

Exploring the Integration of Educational Drama and High School Art Appreciation Curriculum from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the context of educational reform, interdisciplinary teaching is becoming an important trend in cultivating students' comprehensive qualities. Educational drama, with its interactivity, experiential nature, and creativity, brings new vitality to art appreciation classes for high school students. This paper takes the fourth lesson of the second unit, "Human Life," from the Hunan Fine Arts Edition as an example to elaborate on the theoretical foundation for integrating educational drama into art appreciation classes for high school students. It introduces the application process in teaching and proposes improvement measures. Finally, it looks forward to the development of interdisciplinary art education, aiming to promote innovation in high school art teaching.

KEYWORDS

interdisciplinary; educational drama; high school art appreciation curriculum; Human Life

1 Introduction

In the current era of continuous educational reform and development, interdisciplinary teaching has become an important trend in cultivating students' comprehensive qualities. Art appreciation courses, as one of the core courses in high school aesthetic education, play an irreplaceable role in enhancing students' aesthetic abilities and cultural understanding. However, traditional art appreciation teaching models are often rather monotonous, with limited student participation and interest. Educational drama, as an innovative teaching method, brings new vitality and possibilities to art appreciation courses through its unique interactivity, experiential nature, and creativity. Integrating educational drama into high school art not only enriches teaching methods but also allows students to deeply understand the connotations of artworks through personal experiences, fostering multiple skills and promoting their all-around development. Foreign countries have started earlier in the integration of educational drama and art education, achieving rich theoretical and practical results. Many countries widely apply educational drama across various subjects, and in the field of art education, drama activities guide students to understand art history and analyze artworks, thereby enhancing their artistic literacy. In recent years, related research in China has gradually increased, but it is still largely in the exploratory stage. Some studies focus on the theoretical introduction of educational drama and its initial application in certain subjects, while there is less in-depth research on the integration of high school art appreciation curriculum with educational drama, especially lacking practical analyses based on specific teaching cases. In view of this, this paper takes the teaching of "Human Life" as a specific case to deeply explore the theoretical basis, application methods, practical effects and improvement strategies of the integration of educational drama and high school art appreciation curriculum, aiming to provide useful reference for the innovation of high school art teaching and promote the development of interdisciplinary teaching in the field of high school art education.

2 The theoretical basis of the integration of educational drama and high school art appreciation curriculum

2.1 The connotation and characteristics of educational drama

Educational drama originated in the Enlightenment of the 18th century, influenced ideologically by Rousseau's educational philosophy of "learning through practice" and practically by American pragmatist educator John Dewey, who first combined drama with education. It is not merely a theatrical performance but uses dramatic elements and methods to conduct teaching activities. Educational drama applies dramatic techniques and elements in teaching or sociocultural activities, enabling learners to achieve their goals and objectives through dramatic practice. The focus of educational drama is on student participation, which allows students to gain insight into the essence of knowledge through experience and to discover possibilities and create new meanings through mutual exchange. Educational drama is a powerful tool for learning and teaching that engages multiple sensory organs—mind, body, consciousness, and emotion. It has a profound positive impact on students' personality, character, cognition, social skills, emotions, and physical development. Its positive influence extends to all subjects studied in school and daily life. Creative drama is an extremely

effective teaching method for developing students' comprehensive intelligence and improving their learning styles. "[1] Educational drama is interactive, experiential, and creative, allowing students to immerse themselves in learning content through role-playing and other means. Active participation and communication among students promote the development of various abilities.

2.2 The objectives and requirements of high school art appreciation curriculum

Aesthetic appreciation of art refers to the activity of observing, experiencing, associating, identifying, and evaluating works of art and artistic phenomena using perception, experience, and knowledge, thereby gaining aesthetic experiences and enhancing one's taste in art. [2] The high school art appreciation curriculum aims to cultivate students' abilities in art appreciation, aesthetic judgment, and cultural understanding. The curriculum standards require students to master basic methods of art appreciation, enabling them to analyze and evaluate different types of artworks, understand the cultural connotations and artistic values behind the works, form correct aesthetic views and tastes, and enhance their cultural literacy. Through learning, students should learn to appreciate and understand artworks from multiple perspectives, experiencing the unique charm of artworks under different cultural backgrounds. " In high school art appreciation curriculum, the main focus is not on teaching through mere appreciation, nor on making students familiar with the background knowledge of art creation or memorizing appreciated artworks. Instead, it involves appreciating excellent works of art to foster students' interest in art, improve their aesthetic abilities, and enable them to actively engage in deep-level appreciation and understanding of art, thereby gaining aesthetic pleasure and achieving the goal of aesthetic education." [3]

2.3 Theoretical basis of integration

"Constructivist learning theory differs from cognitivism in that it posits knowledge is not objectively existing but rather grows out of an individual's existing cognitive structure. They also believe that individuals construct meaning based on their knowledge structures, leading to different interpretations of the same knowledge." [4] From the perspective of constructivist learning theory, students actively build knowledge on the basis of their existing experiences. Educational drama creates authentic contexts for students, allowing them to construct understanding of artworks through experience and interaction within these contexts. Gardner proposed in his book 'Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences' (1983) that each person has at least seven intelligences: "linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. We will introduce each one below." [5]

The theory of multiple intelligences suggests that everyone possesses multiple intelligences. Integrating educational drama with art appreciation classes can stimulate various intelligences, such as linguistic intelligence, spatial intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence, promoting the all-around development of students. Authentic learning requires teaching to be grounded in real life and oriented towards the real world. "We hope to create a teaching environment filled with love and respect for students through authentic learning, encouraging them to shift from passive recipients of knowledge to active learners. In this process, attention must be paid to each student's unique experiences and personality. Therefore, 'personalization' is always closely related to authenticity." [6] The theory of situational learning illustrates the value of immersing learners in authentic scenarios. The situation created by educational drama is consistent with the situation reflected in artworks, which helps students better understand and feel artworks.

3 The application of educational drama in high school art appreciation curriculum

Taking the teaching of "Human Life" as an example, the author explains the method of integrating educational drama into high school art appreciation curriculum.

3.1 Preparations for teaching

The first is the setting of teaching objectives. The author has established multi-level teaching objectives in conjunction with curriculum standards, textbook content, and students' actual situations. The knowledge and skills goal is for students to clearly explain the artistic features of "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," including the painting techniques and layout, and to learn how to analyze the visual elements and meanings in the artwork; the process and method goal is to improve teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills through participating in drama activities, encouraging creative thinking; and the emotional attitude and values goal is to spark students' appreciation for Chinese traditional culture, boosting their cultural confidence and national pride.

Secondly, let's discuss the key points and challenges associated with teaching. The focus is on enabling students to grasp the artistic characteristics of "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," understand the artistic language used by Zhang Zeduan to depict Song Dynasty urban life, and enhance their comprehensive abilities through dramatic activities. The challenge lies in using dramatic performances to help students deeply understand the symbolic meanings of the work, its creative background, and the emotions embedded by the author within the piece, thereby strengthening cultural confidence and national pride.

The third objective is to design theatrical activities. In terms of role-playing, students work in groups to portray characters from the "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," such as vendors, literati, and boatmen, experiencing life in Song Dynasty urban areas; for scenario recreation, I guide students to recreate important scenes from the painting, like the Rainbow Bridge market and shop operations; regarding story creation, I encourage students to use the characters or scenes from the painting as material, collecting relevant information before class to create imaginative stories. In planning the activity process, I clarify with the students the time allocation and specific tasks for each segment before class, ensuring that the activities are conducted efficiently and orderly.

The fourth aspect involves preparing teaching resources. I guide students to collect relevant materials about "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" through channels such as libraries and the internet, including the life story of the painter Zhang Zeduan, the historical background of the work's creation, and academic research findings on the piece. I use club activity time to invite students to prepare teaching props and costumes together, such as making shop signs and banners from the painting and purchasing costumes and props for related characters; I also utilize classroom space to set up a simulated Song Dynasty market scene, creating a rich and engaging teaching atmosphere.

3.2 Teaching implementation process

The first is the course introduction. The author, dressed in ancient attire, enters the classroom as a Song Dynasty scholar and tells the story of the creation of "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," such as how Zhang Zeduan observed life in the bustling city and the fascinating anecdotes from his creative process. During the narration, high-definition images of parts of "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" are displayed to guide students in observing the details of the painting, sparking their curiosity and interest in learning and thus naturally introducing the course.

Secondly, we organized theatrical activities. I organized students into groups to engage in role-playing and scenario reenactment activities. In these role-plays, students explore character traits from attire, expressions, and language to actions. For instance, those playing vendors mimicked the cries of street vendors from the Song Dynasty, showcasing the process of commodity trading; those portraying scholars displayed refined manners and communication styles. I guided the students in collaborating to set up shop stalls, recreating the bustling scenes of Song Dynasty markets. During the activities, I circulated around, providing timely guidance to help students observe paintings, reminding them to pay attention to interactions between characters and the layout of scenes, thus aiding their deeper understanding of the social and cultural significance of the works.

The third aspect is knowledge presentation and interaction. When explaining painting techniques, I combine the scenes from students' performances to analyze how lines are used to depict the dynamics and texture of figures and how color coordination creates the atmosphere of the painting. When discussing composition features, I guide students to observe the scattered perspective in the paintings, understanding how it presents a grand yet orderly spatial sense. I introduce iconographic analysis methods, working with students to interpret the symbolic meanings of elements such as figures, buildings, and objects in the paintings, like the symbolism of the Rainbow Bridge in Song Dynasty culture and the social status represented by different attire. I encourage active questioning and sharing of insights, organizing classroom discussions to deepen students' understanding of the works through intellectual exchanges.

The fourth part is the homework practice session. I guided the students to work in groups to complete an analysis report on "The Silk Preparation." When assigning the task, I explicitly required the students to apply the image studies methods learned in class, examining multiple dimensions, such as painting techniques, compositional features, and historical context, to thoroughly analyze the work. During this process, I encouraged the students to spark ideas through group discussions, exploring the symbolic meanings of life scenes, costumes, and props in the work. I also arranged a classroom presentation session for each group to share their analysis process and conclusions, reinforcing knowledge and enhancing skills.

The fifth aspect is teaching evaluation. The author evaluates students from multiple dimensions. In terms of teacher evaluation, the author focuses on students' performance in drama activities, including the accuracy of character portrayal, teamwork skills, and depth of understanding of the work. For self-evaluation, the author guides students to reflect on their growth and shortcomings during the activity. For peer evaluation, each group assesses the strengths and areas for improvement of other groups. When analyzing evaluation reports, the focus is on assessing students' ability to apply iconographic methods, the depth of their exploration of the work's meaning, and the logic of their written expression.

4 The practical effect and reflection of the integration of educational drama and high school art appreciation curriculum

4.1 Practical effect

The author found through post-class questionnaire surveys that students' interest in art appreciation classes has significantly increased. 88% of the students expressed a preference for this integrated teaching method, finding it more engaging and vivid. Analysis of student assignments revealed a significant improvement in their ability to analyze artwork using iconographic methods, allowing them to delve deeper into the works' meanings. Classroom observations showed a substantial increase in student participation, with a lively atmosphere and closer collaboration among students that effectively enhanced teamwork skills. The author believes that students are more proactive and active in class, with more dynamic thinking. Students also noted that under this teaching model, their understanding of artworks has deepened, acquiring art knowledge and improving their overall abilities.

4.2 Existing problems and improvement measures

The following problems exist in teaching: the tight class hours make it impossible for some dramatic activities to be fully carried out; some students are not yet proficient in understanding and applying iconographic methods; some students participate passively in dramatic activities, and their enthusiasm needs to be improved; the preparation of teaching resources is relatively complicated, and the production costs of props and costumes are high.

In response to these issues, the author has implemented a series of improvement measures. For example, the author is rearranging class schedules and adjusting the teaching material to give more time for drama activities; providing better guidance on iconographic methods through real-life examples and special exercises to help students understand this method; using different reward systems, like creativity and performance awards, to boost students' interest and encourage them to take part in drama activities; and finding more ways to access teaching resources by using online materials and working with school clubs to make props and costumes, which helps lower teaching costs.

5 Conclusions

The integration of educational drama and high school art appreciation curriculum has achieved significant results in the teaching practice of "Human Life." This blended teaching model enriches both content and form, enhancing students' interest and participation, effectively cultivating their art appreciation skills, aesthetic literacy, and comprehensive abilities. At the same time, by establishing a diversified evaluation system and conducting extended teaching activities, it promotes the all-round development of students. However, some issues have emerged during implementation that require continuous optimization and improvement.

In the future, educators can attempt to further expand the application of educational drama in art appreciation classes for high school students. Continuously innovate the forms of dramatic activities and explore more ways to integrate with art appreciation teaching. Strengthen interdisciplinary integration, deeply combining art appreciation with history, literature, philosophy, and other subjects to broaden students' cultural horizons. Utilize modern educational technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create more immersive learning environments for students, enhancing teaching effectiveness. Additionally, it is hoped that more educators will pay attention to and participate in the research and practice of integrating educational drama with art appreciation classes, jointly promoting innovation and development in high school art education.

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