



Status and Countermeasures of Fine Art Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Ethnic Minority Areas

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Abstract: Fine art is a crucial discipline within the field of aesthetics, and fine art education serves as a significant component of aesthetic education. It holds great importance in providing a comprehensive education and fostering the holistic development and well-being of primary and secondary school students. The deficiency in fine art education within primary and secondary schools located in ethnic minority areas necessitates that teachers acknowledge these gaps, analyze their underlying causes, and explore effective measures to promote its development. Revitalizing fine art education is both the mission and responsibility of schools and teachers, as well as a shared aspiration of all sectors of society. In order to achieve this, teachers must enhance their ideological awareness, innovate institutional mechanisms, foster integration and collaboration, and prioritize and strengthen fine art education. Furthermore, it is essential to identify gaps, address deficiencies, increase investment in education, and expand access to high-quality resources. Leveraging the cultural characteristics of ethnic minorities, schools should develop curriculum that is tailored to their specific needs. Additionally, efforts should be made to enrich the teaching force and elevate teaching standards, including forging partnerships with local universities to enhance the professionalism of fine art teachers and strengthen the collective capacity.

This study focuses on the current state of fine art education in primary and secondary schools within the Enshi Grand Canyon Scenic Area Administration in Enshi City, Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hubei Province. By utilizing interviews and documentary analysis, the author examines and dissects a primary and secondary school located in a remote town. The aim is to reflect upon and analyze the existing conditions and challenges of fine art education in primary and secondary schools within ethnic minority areas, explore novel ideas in fine art education, and propose measures for improvement and advancement.

Keywords: fine art education, ethnic minority areas, primary and secondary schools.

Introduction

Fine art education constitutes a vital component of aesthetic education and plays a significant role in cultivating a refined sensibility. To effectively carry out aesthetic education, it is imperative to prioritize moral education, ground it in contemporary life, align with the distinctive characteristics of aesthetic education, and uphold the essence of Chinese aesthetic education. These efforts will facilitate the healthy physical and mental development of the younger generation of our nation^[1].

For years, the state of fine art education in primary and secondary schools within ethnic minority areas has been a matter of concern for the author. The region in which the author resides and works, Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province, is situated in the less developed southwestern part of Hubei. The author becomes aware of the disparity that exists in fine art education between primary and secondary schools in ethnic minority areas and the rest of China, including the inadequate progress and imbalanced development between towns and villages, as well as among schools.

I. The Current Situation of Fine Art Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Ethnic Minority Areas

China is a vast country with significant economic and cultural differences among regions, and uneven development in education exists to varying degrees due to factors such as history, nature, and social and cultural traditions. The weak infrastructure of basic education, the level of teaching staff, and the educational environment in ethnic minority areas all hinder the development of fine art education and the implementation of fine art teaching.

1.1 Outdated Concept and Neglect of Fine Art Education

In certain regions, there persists a relatively conservative mindset, leading to numerous misconceptions and a narrow understanding of fine art education and instruction. Consequently, the phenomenon of undervaluing fine art education exists to varying degrees both within and outside educational institutions. Many individuals tenaciously cling to the belief that the sole path to personal advancement lies in the study of mathematics, science, and chemistry, ultimately

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securing admission to university.

Due to the influence of exam-oriented education, primary and secondary school assessment standards tend to focus solely on students' academic performance and enrollment rates. Consequently, schools prioritize so-called main courses and undervalue subsidiary courses such as art. It is common for art classes to be marginalized or even cut entirely, leading students to view art as an easy leisure activity rather than an opportunity for learning^[2].

Over time, some students who were originally interested in art only regard it as a "hobby" for easy leisure, unable to truly enter the state of art learning, and the learning effect is naturally unsatisfactory.

1.2 Insufficient Fine Art Teaching Resources and Lack of Teaching Materials

Another challenge is the limited availability of fine art teaching resources and materials. There are four primary and secondary schools under the Enshi Grand Canyon Scenic Area Administration with approximately 2,350 enrolled students. Of these, 16 junior high school classes offer complete courses, employ professional fine art teachers, and have dedicated studios and teaching aids such as plaster geometric bodies. Additionally, there are 37 elementary school classes with around 1,300 students, which can offer complete courses but have only part-time fine art teachers and lack dedicated studios or teaching aids such as plaster geometric bodies. Three more remote rural primary schools provide complete courses but only have part-time non-professional teachers for art, music, and sports.

In some schools, teachers still rely on traditional teaching methods such as chalk and blackboard in art classes, limiting the use of diverse educational resources to enhance classroom content and teaching methods.

1.3 Shortage of Fine Art Education Teachers: Urgent Need to Improve Professional Level

The improvement and strengthening of fine art education in schools depend on the strength of teachers. For rural schools in minority areas, the shortage of teachers poses the biggest obstacle to offering adequate and quality art courses. In some primary and secondary schools, full-time fine art teachers are lacking, rendering art courses to be merely a formality. It is not uncommon to hear of math teachers teaching art classes. Due to insufficient teaching staff, schools cannot guarantee the provision of enough art courses, let alone ensure teaching quality.

Some schools lack enough professional fine art teachers, and part-time fine art teachers have uneven levels of professional knowledge. Some have a superficial understanding of fine art education, and their teaching methods are relatively simple, limited to copying artworks to complete fine art teaching tasks, making it challenging to achieve the "teaching through diverse methods" advocated by the state. During the school season's start, some schools experience a "teacher shortage" and resort to hiring temporary teachers from society. Interviews reveal that schools do not have high requirements for fine art teachers. Regardless of their educational background, as long as they possess certain teaching abilities, they can be employed. However, few university students actively apply for teaching positions in grassroots schools, and very few professional graduates from higher education institutions.

II. Strategies for Improving Fine Art Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Minority Areas

With the continual development and progress of society, education is experiencing a dynamic resurgence. Within the framework of quality education, fine art education is presented with exceptional opportunities for advancement^[3]. The emphasis placed on quality education, aesthetic education, and the holistic development of students is progressively gaining consensus within ethnic minority areas. Revitalizing fine art education is not solely the mission and responsibility of schools and teachers, but also a shared aspiration across society.

2.1 Raising Awareness and Innovating Mechanisms

2.1.1 Integration and Collaboration to Foster Innovative Advancements in Fine Art Education

Schools should utilize the power of aesthetic education to nurture students' aesthetic abilities and overall literacy, fostering education through beauty^[4]. Fine art education serves as a vital component of aesthetic education, laying the groundwork for students' exploration of beauty. Schools should fully harness the enlightening role of fine art education in line with the objective of talent cultivation, encouraging students to develop a correct outlook on life, values, and the world^[5]. This approach facilitates an understanding of the true essence of beauty while fostering the development of well-rounded individuals possessing moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic competencies.

Promoting comprehensive development and innovative future education is inseparable from fine art education, which requires not only the attention of schools, but also the understanding, care and support of the whole society. Relevant departments should increase their support for fine art education in minority areas and provide the necessary conditions. Establishing and refining the integration mechanism encompassing classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, campus cultural development, and art exhibitions is essential. Furthermore, a synergistic mechanism that unites schools, families, and society should be established. Supporting and aiding schools in conducting a diverse array of aesthetic education activities can effectively raise awareness about the significance of fine art education. Schools may consider regularly inviting parents to attend these activities and exhibitions, thereby cultivating parental appreciation for the value of art instruction.

2.1.2 Establishing a Scientific Educational Evaluation System

It is crucial to reorient examinations to their original purpose in education and on the holistic development of students, is crucial. Steps should be taken to rectify the prevalent examination-oriented educational approach and establish a

scientifically grounded evaluation system.

Enhancing the institutional framework supporting fine art education, researching the formulation of rules and regulations for the advancement of fine art education in schools, and refining the system of supervision and evaluation of fine art education are imperative.

Developing appropriate evaluation criteria is essential to foster the effectiveness of art instruction. The current education and teaching evaluation system should encompass the assessment of fine art teachers' instructional performance and students' fine art achievement.

Through the implementation of an educational evaluation system and the enhancement of relevant systems and regulations, endeavors will be made to elevate the status of art classrooms, fortify the recognition bestowed upon fine art education, and steer art instruction onto the right trajectory.

2.2 Addressing Deficiencies and Enriching Resources

2.2.1 Expanding High-Quality Resources and Increasing Educational Investment

Statistics indicate that China's compulsory education has attained a level commensurate with that of high-income countries worldwide^[6]. Nevertheless, rectifying shortcomings in educational development and promoting equitable progress in compulsory education remain long-term challenges that educators must confront, particularly in ethnic minority areas where weaknesses need to be strengthened and deficiencies rectified.

Confronting these issues in a rational manner and striving to overcome them is essential. It is imperative to enhance the quantity and quality of educational resources, and further augment investments in fine art education in primary and secondary schools. This includes procuring additional teaching materials and equipment for fine art education to fulfill the requirements of art instruction in schools.

2.2.2 Enriching Teaching Resources with Local Realities

Create an immersive artistic environment to foster a love for learning.

Schools should allocate dedicated spaces for fine art education, procure specialized equipment and facilities, and provide a conducive teaching environment. Conduct a variety of art activities within the school premises and establish a platform for art exhibitions to enhance student participation and engagement in art.

Organize special lectures and invite renowned artists to provide guidance.

Schools can invite local cultural and folklore experts to deliver talks on the cultural background and artistic characteristics of the indigenous ethnic groups, enabling students to deepen their understanding of minority cultures.

Emphasize hands-on work to enhance the efficacy of classroom instruction.

Depending on the specific circumstances, schools can encourage students to utilize locally available materials in their art projects, enabling them to save on professional consumables while developing their ability to discover beauty and engage in hands-on activities.

2.2.3 Develop School-Based Curriculum Rooted in Minority Cultures

Ethnic minority regions are blessed with abundant natural resources and a rich ethnic heritage. Folk art, a cultural manifestation created through social work and long-standing life practices, enjoys popularity among the local populace and serves their daily lives^[7]. These unique resources represent a valuable asset for conducting fine art education.

Integrate teaching resources and design exemplary curricula.

Drawing inspiration from local minority cultures, devise art courses with distinctive features, such as painting and handicrafts, to guide students in comprehending and mastering the artistic characteristics and techniques unique to the local ethnic groups.

Blend classroom and extracurricular activities to enrich teaching content.

Exploit the architectural elements, traditional attire, and festive customs of ethnic minorities for art instruction, incorporating rich artistic symbolism and diverse forms of appreciation or organizing sketching sessions.

2.3 Enriching Teachers Team and Raising Standards

2.3.1 Collective Efforts of Society, Primary and Secondary Schools

Promoting the healthy development of fine art education in ethnic minority areas and ensuring the quality of education for primary and secondary school students requires the collaborative efforts of schools, families, and society as a whole.

Update perspectives and enhance awareness. Emphasizing the importance of fine art education should extend beyond mere rhetoric and be translated into concrete actions. Recognizing the relative deficiency of fine art teachers in primary and secondary schools in ethnic minority areas, higher-level authorities should allocate sufficient attention and support.

Education is intertwined with the family, school, and society, and quality education also hinges upon parents' correct understanding, positive influence, and support for their children.

2.3.2 Strengthen Collaboration with Local Universities

Serving the local economic and social development is a crucial responsibility of local universities. Colleges and universities in ethnic minority regions should establish professional curriculum systems that cater to the needs of the region, from the needs of economic and social development as the starting point, adopting practical and application-oriented teaching approaches that cultivate art talents necessary for the local context.^[8]

In addition to curriculum development, universities in ethnic minority regions should encourage greater participation of

college students in local educational activities, actively involving them in teaching within art classrooms. Support should be provided for university students to engage in mutual learning and exchange with local primary and secondary school fine art teachers, thereby deepening their understanding of fine art education through practical experience. Local universities should intensify their support and establish fine art teaching practice and creative centers in collaboration with primary and secondary schools. Alongside internships for university students, university fine art teachers can also enhance exchanges with teachers and students in primary and secondary schools, fostering mutual improvement.

2.3.3 Continuous Professional Development for Fine Art Teachers

Schools should prioritize the development of fine art teachers by providing opportunities, creating platforms, and offering various forms of support to facilitate their growth. Organizing young fine art teachers to undergo planned further training and education in art colleges and teacher training colleges can enhance their overall professional competence^[9]. Additionally, schools can employ fine art teachers from external sources through multiple channels, leveraging social forces to enhance fine art teaching and enrich campus art activities.

The vast rural areas hold tremendous potential. Ethnic minority regions, particularly remote rural areas, are in dire need of fine art teachers who possess both talent and dedication. The key to professional development for rural fine art teachers lies in their connection to rural life. Understanding, experiencing, and embracing the rural environment are vital for nurturing a cohesive rural fine art teacher community^[10].

Primary and secondary school fine art teachers must not only strengthen their professional training and deepen their knowledge, but also stay abreast of contemporary trends, constantly improving their teaching abilities and standards. They should continuously innovate and refine teaching methods to make the art curriculum more engaging.

By incorporating modern science and technology, multimedia teaching can be employed to diversify teaching formats and content, enhancing students' interest in learning. This approach allows students to experience the enchantment of art in the real world, fostering a deeper appreciation for beauty.

III. Conclusion

Fine art education plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of primary and secondary school students. However, certain shortcomings exist in some ethnic minority schools, impeding the normal progress of fine art teaching and hindering the advancement of fine art education to some extent.

To address the challenges associated with developing fine art education in primary and secondary schools in ethnic minority areas, all sectors of society must increase awareness, prioritize policy support, strengthen teacher training initiatives, innovate teaching methods, and strive for improved teaching quality.

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