

# Art-Based Learning in Business in Mainland China

## 企業學習領域的藝術應用

Peng Yongwen 彭勇文  
Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

### Abstract

This study is based on investigations, research and practices of art-based learning in businesses of Mainland China. Using Otto Sharmar's learning and innovation U-Theory model, and on the basis of the author's own practice, it is proposed that art-based learning presented by artists has been helping entrepreneurs and their teams enhance connections with themselves, each other, and the environment. The application of arts to businesses demonstrates a growing social trend of recognizing the spiritual value of humans and the increasing importance of the construction of ecological organizations, as well as the structuring and formation of social fields, all of which are beneficial to relationships and productivity in a wide range of industries. This article further discusses the two difficulties artists often encounter when they enter corporations, namely, research and practical application on the front lines, and development of rational thinking and useful tools in order to strengthen the long-term effects of the participants' experiences from artistic workshops, solve real-life problems, and generate meaningful results.

**Keywords:** Art-based learning, Corporation, Artists, Entrepreneurs, U-Theory

### 摘要

本論文對近年來國內企業學習領域的藝術應用進行了調查和研究。根據美國麻省理工學院教授奧拓-夏莫(Otto Sharmar)的U型理論，並結合作者本人的實踐，本文提出了企業家需要藝術家的三個理由，藝術家能夠幫助企業家增強與自我、與他人、與環境的聯結。藝術家們走進工商企業，代表著一種社會潮流，人的心靈價值正在回歸，社會越來越重視生態型組織的建設，重視場域的構建，這些都有利於社會成員間的聯結和共創，推動各領域的創新和發展。本文還提出藝術家進入企業可能遇到的兩個困難，需要他們深入最前沿去研究現實情況，在實踐掌握跨界應用的方法，同時還需要借助理性的思維和實用的工具，增強感性體驗效果的長期性，以解決現實的問題，產生實際的作用。

**關鍵字:** 以藝術為基礎的企業學習，U型理論，藝術家，企業家

## 1. Introduction

During the decade from 2005 to 2015, the author was submersed in the corporate learning, investigating new artistic developments and the rationale behind it, and persistently exploring ways to apply artistic behaviors that included performance, drawing, music, and movement/dance to the field of corporate learning. There is a growing demand in the business world for art-based learning programs, which brings

more opportunities for the author and his colleagues to perform corporate training. Since 2011, more than five teachers of Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA), along with the author, have carried out corporate training sessions to improve their skills for social performance and problem-solving. Mr. Sun, a teacher in the Department of Acting, has conducted emotional management training for dozens of Chinese and foreign companies and become a personal language and public presentation coach for corporate executives. Over the past three years, STA fine art graduates with master's degrees on Social Performance Studies have set up five companies which provide brand promotion services.. The trainers use various form of arts including acting, directing and visual arts to teach Chinese entrepreneurs to become more expressive performers in the commercial arena so that they can attract more investors and customers.

However, very few Chinese scholars have ventured into this cross-disciplinary research; only a small number of articles on this topic have been published in the Chinese journals. The relevant research articles in the CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure) database are primarily written by Dr. Qiu Zhaoliang from the Business School of Nankai University and founder of China Learning Organization Research Center. He introduced Otto Sharmmer's U-Theory in China, which is a learning and innovation theory for political and economic leaders to break unproductive patterns of behavior and learn individual and collective productivity (Qiu, 2006). In 2013, he proposed that with the rise of the Internet and social media, corporate learning has witnessed four transformations in reaction to the generation born since the 1980s and 1990s. They include:

- 1) Blending: the design and implementation of study programs informed by different ways of learning;
  - 2) Incorporating: the incorporation of learning into work and design study programs informed by work tasks;
  - 3) Communalization: the strengthening of informal learning and building of communities of learning and exchange;
  - 4) Systemization: the utilization of technology, integration of resources, and realization of continual optimization.
- (Qiu, 2013).

Art-based learning programs, such as improvisational performance, visual facilitating, or coaching, exemplify the effective means of blending and incorporating learning.

Two relevant international articles are found from our searching in SSCI database on this specific topic. Song from South Korea stated there were three functions of arts-based learning in business: improvement of the work capabilities of members, improvement of the creative power of the organization, and assistance to members in sharing values, and thereby accomplishing their purpose (Song, 2013). French scholars Descubes and McNamara, based on their participatory research with *Électricité de France*, proved the positive impact of using improvisational theater formats to change corporate culture.

“Since theatre creates a type of meta-language that allows and/or reinforces the generation of dialogue by making thought visible (Boal 1995), it can trigger in the participants a sense of ownership and interest in the targeted organizational structure, management, or customer-oriented culture change and can be used as a catalyst for transformation” (Descubes & McNamara, 2013).

This article is based on the author's investigations, researches and practices in the application of the arts in corporate learning in Mainland China. It discusses the following three major questions: Why do entrepreneurs need artists? What kinds of social trends does their cooperation imply? What difficulties do artists have and how do they deal with them?

## 2. Part 1: Why Do Entrepreneurs Need Artists?

Driven by economic globalization and the internet revolution, mainland China has seen an upsurge of business ventures, and new industries and corporations have mushroomed. As a major driving force for social innovation and development in this complex and uncertain era, entrepreneurs must learn how to assess the situation, fully utilize limited resources, and lead their core team and employees to innovate and stay competitive at the cutting-edge of trends.

Over the past 3 years, the U-Theory proposed by Dr. Otto Sharmer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has been popular among corporate learning communities in China. This learning and innovation theory is an in-depth extension of the notion of learning organization developed by Peter Senge. Sharmer stressed in his U-Theory that in the age of innovation and development, people should not only learn from the past, but also learn from the future by extending themselves to the edge and outside of themselves and surroundings to listen, observe, and sense the emerging future. At the same time, one must connect to his or her inner self, perceive his or her inner and inherent motivation, and seek his or her mission in life. In this way, people can be inspired and motivated. With these connections to the future and their inner selves, people are more willing to open up, listen, and talk frankly in a shared field, thus stimulating the collective creativity of the group (Sharmer, 2013).

Sharmer's U-Theory works by coaxing people to broaden their cross-border cooperation based on a better understanding of themselves and society. This can bring solutions to various social problems, especially those arising from the following three types of divides:

The first type of divide is called the spiritual divide, which signifies the separation of one's present self from his or her future and inner self. This separation often deprives people of motivation in life and a hope for the future, and may contribute to the occurrence of depression or even suicide. The second type, the social divide, refers to a category of separation between people. Political, religious, racial, cultural, and economical differences have given rise to serious class and social differentiations and can be blamed for conflicts and wars throughout the world. The last category of divide is the ecological divide, which refers to the rift between man and the environment. This is evidenced in the excessive exploitation and utilization of the earth's natural resources, bringing about global environmental problems.

Using Sharmer's theoretical model, today's entrepreneurs must practice continuous innovation and development to cross the divides. First, he or she needs to cross the spiritual divide to strengthen the connection with his or her present and future self, to know who he or she is and who he or she wants to be, and then to enhance the mission and value of the corporation to achieve continuous development. Second, he or she must

cross social divides by improving personal connections to establish deep trust with his or her core team members. Thirdly, from the perspective of an enterprise's survival, the industry and related industrial chain represent an environment, and any irregular or excessive competition may damage the whole environment and restrict the sustainable development of the industry. Therefore, an entrepreneur needs to span ecological divides to enhance his or her connection with the other players in the industry to market and contribute to a better environment.

Many courses in business management seek to provide answers and solutions to entrepreneurs' questions and demands. However, the art-based learning approach, using music, dance, drawing, and performance, has been providing entrepreneurs with unique experiences and perspectives, assisting them in crossing the three divides by improving their connection with themselves, with each other, and with the environment, and teaching them to deal with difficulties in a brand new way.

### **2.1. Improving the Connection with One's Self**

A Chinese philosopher in the Song Dynasty, LU Jiuyuan (1139-1192) said: "My heart is the world" (Feng, 2009). He does not refer to the physical heart, but to one's conscience, which can realize the "Tao" of the universe and integrate a person's inner and outer world.

In Mainland China, music and dance were introduced to corporations in the form of workshops to help entrepreneurs and their teams establish deep connections and strengthen their power to develop in the future. For example, YIN Yili, a Shanghai music facilitator, developed a music workshop with African drums, in which participants' internal motivations are excited by the sound of drums that become a force of collective action. Another trainer deeply versed in Chinese culture makes use of Guqin, a Chinese ancient instrument, to train entrepreneurs to remain calm and communicate with their heart before making some important decisions.

In Shanghai, some dance training institutes, such as the Ting Ballet School, and some dancers, such as Ms. HE Yu, have been developing dance courses for white-collar workers and corporate employees to help them strengthen their mind-body connection, release physical energy, and express their ideas and feelings using their bodies. In the dance workshops, participants are asked to pay attention to their bodies, to feel the working and integration of different body parts as well as the dialogue between one's body and mind, thereby attaining harmony and serenity with the music and dancing, and allowing one's inner voice to be heard.

In fact, the effects of dance are reflected in Tai Chi Quan, which is a traditional martial art. It has risen to the level of art for its embodiment of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics and the balance of Yin and Yang, hardness and softness. It has become more welcomed among entrepreneurs, including CEO Jack Ma of the Alibaba Group who not only loves it himself, but also invites entrepreneurs from Jiangsu Province and Zhejiang Province to practice Chen-style Tai Chi Quan. President of Shanghai Fosun Group, GUO Guangchang, also introduced Tai Chi Quan into his company. Through the long-term practice of Tai Chi Quan, people can reach new levels of awareness of their vital essence, energy, and spirit as well as achieve balance between body and soul.

Since 2011, the author has given two or three times a year trainings to employees, internal trainers, and middle-level and senior managers for corporate such as Germany's Bosch, America's HDC, and Hotel Equatorial Shanghai. In 2015, he undertook five corporate training programs. The author's voice and public speech training courses (six days, 36-hour) is introduced to the open course platform developed by Shanghai KNX, a well-known human resource management service provider in China associated with Shanghai Human Resources Consulting Association. Shanghai KNX has so far trained two hundred thousand students over the past decade.

By combining the body and breathing exercise in the Chen-style Tai Chi Quan with the sound and language training methods used in acting arts, the voice and speech trainings help entrepreneurs and their employees improve the expressivity of their voice and language. Moreover, reading and appreciating classical poetry, prose, and dramatic monologue has proved to help enhance their connections with their inner selves, inspire their inward feelings, and give greater impetus to their career.

## **2.2. Improving Connections with Others**

Dramatic performance and physical training are effective ways to cross social divide, strengthen interpersonal connections, unite the strength of a team, and stimulate creativity and productivity.

Patricia Madson, a professor in the Department of Drama at Stanford University, is also the honorary lecturer for Apple, Google and some other companies. Since 1995 she has introduced improvisation courses to corporate learning. She is very certain that improvisational performance can strengthen connections with others and stimulate imagination and creativity of entrepreneurs and their teams. She highlighted its two major principles (Madson, 2014): the first principle is teamwork in the style of "Yes, and..." This means full acceptance of any proposal made by teammates, while "and" is used for adding one's own thoughts and ideas. Performers create together as a team, encourage each other, and are not afraid of making mistakes. The second is the spirit of letting another teammate be outstanding, which means that participants need to put aside their egos, and to fully listen, observe, and sense each other. In this way they can provide divergent ideas and actions to keep their teammates from running out of inspiration and becoming embarrassed on stage, effectively allowing their teammates to be outstanding on their own.

In the past five years, improvisational performance has been widely used in corporate training throughout Beijing, Shanghai and other big cities in China. Many white-collar workers are surprised to find that they have natural talent for acting. After 20 - 40 hours of training, they are often able to interact comfortably with the audience and present improvisational performances. The skills of observation, listening, and improvisation obtained from training can be seamlessly applied to their performance in their workplace.

In Shanghai, there are dozens of improvisational performance teams, some are composed entirely of foreigners, and some made up of a mixture of Chinese and foreigners. These teams not only recruit students from all walks of life, but also open half-day or whole-day training courses in enterprises as requested. There are successful

theater troupes that carry out corporate team building and creativity training by means of improvisational performance including Shanghai's Fly Improv, Improvisers, and Beijing's ImprovFirst. Founded in 2013, Fly Improv was China's first improvisational performance team to conduct corporate training. It has offered training services to over 40 corporations including China Europe International Business School, Lenovo, IBM, McKinsey, Starbucks, Nike etc.. Improvisers, founded in July 2014, mainly serves companies in the Fortune Global 500 as well as domestic emerging industries and start-ups, such as Alibaba and Tencent. In addition to improvisational performance, Improvisers also incorporates corporations' products and culture into the creation and performance of scene plays in order to cultivate employees' cooperation and creativity.

For example, Table 1 presents the contents of a half-day (usually 3 hr) improvisation training course for an international company given in 2014 by Fly Improv., a Shanghai improvisation troupe. Feedback from the participants showed they were able to listen attentively in improvisation and inspire each other in team activities, and as a result, they found their ability to communicate and cooperate was enhanced.

**TABLE 1 |** Half-Day (usually 3 hrs) Improvisation Training Program

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Time (min)</b>	<b>Name of the games or exercises</b>
Warming-up games	30	Stretch Follow me to do self-introduction Woosh-bang-zip Sound ball / word ball Sharing thoughts
Verbal and non-verbal exercises	60	Yes, no, and, but Passing the gift Props I'm a tree Family photo Dream machine Sharing thoughts
Coffee break	15	
Performance rehearsal and show	80	Emotional symphony Freeze tag Chain murder Late to work Sharing thoughts
Question and Answer Session	10	

If improvisational performance is a mode of comedy because of the collective creativity in a joyful and relaxing atmosphere, then theater in corporation (TIC), which is an extension of theater in education (TIE) and the application of forum theatre in the corporate sector, is regarded as a mode of tragedy. Theater in corporation involves urgent and complex problems within the corporation, particularly issues triggered from interpersonal conflicts. Through experiential learning processes and reflections on actions in roles, people learn to solve complex problems in highly realistic but safe interactions.

Theater in corporation was practiced in the corporate learning of Shanghai Moller Villa Hotel by the author and his team. A number of issues and practical cases concerning hotel management and services were collected; guests who were picky and difficult to communicate with were categorized and characterized in several role-plays. Then hotel employees were trained to find appropriate ways to best respond to difficult roles and situations in theater in corporation.

Music also plays an important role in enhancing connections with others and improving leadership skills. For example, Euromed Marseille Ecole de Management of Shanghai Jiaotong University has offered a musical leadership program since 2012. The course involves observing orchestra conductors at work at a concert hall, from which an experience and understanding between conducting and corporate managing can be derived. Both seek common ground and coordinate the talents of team members, who come from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, eventually attaining a harmonious and dynamic state based on the process of rehearsal, communication, commands, and listening.

### **2.3. Improving Connections with the Environment**

Drawing allows a person to observe from a different perspective and better understand complex relationships between the parts of one thing, different things, and their environment, and it is the reason why artists offer drawing and painting courses to corporations in mainland China. Through visual facilitation, the artists train corporate teams to break with conventional mindsets to observe and think from multiple perspectives. The visual facilitation can effectively open people's vision and imagination and strengthen their connections with other individuals and the environment, which in turn helps people look at the details in micro and the overall situation in macro perspective. The essential skill for visual facilitators is clearly presenting a complex thing in a simple but elegant way.

The needs for visual recording and visual facilitating are on the rise. Visual-Bubble Creative Consulting Co. in Shanghai, a leading company founded by Ms. Bubble, a Dutch-Chinese artist, provides the visual recording and facilitation in China. During a period of only two years, the company has launched 100 courses open to the public and has conducted 2-3 internal training courses every month for corporations, mostly transnational corporations. It also developed a certified graphic facilitation program (CGFP). More than 800 people have participated in this program and over 80 of them have been certified. Some of the trainees go on to actively undertake visual recordings at various meetings.

The visual approach actively inspired, promoted, and supported the participants' thinking. At the same time, three visual facilitators led more than 200 participants in carrying out activities on the four ideas of "playing," "connecting," "creating together," and "the growth of all things." Participants were not allowed to speak at first but instead had to search for images, draw them on paper, and then use language and movement to elaborate on them. Images and visual tools opened up people's vision and imagination and enhanced relationships between individuals and between people and the environment.

### **3. Part 2: The Social Trend of Cooperation in China**

The application of arts to the business world and the cooperation of entrepreneurs demonstrate a social trend that the value of human beings is rebounding and that society increasingly values the construction of ecological organizations and social fields in which arts can make a difference.

With the development of economic globalization, the whole world follows the same economic rules and multinationals are able to organize resources and manage production on a global scale. At the same time, with the information technology revolution, people can theoretically connect with anyone on the planet, and individuals enjoy more freedom and variety of choice. The success of internet corporations like Apple, Google, and Alibaba demonstrate that the countless connections and creations forged between individuals can eventually converge to bring forth continual creativity for corporations and prosperity for society.

Scharmer believes that, against the background of the above economic and technological revolution, an "inner revolution" is underway (Scharmer, 2013); one aspect is the rise of a civil society and the rapid growth of millions of NGOs, which have become a major force behind global social revolution. Another aspect involves the flourishing of the creative class due to the rise of the knowledge economy and creative industry including professionals of science, research, education, engineering, design, finance, and law. This creative class habitually favors an atmosphere of sharing and co-productivity on the basis of individuality, and they live and socialize in environments that are prone to inspire and stimulate creativity.

Tracing the source of creativity leads entrepreneurs and the creative class to the fields of religion and the arts. Innovations in fields such as science, arts, and religion actually derive from a common source—human spirituality and spontaneity—where epiphany, inspiration, and vitality emerges, and where one thinks beyond one's own small self to make a deep connection with people and the universe. Therefore, spiritual practices, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi Quan, and other mind-heart-body cultivation courses are gaining the attention of corporations and are increasingly integrated into leadership training.

Art-based learning courses share similarities with courses in spirituality but are less mysterious. They are vivid, experiential, and playful, and create an atmosphere to play games, explore possibilities, and have fun. In fact, whether in art, work, or life, it is best not to approach it in a mechanical and stoic way, but in a way that appreciates each day and discovers the fun in life and work with a freedom of mind. By discovering the fun in work and life one can keep enjoying them and make continuous innovations. In artistic group workshops such as performance, music, and dance, people tend to cast off

their social masks more easily and thus enter the “U” in the U-Theory where they can speak to their souls and ponder, “Who am I? Who will I be? What’s the work of my life?” In engaging with the arts, people more readily build mutual trust and embrace each other; they are more willing to open their minds and heart, moving beyond superficial talk in which everyone insists on their own opinion. They tend to have deeper conversations in which they listen to each other and explore ways to solve problems.

#### **4. Part 3: The Challenges for the Artists**

Broadly speaking, it could be argued that entrepreneurs and artists belong to two different types of people: entrepreneurs are more rational, logical, and often focus on measurable and practical results, whereas artists are more emotional and visual, paying more attention to human feelings and experiences. Their ways of thinking, expressing, and behaving are different, and therefore misunderstandings and conflicts may be unavoidable during interaction, which require mutual understanding, adaptation, and negotiation. There are two difficulties from an artist’s point of view.

##### **4.1. Difficult to Clarify the Problem of Entrepreneurs and Provide Possible Solutions**

When creating artistic works, artists usually begin with their own needs and inspirations. They focus on their strengths and how to create a unique aesthetic experience or piece of art, which may be attractive to large multinational or state-owned corporations. The hotel-equatorial of Shanghai has invited famous musicians, painters, and writers to present artistic courses and workshops to employees so they can provide a higher level of quality and culture in the hotel experience.

However, there are entrepreneurs whose purpose for shopping for artistic courses is to address particular problems. If an artist has little experience in the business world or lacks the ability to remedy the problem, he may be unable to meet a corporation’s needs by providing artistic courses and possible solutions. For example, a newly-developed course by the author was introduced with this initial description:

Applying Tai Chi Quan and voice training methods to the training of employees, to help them open their body and voice, connecting internal energy and balance physical and mental development.

The description confused entrepreneurs and human resource professionals. They did not understand what the course offered or see the relationship between the course and their needs. Entrepreneurs and corporations stress the importance of combining the course and methods with the problems of their enterprise and want possible effects highlighted clearly. Therefore, the description was changed to the following description:

Faced with stress at work and mental/physical exhaustion, how can we manage and renew our energy? Through the basic practice of Tai Chi Quan, you can strengthen the connection with the center of the body’s energy—Dantian, and through breathing and vocal exercises you can attain emotional balance and stress relief.

In fact, when people perform theatre in education (TIE), they stress the importance of understanding the characteristics and needs of the target audience and the participants. The clearer the understanding, the more effectively the educational function of TIE can be carried out. Similarly, in order to successfully cross over and develop effective arts courses for today's corporations, artists need to get involved in the communities of entrepreneurs to understand their environment and fundamental needs. If artists participate in MBA courses, practice in HR departments and form partnerships with experienced HR professionals or trainers to develop and refine the courses, they will undoubtedly be capable of offering more effective art-based learning programs.

#### **4.2. Balancing between Short and Long Term Effects, between Sensibility and Rationality**

Outward development training (called outward-bound training in western countries) has gained popularity in mainland China since 1995. It removes participants from their work environments to carefully designed outdoor facilities to participate in various group activities. Some activities are physically challenging and some are mentally challenging. Like other experiential training methods, the short-term effects of such training are good: people are enthusiastic, enjoy profound experiences, and are deeply touched. However, following the training most participants forget the training exercises or are unsure of how to apply them to their work.

In artistic courses, experiences are the foundation for learning for entrepreneurs and their teams. Artists can help them open their visual, aural, and kinesthetic senses through various artistic mediums, allowing them to listen deeply to themselves and to each other, and observe and contemplate solutions to the problems that the team is facing. Effective courses usually bring strong experiences to participants, producing obvious short-term effects. However, in order to produce long-term effects, it is necessary to establish easily applicable methods, combined with tools of management science and information technologies, so that the artistic activities can be documented and traced, and the results can be evaluated and analyzed quantitatively.

A good example is MU Sheng, Executive Chairman of Global Think Tank Expert Committee on Human Resources, who incorporates drama into the training of employees in his version of theatre in corporations. He combines the tool of competence model to design, train, and appraise employee performances, refines examination points (also training points) for different roles in specific situations, and classifies the behaviors of the participants using quantifiable and specific indicators to distinguish their performances in simulated environments. There is also a team of mentors available during the simulation exercises of TIC. And in addition to the general director, a behavioral coach and knowledge mentor are available for consultation. A behavior coach is an experienced manager who is responsible for observing and recording the behaviors of trainees during the activities and correcting their behavior, if needed, at key points of the situations. A knowledge mentor is an expert or consultant who can answer trainees' questions, give them advice, and teach by demonstration. After the exercises, the mentor team assesses the participants' performance and reveals their final results, which are documented in the Talent Development Archives with the scores of their appraisals and descriptions of

the individual behaviors of each trainee along with suggestions and tools for their future development. This is not only beneficial to the corporations, but to the employees because they can use the file as a reference to know themselves better and how to improve in the real world.

Another example comes from a multinational consulting firm HCD Learning Co. in Shanghai whose course “Leadership & Change Management” is a step ahead of the previously mentioned case. The core concept of the course suggests that a leader, in order to manage change, must understand the importance of having intimate communication with their team to understand the cognition, emotion, and mental status of each member. Different statuses need different responses in order to lead the team forward as a whole. Ignoring the psychological states and feelings of participants during the process of change is a common reason for failure. In this course, the instructor leads multiple teams in role-playing simultaneously, carrying out the tasks of revolution similar to those in reality by using the method of online games. A series of selections, decisions, and actions takes place with a visualized simulation of the process that exhibits the six stages of revolution with the positions of the teams, the individual stances and attitudes of the revolution, and the level of their resistance and the obstacles they face. As these combat simulation games are competitive, each team is very dedicated. The entire process can be recorded; and in addition, there are huge repositories of management knowledge and databases to explain the reason for every success or failure during the game. The team can replay the project in the games and simulate a real project. Comparing virtual and real situations can have practical value in summarizing the successful experiences and the lessons from failures.

## 5. Conclusion

This article investigates and provides an overview of a variety of artistic approaches for art-based learning for businesses in mainland China. An increasing number of artistic workshops have been introduced into companies, helping entrepreneurs and their teams connect with themselves, each other, and the market and environment. These connections are paramount to improving corporations’ culture and in maintaining their sustainable development. The cooperation between artists and entrepreneurs implies a rising social trend in regaining the spiritual value and inner motivation of individuals, and suggests that the construction of ecological organizations is very valuable in our society.

Against the backdrop of a slowing global economy and growing downward pressure on China’s economy, the Chinese government put forth a developmental strategy to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.

The plan calls for governmental effort to create a favorable environment and a creative atmosphere for both entrepreneurship and innovation. The authorities have recognized that assistance from social members is necessary to vitalize individuals and teams in order to provide support, change their modes of thinking and acting, and create a new path. In this regard, artists play an important role because their enthusiasm, imagination, and creativity can arouse people’s fervor, expand their horizons, and inspire their imagination.

However, in the fierce competition of the business world and entrepreneurs who value logic and efficiency, artists often encounter two difficulties when they implement art-based learning in business: clarifying the problem to entrepreneurs and providing possible solutions, and keeping the balance between short and long term effects and between sensibility and rationality. Therefore, they must be immersed in entrepreneurs' communities to understand their problems and needs; and they must conduct research and practice in the related fields to develop rational thinking and practical tools in order to strengthen the long-term effects, solve real-life problems, and produce practical results.

## Acknowledgement

The research is funded by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, research project B11050.

## About the author

Peng Yongwen 彭勇文, Association Professor, Art Education, Dramatic literature Department, Shanghai Theatre Academy.  
ORCID:0000-0002-4087-1471  
Email: pengyongwen@126.com.

## References

- Boal, A.(1995). *The rainbow of desire (A. Jackson Trans)*. London, England: Routledge.
- Descubes I., & McNamara T. (2013). *Art-based learning: Catalyst for change in corporate culture*. The 7th International Days of Statistics and Economics. Prague, Czech Republic.
- Feng Y.L.(2009). *A history of Chinese philosophy*. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing Company.
- Madson P. (2014). *The wisdom of improvisation (Chinese Version)*. Wuhan: Huazhong University of Science & Technology.
- QIU Z.L. (2006). *The new development in the research area of organizational learning*. Journal of Economic Affairs, July, 43-47.
- QIU Z.L. (2013). *Learning technologies leading the reform of organizational learning*. Journal of Modern Corporation Education, December, 12-14.
- Sharmer, O. (2013) *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges (Chinese Version)*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House.
- Song, E.J.(2013). *Research trends and issues of arts-based corporate education*. Journal of Korea Design Forum, Society of Korea Design Trend, 38, 73-82.