

A Study on the Cultivation Mechanism of Adolescents' Aesthetic Literacy through Art Education from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education

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Abstract

Against the background of the new-era aesthetic education reform, the core goal of art education has shifted from traditional artistic skill training to the comprehensive cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy, serving as a vital carrier to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. At present, adolescents are confronted with prominent problems including fragmented aesthetic cognition, utilitarian aesthetic taste and weak aesthetic creativity. Traditional art teaching modes cannot meet the requirements of competency-oriented aesthetic education. Supported by aesthetic education theory and core competency theory, this paper adopts literature research, questionnaire survey and case analysis to explore the internal logic of cultivating adolescents' aesthetic literacy. It systematically analyzes the four-dimensional cultivation mechanism of art education on adolescents' aesthetic perception, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic emotion and aesthetic creation. The study finds that school art and aesthetic education currently faces practical dilemmas such as biased educational concepts, rigid teaching modes, imbalanced cultivation systems and insufficient home-school-community collaborative education. Accordingly, optimization paths are proposed from five dimensions: educational philosophy, classroom teaching, cultivation system, resource integration and teacher development. This research intends to improve the cultivation system of adolescents' aesthetic literacy, give full play to the educational value of art education, and provide theoretical references and practical suggestions for the teaching reform of school aesthetic education.

Keywords

Aesthetic Education; Art Education; Adolescents; Aesthetic Literacy; Cultivation Mechanism

1. Introduction

With the full implementation of the School Aesthetic Education Infiltration Initiative in China, aesthetic education has been identified as a core component of quality-oriented education. As the primary carrier of aesthetic education, art education has attracted considerable attention for its educational function. Compared with traditional teaching models that focus on skills such as painting and singing, art education in the new era places greater emphasis on the long-term cultivation of students' aesthetic literacy, humanistic character and comprehensive competencies. Adolescents are in a critical period for the formation of aesthetic cognition and values. High-quality art-based aesthetic education helps them develop sound aesthetic tastes and improve their aesthetic perception and creative capacities. Nevertheless, obvious shortcomings remain in domestic art education practice. Some schools prioritize technical training over aesthetic cultivation and neglect systematic development of adolescents' aesthetic literacy, resulting in students' one-sided aesthetic cognition and insufficient aesthetic creativity. Existing domestic and international studies mostly concentrate on optimizing art teaching strategies, while research on the internal mechanism through which art education fosters aesthetic literacy remains inadequate. On this basis, from the core perspective of aesthetic education and targeting adolescent groups, this paper explores the internal mechanism, practical problems and optimization paths for cultivating aesthetic literacy via art education. It aims to fill gaps in existing research and promote the high-quality development of aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools.

2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

This paper defines three core concepts. Aesthetic education is a humanistic education rooted in people's all-round development, centered on aesthetic experience, which nourishes the mind, cultivates sentiments and shapes aesthetic character. Art education is a core form of school education carried through music, fine arts and comprehensive art courses, with dual functions of skill instruction and aesthetic edification. Adolescents' aesthetic literacy consists of four core dimensions: aesthetic perception, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic emotion and aesthetic creation, and constitutes an important part of adolescents' comprehensive literacy.

This research draws on three major theories. Aesthetic education theory clarifies the nature of aesthetic education as perceptual nurturing and provides the fundamental theoretical support for the cultivation of aesthetic literacy. Core competency theory shifts educational goals from knowledge and skills to the cultivation of comprehensive literacy, aligning with the reform direction of art education in the new era. Constructivist learning theory advocates that students actively experience, explore and construct knowledge, offering practical grounds for experiential and immersive art aesthetic teaching. Mutually reinforcing, these three theories lay a solid theoretical foundation for analyzing the cultivation mechanism of aesthetic literacy through art education, sorting out existing problems and constructing

optimization paths.

3. The Cultivation Mechanism of Adolescents' Aesthetic Literacy through Art Education

The cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy via art education is not a simple transmission of knowledge, but an integrated, progressive and interactive internal cultivation mechanism. Running through the whole process of aesthetic perception, cognition, emotion and practice, it comprehensively promotes the iterative improvement of adolescents' aesthetic literacy and includes four core sub-mechanisms.

3.1. Aesthetic Perception Activation Mechanism

The fundamental prerequisite for cultivating adolescents' aesthetic literacy. Aesthetic perception refers to the basic ability to discover, capture and sense beauty, and serves as the first gateway for adolescents to access the aesthetic world. Adolescents have immature aesthetic senses and cognition, and their sensitivity to aesthetic elements in daily life and art remains relatively low. Through diverse classroom experiences, art education guides students to appreciate paintings, sculptures, music, dance and other artworks, exposing them to artistic aesthetics of varied styles, eras and regions and breaking their monolithic and rigid aesthetic cognition. Immersive artistic experiences can effectively activate adolescents' aesthetic senses and develop their acute aesthetic perception, enabling students to discover beauty from natural scenery, daily scenarios and artworks, get rid of aesthetic numbness and passivity, and lay a solid foundation for subsequent cultivation of aesthetic literacy.

3.2. Aesthetic Cognition Construction Mechanism

The core support for standardizing adolescents' aesthetic literacy. Mere sensory experience cannot form stable aesthetic literacy, which requires systematic artistic knowledge to build a scientific aesthetic cognitive system. In art classes, teachers impart professional knowledge such as art history, aesthetic principles, creative backgrounds of artworks, composition and color rules, helping adolescents establish a standardized and systematic aesthetic cognitive framework. Compared with fragmented and vulgar aesthetic information on the Internet, aesthetic concepts delivered by formal art education are more scientific and positive. Such education guides adolescents to set up sound aesthetic criteria and avoid blind conformity, vulgar taste and utilitarian aesthetics. Meanwhile, systematic knowledge teaching helps students distinguish beauty from ugliness, refinement from popularity, develop independent and rational aesthetic judgment, and build a stable and positive aesthetic cognitive system.

3.3. Aesthetic Emotion Immersion Mechanism

The inner core for sublimating adolescents' aesthetic literacy. Aesthetic education is essentially spiritual and emotional education, and aesthetic emotion constitutes the soul of aesthetic literacy. Outstanding artworks carry creators' thoughts, emotions, humanistic sentiments and the spirit of the times, possessing strong emotional appeal. Through artwork appreciation, situational creation and classroom empathic experience, art education guides adolescents to resonate emotionally with artworks and perceive the patriotism, humanistic warmth and vitality embodied in works. Long-term immersion in artistic emotions subtly cultivates students' sentiments, fosters inclusive, positive and rich aesthetic feelings, shapes healthy aesthetic character and humanistic accomplishment, helps adolescents escape impetuous and utilitarian aesthetic mindsets, and nourishes and elevates their aesthetic mind.

3.4. Aesthetic Practice and Creation Mechanism

The critical path for internalizing and sublimating adolescents' aesthetic literacy. The cultivation of aesthetic literacy ultimately relies on practical creation. Shifting from passive aesthetic reception to active creation of beauty forms the core closed loop of literacy advancement. Art education provides platforms for adolescents' aesthetic creation through diverse practical activities including painting, handcraft design, stage performance and artistic creative adaptation. During practice, students integrate acquired artistic knowledge, aesthetic cognition and aesthetic experience to create artworks with their own ideas, realizing the transformation and application of aesthetic cognition. Furthermore, trial-and-error, innovation and refinement in the creative process further stimulate students' aesthetic imagination and creativity. Aesthetic literacy is thereby transformed from external experience into internal quality, achieving all-round and closed-loop advancement covering perception, cognition, emotion and creation. The four mechanisms interact and progress step by step, forming a complete system for art education to cultivate adolescents' aesthetic literacy.

4. Current Situation and Problems in the Cultivation of Adolescents' Aesthetic Literacy

To accurately grasp the current status of aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools, this paper adopts a mixed method of questionnaire surveys and classroom observations. Adolescent students and art teachers from multiple primary and secondary schools were selected as research subjects. The investigation was carried out around the four dimensions of aesthetic literacy (aesthetic perception, appreciation, emotion and creation), as well as teaching models, educational philosophies and resource allocation. Combined with survey data, this paper sorts out the practical dilemmas and core problems existing in the cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy.

4.1. Utilitarian bias in aesthetic education philosophy and

misalignment of literacy cultivation orientation.

Influenced by the long-standing exam-oriented education mindset, most primary and secondary schools regard art subjects as minor courses and ignore their core value in aesthetic education. Some art teachers focus on utilitarian goals such as artistic skill training, grade examination tutoring and competition coaching. They overemphasize the improvement of students' professional skills such as painting and singing, while completely neglecting the cultivation of core literacy including aesthetic perception, aesthetic emotion and aesthetic creation. Classroom teaching prioritizes outcomes over processes and skills over aesthetic immersion. Consequently, adolescents only master basic artistic techniques but lack independent aesthetic judgment and healthy aesthetic tastes. The cultivation of aesthetic literacy becomes a mere formality and deviates from the essence of aesthetic education in the new era.

4.2. Rigid and monotonous classroom teaching models with weak effects of aesthetic immersion.

Art classes in primary and secondary schools generally adopt the lecture-based model of "teacher explanation plus student imitation", featuring rigid forms and dull content. Classroom activities mainly consist of theoretical lectures and superficial artwork appreciation, lacking interactive and experiential links such as immersive experiences, situational inquiry and creative practice. Teachers dominate the whole class, leaving students in a passive receiving state with little room for active perception, independent thinking and autonomous creation. Such rigid teaching models fail to motivate students' aesthetic initiative and prevent them from engaging in in-depth aesthetic experiences. The effectiveness of aesthetic immersion is therefore greatly reduced, making it difficult to achieve long-term cultivation of aesthetic literacy.

4.3. Unbalanced development of literacy dimensions and imperfect comprehensive cultivation system.

The survey reveals obvious weaknesses in current art and aesthetic education, presenting an imbalanced pattern of "valuing appreciation, neglecting perception, weakening creation and downplaying emotion". Most classes focus on the appreciation of classical artworks to develop students' aesthetic appreciation ability, yet ignore the daily activation of aesthetic perception and in-depth nurturing of aesthetic emotion, especially the cultivation of aesthetic creation. Many students can briefly appreciate artworks but fail to capture beauty in daily life. They lack ideas and capabilities for independent artistic creation and suffer from insufficient aesthetic emotion and creativity. The uneven development of the four dimensions hinders the comprehensive improvement of their overall literacy.

4.4. Disconnection of home-school-community collaboration and insufficient support of aesthetic education resources.

Cultivating adolescents' aesthetic literacy requires diverse scenarios. However, current aesthetic education mainly relies on school art classrooms, while family and community aesthetic education are largely absent. Most parents lack awareness of aesthetic education, focusing only on academic performance rather than their children's aesthetic literacy, resulting in a weak family aesthetic atmosphere. Social aesthetic resources such as art museums, exhibitions and public art activities have not been effectively connected with school teaching, leading to low utilization of high-quality community aesthetic resources. Meanwhile, some grassroots schools are short of art and aesthetic education resources, teachers with adequate professional competence and sound aesthetic curriculum systems, which further limit the effectiveness of aesthetic literacy cultivation. Overall, the disconnection and insufficient resource integration among families, schools and communities form a one-dimensional cultivation model that cannot meet the demands of long-term aesthetic literacy development for adolescents.

The root causes are twofold. On one hand, the long-term orientation of exam-oriented education restricts the implementation of aesthetic education. The entrenched tendency of schools and parents to prioritize intellectual education over aesthetic education cannot be changed rapidly. On the other hand, the professional aesthetic competence of art teachers in primary and secondary schools varies greatly. Most teachers are skilled in skill teaching but lack systematic aesthetic education thinking and competency to foster students' literacy. Coupled with incomplete curriculum systems and inadequate resource allocation in schools, many shortcomings and loopholes remain in the cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy.

5. Optimization Paths for Cultivating Adolescents' Aesthetic Literacy

In view of the practical problems and root causes in the current cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy, this paper constructs comprehensive and actionable optimization paths from five dimensions: educational philosophy, classroom teaching, cultivation system, resources and teachers, based on the essence of aesthetic education and the four cultivation mechanisms as well as the realities of art teaching in primary and secondary schools. These paths help promote the all-round improvement of adolescents' aesthetic literacy.

5.1. Renew educational philosophy and establish a competency-oriented orientation for aesthetic education.

It is necessary to transform the traditional utilitarian mindset of art teaching, abandon the one-sided idea of "valuing skills over literacy", and return to the essence of aesthetic education. Schools and teachers should clarify the core objectives of art education in the new era, take the cultivation of four-dimensional literacy including

aesthetic perception, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic emotion and aesthetic creation as the central task of art classes, and reduce the weight of utilitarian teaching goals such as skill competitions and grade examinations. Based on adolescents' physical and mental development rules and characteristics of aesthetic cognition, schools should adhere to student-centered education, emphasize aesthetic experience and spiritual edification, and integrate literacy cultivation into the whole process of art teaching, so as to realize the fundamental transformation of art education from "skill teaching" to "literacy-oriented education". Meanwhile, aesthetic education publicity should be strengthened to guide parents to establish correct perceptions of aesthetic education, attach importance to the cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy, and consolidate the foundation of home-school collaborative aesthetic education.

5.2. Optimize classroom modes and build immersive and experiential aesthetic classrooms.

Rigid lecture-based teaching modes should be broken, and art teaching forms should be innovated to develop experiential, immersive and inquiry-oriented aesthetic classrooms. In teaching, monotonous theoretical lectures and mechanical imitation should be reduced, while teaching activities such as immersive artwork appreciation, aesthetic scenario construction, group aesthetic inquiry and creative art practice should be increased. With multimedia technologies, diverse materials including images, videos and audios can be adopted to create a strong classroom aesthetic atmosphere, activate students' multiple senses such as sight and hearing, and enable students to deeply engage in aesthetic experience, think actively about aesthetic issues and create art independently. The innovation of classroom modes can fully stimulate students' aesthetic initiative and strengthen the effect of aesthetic immersion, allowing students to improve aesthetic perception and sublimate aesthetic emotion through immersive experiences.

5.3. Improve the cultivation system to realize balanced development of four-dimensional literacy.

Targeting the imbalance among cultivation dimensions, an integrated four-in-one cultivation system of "perception-appreciation-emotion-creation" should be established to make up for weaknesses in aesthetic education. In classroom design, teaching content and class hours for the four dimensions of literacy should be allocated in a balanced way. Daily teaching focuses on awakening students' aesthetic perception and nurturing their aesthetic emotion; artwork appreciation sessions strengthen aesthetic appreciation competence; after-class practice and in-class creation mainly exercise students' aesthetic creativity. Targeted measures should be taken to improve the weak links in cultivating aesthetic creation and aesthetic emotion. Diversified creative art activities can be designed to encourage students to innovate boldly and create independently, so as to achieve coordinated, balanced and

comprehensive development of adolescents' four dimensions of aesthetic literacy.

5.4. Integrate diversified resources and build a home-school-community collaborative pattern of aesthetic education

The limitation of school-only education should be broken. A full-range aesthetic education system can be constructed by integrating aesthetic resources from families, schools and communities. Schools should take the initiative to cooperate with families, carry out themed home aesthetic education activities, and guide parents to build a favorable family aesthetic environment. Schools should also actively connect with social aesthetic resources, organize students to visit art museums, galleries and cultural and creative parks, and participate in public art activities to expand off-campus aesthetic scenarios. At the same time, schools need to improve the allocation of on-campus aesthetic resources, enrich art curricula and develop school-based aesthetic courses, so as to realize the organic integration of in-class aesthetic education and off-campus aesthetic scenarios and expand multiple channels for adolescents' aesthetic cultivation.

5.5. Strengthen teacher development and improve teachers' professional competence in aesthetic education

Teachers' professional competency is the key to implementing aesthetic education. Schools should carry out regular special training for art teachers, focusing on core contents such as aesthetic education theories, literacy cultivation methods and experiential teaching models, to enhance teachers' professional aesthetic literacy and classroom teaching abilities. Teaching research and exchange platforms should be built to organize seminars on aesthetic education, observation of high-quality lessons and exchanges of teaching innovation. These activities help teachers renew educational philosophies and innovate teaching approaches, enabling them not only to teach artistic skills but also to accurately implement tasks of aesthetic literacy cultivation, thus providing solid teacher support for the cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy.

6. Conclusion and Prospect

From the perspective of aesthetic education, this paper focuses on the cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy and systematically explores the internal cultivation mechanism, practical dilemmas and optimization paths of art education. The study confirms that art education adopts four interactive mechanisms — activation of aesthetic perception, construction of aesthetic cognition, immersion of aesthetic emotion, and aesthetic practice and creation — to cultivate adolescents' aesthetic literacy in a progressive and comprehensive manner. It serves as an important carrier to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and promote quality-oriented education. Survey analysis reveals prominent problems in

current art and aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools, including utilitarian educational philosophies, rigid classroom teaching modes, unbalanced development of literacy dimensions, inadequate home-school-community collaboration, and insufficient aesthetic teaching competency among teachers. These problems seriously restrict the high-quality cultivation of adolescents' aesthetic literacy. To tackle these challenges, targeted optimization paths are proposed from five aspects: philosophy renewal, classroom improvement, system perfection, resource integration and teacher empowerment. A cultivation system for adolescents' aesthetic literacy adapted to the requirements of aesthetic education in the new era is constructed, which can effectively remedy the shortcomings of current art aesthetic teaching and offer practical references for the reform of art and aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools.

This study has certain limitations. The scope of research samples is limited, and the generalizability of the findings needs further verification. Future research can expand the sampling scope and deepen the research on the mechanism linking art education and aesthetic literacy cultivation by incorporating emerging directions such as digital aesthetic education and cross-cultural art education. Continuous refinement of aesthetic education approaches will boost the high-quality development of school aesthetic education in the new era and give full play to the core value of art education in educating, influencing and nourishing people through aesthetics.

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