Journal of Interdisciplinary Science | ISSN: 2960-9550
Research Article Peer-review, Open Access

Arts-Based Pedagogy as a Pathway to Developing Students' Digital Competences in Higher Education: Conceptual Foundations, Historical Roots, and Integrative Potential

Kurbanova Aziza Tolibovna [1]

Abstract

Background. The rapid expansion of digital learning environments requires universities to develop students' digital competences in a way that goes beyond technical skills and includes creativity, critical meaning-making, empathy, and ethical responsibility. Art pedagogy, an interdisciplinary field that uses artistic means to achieve educational, developmental, and corrective goals, is a promising but still under-theorised resource for this task. Purpose. This article examines the conceptual foundations of art pedagogy and substantiates its potential for developing the digital competences of university students. Methods. A conceptual-analytical design was applied, combining historical-comparative analysis, content analysis of scholarly sources, and theoretical synthesis. Findings. The analysis shows that (1) the roots of art pedagogy lie in the civic and educational functions of art in classical antiquity; (2) art pedagogy became an independent scientific-practical field as the therapeutic and pedagogical functions of art therapy diverged; (3) film art, as a multimodal medium, unites visual-emotional impact, narrative understanding, aesthetic competence, and technological expression, which correspond to the content-creation, communication, and meaning-making dimensions of digital competence; and (4) implementation depends on the educator's own art-pedagogical competence, including emotional intelligence, improvisation, and the capacity for empathic dialogue. Implications. The study offers a conceptual basis for integrating art-pedagogical tools into digital-competence curricula and teacher-education programmes. Empirical validation of the proposed model is a priority for future research.

Keywords: art pedagogy; arts-based education; digital competence; higher education; film art; teacher education; empathy; creative thinking.

[1] *Assoc. Prof. DSc., Head of the Department of Information Technologies, Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, Uzbekistan, E–mail: caro_8787@mail.ru*
ORCID: 0009–0002–2566–8421

Introduction

Digitalisation has changed not only the tools of education but also the conditions under which students perceive, interpret, and create meaning. International frameworks define digital competence as a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes covering information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving. Research syntheses, however, show that the concept is used inconsistently and is often reduced to technical proficiency, [1]. Russian-language research on the "digital generation" stresses a further dimension: digital competence includes the ability to find meaning, to regulate one's own activity, and to remain safe in the digital environment [2].

This broader understanding invites a closer look at pedagogical approaches that work with emotion, imagination, and self-expression. Art pedagogy is one of them. It is defined as an educational direction that uses artistic means for the comprehensive aesthetic, moral, and intellectual development of the person, [3]. Within international scholarship, closely related ideas are discussed under the labels of arts-based education and arts integration. Despite this long tradition, the relationship between art pedagogy and the development of students' digital competences has received little systematic attention.

The aim of this article is to clarify the conceptual foundations of art pedagogy and to justify its potential for developing digital competences in higher education. The study addresses three questions:

- How did art pedagogy emerge historically, and how did it separate from art therapy?
- What are its defining features, functions, and boundaries as a field?
- Which of its mechanisms can support digital-competence development, and what does this imply for teacher preparation?

Methodology

The study is theoretical and conceptual in nature. Three methods were combined: (a) historical-comparative analysis of the origins of art pedagogy, from classical antiquity to the twentieth century; (b) content analysis of scholarly sources in pedagogy, psychology, special education, and art education, written in English and Russian, to identify definitions, functions, and principles; and (c) theoretical synthesis, in which the identified mechanisms were related to the areas of the European Digital Competence Framework. No empirical data were collected; the conclusions are therefore presented as a conceptual model to be tested in later empirical work.

Historical and Philosophical Roots of Art Pedagogy

Art as an educational institution in classical antiquity

The foundations of art pedagogy were laid in classical antiquity. The works of Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Isocrates, Lucian of Samosata) and Roman thinkers (Apuleius, Seneca the Younger, Marcus Aurelius, Cicero, Lucretius) contain a rich store of ideas about the formative power of art that can be adapted to modern conditions.

In ancient Greece, the visual arts were regarded as an effective means of influencing the human mind. Statues expressing human virtues such as mercy and justice were displayed in public galleries, and it was believed that contemplating beautiful works led viewers to absorb the qualities they represented. Theatre held a special place. It originated in ancient Greece and, in Athens, Sparta, and other poleis, functioned as a civic institution rather than as mere

entertainment. Through theatre, state and religious leaders promoted shared ideas and conveyed moral values, political unity, and civic duty.

In Athenian democracy, attending the theatre was considered a civic obligation. At the Dionysian festivals, public arrangements made attendance possible for all social strata, including poor citizens, which shows that theatre developed as a cultural medium addressed to the broad population rather than to the elite alone . Tragedies built around figures such as Prometheus, Oedipus, Antigone, and Electra presented strong will, inner struggle, tragic choice, and human responsibility. These figures served as models of civic position, moral decision-making, and self-sacrifice. The architecture of the theatre carried meaning as well: the central "orchestra" and the circular seating expressed the idea of equality among citizens and made the theatre a visual and spatial symbol of democratic culture. This functional nature of Greek theatre later underpinned the pedagogical and social tasks of theatre in the Roman Empire, medieval Europe, and the modern period.

From art therapy to art pedagogy

In early periods, the notion of "art therapy" was not integrated into the education system; it was applied mainly in psychological and rehabilitative practice. Studies and practical analyses of work with young people show, however, that the use of artistic means to resolve socio-psychological problems gradually merged with didactic goals. As a result of this evolution, two directions separated from the original concept of art therapy: a therapeutic function and a pedagogical function. From this stage, art pedagogy began to take shape as an independent scientific-practical field concerned with education and upbringing through art. In Taranova's interpretation, such an approach raises art education to a qualitatively new level and can be understood as a modern pedagogical mechanism that gives students access to socially and culturally significant real-life experience. Today, art pedagogy serves not only the development of emotional and aesthetic awareness but also self-realisation, free expression of opinion, social adaptation, and participation in cultural integration .

Theoretical formation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The theoretical basis of art pedagogy took shape between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries in the ideas of pedagogical innovators such as W. von Humboldt, J. Dewey, M. Montessori, and R. Steiner. In this approach, the learner is regarded not as a passive recipient of knowledge but as an active creator and a bearer of aesthetic experience.

From the second half of the twentieth century, art pedagogy developed on the basis of interdisciplinary integration, multimodal methods, and visual culture, and entered into close contact with modern art forms: theatre, music, the visual arts, and, above all, film. Film art holds an important place in contemporary art-pedagogical practice because it engages learners in the educational process through moving images, dramatic conflict, visual thinking, and technological tools.

Results.

Conceptual Foundations of Art Pedagogy

Definition, scope, and distinction from artistic education

According to T. A. Barisheva, a doctor of psychological sciences, art pedagogy is a practice-oriented, independent direction emerging within the system of modern pedagogical sciences . In her definition, its essence is the use of artistic means to solve professional-pedagogical problems in the educational process. Barisheva identifies the fundamental bases of the field by studying its nature, regularities, principles, and didactic technologies. In her view, art pedagogy is not limited to work with children who have special educational needs; its field

of activity is considerably broader and aims at developing the aesthetic, emotional, and communicative potential of people of all ages [4].
The author also distinguishes the main purpose of art pedagogy from the tasks of traditional artistic education and aesthetic upbringing. Artistic education is oriented mainly towards technical and theoretical knowledge acquired through the visual arts, music, theatre, or literature. Art pedagogy, in contrast, uses artistic means to open the learner's inner world, to support self-expression, and to enable creative dialogue with society . It is thus an innovative approach based on the synthesis of art and education, which not only teaches learners but also nurtures them as distinctive aesthetic subjects. Its universality lies in its contribution to creative thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness [5].
Art pedagogy is currently applied in education, health care, psychology, rehabilitation, and social work. This breadth demonstrates a multifunctional, multidisciplinary methodological basis that adapts to practical needs. It is best understood not as a separate form of art education but as an integrative pedagogical concept that supports the multifaceted development of the person and makes it possible to ease and resolve psychological and corrective problems through artistic activity.

Corrective and developmental potential

The approach draws on the emotional, expressive, and symbolic possibilities of art to strengthen psychological stability, activate social adaptation, improve interpersonal relationships, and consistently develop creative potential. Art pedagogy enriches all stages of corrective-developmental education through aesthetic experience, making the educational process effective not only cognitively but also therapeutically and educationally.
The important role of art in corrective work was demonstrated by foreign scholars such as É. Séguin, J. Demoor, and O. Decroly [6], [7], as well as by scholars of the Commonwealth of Independent States who worked on different areas of special pedagogy, including L. S. Vygotsky, A. I. Graborov, E. A. Ekzhanova, and T. S. Komarova . These authors argued that children's artistic activity plays an important role in sensory development and shapes internal motivation and need in relation to productive activity. In the course of such activity, perception, voluntary attention, imagination, spoken language, the ability to use pictorial means of expression, manual motor skills, and the culture of communication develop step by step.

Perception of art, empathy, and moral development

The perception of works of art evokes a feeling of aesthetic satisfaction and, through pleasant impressions, directs a person's inner world towards positive feelings. This influence not only softens the emotional state but also strengthens psychological stability. Artistic images, in turn, make it possible to express vague experiences that lie below conscious awareness and cannot be grasped by other means, such as childhood memories, inner conflicts, anxiety, and fears. Through art, a person can express emotional experiences in a safe and socially acceptable form, which restores psychological balance. For this reason, the perception of art is regarded not only as a means of aesthetic education but also as an effective way of understanding and harmonising one's inner world [8].
Representatives of the national pedagogical school, such as N. G. Chernyshevsky and K. D. Ushinsky, evaluated art as a phenomenon of culture and a unique means of upbringing and development. In their view, art provides not only knowledge and taste but also awakens the inner world of the person, develops the ability to make moral decisions, and forms aesthetic values. V. A. Sukhomlinsky and L. N. Tolstoy similarly described the pedagogical

possibilities of art. Art creates favourable conditions for all-round development and also becomes a means of harmonising social relations by developing empathy, that is, the ability to share and understand the feelings of others. As a cultural phenomenon, art can express in figurative form the harmony between human beings and nature, the "dialectics of the soul," and the inner contradictions and dynamics of feelings, characters, and interpersonal relations. The upbringing effect of art is particularly strong in moral and aesthetic development, since the enjoyment of beauty elevates the soul and perfects the person spiritually. The sense of inner harmony formed through aesthetic perception strengthens social consciousness, social responsibility, and cultured behaviour.

Film Art as a Resource of Art Pedagogy in the Digital Era

Film art occupies a special position among the arts used in art pedagogy because it combines moving images, dramatic conflict, visual thinking, and technology. Its pedagogical possibilities can be grouped into four areas:

- **Visual-emotional impact.** The combination of scene movement, colour, composition, and music acts directly on the learner's emotional awareness.
- **Narrative understanding.** Stories told through film make it possible to analyse moral choices, life conflicts, and human values.
- **Development of aesthetic competence.** Frame structure, composition, artistic language, and dramatic construction activate the learner's aesthetic thinking.
- **Technological expression.** Through montage, animation, and digital effects, learners come to understand art as a means of technological expression [9].

These features are consistent with research on multimodal learning, which shows that the combination of verbal and visual channels supports understanding and engagement.

Art Pedagogy and Digital Competence: Conceptual Links

Building on the research of Soldatova, Rasskazova, and Nestik [10], the tasks of art pedagogy can be extended towards the development of digital competences and towards activating meaning-making in the digital environment. On this basis, the following correspondences between art-pedagogical mechanisms and the areas of the DigComp 2.2 framework are proposed as a working conceptual model:

- **Information and data literacy:** analysis of narrative and visual messages in film develops the ability to interpret and critically evaluate digital content.
- **Communication and collaboration:** self-expression, empathic dialogue, and the "dialogue among equals" that characterise the art-pedagogical environment support constructive and respectful online communication, in line with the idea of participatory culture [11].
- **Digital content creation:** technological expression (montage, animation, digital effects) and work on composition and artistic language develop the creation and editing of multimedia content.
- **Safety and well-being:** the capacity of art to stabilise emotional states and to express experiences safely contributes to digital well-being and emotional self-regulation.
- **Problem solving and creativity:** improvisation, the search for new approaches, and reflective practice strengthen creative problem solving with digital tools [12].

This model should be treated as a theoretical proposition. Its validity requires testing through

empirical designs, such as quasi-experimental studies or design-based research in university courses [13].

Art-Pedagogical Competence of the Educator

One important condition for forming a teacher's creative pedagogical position is the creation of an art environment. It should be built with culturally rich technologies and with high-quality tools from different disciplines, both the humanities and the natural sciences. The creative component of preparing future teachers needs to be strengthened because, in the art-pedagogical approach, the teacher must not only convey knowledge and skills but also develop the student's creative personality. In a broad sense, art pedagogy views the student as a person striving for self-realisation [14].

Effective implementation therefore requires more than methodological knowledge about art: it requires special, non-standard psychological preparation for individual and creative work with students. Art-pedagogical preparation demands the ability to understand the psychological characteristics of the person, to develop emotional intelligence, and to organise educational communication that corresponds to each learner's individual needs. It also calls for a deeper reliance on psychology and a readiness to work with the learner's inner world. This, in turn, makes it necessary to revise the content of pedagogical and psychological disciplines and to integrate them into a modern art-pedagogical methodology. The modernisation concerns not only higher education institutions that prepare future teachers but also the system of retraining and professional development of practising teachers, since art pedagogy by nature requires constant reflection, adaptability, and professional sensitivity [15].

It is difficult to find a competence needed by a modern teacher that does not rest on art-pedagogical observation and support. The art pedagogue should be able to improvise, to search for new approaches, to change stereotypes, to master public speaking, and to know the basics of pedagogical creativity, dramaturgy, and theatre pedagogy. Skills in directing, music, and choreography are also useful. All of this is required in addition to general professional demands such as high intellect, developed thinking, and memory. Art-pedagogical preparation should thus be interpreted as an important methodological mechanism that develops the teacher's psychological competences, builds empathy-based communication, and establishes a meaningful inner dialogue with the learner through art. These requirements are consistent with international frameworks for educators' digital competence and for integrating technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge [16].

Discussion

The analysis supports three main points. First, art pedagogy is not a recent invention: its functions of civic formation, moral education, and emotional regulation were already present in ancient practices, and its modern form results from the differentiation of therapeutic and pedagogical aims. Second, the field is distinguished from traditional artistic education by its focus on the learner's inner world, self-expression, and dialogue, which makes it relevant to competences that are not reducible to technical skills. Third, film art and other digital-era art forms provide a concrete bridge between artistic experience and digital competence, since they require learners both to interpret and to produce multimodal content [17].

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The study is conceptual and does not provide empirical evidence of effectiveness. The proposed correspondences with DigComp 2.2 are theoretical, and the literature base, which draws substantially on Russian-language scholarship, should be broadened to include other national and regional traditions. Future

research should operationalise the model, design measurable indicators of art-pedagogically supported digital competence, and test them in university settings, including teacher-education programmes [18].

Conclusion

Art pedagogy, grounded in the synthesis of art and education, can be interpreted as an integrative approach that develops creative thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness. These qualities are essential for a broad, human-centred understanding of digital competence. Film art and other technologically mediated art forms offer particularly promising means of linking aesthetic experience with the creation, interpretation, and responsible use of digital content. Realising this potential requires purposeful art-pedagogical preparation of teachers and a revision of the content of pedagogical and psychological disciplines. The conceptual model proposed here provides a starting point for empirical studies and for curriculum design in higher education.

REFERENCES

[1] M. Spante, S. S. Hashemi, M. Lundin, and A. Algers, "Digital competence and digital literacy in higher education research: Systematic review of concept use," Cogent Educ., vol. 5, no. 1, Art. no. 1519143, 2018, doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2018.1519143.

[2] G. U. Soldatova, E. I. Rasskazova, and T. A. Nestik, Tsifrovoe pokolenie Rossii: Kompetentnost' i bezopasnost' [Digital Generation of Russia: Competence and Safety]. Smysl, 2017.

[3] J. Dewey, Art as Experience. Minton, Balch & Co., 1934.

[4] Aristotle, Poetics, A. Kenny, Trans. Oxford Univ. Press, 2013.

[5] E. Csapo and W. J. Slater, The Context of Ancient Drama. Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994.

[6] O. Decroly and E. Monchamp, L'initiation à l'activité intellectuelle et motrice par les jeux éducatifs. Delachaux & Niestlé, 1914.

[7] É. Séguin, Idiocy and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method. William Wood & Co., 1866.

[8] H. Jenkins, R. Purushotma, M. Weigel, K. Clinton, and A. J. Robison, Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century. MIT Press, 2009.

[9] C. Redecker, European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators: DigCompEdu, Y. Punie, Ed. Publ. Office Eur. Union, 2017, doi: 10.2760/159770.

[10] "The model of inclusive educational space of Federal University," Soc. Sci., vol. 10, no. 7, pp. 2089–2093, 2015.

[11] A. I. Akhmetzyanova, I. A. Nigmatullina, and A. T. Kurbanova, "Prognostic competence and socialization of junior schoolchildren with health limitations," in Proc. Int. Sci. Technol. Conf. FarEastCon, Cham: Springer Int. Publ., Oct. 2018, pp. 834–845.

[12] A. T. Kurbanova, Information Technologies in Art Education: Study Guide. Tashkent: Zebo Print, 2023.

[13] K. A. Tolibovna, "Theoretical and practical conditions of development of information and communication competence of future cultural and art figures," Eur. J. Res. Reflection Educ. Sci., vol. 7, no. 12, 2019.

[14] A. T. Kurbanova, Z. M. Zufarova, S. A. Xudayberdiyev, M. A. Tillashayxova, and G. A. Samigova, "The role of the software in the development of information and communicative competence of students of culture and art," J. Pharm. Negat. Results, vol. 13, pp. 2741–2749, 2022.

[15] A. T. Kurbanova, A. V. Tolmachev, E. V. Patsyuk, and V. S. Ustenko, "Digital inclusiveness for sustainable development," in Digital Inclusiveness: Bridging the Divide in the Digital Economy, 2025, pp. 111–123.

[16] T. Aziza, "Developing information and communicative competence of specialists in art and culture sphere," Eastern Eur. Sci. J., no. 1, 2019.

[17] A. T. Kurbanova, "San'at ta'limini raqamlashtirishning mavjud holati," Inter Educ. Global Study, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 561–568, 2025.

[18] K. R. Mamadaliev and A. T. Kurbanova, “Technology of creation electronic manual and mechanisms of organization the teaching process in accordance with it,” Eastern Eur. Sci. J., no. 1, 2017.