

A STUDY OF THE COUNTERMEASURES TO IMPROVE ART EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA

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Abstract: This paper examines the status of art education in rural China and the challenges that rural schools face in providing quality art education. The paper argues that art education is essential for the development of students' creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills, and that the lack of art education in rural schools can have a negative impact on students' overall development. The paper proposes some suggestions for how to improve art education in rural China, such as increasing investment in art education, providing more opportunities for extracurricular art activities, and training more art teachers.

Keywords: art education, rural China, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, extracurricular activities, art teachers

Introduction

Art education is an essential component of a well-rounded education system that can contribute to the development of individuals' creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills. In rural China, however, the status of art education has been relatively low, as the focus has been more on vocational skills training rather than creativity and imagination cultivation. The cost of distributing the same amount of resources to rural areas is much higher than that of urban areas. Therefore, in China, rural areas have traditionally received less attention in terms of educational investment compared to urban areas. The lack of resources, facilities, and qualified teachers has resulted in an education system that is less diverse and less well-rounded than those in urban areas. Art education, in particular, has been neglected, with limited exposure to art in rural schools, few opportunities for extracurricular activities, and a lack of art teachers. This has resulted in students lacking creativity, imagination, and critical thinking skills, which can limit their potential to excel in life.[1]

1. Status quo of Art Education in Rural China

The current status of art education in rural China is characterized by several factors, including:

2.1 Lack of art teachers

Rural schools have difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified art teachers. This is mainly manifested in: Lack of incentives: Rural areas often offer lower salaries and fewer benefits than urban areas. This can make it difficult for schools in these areas to attract and retain qualified art teachers, who may prefer to work in urban areas where they can earn more money and have access to more resources. In addition, teachers who want to have a family would primarily consider settling down in a city where education resources are easily accessible for their children. Limited professional development opportunities: Many rural schools do not have access to the same professional

development opportunities as urban schools. This can make it difficult for art teachers in these areas to stay up-to-date with new teaching methods, technologies, and resources. Limited exposure to art education: Some art education programs in rural areas may not be as well-developed or comprehensive as those in urban areas. This can make it difficult for teachers in these areas to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be effective art educators. Social and cultural barriers: Some art education teachers may not be willing to work in rural areas due to social and cultural barriers. For example, they may prefer to live in urban areas where there are more cultural and entertainment options, or they may not feel comfortable living in a community that is significantly different from their own. Lack of resources: Rural schools may not have access to the same resources and facilities as urban schools, which can make it difficult for teachers to provide high-quality art education.

2.2 Lack of resources and facilities

Rural schools in China often lack the resources and facilities necessary to provide a comprehensive art education, which can be a significant disadvantage for students in these areas. Because of limited funding. Many rural schools have limited funding available for art education programs. This can make it difficult to purchase the necessary art supplies and equipment, such as paint, brushes, easels, and drawing tablets. The lack of infrastructure results in some rural schools that may not have the necessary infrastructure to support a comprehensive arts education program. For example, they may not have enough classrooms, studios, or workshops to accommodate all of the students who are interested in art. At the same time, limited access to technology: Rural schools may not have access to the same technology as urban schools, such as digital cameras, printers, and design software. This can make it difficult for students to explore digital art and graphic design. Inadequate facilities: Some rural schools may lack the necessary facilities, such as art studios or exhibition spaces, to enable students to showcase their work and gain valuable feedback.[2] And lack of qualified teachers: As mentioned earlier, rural schools may struggle to attract and retain qualified art teachers. Without qualified teachers, students may not receive the guidance and instruction they need to develop their artistic skills and creativity. These limitations on infrastructures and equipment caused students to have less interest in art education since they didn't have the chance to witness how art is done.

2.3 Emphasis on vocational skills

The focus of rural education is primarily on vocational skills training, with less emphasis on the development of creativity and imagination, which can limit students' potential to excel in life. Rural areas in China have historically been underdeveloped compared to urban areas, with lower incomes and fewer job opportunities. As a result, there is a strong emphasis on vocational education in these areas as a means of increasing economic development and providing students with the skills they need to secure employment.[3] Many rural students come from low-income families, and may not have the financial means to pursue higher education. Vocational education offers a practical alternative to academic education, as it provides students with tangible skills and qualifications that can help them find employment and improve their quality of life. Differences in cultural values have led to a preference for practical skills and trade rather than academic pursuits in some rural areas. This can be seen in the emphasis placed on traditional crafts and trades, such as weaving, carpentry, and agriculture. At the same time the Chinese government has implemented policies to promote vocational education in rural areas, including funding for vocational schools and programs, and incentives for students who choose vocational

education over academic education. Even if the rural areas didn't pay too much attention to vocational skills, they would pursue academic achievement over art cultivation because they have outdated opinions on art education. However, the focus on vocational education in rural areas has led to a neglect of other important subjects, including art education. To address this issue, it is important to promote a more well-rounded education in rural areas, including the development of artistic and creative skills alongside vocational training. Research has shown that when a gifted child solves a problem, he or she has increased electrical activity on both sides of the brain. This suggests that for the brain, the left and right hemispheres must work together to be more effective. By stimulating and exercising the right brain, art can strengthen the connection between the left and right brains. Children should learn the art of using the right brain to promote the synergy between the two sides of the brain, so as to achieve the effect of wielding the full potential. This can help to cultivate a diverse and skilled workforce that is better equipped to meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy.[4]

3. Countermeasures

To address the issues facing art education in rural China, several countermeasures can be implemented, including:

3.1 Government Investment: The government can increase investment in rural education, including art education, to provide more resources, facilities, and qualified teachers.

To increase investment in rural art education, the government could allocate more funding to rural schools specifically for the purpose of art education. This could include funding for art supplies, equipment, and facilities, as well as salaries for qualified art teachers. Provide incentives: The government could provide incentives for art teachers to work in rural areas, such as higher salaries or subsidized housing. This could help to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural schools. Establish partnerships: The government could establish partnerships between rural schools and arts organizations or universities to provide students with additional resources and opportunities. For example, universities could send art students to rural schools to teach classes or provide mentorship. Develop online resources: The government could develop online resources for art education, such as video tutorials or webinars, that can be accessed by rural schools with limited resources or facilities. Promote cultural exchange: The government could promote cultural exchange programs between urban and rural schools to expose rural students to different styles and techniques of art. This could help to broaden their horizons and inspire creativity. Develop competitions and exhibitions: The government could develop competitions and exhibitions for rural students to showcase their artistic skills and gain recognition for their work. This could provide motivation for students to pursue art education and help to cultivate a sense of pride in their achievements.

Overall, increasing investment in rural art education requires a multifaceted approach that involves government funding, incentives for teachers, partnerships with arts organizations, online resources, cultural exchange programs, and competitions and exhibitions. And these measures require multi-lateral cooperation and investment. Particularly, they also need a long time to make a difference. By taking these steps, the Chinese government can help to provide students in rural areas with the resources and opportunities they need to pursue their artistic passions and develop their creative potential.

3.2 Teacher Training: Rural schools can provide teacher training programs to enable existing teachers to teach art subjects, even if they lack a formal background in art.

Providing teacher training programs is a viable solution to enable existing teachers in rural areas to teach art subjects, even if they lack a formal background in art. These training programs can help teachers to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to teach art effectively, while also promoting a culture of creativity and art appreciation in rural schools. In addition, these training programs can also become an attraction for teachers in other places to join the rural schools.

Here are some ways in which teacher training programs could be implemented in rural schools: Collaborate with art schools: Rural schools can collaborate with nearby art schools to develop training programs for their teachers. Art schools can provide the expertise and resources necessary to train teachers in various art forms, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and design. Provide online training: Online training programs can be an effective way to provide training to teachers who are unable to attend in-person training sessions due to distance or other factors. Online training can also be more cost-effective than in-person training, making it a more feasible option for schools with limited resources. Organize workshops: Rural schools can organize workshops and seminars to provide teachers with hands-on experience in various art forms. These workshops can be led by professional artists or art educators, who can provide guidance and feedback to teachers as they develop their skills. Encourage peer-to-peer learning: Teachers in rural schools can also learn from each other through peer-to-peer learning. Schools can organize peer-to-peer learning groups where teachers can share their experiences and knowledge in teaching art, as well as provide feedback and support to each other.

In addition to providing training to existing teachers, rural schools can also consider hiring art education specialists who can work alongside existing teachers to enhance the quality of art education in rural schools. These specialists can provide guidance and support to teachers, as well as develop and implement art curriculum and programs in rural schools. Overall, teacher training programs can help to bridge the gap in art education in rural schools and provide students with the opportunity to develop their creative potential. By investing in the training and development of existing teachers, rural schools can promote a culture of creativity and artistic expression in their communities, and help to foster the next generation of artists and creators.

3.3 Technology-based Learning: Technology-based learning can be utilized to provide students with access to art education materials and resources, including online art courses and tutorials.

Technology-based learning can be a valuable tool to provide students with access to art education materials and resources, including online art courses and tutorials. With the increasing availability of technology, particularly in urban areas, online resources can be a viable solution to overcome the limited access to art education materials and resources faced by rural students. For example online art courses and tutorials: Online art courses and tutorials can be an effective way to provide students with access to high-quality art education materials and resources. These courses can cover a wide range of topics, including drawing, painting, sculpture, design, and digital art, and can be accessed by students from any location with an internet connection.[5] Virtual reality (VR) technology: VR technology can be used to provide students with immersive experiences in art education. With VR technology, students can explore virtual art galleries, participate in interactive art installations, and engage with art in ways that are not possible in a traditional classroom setting. Mobile learning apps: Mobile learning apps can provide

students with access to art education materials and resources on their smartphones or tablets. These apps can include art quizzes, interactive art games, and virtual art galleries.

By utilizing technology-based learning, rural schools can provide students with access to high-quality art education materials and resources, regardless of their location. Technology-based learning can also help to promote a culture of creativity and innovation in rural schools, and provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to pursue careers in the creative industries.[6]

4. Conclusion

Art education plays a vital role in the development of creativity, imagination, and critical thinking skills, which are essential for students to excel in life. In addition, art education also cultivates students' aesthetic qualities. It enables children to freely express their own views, express their inner emotions, and feel the joy of communicating with others through art so as to obtain a kind of spiritual satisfaction and a sense of pleasure from self-affirmation. However, in rural China, art education has been neglected, resulting in students lacking exposure to art, qualified teachers, and resources. And the lack of all kinds of resources leads to further neglect of things that are not critical to survival, which forms a vicious cycle. Most parents in rural China still believe that art education is a luxury subject for wealthy families. They refuse to realize that art education is necessary for all kids to have a better life. To address these issues, the government, schools, and communities must work together to provide the necessary investment, training, resources, and opportunities to enable students to develop their artistic potential. By doing so, we can create a more diverse, well-rounded education system that can help students succeed in both their personal and professional lives.

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