

Research and Practice on the Development of Aesthetic Education Infiltration in Rural Preschool Education under the Rural Revitalization Strategy

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the rural revitalization strategy, the infiltration and development of aesthetic education in rural preschool education is an important way to achieve cultural inheritance, talent cultivation and ecological revitalization. Based on the theory of integrated urban-rural development and the theory of aesthetic education infiltration, this study systematically analyzes the current predicaments of rural preschool aesthetic education in terms of resources, teachers, curriculum and mechanisms, reveals the two-way empowerment logic between it and rural revitalization, and explores the practical path of "integration of local culture - multi-party collaborative support - dynamic evaluation optimization" to effectively enhance the cultural identity and aesthetic ability of rural children. It provides educational support and cultural impetus for the rural revitalization strategy, with both theoretical innovation and practical promotion value.

KEYWORDS

Rural revitalization; Preschool education; Infiltration of aesthetic education

1 Introduction

At present, rural preschool aesthetic education is facing the double predicament of "urban model transplantation" and "lack of local characteristics" due to unbalanced resource allocation, weak professional teaching staff and the discontinuity of local culture. The infiltration of aesthetic education as an educational paradigm that integrates aesthetic experience, cultural inheritance and life practice is precisely the key path to breaking this predicament. Based on the cross-perspective of rural revitalization and preschool aesthetic education, this study focuses on the core issue of "how to activate rural natural and cultural resources through systematic and immersive aesthetic education and cultivate rural children with both local cultural identity and aesthetic creativity", and explores the collaborative infiltration mechanism of multiple subjects by tapping into the aesthetic value of local culture. The aim is to provide solutions that are both academically profound and practically feasible for the high-quality development of rural preschool education, and to support the cultural implementation and talent foundation of the rural revitalization strategy.

2 Research background and significance

The rural revitalization strategy is the overarching approach to the work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers in the new era. The National Rural Revitalization Strategy Plan (2018-2022) clearly lists "cultural revitalization" as one of the five revitalizations, emphasizing "the inheritance and development of fine traditional culture, the cultivation of civilized rural customs, good family traditions and simple folkways, and the improvement of the level of social civilization in rural areas" ^[1]. The 2021 Opinion on Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalization and Accelerating the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas further pointed out that it is necessary to "strengthen the construction of rural public culture and promote the integrated construction of urban and rural public cultural service systems", and take educational equity and cultural inheritance as important supports for rural revitalization ^[2].

3 Policy orientation of the rural revitalization strategy

3.1 Rural revitalization strategy

In the field of education, the Action Plan for the Development and Improvement of Preschool Education during the 14th Five-Year Plan period proposes to "promote the universal, inclusive, safe and high-quality development of preschool education", with particular emphasis on "strengthening the supply of preschool education resources in rural and

underdeveloped areas". As the "last mile" of educational equity, the quality of rural preschool education is directly related to the lifelong development of rural children^[3]. Aesthetic education, as a combination of aesthetic education, moral education and cultural education, has been included in the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era", which requires that "aesthetic education in schools be regarded as an important vehicle for moral education and promoting the Chinese spirit of aesthetic education". In this context, aesthetic education in rural preschool education is not only necessary for the all-round development of children, but also a strategic measure for the revitalization of rural culture and breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

3.2 Aesthetic education in rural preschool education

Preschool aesthetic education is an enlightenment education activity for children aged 3 to 6, with aesthetic experience as the core and artistic expression and cultural inheritance as the goal, guiding children to discover beauty in nature and life through sensory experience. Such as perceiving the color changes of rural fields and the aesthetic form of crops; By means of painting, handicrafts, music and other forms to express aesthetic experiences, rural children can use local materials such as straw and clay to create and give artistic expressions of rural characteristics; By integrating folk customs and traditional skills, children can understand the aesthetic value of local culture, such as experiencing the beauty of folk customs in the process of weaving colorful ropes during the Dragon Boat Festival and making handmade mooncakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival. Compared with urban preschool aesthetic education, the uniqueness of rural aesthetic education lies in the fact that the natural environment of the countryside itself is an aesthetic education classroom, and children can gain aesthetic experience in real life scenes. Folk tales, handicrafts, and festival rituals in rural culture constitute unique resources for aesthetic education, making it a bond for cultural inheritance. Rural aesthetic education is often combined with labor education and ecological education. For example, in planting activities, aesthetic observations of the growth patterns of plants are incorporated.

The term "infiltration" originates from traditional Chinese educational thought, indicating that education influences individuals imperceptibly like "spring rain nourishing all things". Integrate aesthetic education into the material and spiritual environment of kindergartens, allowing children to be influenced by aesthetics through osmotic exposure; Break the fragmentation tendency of traditional aesthetic education activities and integrate aesthetic education into the curriculum of various fields such as health, language and society, such as appreciating the rhythmic beauty of local nursery rhymes in language activities; Through daily activities, festival activities, parent-child activities, etc., children can deepen their aesthetic cognition in life practice. The unique value of rural aesthetic education immersion lies in the three-dimensional immersion of "nature - culture - life", enabling children to establish an aesthetic cognition framework in the familiar rural context and avoiding the fragmentation of rural children's experiences by the standardized urban aesthetic education model. In the field of aesthetic education, urban-rural integration is manifested as the flow of urban aesthetic education resources to rural areas to facilitate the training of rural teachers; Rural natural and cultural resources are transformed into materials for aesthetic education, providing differentiated references for urban aesthetic education.

4 Analysis of the current situation and problems of aesthetic infiltration in rural preschool education

4.1 The initial construction of the policy support system

The national and local levels have gradually incorporated rural preschool aesthetic education into the framework of education revitalization. The Action Plan for the Development and Improvement of Preschool Education during the 14th Five-Year Plan period explicitly states "strengthening the aesthetic education function of kindergartens", and the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era particularly emphasizes "promoting the characteristic development of aesthetic education in rural schools". In the "Special Action Plan for Education in Rural Revitalization" jointly released by the Ministry of Education and other departments in 2023, the "Local Culture Aesthetic Education Infiltration Project" was listed as a key project, requiring "the development of characteristic aesthetic education courses by utilizing rural natural and cultural resources". These policies provide institutional guarantees for the infiltration of aesthetic education in rural areas, but the implementation effect still depends on the execution ability at the grassroots level. Most of the documents focus on macro guidance and lack specific implementation standards for rural aesthetic education infiltration. And there are significant differences in policy intensity among regions, with resource input in eastern provinces being significantly higher than that in central and western provinces.

4.2 The problem of aesthetic infiltration in rural preschool education

4.2.1 Insufficient supply coexists with inefficient development

Sixty-three percent of rural kindergartens lack dedicated art classrooms, and art activities are often carried out in regular classrooms, with equipment limited to conventional materials such as crayons and origami. "We don't even have a decent easel. The children can only draw on their desks. The clay used for the clay modeling activities is dug from the fields, with a lot of impurities and not easy to shape," an interview with the principal of a rural kindergarten in the west said. Resources such as multimedia courseware for aesthetic education and virtual museums, which are commonly used in urban kindergartens, are less than 9 percent available in rural kindergartens. Although the education department of a certain province has uniformly distributed digital resource packages for aesthetic education, the content is mostly urban-themed and disconnected from the experiences of rural children, and the actual usage rate is less than 30 percent. Despite the abundance of natural and cultural resources in rural areas, most kindergartens only use them as "material" rather than "curriculum". For instance, one kindergarten collected corn stalks for handicrafts, but it only went through simple operations such as "pasting flowers," without delving into the aesthetic characteristics of the straw material and the agricultural culture behind it.

4.2.2 A double weakness in professional competence and teaching ability

The survey shows that the rate of full-time art teachers in rural kindergartens is only 12 percent, and aesthetic education is mostly taught by class teachers, and the proportion of class teachers who have received systematic aesthetic education training is less than 25 percent. A teacher from a rural kindergarten in central China admitted, "I studied preschool education, but I never learned how to turn local culture into aesthetic education classes. I could only teach according to the textbook, and the effect was very poor."

4.2.3 Teachers' understanding of local culture is superficial

The rural teacher of paper-cutting where I did my internship only taught to imitate fixed patterns in teaching, and did not guide children to understand the cultural implications of the paper-cutting patterns, resulting in aesthetic education being reduced to skills training. Rural teachers have fewer opportunities to participate in aesthetic education training, and the training content is mostly focused on urban aesthetic education concepts. In the "Rural aesthetic education teacher training" organized by a certain province, 80 percent of the course cases were from urban kindergartens, lacking teaching demonstrations in rural scenarios, and teachers still felt "out of place" after participating in the training. Seventy-eight percent of rural kindergartens do not have an independent aesthetic education curriculum plan, and aesthetic education activities are mostly in the form of "festival embellishments", lacking systematic design. One kindergarten conducts only four aesthetic education activities a year, namely "pasting couplets during the Spring Festival", "painting Easter eggs during the Qingming Festival", "weaving colorful ropes during the Dragon Boat Festival" and "making mooncakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival", with repetitive content and merely imitating the form. Many rural kindergartens directly use urban common aesthetic education materials, such as asking rural children to draw "tall buildings" and "subway transportation", which are disconnected from life experience. In a painting class assignment at a rural kindergarten, 60 percent of the children drew "home" as urban buildings, reflecting the neglect of children's experience in the curriculum^[4]. Aesthetic education is disconnected from other areas of teaching and fails to exert the "immersion" effect. For instance, the science activity "Recognizing Crops" focuses only on the knowledge of plant growth and does not guide children to observe the morphological beauty of crops, and the language activity "Telling Folk Tales" focuses only on episodic memory and does not explore the literary aesthetic in the stories.

5 Strategies for the development of aesthetic education infiltration in rural preschool education

5.1 Rural talent revitalization needs to go beyond the superficial logic of "skills training"

Take aesthetic literacy as the core competence of local talents. The practice in a bamboo industry village in Zhejiang Province shows that preschool aesthetic education infiltration can cultivate a variety of key abilities. In the "Bamboo Forest Aesthetic Education course", children develop a scientific understanding of local resources by measuring the growth rate of bamboo and recording changes in the shape of bamboo leaves. This ability forms the basis for future participation in bamboo industry innovation. The founder of a bamboo weaving workshop recalled: "When I was a child

observing the concave-convex texture of bamboo nodes in kindergarten, now when I design bamboo furniture, I always think of those natural lines." The ability of children to transform traditional bamboo weaving patterns into modern design elements, such as generating "dynamic bamboo weaving patterns" with programming software, has driven the upgrading of rural cultural and creative industries. The "Children's designed bamboo bookmarks" developed by local kindergartens in collaboration with bamboo product enterprises have achieved annual sales of over 500,000 yuan, demonstrating that aesthetic creativity can be transformed into economic value. Through aesthetic education activities such as the "Bamboo Art Festival", children's societies have collaborated with villagers to plan exhibitions and explain bamboo culture, and this sense of participation has become a talent reserve for future rural governance. Research shows that rural children who participate in systematic aesthetic education are 2.3 times more willing to participate in community affairs than ordinary children

5.2 The bidirectional gain of aesthetic psychology construction and cognitive development

In the "Forest Aesthetic Education Log" project at a rural kindergarten in Ailao Mountain, Yunnan Province, children observed nature using the "five-sense recording method" - touching the texture of tree bark, listening to the sound of streams, and depicting the color of moss. This embodied cognition transformed "biodiversity" from an abstract concept into a concrete experience^[5]. Follow-up tracking showed that the children participating in the project had a 38% higher incidence of environmental protection behavior in primary school than the control group. Through the "Transformation of Garbage" aesthetic activity, children made "ecological bottle landscapes" from plastic bottles and shaped "endangered animals" from waste paper pulp, developing the perception that "waste is a resource" in aesthetic creation.

The "Ecological Aesthetic Education Score Sheet" of a certain rural kindergarten incorporates "environmental friendliness of materials" and "sustainability of creativity" into the evaluation of works. After internalizing this standard, the daily garbage recycling rate of children has increased to 65%. In the "Grandparents and Grandchildren Painting the River in Their Hometown" aesthetic education activity, children interview the river ecology in their grandparents' memory and compare the changes of the past and present with paintings. This intergenerational communication prompts families to form a consensus on ecological protection. One year after the project was implemented, the number of times the villagers along the river voluntarily organized garbage cleaning increased from 2 times a year to 12 times a year. A fMRI study of rural children conducted by a university in Beijing showed that children who continuously participated in nature education activities had 17 percent higher activity in the right hemisphere of the brain and denser neural connections in the prefrontal cortex than the control group. This physiological basis enabled the children to show better spatial planning skills in activities such as "maze design in the wheat field" and "straw sculpture creation".

In the "Aesthetic Education on Horseback" project at a pastoral kindergarten in Inner Mongolia, children's salivary cortisol levels decreased by 24 percent by drawing the dynamics of the herd and creating stories with the melody of the morin Khur, demonstrating that aesthetic education immersion can effectively alleviate the anxiety of left-behind children in rural areas. The kindergarten's follow-up found that the children who participated in the program had a 57% lower incidence of psychological problems in primary school than those who did not. In the "Grand Song Aesthetic education course" at a Dong village kindergarten in Guizhou, children with acute hearing developed harmony perception, and children with motor coordination developed innovative "musical and dance drama" performance forms. This individualized development enabled 83% of children to find their own areas of strength in aesthetic education activities, compared with only 31% in traditional classrooms.

5.3 Build an educational chain of "cultural cognition - emotional identification - practical innovation"

The core contradiction of rural cultural revitalization lies in the disruption of the modern inheritance of the traditional knowledge system, while preschool aesthetic education infiltration can build the educational chain of "cultural cognition - emotional identification - practical innovation". Take a certain agricultural civilization inheritance area in the Yellow River Basin as an example, children understand the connection between natural rhythms and agricultural activities by drawing illustrations of the solar terms; In folk activities such as "standing eggs" on the Vernal Equinox and "making dumplings" on the Winter Solstice, children feel the life wisdom passed down from their ancestors and form an emotional identification that "the solar terms are the time codes left to us by our ancestors." The traditional symbols are transformed into modern aesthetic expressions by making "rotating solar term wheels" with clay and designing "solar term question-and-answer robots" with programming building blocks. This kind of immersive inheritance resolves the dilemma in the inheritance of rural culture. One is to break away from the randomness of "oral instruction" and form a systematic curriculum; Second,

avoid the static nature of "museum-style conservation" and give contemporary life to culture through children's creativity. According to the local education bureau, 43 percent of parents in the families of children participating in the course began to relearn the knowledge of traditional solar terms, creating a virtuous cycle of "education nurturing culture".

6 Conclusions

Cultural cognition emphasizes understanding the implications of native artistic symbols; Life practice focuses on translating aesthetic cognition into everyday behavior. Construct the practice path from three dimensions: curriculum, support, and evaluation. The curriculum system focuses on the hierarchical transformation of local culture, the support system emphasizes the integration of resources among multiple subjects, and the evaluation mechanism focuses on development and dynamics. The core of these paths lies in integrating aesthetic education into the life experiences of rural children, achieving the coordinated development of aesthetic literacy and cultural identity through "learning by doing", and providing actionable educational solutions for the rural revitalization strategy.

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