enhanced by promoting teacher- and learner-centred

approaches, striking a balance between the two. Continuous professional development programs should be designed to enable teachers to integrate the latest academic research into their teaching. This will provide students with a comprehensive and current understanding of artistic sports, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market.

On the other hand, **updating university policies is essential**, which noted that teaching and learning activities should align with national and university policies, particularly those promoting constructive alignment and learner-centred approaches. This would ensure that the teaching and learning activities, along with the assessment tasks, are appropriately designed and delivered. Then, **shifting from traditional teacher-centred teaching methods to learner-centred approaches**, which aim to promote active learning within the classroom, motivating students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity. Further, **departmental policies update** can support an optimised staffing structure and clear implementation plans, ensuring efficient resource allocation and utilisation. Finally, **enhancing policies for lecturers and researchers** aim to improve assessment measures and promote academic research, which can potentially expand the scope of vocational outcomes for students.

7.7 Employment Opportunities - Vocational Outcomes

Upon analysing the current research findings and their implications on teaching and learning in artistic sports courses, it was discovered that Chinese students have more career and industry options available to them. Therefore, several vocational areas were identified that should be considered:

1. **Artistic Sports Therapy:** This is an emerging field where graduates can utilise their knowledge of artistic sports to contribute to health and well-being initiatives, aligning with societal demands such as the "Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan".
2. **Artistic Sports Health Consultants:** By incorporating health aspects into

course content, students can learn to guide and promote health and well-being through artistic sports activities, where they can help identify, analyse, and solve health problems.

3. **Careers in the Health and Social Care Sector:** By exploring therapeutic areas such as mental well-being, body health promotion theories, and movement and psychological analysis, students can prepare for roles in the health and social care sector.
4. **Practitioner Roles in Traditional Chinese Artistic Sports:** Including traditional Chinese artistic sports activities like Chinese Martial Arts, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Dragon Dance, and Lion Dance in the course content can prepare students for roles promoting these traditional practices.
5. **Practitioner Roles in Artistic Sports Creativity:** Avenues such as dance movement creativity for promoting healthy emotional expression or physical activity creativity for promoting healthy performance could be explored.
6. **Academic Researcher:** Developing academic research skills in artistic sports can also open pathways into academia for graduates, where they can contribute to the evolution of the discipline itself, which could focus on integrating life science knowledge with artistic sports, which can open avenues for roles in health consultancy, artistic sports therapists, health promotion, and well-being research, or researchers in the health sector.
7. **Artistic Sports Business Management:** This could offer career opportunities in managing artistic sports events, marketing, and public relations in the artistic sports industry.
8. **Roles requiring Entrepreneurial Skills:** By integrating entrepreneurship skills-related courses and artistic sports management-related content, students can be equipped with skills needed in the business sector of artistic sports.

It was previously highlighted that Chinese artistic sports courses currently prioritise performance and coaching/teaching, which has resulted in limited vocational options for students. However, as detailed above, there are numerous opportunities for diverse

career paths, ranging from health and wellness roles to entrepreneurship in the sports industry. By equipping students with a versatile skill set, these courses could offer a promising future for graduates in the evolving artistic sports landscape.

7.8 Strengths and Limitations

This section provides an overview of the strengths and limitations of this research project:

7.8.1 Strengths

The strength of this research lies firstly in its **Robust Methodological Approach and Comprehensive Analysis**, which allowed participants to share their experiences and provide rich data on their perceptions, which offers a deep and holistic understanding of the current state of artistic sports courses in China. Additionally, this study has **Strong Grounded Practical Implications** for different facets of artistic sports courses, grounded in interview results, pedagogic theory, and contemporary research literature, as well as reinforced by my personal experience. This lends credibility and practical relevance to the implications and recommendations for future course design and improvement by basing them on a robust understanding of both industry trends and students' needs and aspirations.

Furthermore, the study identified **Diverse Vocational Outcomes**, suggesting a broad range of vocational paths for students beyond traditional education and performance routes. This expanded view is particularly relevant given the rapidly changing dynamics in artistic sports and education. The **Inclusion of Stakeholders** is also a project strength, recognising the importance of engaging various parties, such as students, teachers, university experts, and social professionals. This inclusive approach should align better with industry demands and societal expectations. Lastly, the research places a significant emphasis on **Constructive Alignment** in the final chapter. This emphasis on a critical aspect of effective teaching and learning could have profound implications for course development in artistic sports.

7.8.2 Limitations

Several limitations can be noted. **Limited Respondent Coverage:** Due to the limited time available for research, this study was unable to include all potential university respondents in China and the U.K. Further, **the Scope of Interviews** might have also posed a limitation. The insights drawn from the stakeholders might be constrained by the respondents' personal experiences and perceptions. A more inclusive participant pool from various backgrounds, different universities, and roles within the artistic sports domain could have facilitated a broader perspective.

There are further limitations when considering the methodology and focus of the research. The study **Dependence on Semi-Structured Interviews and Personal Experience.** While this lends practicality and provides a rich source of insights, it also opens the door to potential biases despite the use of reflexivity (reflective diary), iterative analysis, and peer debriefing. Including additional quantitative methods could have substantiated the findings further, such as conducting large-scale numerical data-based surveys involving students, teachers, and other stakeholders. This could have provided additional statistical data validation to analyse trends and correlations within this data and further corroborate qualitative findings.

Additionally, **Limited Focus on Policy and Institutional Barriers** might have been restrictive. While the study touches upon university policies, a broader examination of the policy and institutional barriers that could affect implementing the suggested changes might have painted a more comprehensive picture. Lastly, the **Limitations in the Implementation of Implications** were notable. Despite detailed suggestions, the research does not extensively address the practicalities and potential challenges of executing these recommendations. Future work could delve deeper into the feasibility and strategies for implementing the suggested improvements.

7.9 Unique Contributions of This Research

The **Expanded Employment Opportunities** highlighted by this research represent a

significant contribution to the field of artistic sports. This research extends the potential vocational outcomes for artistic sports graduates beyond traditional boundaries. Identifying and exploring a broad range of vocational pathways, from health consultancy to academia and business management within the artistic sports industry, also opens new avenues for graduates and sets the stage for more comprehensive career development in this field.

The research makes another unique contribution through the **Expansion of Course Objectives** and **Diversification of Course Content**, proposing an innovative approach to artistic sports courses. It recognises the need to align course objectives with societal and industry demands, broadening them beyond traditional outcomes to cover areas such as business management and health-enhancing in artistic sports. Alongside this, the research suggests a paradigm shift in course content, promoting a more inclusive course that aligns with health, entrepreneurship, and students' distinctive interests and abilities. The study also highlights the critical role of **Communication and Cooperation** in successful course implementation and advocates for an **Inclusive and Diverse Assessment Approach** that captures all facets of a student's learning journey. Furthermore, the research underscores the need for **Strengthening Quality Enhancement** through continuous professional development for educators and revisions of university policies.

Further, the **Development of Student Portfolios** stands as a unique contribution of this research. By encouraging students to curate a comprehensive portfolio reflecting their skills, knowledge, and experience gained throughout the course, the research not only enhances their self-awareness and growth but also provides them with a tangible showcase of their abilities to prospective employers. This innovation is a considerable contribution to the field, aligning the course outcomes more closely with the needs of the job market.

Lastly, two additional significant contributions of this research are the **Integration of Traditional Chinese Artistic Sports** and an **Interdisciplinary Approach**. By

incorporating traditional Chinese artistic sports into the course content, the study not only preserves and promotes traditional arts but also enhances the competitiveness of graduates in the job market. Meanwhile, the emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach - integrating knowledge from life sciences, health and well-being, and business management - broadens the scope of artistic sports. This approach enriches the educational experience, equipping students with a wider range of skills and competencies.

7.10 Recommendations for Future Research

From this study, suggestions for enhancing artistic sports courses have been formulated. Furthermore, several ideas for future studies are proposed.

Studies Across Multiple Countries: Exploring artistic sports courses between the UK and China provides valuable insights, but future research could broaden this approach by including additional countries.

Therapeutic Applications of Artistic Sports: Given the recognition of the therapeutic and health-promotion potential of artistic sports, future research could delve into their therapeutic applications, perhaps investigating their use in mental health interventions, rehabilitation settings, or public health initiatives.

In-Depth Study on Integrating Life Sciences and Health Knowledge: This research has underscored the significance of integrating life science in health and well-being knowledge into artistic sports courses. Further research could examine in detail how to effectively incorporate this content, including identifying relevant theoretical frameworks and practical teaching strategies and the impact this integration has on students' learning experiences and career outcomes.

Role of Entrepreneurship in Artistic Sports: Given the potential career paths in artistic sports business management and roles requiring entrepreneurial skills, further studies could be conducted on how to incorporate entrepreneurship education into

artistic sports courses effectively. This could include research on how to develop students' entrepreneurial mindsets, the types of entrepreneurial skills needed in the artistic sports industry, and the effectiveness of current entrepreneurship education practices in artistic sports courses.

Assessment Practices in Artistic Sports Courses (Portfolios): Further research could explore more deeply the use of comprehensive and diverse assessment strategies in artistic sports courses. This could include case studies using portfolios, peer assessment, self-assessment, and other innovative assessment practices. This research could provide valuable insights into enhancing the validity and reliability of assessments and their impact on students' learning outcomes, experiences and employment prospects.

Evolution of Industry Trends: While the study effectively considered current industry trends and societal demands, these are subject to change over time. Future research will need to re-examine and update these findings periodically to maintain their relevance.

These recommendations aim to address some of the gaps identified in the current research and contribute to the continuous improvement of artistic sports courses. They also aim to further our understanding of the diverse career outcomes for graduates and how universities can better prepare students for these opportunities.

7.11 Conclusion

This research focused on exploring artistic sports courses in Chinese higher education, producing a comprehensive understanding of challenges and potential opportunities and expanding vocational outcomes for Chinese students.

The core of this research was to investigate the application and effectiveness of various curriculum components in the context of artistic sports courses. This was built upon the foundation of Tyler's curriculum design framework, highlighting the significant

role of pedagogical strategies and the principle of constructive alignment. Through applying Tyler's curriculum rationale and Biggs and Tang's principles of constructive alignment, a symbiotic relationship between pedagogical strategies and curriculum components was identified to enhance learning experiences in artistic sports courses, revealing a refreshing approach to artistic sports course development. A detailed analysis of the current state of artistic sports and its associated courses in China, enriched by a comparative study with the U.K., has provided valuable insights. The data collected from interviews conducted in China and the U.K. reinforced these insights, identifying distinct challenges and opportunities within China's context and potentially aiding in diversifying student vocational outcomes. The thematic analysis of the interview data led to the emergence of a significant new theme: "Quality Enhancement Opportunity". This theme added depth to understanding and offered new potential directions for the development of artistic sports courses in China.

As the research concludes, the insights collected have noteworthy implications for teaching and learning practices in the field of artistic sports in China. Also, it contributes to the broader body of knowledge and employment opportunities for students, potentially shaping the future of the specialised field of artistic sports in higher education in China. Therefore, by blending theoretical principles with experience-based insights, this research not only underscores the challenges but also illuminates the path forward in developing artistic sports courses, thereby significantly enriching the higher education landscape for students in China interested in artistic sports courses.

On the other hand, back to my personal motivations for pursuing current research. The experiences, insights, and revelations I have grown through this journey are invaluable. These have not only influenced my professional trajectory but also deepened my personal commitment to this field. As I prepare to return to China, I carry with me a renewed vision and profound understanding of artistic sports courses that I intend to put into practice. The opportunities for enhancement and innovation in artistic

sports provision in China are plentiful, especially extending the vocational outcomes for students in artistic sports is exciting and inspiring. Also, I am keen to pursue more research on this topic to explore deeper into the potential of artistic sports in Chinese higher education by building upon the future research ideas mentioned in the previous section.

In conclusion, as I stand at the crossroads of this research journey and my return to China, I am filled with a sense of anticipation and responsibility, which this research journey has transformed from my personal motivation into a professional commitment, fuelling my resolve to continue contributing to the development and diversification of artistic sports in China. (67168 Words)

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1 – Artistic Sports Courses at Chinese Sports University

Undergraduate Degree in Artistic Sports Courses at 14 Chinese Sports University

University Name	Founded	Name of Discipline/Course/ Major Focus	
Beijing Sports University	2003	Course Name	Dance Performances, Dance Study
		Major Focus	Ice Dancing, Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Capital Institute of Physical Education	2010	Course Name	Dance Performances (Artistic Sports-Related)
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Shanghai University of Sports	2005	Course Name	Dance Choreography
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Wuhan Sports University	2002	Course Name	Dance Study, Dance Performances
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Tianjin University of Sports	2001	Course Name	Dance Education, Dance Study
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Shandong Sports University	2008	Course Name	Dance Performances, Dance Choreography
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Harbin Sports University	2012	Course Name	Dance Performances (Artistic Sports Related)
		Major Focus	Figure Skating, Ice Dancing, Dance Sports.
Shenyang Sports University	2003	Course Name	Dance Performance, Dance Choreography
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Chengdu Sports University	2003	Course Name	Dance Performances, Dance Study
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Nanjing Sports Institute	2010	Course Name	Dance Performances
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Xi'an Physical Education University	2007	Course Name	Dance Study, Music Study
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Guangzhou Sports University	2003	Course Name	Dance Performances (Artistic Sports Course Module)
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Hebei Institute of Physical Education	2005	Course Name	Dance Performances, Dance Study
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.
Jilin Institute of Physical Education	2009	Course Name	Dance Performances
		Major Focus	Gymnastics, Dance Sports, Martial Arts.

9.2. Appendix 2 – Courses Objectives at Chinese Sports University

Undergraduate Course Objectives of Artistic Sports at 10 Chinese Sports University

Uni	Course Objectives
TUoS	Application-Oriented Professionals. Our program offers students a well-rounded education in dance, covering theoretical knowledge and practical skills in movement and technology. Through our curriculum, students gain the ability to plan, organize, and host dance events and sports activities. As they progress in their studies, they also develop their professional skills in teaching, performance, creation, and research. Upon graduation, our students are equipped to work as experienced dance teachers in a variety of settings, including primary schools, secondary schools, and dance studios. Their experience in teaching, coaching, performing, organizing, and choreography makes them valuable assets to any organization.
WSU	Application-Oriented Professionals. We are experienced in instructing dance performance techniques, guiding the execution of artistic sports movements, and prioritizing the development of a solid basis in theoretical knowledge, technology, and communication. Our skill set enables us to effectively contribute as both teachers and performers in educational institutions and private studios alike.
CloPE	Application-Oriented Professionals. Our goal is to develop students' entrepreneurial and artistic skills, fostering high levels of creativity and innovation. We prioritize providing comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical abilities in artistic sports. Our students will have the opportunity to engage in teaching, choreography, and performance in various schools and clubs.
CSU	Application-Oriented Professionals. Our program offers students a comprehensive education in both dance performance and dance technology. Through creative research methods, students can develop mastery in dance teaching and sports coaching theory. Upon completion, graduates will be prepared to work in dance teaching or sports coaching roles at all levels of education.
NSI	Application-Oriented Professionals. The artistic sports program helps students develop a strong understanding of dance theory and technology, which prepares them for careers in teaching, training, providing fitness guidance, and other related fields. Graduates can find employment in public schools, training institutions, health clubs, and various organizations focused on artistic sports.
BSU	Application-Oriented Professionals. Our program aims to enhance students' understanding of sports-related theoretical knowledge and improve their dance performance skills in various artistic sports programs. Additionally, we emphasize the development of their practical innovation ability. Upon completion, graduates will be equipped to teach at different levels of schools, clubs, and other organizations, as well as engage in coaching, creative work, and other related activities.
SSU	Developing application oriented. Our team of experts specialize in teaching and coaching students of all levels in educational institutions. We also provide knowledge on sports performance in various clubs and communities. Additionally, we offer practical experience in dance performances and choreography for our students.
SUoS	Innovation-Oriented Professionals. Our program aims to equip students with a well-rounded education that includes hands-on experience, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills. By completing our program, students will have the ability to teach a variety of artistic sports courses in primary and secondary schools, clubs, and communities at a high level of proficiency.
XPEU	Application-Oriented Professionals. By completing this course, students will gain a strong foundation in dance theory and performance skills, enabling them to excel in various areas such as dance performance, teaching, training, competition organization, and working as professionals in primary and secondary schools, health clubs, and communities.
HSU	Application-Oriented Professionals. We offer training for those interested in becoming teachers for primary and secondary schools, as well as community centres and clubs. Additionally, our students can coach and participate in various artistic sports programs such as artistic gymnastics, aerobics, dance sports, and ice dance.

9.3. Appendix 3 – List of Courses Module at Chinese Sports University

Undergraduate Course Module of Artistic Sports in 10 Chinese Sports University

Uni	Basics Course Module	Core Courses Module
TUoS	Introduction to the Art of Dance Psychology Pedagogy Sports Aesthetics Basic Music and Rhythm Training Basic Gymnastics Contemporary Ballet Basic Skills Training	The Theory of Art and Physical Education Exercise Training Methods of Sports Research Large-scale stylistic organisation and arrangement Aerobics Sports Dance Artistic Gymnastics (female) Martial Arts Charm (Male)
WSU	An Introduction to Dance Body training The History of Chinese and Foreign Dance Dance Appreciation The Basic Theory of Dance Music and Dance The Basic Theory of Music Dance Psychology The Theory of Dance Teaching	Basic skills in dance Ballet Basic Training Action Analysis and Orchestration Dance Creation Foundation Teaching portfolio Dance Teaching Drama Competitive Gymnastics Sports Anatomy Exercise Physiology
CloPE	An Introduction to Art and Sports Literary training Pedagogy Sports Anatomy Performance of Basic Theory and Skills Music Theory and Foundation	Aerobics Sports Dance Performance (Male) Basic Gymnastics Artistic Gymnastics (Female)/Wushu Special Theory and Practice Sports Performances and Creations
CSU	Exercise Physiology Sports Psychology An Introduction to Art Performance Theory and Methods Music Foundation	The direction of Chinese Dance Sports Dance Directions Aerobics Direction Pedagogy and Research methods Sports Anatomy
NSI	An Introduction to Art An Introduction to Dance The History of Chinese and Foreign Dance The Basic Theory of Performance The Basic Theory of Music Chinese folk dance Contemporary Basic Gymnastics The Theory and Method of Physical Training Pedagogy Dance Anatomy Dance Physiology Sports Pain and Prevention Research methods	Performing Basic Skills Sports Performance Choreographer and Practice Special Theory and Practice Sports Music Selection and Production Body training Ballet Basic Training Basic Training in Modern Dance Dance Skills and Skills Classical Dance Rhythm Basic Music Theory and Visual Singing Practice Ear Show Choreographer Dance and Sports Dance Theory and Practice
BSU	Sports Anatomy Exercise Physiology Introduction to Sports Art Literary training Performance of Basic Theory and Skills The Theory and Production of Music Foundation Choreographing Theory and Practice	Ballet Basic Training Basic Training in Modern Dance Performance Makeup Art and Practice Special training in artistic gymnastics The Practice and Theory of Special Training in Aerobics Dance Sports special training practice and theory Dance Special Training Practice and Theory
SSU	Introduction to the Art of Dance An Introduction to Art The History of Chinese and Foreign Dance Performance Theory and Methods Literature Course Introduction to Clothing Science The History of Chinese and Foreign Clothing Make-up Styling	Choreographer Analysis of dance-dramas Folk Dance Classical Dance Contemporary Dance Sports Anatomy Exercise Physiology Aerobics Dance Sports

SUoS	An Introduction to Art The Basic Theory of Music Music editing and production The Basic Theory of Performance Sports Anatomy Exercise Physiology	Choreographing Theory and Practice Ballet Basic Training Contemporary Special Training Theory and Practice Performances
XPEU	An Introduction to Art The Basic Theory of Music An Introduction to Sports Aesthetic principles Pedagogy Exercise Physiology Dance Anatomy	Aerobics Latin Dance Contemporary Dance Rhythmic gymnastics Modern Dance Folk Dance Ballet Basic Theory and Practice
HSU	An Introduction to Art The theoretical basis of music The Basic Theory of Music Pedagogy Sports Anatomy Exercise Physiology Sports Psychology Dance music appreciation Dance Appreciation Appreciation of fine artworks Appreciation of literary works Applied Writing	Basic skills in dance Aerobics, Aerobics (Improved) Dance Sports (Theory), Dance Sports (Technical) Basic training in ballet Contemporary Dance Rhythmic gymnastics Artistic Gymnastics (Theory) Artistic Gymnastics (Technical) The Basic Theory of Performance Body dance performance Body training method Costume / Props / Make-up Design

9.4. Appendix 4 – Courses Content at Chinese Sports University

Undergraduate Course Content of Artistic Sports in 10 Chinese Sports Universities

Uni	Course Content
TUoS	The course will provide an overview of educational psychology, Directing Theory and Practice, Music Editing and Production, Basic Gymnastics, Physical Training, Chinese Dance, Aerobics, Cheerleading, and Sports Dance.
WSU	As part of the program, undergraduate students will gain knowledge in various fields such as art, philosophy, literature, pedagogy, and history. They will also use technology and engage in artistic practice to enhance their understanding of dance teaching, art practice, and art management. All of these skills will be applied to integrate dance with social and physical education training.
CloPE	Among the topics covered in this course are art overviews, basic music theory, Chinese and foreign dance history, choreography theory and practice, music editing and production, dance teaching methods, modern dance, ballet basic skills training, dance theory and practice, dance performance arrangement, club management, and fitness guidance and evaluation.
CSU	The course covers Chinese and foreign dance history, basic music knowledge, dance education, dance education psychology, dance morphology, dance anatomy, dance works appreciation and commentary as well as basic dance training, popular dance, modern dance, dance choreography theory and practice, dance training theory and practice, style dance technology, Chinese folk-dance technology, Chinese classical dance body rhythm technology, and dancing techniques.
NSI	Among the topics covered in this course are sports art overviews, sports anatomy, sports physiology, performance theory, performance skills, dance choreography and practice, basic music knowledge, sports music selection and production, ballet basics, aerobics, martial arts practice, and other courses.
BSU	The course consists of art theory, appreciation of dance works, music theory, Chinese dance history, ballet basic training, modern dance basic training, Chinese dance basic training, dance theory and practice, choreography theory and practice.
SSU	This course includes ballet fundamentals, pedagogy, educational psychology, choreography theory and practice, music editing and production, gymnastics basics, physical training, and special theory and practice (aerobics, dance sports, Chinese dance).

SUoS	Art overview, music basic theory, directors' foundation and practice, dance choreography technique, dance choreography foundation and practice, and classical dance are all included in the course.
XPEU	Basic skills and basic methods of dance performance are emphasised, along with strong teaching and practical abilities of dance performance, technical skills of dance performance, and training with coaching skills.
HSU	Artistic gymnastics, aerobics, dance sports, ballet training, modern dance basic training, dance body rhyme, performance practice class, folk dance, ice dance, art overview, basic performance theory, music selection and editing, and film and television performance basic tutorial are included in the course.

9.5. Appendix 5 – Participants Information

Participant	Participant Name *	Age	Original From	Year of Experience
A1	Dong	51	Chinese Experts	18
A2	Zhen	53	Chinese Experts	16
A3	Wu	56	Chinese Experts	19
A4	Tan	58	Chinese Experts	21
A5	Long	55	Chinese Experts	17
A6	Kai	45	Chinese Social Professionals	11
A7	Xiao	37	Chinese Social Professionals	8
A8	Zhou	44	Chinese Social Professionals	8
A9	Kong	45	Chinese Social Professionals	11
A10	Song	48	Chinese Social Professionals	12
A11	Huang	45	Chinese Social Professionals	14
A12	Wendy	43	UK Experts	9
A13	Diane	45	UK Experts	9
A14	Jack	49	UK Experts	10
A15	Noah	45	UK Experts	12
A16	Leo	51	UK Experts	14
A17	Ben	42	UK Social Professionals	11
A18	Olivia	37	UK Social Professionals	8
A19	Oscar	39	UK Social Professionals	10
A20 (Group One)	Wen	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Ken	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Gu	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Long	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Chang	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Qi	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Xiao	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Wang	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
A21 (Group Two)	Gong	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Bai	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Hu	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Qin	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year

	Lei	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Jia	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Ming	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Fang	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
A22 (Group Three)	Xue	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Ping	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Yan	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Wei	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Ling	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Rong	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Shu	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
A23 (Group Four)	Hui	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Cui	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Zhen	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Dan	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Tao	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Qiang	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Bao	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
A24 (Group Five)	Pei	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Yue	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Mei	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Jun	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Xi	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Lu	22	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year
	Shan	21	Chinese On-Campus Students	Final-Year

*The given names are pseudonyms

9.6. Appendix 6 – Details of Participants’ Recruitment in China

In China					
	Participants Number	Recruitment Portals	Interview Form	Experience limitation	Communication to and Recruitment of Participants
Group 1. Teachers/ Experts, who working in University (Approx. 60 Min/Person)	One Person/University (Total: 5 Persons)	Select Five Universities from the below list ①	Semi-structured interviews (Online One by One)	More than 5 years teaching/research experience in Artistic Sport field	1. Screening the information from Universities Website 2. Through the way of Referrer recommendation 3. Connect by E-mail in advance (Get Consent) 4. Interview by online platforms (COVID-19 Strategy)
Group 2. Students, who current studying in University (Approx. 60 Min/Group)	One Group/University (Total: 5 Group) Students/Group No mixed across different Unis	Select Five Universities from the below list ①	Semi-structured interviews (Focus Groups)	On-campus students who are in final year	1. Through the way of above Experts/Teachers recommendation Note, using the above interviews to ask if anyone (Expert/Teacher) who wonder to act as a contact between me and their students in the same Uni.
Group 3. Social Professionals, who working in Artistic Sport Educational Industries (Approx. 60 Min/Person)	Three Person/Institution (Total: 6 Persons) Focus on Artistic Sport Therapy Industries	Select Two Social Institutions from the below list ②	Semi-structured interviews (Online One by One)	More than 5 years working experience in Artistic Sport industries field	1. Through the way of above Experts/Teachers recommendation 2. Through screening information of official website to get in touch with the staff who working in the Associations/Federation/Institutions in China, so as to gain the recommendation
List ①: "Beijing Sports University", "Tianjin University of Sport", "Wuhan Sports University", "Capital Institute of Physical Education", "Chengdu Sports University", "Nanjing Sport Institute", "Shandong Sports University", "Shanghai University of Sport", "Xi'an Physical Education University", "Harbin Sports University"					
List ②: "Private Art/Dance Institutions", "Chinese Dancesport Federation (CDSF)", "Chinese Figure Skating Associations (CFSA)" and "Chinese Aerobic Association"					

9.7. Appendix 7 – Details of Participants’ Recruitment in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom					
	Participants Number	Recruitment Portals	Interview Form	Experience limitation	Communication to and Recruitment of Participants
Group 1. Teachers/ Experts, who working in University (Approx. 60 Min/Person)	One Person/University (Total: 5 Persons)	Select not less three Universities from the below list ①	Semi-structured interviews (Online One by One)	More than 5 years teach or research experience in "Sport Combined with Art" field	1. Screening the information from Universities Website 2. Through the way of Referrer' recommendation 3. Connect by E-mail in advance (Get Consent) 4. Interview by online platforms (COVID-19 Strategy)
Group 2. Social Professionals, who working in Artistic Sport Therapy Industries (Approx. 60 Min/Person)	Three Person/Institution (Total: 3 Persons) Focus on Artistic Sport Therapy Industries	Select Two Social Institutions from the below list ②	Semi-structured interviews (Online One by One)	More than 5 years working experience in "Sport Combined with Art" industries field	1. Through the way of above Experts/Teachers' recommendation 2. Through screening information of official website to get in touch with the staff who working in the Societies/Associations in UK, <u>so as to</u> gain the recommendation
List ①: "University of Derby", "University of London", "University of Roehampton", "Goldsmith University of London", "Cardiff Metropolitan University", "London Metropolitan University", "Plymouth Marjon University" and "Bucks New University".					
List ②: "The Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK (ADMP UK)", "The Society of Sports Therapists (SST UK)",					

9.8. Appendix 8 – Summary of Entries from My Reflective Diary

Summary of entries from my reflective diary – Semi-Structured Interviews

Date	Participant Group	Reflexive Note	Impact
15.04.2021	Experts (China)	Today, I conducted the first round of interviews with the experts in China. Many of them emphasised the importance of the lecturer team enhance in artistic sports courses. This wasn't something I had considered a major theme before.	The emphasis on the lecturer team by the experts led me to incorporate this as a new theme in my template.
24.05.2021	Experts (UK)	I've started the interviews with the experts in the U.K. They also mention the importance of the lecturer team but from a different perspective – academic research.	This reinforced the theme of the lecturer team that emerged from the U.K. expert interviews (rethinking this theme in the finale template)
30.05.2021	On-Campus Students	Many students felt uncomfortable expressing their concerns regarding the lecturers' teaching methods during the focus group interview.	Should interpret their responses from their body language or tone of voice.
03.06.2021	On-Campus Students	As a former student of artistic sports, I've been reflecting on my own experiences. I've come to the realization that my personal experiences could possibly affect how I conduct interviews with student groups about their motivations for learning.	I remained aware of my potential bias and ensured that my interview process with the students' group was based on their experiences, not my own.
03.07.2021	On-Campus Students	I thought students would focus on the difficulty of learning in the course during interviews.	Students often discussed the relevance of the course content to their future careers. (Relevance of Course Content to Career Goals).
03.08.2021	Social Professionals	I thought professionals would focus on the marketability of the course content during interviews.	Professionals discussed the importance of personal development in the course, to add: "Personal Development".
03.09.2021	On-Campus Students	I assumed students would have similar views on course assessment.	However, there was a wide range of views on assessment among students (peer assessment)
07.10.2021	Social Professionals	I assumed professionals would have a more critical view of the course implementation during interviews.	Professionals provided nothing regarding course implementation.

9.9. Appendix 9 – Summary of Entries from My Reflective Diary

Summary of entries from my reflective diary – Data Analysis

Diary Date	Participant Group	Reflexive Note	Impact
10.10.2021	Experts	My experience suggested that assessment strategies should be structured, especially for particular course content.	However, the experts' interviews indicated the importance of diversity and multiple methods in assessment. (Important Ideas)
15.10.2021	Experts	I assumed experts would focus on traditional teaching methods based on their long-term experience.	However, many experts highlighted the importance of interactive teaching methods, leading me to add: "interactive Teaching Methods".
20.10.2021	Experts	I thought experts would prioritise course content over other aspects.	However, experts emphasised the equal importance of course objectives and implementation (to balance these themes in the template)
10.11.2021	On-Campus Students	Initially, I assumed that students might prefer more structured and predictable course content.	However, many students expressed a desire for more diverse and flexible course content during the interviews. This challenged my initial assumption and led me to add: "Student Preference for Diversity and Flexibility in Course Content".
15.11.2021	Peer Debriefing	I shared my refined template with my colleague today. She suggested that I consider the theme of "Extending Resources" as content.	Although "Resource" hadn't come up strongly in the interviews so far, I kept this theme in mind as I continued the analysis.
20.11.2021	Social Professionals	Based on my understanding of the industry, I thought that professionals might emphasise the importance of practical skills in the course content.	The interview results with professionals indeed highlighted the importance of practical skills, but they also emphasised the need for theoretical knowledge. -- Course Content includes both "Practical Skills" and "Theoretical Knowledge".
10.12.2021	Peer Debriefing	I've developed a final template. I planned to send it to my supervisors for checking.	I was aware of the importance of ensuring that my interpretation of the interviews aligned with the participants' experiences.
15.12.2021	Peer Debriefing	I received feedback from supervisors. Most of them agreed with my coding, but some provided additional insights that led me to refine some of the themes.	The feedback from the supervisors helped me to ensure the validity of my findings and to refine the themes in my template.

9.10. Appendix 10 – Interview Guide - Semi-Structured Interview Question

• Semi-Structured Interview Question –Experts

1. Could you please tell me about the course objectives of you are teaching?
 - ⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me what the course's competency objectives are?
 - ⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me what the students' career options are?
 - Probe - Where can students find jobs?
 - Probe - Which job forms are involved?
 - ⇒ Prompt - In addition to competency and career objectives, are there others?
 - ⇒ What thoughts do you have for course objectives development?

2. Could you please tell me what content students should learn?
 - ⇒ Prompt - What theoretical knowledge should students have?
 - ⇒ Prompt - What practical knowledge should students have?
 - ⇒ Prompt - Besides theoretical knowledge and practical skills, what else should students learn?
 - ⇒ What thoughts do you have for course content development?

3. How is the course content organised?
 - ⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me about the pedagogies (teaching approaches) used in the course based on your experience?
 - Probe - How is pedagogy implemented into theoretical courses?
 - Probe - How is pedagogy implemented into practical courses?
 - ⇒ What ideas do you have on how to organise this course most effectively?

4. Could you tell me about the methods of assessment used?
 - ⇒ Prompt - How are theoretical knowledge assessed?
 - ⇒ Prompt - How are practical abilities assessed?
 - ⇒ Prompt - How does the assessment work?
 - ⇒ Are there any other assessment methods besides theoretical knowledge and practical ability? Can you expand on this?
 - ⇒ What thoughts do you have for course assessment?

5. Could you offer any advice to enhance the quality of teaching? (China Only)
 - ⇒ Probe - How this could be achieved? Can you expand on this?

- **Semi-Structured Interview Question – The Chinese Students**

1. Could you tell me what made you decide to study the artistic sport course?
Why?
⇒ Prompt - Why did you decide to do so?
2. Could you tell me what is your intended purpose of studying artistic sport?
⇒ Prompt - What practical skills have you already acquired/would like to acquire?
 - Probe - Why you prefer this skill?⇒ Prompt - After graduation, where would you like to work? Why?
 - Do you have any thoughts about your future career?
3. Could you tell me what course contents you took at university?
⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me what theoretical knowledge you have acquired?
 - Probe - Would you mind sharing your learning experiences with the theoretical knowledge you've acquired?⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me what practical knowledge you have acquired?
 - Probe - Would you mind sharing your learning experiences with the practical knowledge you've acquired?⇒ Prompt - Besides theoretical knowledge and practical skills, what else have you learned?
 - Probe - Could you tell me what else you want to learn?
4. Could you tell me how your teacher organised your classes? Any experience?
⇒ Prompt - What pedagogies (teaching approaches) did the teacher employ?
 - Probe - How is pedagogy implemented into practical courses?
 - Probe - What pedagogy impressed you the most?⇒ What pedagogies do you prefer?
5. Could you tell me what assessment method the teacher used?
⇒ Prompt - How are theoretical knowledge assessed?
⇒ Prompt - How are practical abilities assessed?
 - Probe – What assessment method impressed you the most?⇒ What assessment method do you prefer?
 - What is your expectation?

- **Semi-Structured Interview Question – Social Professionals**

1. Could you tell me about the competencies/skills you expect graduates to possess?

⇒ Prompt - What competencies/skills you are looking for in graduates?

⇒ Prompt - Which capabilities need improvement for graduates?

- Probe - Could you suggest anything to improve the capabilities of graduates?

2. In your industry, what are the employment opportunities for graduates?

⇒ Prompt - Which types of jobs are suitable for graduates?

- Probe - Based on your experience, could you list other jobs that may be suitable for graduates besides the ones you just mentioned?

3. What assessment methods are most used? For those working in your industry.

⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me about what the assessment content involves?

⇒ Prompt - Could you tell me about what the assessment method involves?

⇒ Prompt - Are there any assessment suggestions you have?

9.11. Appendix 11 – Participant Invitation (E-mail)

Dear [Insert name]

I am inviting you to participate in a PhD research project at the University of Derby. Your expertise in the field of artistic sport can contribute to this study in the most useful way. Due to this, I am hoping to get some support from you.

The title of the project is: Exploration of higher education delivery of the artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China. The aim of this study is to construct valuable recommendations for enhancing the artistic sports curriculum for Chinese higher education, especially in sports universities. These recommendations can contribute to enhancing the development of the Artistic Sport Curriculum.

There are two documents attached to this email: a participant information sheet, which provides information on the intended research project, and a consent form for participants. Please take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you would like to take part, please complete and return the attached consent form.

Many thanks!

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

First Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

C.ribchester@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 594291

9.12. Appendix 12 – Principal/Leader's Authorization Letter – China

Dear [Insert name] of [Organisation name]

My name is Yutao Zhou, come from Zhuzhou City, Hunan province, China. Used to be worked in Sport and Exercises college of Hunan University of Technology during 2006 - 2019 for 13 years, Senior Lecturer from 2012. Currently, I am studying in University of Derby, United Kingdom for my PhD project, this is my second year. Due to my research project of “Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China” is partly related with the research/work experience of your institution/organisation, and there are many knowledgeable teachers, experts, workers in your organisation. Hence, I would like to invite them to take part in my PhD research project of the University of Derby, who can help me and supporting this study. Indeed, I am hoping that I will get support from you.

The aim of this study is to construct valuable recommendations for enhancing the artistic sports curriculum for Chinese higher education, especially in sports universities. These recommendations can contribute to enhancing the development of the Artistic Sport Curriculum. The next appendix include participant information sheets (Teacher, Social Professionals and Students), giving details of the intended research project, and an authorization consent form. Please take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you would like to give me the authorization, please complete and return the authorization consent form. Many thanks!

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297 (UK) T: 013055130565 (China)

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

First Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

C.ribchester@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 594291

9.13. Appendix 13 – Participant Information Sheet

Project title:

Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China

Name, position and contact details of researchers:

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

E: Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

E: A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

First Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

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Invitation to take part

This is an invitation to participate in a PhD research project from the University of Derby entitled: Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China. Before you agree to take part, it is critical for you to understand why the research is being done, and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

Who is organising/funding the research?

Myself with University of Derby

What is the purpose of the project?

The aim of this study is to construct valuable recommendations for enhancing the artistic sports curriculum for Chinese higher education, especially in sports universities. These recommendations can contribute to enhancing the development of the Artistic Sport Curriculum.

Why have I been chosen?

(To University Expert) You have been chosen because of the below two reasons.

1. You are a member of experts of artistic sports subjects and teaching/researching on these majors.
2. You are knowledgeable on one or more study experience within artistic sport subjects, which can help us and supporting this study.

(To Social Professionals) You have been chosen because of the below two reasons.

1. You are a member of social professionals/workers who working in artistic sport industries.
2. You are knowledgeable on one or more social experience within artistic sport industries, which can help us and supporting this study.

(To Students) Given that I cannot liaise with you directly under non-authorization, so I through the way of recommendation by your teacher/expert who is working in this university connecting with you. Also, you have been chosen because of the below two reasons.

1. You are the on-campus student who is studying in artistic sports subjects or related disciplines on this major.
2. You are the final year students whose study/research experience should more plentiful than other non-final year students, as well as your intended working aims should clearer/richer than others.
3. You are interested and plentiful experience in one or more study course within artistic sport subjects, which can help us and supporting this study.

Do I have to take part?

It depends on your interest. Because this research is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. It is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be

given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form.

(To University Expert) What would taking part involve?

Given that you are an experiential expert/teacher, below information of taking part should be noted, which involve:

1. Participating in a semi-structured interview which the method is “Participant personal interviews (face-to-face)” to discuss your experiences. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main interview method will be conducted by “Online Platforms” or using the “Telephone/E-call”, and approximately 60 Minutes)
2. The content of interviews will include the “Curriculum Objectives”, “Curriculum Content”, “Current Assessment” and “Curriculum implementation”, and “Quality Enhancement”. As well as there are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

(To Social Professionals) What would taking part involve?

Given that you are a Social Professionals/Workers, below information of taking part should be noted, which involve:

1. Participating in a semi-structured interview which the method is “Participant personal interviews (face-to-face)” to discuss your experiences. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main interview method will be conducted by “Online Platforms” or using the “Telephone/E-call”, and approximately 60 Minutes)
2. The content of interviews will include the “Cognization of Artistic Sport Subjects/Industries”, “Expected benefits by stakeholders (Industry Motivation)”, “Barriers in your working Process”, “Employee Assessment Methods” and “Most needed abilities/experience of employees”. As well as there are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

(To Students) What would taking part involve?

Given that you are an experiential final year student in this university, below information of taking part should be noted, which involve:

1. Participating in a focus-group interview (Approximately 5-6 students per group at a time) and no mixed across different Universities and Countries. Which should use the method of “Focus-Group interviews (face-to-face)” to discuss your experiences. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main interview method will be conducted by “Online Platforms” or using the “Telephone/E-call”, and approximately 60 Minutes)
2. The content of interviews will include the “Teaching/Researching Motivation”, “Curriculum Objectives”, “Curriculum Content”, “Current Assessment” and “Curriculum implementation” and “Intended Working Aims”. As well as there are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

While your participation in the project will not provide immediate benefits, it will allow future students and teachers to gain a better educational experience and more teaching/learning guidance for Artistic Sport in HE. No potential disadvantages are identified from participation in this project.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project’s objectives?

With regard to the type of information that was requested, which is: five interview themes that will be considered in this research, including “Curriculum Objectives”, “Curriculum Content”, “Current Assessment” and “Curriculum implementation”, and “Quality Enhancement”. The collection of this information is directly aligned to the project’s objectives. It is needed to help us to put in place a robust, flexible and supportive system. This will aid and guide us to develop the current Artistic Sport Curriculum. Additionally, it is to inform the wider region/countries about the experiences in our area so as to improve the development of artistic sporty industries.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

During the entire interview process, we will record audio using a voice recorder or other recording equipment. The audio recordings made during this research will be used exclusively for analysis and for transcription of the recordings for use in my dissertation and in conference presentations, publications, and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. Where direct quotations of your words are used, we will present your information in a way that will not allow you to be identified. Indeed, the recordings will be deleted once transcribed.

Will my taking part in this project be kept Anonymity and confidentiality?

Yes. We will use two recording methods in the interview process, which are summary notes taken in a notebook and audio recordings taken with a voice recorder. We will protect your private information comprehensively. Please review the following strategy.

In terms of anonymity, all participants of “person to person interviews” (all conducted virtually) and their interview responses will be anonymised for both direct and indirect identifiers. Further, any specific data quoted in research dissemination will be pseudonymised where appropriate, as well as the names of Groups, Universities, and Institutions. So, "code", as a powerful information container, is used to combine similar/raw data for later anonymised analysis, and the anonymised code (ID Code) will be used throughout the entire research, with only the researchers knowing their identities.

In terms of confidentiality, only I and my supervisors will know who has provided the data and have access to the data. It is also possible that the examiners of my thesis may request to see part of the data for confirmation purposes. During the course of the research, all the information and data whether from “person to person interviews” or “focus group research” will be kept securely, password-protected and strictly confidential. Neither your name nor the name of your institution will be used in any of

the outputs from the study, including the thesis itself. And neither you nor your institution will be identifiable in any of the outputs. In addition, the whole interview recording will be transcribed into qualitative analysis software – Nvivo 12 manually by the researcher. Meanwhile the recordings will be deleted once transcribed. However, the transcripts will be securely stored in accordance with GDPR guidance until the time of publication, after which the data will be responsibly deleted.

How do I withdrawal from the investigation

Suppose you have joined this research and wish to withdraw, which is allowed. Up until 2 weeks after the interview, you can withdraw from the study at any point without giving any reason. Any data collected about you will be removed from the study. Prior to that, all participants must inform us by e-mail or telephonic means, which acts as a withdrawal record. If we receive any withdrawal information from you, we will contact you. Your recordings will be destroyed or deleted immediately, and your name will be removed from all the study files. Also, if you withdraw from participating in the project after 2 weeks of the interview, we may not be able to withdraw all of your data from further use within the project, particularly once we have anonymised your data and we can no longer identify you.

- Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297
- A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

How will my information be kept?

All the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly in accordance with the current General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications without your specific consent. It is noteworthy that the research results will be included in my PhD Dissertation and portions of my public publications in both the UK and China.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact:

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

E: Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

In case of complaints

Any concerns about the study should be directed to Yutao Zhou. If your concerns have not been answered by Yutao Zhou, you should contact:

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

E: A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

Finally

If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

9.14. Appendix 14 – Participant Agreement Form – Expert/Social Professionals

Full title of project:

Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China

Name, position and contact details of researchers:

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

F: Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

F: A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

First Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

F: C.ribchester@Derby.ac.uk. T:01332 594291

PART A

In this Form we ask you to confirm whether you agree to take part in the Project.

You should only agree to take part in the project if you understand what this will mean for you. If you complete the rest of this form, you will be confirming to us that:

1	You have read and understood the Project Participant Information Sheet.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2	You have had the opportunity to ask questions	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

You also understand that:

1	Your participation is voluntary and depends on your interest.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2	The research will involve you taking part in a <u>Semi-Structured Interview with Personal Interviews</u> , which will be audio recorded and that these recordings will be transcribed into the qualitative analysis software – Nvivo 12 manually by researcher, meanwhile the recordings <u>will be deleted once transcribed</u> . But the transcribes data will be retained securely in-line with GDPR guidance up until the point of publication, at which point data will be responsibly deleted.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main interview method will be conducted by <u>“Online Platforms” or using the “Telephone/E-call”</u> and collect the data respectively.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
4	You can make a withdrawal during the investigation at any point up till <u>2 weeks</u> after the interview have been conducted and without giving any reason, we will remove any data collected about yours from the study. Before that you <u>Must</u> inform into the one of our researcher E-mail and Tele us, which as a withdrawal record.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5	Suppose you withdraw from participating in the project after <u>2 weeks</u> of the interview, we may not be able to withdraw all of your data from further use within the project, particularly once we have anonymised your data and we can no longer identify you.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

6	Data you provide may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be stored in an encrypted document in line with GDPR requirements.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Data you provide may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

We will be confirming that:

Consent to take part in the Project	YES	NO
I agree to take part in the Project on the basis set out above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent to participating in specific Project activities	YES	NO
I agree to being audio recorded during the Project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent to use of information in Project outputs	YES	NO
I understand that my words may be quoted anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART B Signature

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

This Form should be signed and dated by all parties after the participant receives a copy of the participant information sheet.

A copy of the signed and dated participant agreement form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location

9.15. Appendix 15 – Participant Agreement Form – Students

Full title of project:

Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China

Name, position and contact details of researchers:

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

G: Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

G: A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

Supervisor: Martin Gary Charles Lewis, Senior Lecturer in Biomechanics and Performance Analysis

E: M.lewis@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 622277

Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

G: C.ribchester@Derby.ac.uk. T:01332 594291

PART A

In this Form we ask you to confirm whether you agree to take part in the Project.

You should only agree to take part in the Project if you understand what this will mean for you. If you complete the rest of this Form, you will be confirming to us that:

1	You have read and understood the Project Participant Information Sheet.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2	You have had the opportunity to ask questions	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

You also understand that:

1	Your participation is voluntary and depends on your interest.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2	The research will involve you taking part in a <u>Semi-Structured Interview with “Focus-Group Interviews”</u> , which will be audio recorded and that these recordings will be transcribed into the qualitative analysis software – Nvivo 12 manually by researcher, meanwhile the recordings <u>will be deleted once transcribed</u> . But the transcribes data will be retained securely in-line with GDPR guidance up until the point of publication, at which point data will be responsibly deleted.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the main interview method will be conducted by <u>“Online Platforms” or using the “Telephone/E-call”</u> and collect the data respectively.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Given that I cannot liaise with you directly under non-authorization, so I through the way of recommendation by your teacher/expert who is working in your university to connect with you. Thus, in this circumstance, <u>I and my supervisor and your teacher/expert</u> will know who has provided the data.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5	After all of all of you who are in one group have consented, I will use online vote tools – <u>Doodle</u> to share the voting time slot to all of you and waiting an optimal	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

	interview time could be provided.		
6	You can make a withdrawal during the investigation at any point up till 2 weeks after the interview have been conducted and without giving any reason, we will remove any data collected about Your Whole Group from the study. Before that you Must inform into the one of our researcher E-mail and Tele us, which as a withdrawal record.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
7	If you withdraw from participating in the project after 2 weeks of the interview, we may not be able to withdraw all of your data from further use within the project, particularly once we have anonymised your data and we can no longer identify you.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
8	Data you provide may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be stored in an encrypted document in line with GDPR requirements.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
9	Data you provide may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

We will be confirming that:

Consent to take part in the Project	YES	NO
I agree to take part in the Project on the basis set out above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent to participating in specific Project activities	YES	NO
I agree to being audio recorded during the Project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent to use of information in Project outputs	YES	NO
I understand that my words may be quoted anonymously in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART B Signature

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

This Form should be signed and dated by all parties after the participant receives a copy of the participant information sheet.

A copy of the signed and dated participant agreement form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location

9.16. Appendix 16 – Post-interview Participant Debrief

Project title:

Exploration of higher education delivery of artistic sport curriculum in the UK and China

Name, position and contact details of researchers:

Yutao Zhou, PhD Student of UoD, (University of Derby)

Y.Zhou@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592297

Director of Studies: Andy Hooton, Head of Discipline-Sport Outdoor and Exercise Sciences

A.hooton@Derby.ac.uk. T: 01332 592882

First Supervisor: Chris Ribchester, Associate Professor of Learning and Teaching, CELT

C.ribchester@Derby.ac.uk. T:01332 594291

Thank you for taking part in this research project.

The aim of this study is to construct valuable recommendations for enhancing the artistic sports curriculum for Chinese higher education, especially in sports universities. These recommendations can contribute to enhancing the development of the Artistic Sport Curriculum.

Your interview has finished, and the recording will now be transcribed by Yutao Zhou (PhD Student of UoD) and analysed thematically in relation to the project's objectives. Your transcript will be assigned a unique identifier, which will be used in analysis and in any subsequent dissemination of research findings. You will not be personally identifiable in any research output.

You can make a withdrawal during the investigation at any point up till **2 weeks** after the interview have been conducted and without giving any reason, we will remove any data collected about yours from the study. Before that you **Must** inform into the one of our researcher E-mail and Tele us, which as a withdrawal record, if we received any withdrawal information from you, we would feedback to you, meanwhile your recordings will be destroyed or deleted immediately, and your name will be removed from all the study files. Also, if you withdraw from participating in the project after **2 weeks** of the interview, we may not be able to withdraw all of your data from further

use within the project, particularly once we have anonymised your data and we can no longer identify you.

If you would like to be kept informed as to the progress of the project and any subsequent presentations or publication of the findings, please let a member of the research team know.

All audio recordings and notes relating to this study will be deleted once transcribed. But the transcribes will be securely kept for at least **three years** after the completion of this research, as well as. This is to allow the opportunity for re-analysis of the data (by me) later on. University of Derby will hold the information we collect about you in a password-protected secure network where it will be held electronically. Access to the data will be restricted to members of the research team.

Much appreciate once again for taking part!

9.17. Appendix 18 – (Initial Template) Table of Coding Example Extract

NOTE: In below tables, it is about the interview data of Curriculum Assessment, which including three types of interviewees - Expert, Student, and Professionals. The specific interview themes include Course Assessment method and its comments by interviewee.

Experts – Regarding Assessment Method

Interviewees	Relevant topics	Types	Interviewee Number (Total 6)	References Frequency (Time)	Types of assessment	Instruction
Experts	Course Assessment methods (Assess students)	Theoretical knowledge	6	21	Essays	
			6	20	Dissertation	
			6	16	Multi-presentations	
			6	23	Written examinations	
		Practice or skill-based course	6	16	Interning experience Manuals/Reports	Short answer
			4	10	Work placement case practice examination	Single/Multiple choice tests
			6	24	Test/Examinations of practical course content	Dance practice skill
						Music edit skill
						Art/Theatre Performance skill
			6	18	Written examinations	Short answer
		Single/Multiple choice tests				
		Studying Tools	6	10	English skill	
			6	11	Writing skill	
	6		9	IT skill		
	Comments regarding assessment method	What Need to improve?	4	8	The structure of assessment need improving	
			5	11	Assessment delivery forms need improving	
			3	7	The assessment content need improving	
			3	6	Third-part assessment organization need increasing	
			(100% experts believed that Perfect evolutionary strategy doesn't exist, and expecting to improve current assessment strategy)			
Barriers		4	7	Few researchers doing these sorts of study specially, we just following others.		
		5	8	We should have developed assessment system independently with artistic sport-characteristic, rather than duplicate the evaluation schedule of other course subjects.		

Students – Regarding Assessment

Interviewees	Relevant topics	Interviewee Number (Total 7)	References Frequency (Time)	Related Interview content	Interviewees	Instruction
Students	Students' feedback	Theoretical knowledge	5	14	Reasonable	
			30	65	Unreasonable but acceptable	Written examinations were boring
						Written examinations were too hard
		Preparing written examinations was wasting time				
		2	2	Complete unreasonable	Rote memorization can help us improve our scores of written examinations, but after that we cannot recall anything, and it could not reflex our truly thinking capacities.	
		Practice Experience or skill-based course	24	49	Reasonable	
			12	33	Unreasonable but acceptable	
	1		2	Complete unreasonable		
	Students' Expectation	7	14	Expecting efficacy assessment of collective cooperation study		
		15	38	Different students offering differ exam forms		
		21	45	Practice or skill-based courses do not need the written examination		
		14	24	Increases percentage of outcome come from our teacher, reduce the impaction of written examinational score.		

9.18. Appendix 19 – Ethics Approval Letter

Kedleston Road, Derby
DE22 1GB, UK

T: +44 (0)1332 591060
E: researchoffice@derby.ac.uk
Sponsor License No: QGN14R294

Dear Yutao

ETH2021-0409

Thank you for submitting your application to the College of Science and Engineering Research Ethics Committee, which has now been reviewed and considered.

The outcome of your application is:

approved.

If any changes to the study described in the application are necessary, you must notify the Committee and may be required to make a resubmission of the application.

On behalf of the Committee, we wish you the best of luck with your study.

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Dakin

Research Student Office

Vice-Chancellor Professor Kathryn Mitchell
Incorporated in England as a charitable limited company
Registration no 3079282



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