

Survey and Analysis of Rural Aesthetic Education Development in Liaoning Province

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ABSTRACT

Taking Liaoning Province as a case study, this research systematically analyses the practical value of rural aesthetic education practices in the region, the bottlenecks encountered, and pathways for collaborative optimisation. Aesthetic education fundamentally constitutes the soul of cultural development in rural settings, demonstrating irreplaceable functions in fostering industrial upgrading momentum and refining social governance. However, aesthetic education practices within Liaoning Province face practical constraints such as inter-regional resource allocation balance, stable supply of professional teaching staff, and long-term funding mechanisms, which directly undermine their full effectiveness. To address these challenges, this study proposes mobilising diverse stakeholders to participate through a coordinated chain of actions: consolidating social resources, deepening reforms in local talent cultivation systems, and exploring multifaceted institutional designs. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a self-sustaining rural aesthetic education ecosystem with endogenous capacity.

KEYWORDS

Rural aesthetic education; Rural areas of Liaoning province; Aesthetic education development

1 Introduction

The modernisation process is profoundly reshaping the value positioning of rural areas. The historically formed urban-rural dichotomy framework has long confined the countryside to a narrow role as a supplier of production factors and agricultural products serving urban development. However, with the deepening development of late industrial societies and a wave of reflection on the complex effects of modernity, the ecological multifunctionality, cultural distinctiveness, and social cohesion value embodied by rural areas are gradually being re-recognised. Rural areas no longer serve solely as producers of material goods. They are also vital repositories of national historical memory, guardians of ecosystem stability, and essential spaces providing spiritual refuge for highly mobile urban populations. This fundamental shift in cognitive coordinates demands that perspectives on rural development transcend narrow economic dimensions, embracing a comprehensive assessment of multiple economic, cultural, social, and ecological values. Against this backdrop, the urgent question of our times is how to stimulate the inherent vitality within rural areas to achieve sustainable development. Past rural transformation models, overly reliant on external material capital investment, may have improved physical infrastructure in the short term but often carried the latent risk of damaging cultural continuity and community cohesion. This imbalance between external material renewal and internal spiritual structure has sparked profound questioning about the intrinsic logic of rural modernisation.

2 The importance of rural aesthetic education in the development of rural areas in Liaoning province

2.1 Conceptual framework of rural aesthetic education

Rural aesthetic education should not merely relocate urban art education models to rural areas. Its essential nature is deeply rooted in the specific natural and geographical conditions, agricultural production methods, and historically accumulated cultural traditions of rural areas. In practical terms, it represents a process of cultural value formation within rural society. Its core lies in awakening and enhancing residents' ability to perceive, understand, and creatively respond to the aesthetic qualities inherent in their ecological landscapes, daily experiences, and cultural heritage. Its aesthetic framework exhibits pronounced characteristics of everyday life and inclusivity, encompassing not only conventional art forms but also being deeply embedded within the spatial organisation of villages, the orderly rhythms of agrarian civilisation, specific seasonal rituals, generations-old intangible skills, and the communal norms they embody. The core value orientation of this practice is not the cultivation of professional artists, but rather the integration of aesthetic sensibility with residents' daily life practices and productive labour. It guides villagers to proactively become the primary agents of aesthetic creation in their living environments and conscious custodians of cultural traditions ^[1].

2.2 Rural aesthetic education plays a vital role in rural vitalization

Within the complex systemic framework of rural vitalization, rural aesthetic education transcends basic art

popularization. As a vehicle for deep spiritual construction and the reshaping of cultural confidence, it demonstrates a structural role in advancing multidimensional objectives. For instance, in fostering spiritual cohesion and cultural identity, aesthetic education forms the core bond connecting community emotions and reinforcing local identity. By organising collective aesthetic practices—such as organising residents to participate in compiling village historical memories, reviving local oral arts, and restoring representative vernacular architectural styles—it enhances community psychological belonging by evoking shared historical experiences. This effectively mitigates the spiritual dispersion caused by external population mobility and the loss of identity stemming from cultural shocks. Function of Driving Industrial Transformation and Value Chain Enhancement: Aesthetic education is the intrinsic catalyst for rural economies to transition from single-production models to diversified value-based systems. The capacity of local communities to transform regional natural landscapes and cultural characteristics into distinctive aesthetic expressions and experiences constitutes the key mechanism for effectively converting local resource endowments into competitive market advantages. Rural Governance Optimisation and Civilisation Cultivation Function: Aesthetic education flexibly promotes rural civility and enhances governance efficiency through non-coercive cultural immersion. The positive interaction platform formed by shared aesthetic activities helps cultivate public participation awareness and mitigate community conflicts.

2.3 Aesthetic education is needed for liaoning's rural development

As a typical industrial-accompanying rural region, Liaoning's rural society faces unique structural contradictions, making its demand for aesthetic education urgent and distinctive—for instance, the need to revitalise cultural cores and reconnect community vitality. Long-term population migration trends—particularly the exodus of young and middle-aged adults to urban areas—have caused systemic vitality decline in numerous villages. Some rural areas face the challenge of maintaining physical living spaces while experiencing weakened internal cultural support structures and community cohesion. The physical landscapes persist, but the rural cultural bonds and social vitality sustaining them grow increasingly tenuous. Against this backdrop, aesthetic education can serve as an effective driver for "community reorganisation." There is also a need to drive economic diversification and unlock local aesthetic productivity. Liaoning's rural industrial systems are generally monolithic, with limited scope for expanding the value-added potential of traditional agriculture. The pressure for transformation is profound and persistent, and rural aesthetic education offers a perspective for addressing this challenge. Liaoning possesses rich potential aesthetic value reserves, including deeply rooted cultural elements from ethnic minorities such as the Manchu and Xibe peoples, the unique regional folk customs of the "Guandong" area, and diverse ecological landscapes ^[2].

3 Rural aesthetic education in Liaoning province faces multiple practical challenges

3.1 Uneven distribution of aesthetic education resources hinders development quality

The advancement of rural aesthetic education in Liaoning Province is primarily constrained by spatial gradients in resource allocation and structural deficiencies. High-level public arts education facilities, professional talent pools, and diverse cultural programs exhibit a central concentration, heavily clustered in core cities like Shenyang and Dalian. This creates a distinct spatial pattern radiating from urban centres to peripheral areas. Such disparities in resource allocation effectively erect barriers to rural access for systematic, high-quality arts education services. Consequently, public cultural provision in counties and below remains chronically underdeveloped, characterised by insufficient volume and unstable quality. Of particular concern is that this resource imbalance extends beyond public fiscal investment structures to the natural flow of social capital. Market-driven art education resources and cultural-creative investments exhibit a pronounced preference for urban areas, objectively accelerating the marginalisation of rural aesthetic education ecosystems. The direct consequence of this structural resource deficit is that most rural aesthetic education activities remain sporadic, externally driven, superficial cultural outreach initiatives. They lack the deep support of localised, long-term, and institutionalised development, making it difficult to genuinely connect with the endogenous cultural fabric of rural areas, let alone establish sustainable endogenous development mechanisms ^[3].

3.2 Weak art education faculty hinders development

Rural art education development requires talent possessing both professional skills and a deep connection to local culture. However, Liaoning Province faces a dual challenge: a shortage of qualified personnel and a mismatch in their skill sets. Quantitatively, factors like regional economic disparities, differing career expectations, and inadequate institutional safeguards significantly reduce the willingness of professional art educators to work in counties and below. Regarding competency, even when professionals enter rural settings, their knowledge structures often remain profoundly

disconnected from local cultural characteristics. Educators trained within urban art academy systems possess knowledge frameworks profoundly shaped by classical Western art theories and urban aesthetic paradigms. Consequently, their ability to understand and adapt to Liaoning's local folk art forms, rural aesthetic traditions, and indigenous cultural semantics is generally weak. This mismatch in professional skills, stemming from a lack of contextual understanding, hinders educators' ability to effectively tap into local aesthetic education resources and establish substantive connections between teaching content and rural life experiences. Furthermore, the structural tension between these two aesthetic paradigms risks displacing local aesthetic subjects.

3.3 Insufficient funding impedes long-term development

Stable and institutionalised funding is a prerequisite for transitioning rural aesthetic education from conceptual design to practical implementation. However, current bottlenecks include overly concentrated funding sources and closed financing channels, with the core issue being excessive reliance on local government allocations. Under the practical constraints of overall local fiscal pressure and the imperative to prioritise essential livelihood projects, aesthetically-oriented cultural initiatives—which possess public cultural attributes—often occupy a secondary position in budgetary priorities. Funding exhibits pronounced short-term project-based characteristics, relying on temporary injections from targeted allocations for higher-level projects. Once project cycles conclude, funding streams cease abruptly, resulting in fragmented implementation and a lack of long-term planning. This prevents many forward-looking explorations from sustaining momentum, significantly diminishing investment effectiveness. Another prominent constraint lies in the failure to establish mechanisms for social capital participation. Given that rural aesthetic education projects typically exhibit pronounced positive externalities, long-term investment returns, and ambiguous economic value conversion logic, market investment institutions generally lack incentives to engage.

4 Rural aesthetic education in Liaoning requires multi-party collaboration

4.1 Integrating social resources to expand aesthetic education practice spaces

Breaking through resource constraints in rural aesthetic education in Liaoning hinges on establishing an open, mutually supportive resource circulation framework, alongside a collaborative network of social actors, between urban and rural areas. Government departments must drive stable partnerships between urban professional cultural institutions and rural communities through institutional design, prioritising support for artist residencies and curating site-specific exhibitions to transform rural spaces into dynamic aesthetic carriers. Simultaneously, organise academically rigorous exhibitions on rural cultural themes within core urban cultural venues to strengthen external recognition of rural values. Higher education institutions within the province should establish aesthetic education practice sites leveraging their teaching and research resources. Through curriculum reform, integrate practical rural artistic development into talent cultivation, enabling cutting-edge concepts to permeate rural settings via young professionals. Simultaneously, systematically identify and empower local cultural custodians (e.g., rural artisans, intangible cultural heritage inheritors). Integrate them into formal education systems through inheritance subsidies and cultural identity recognition mechanisms, positioning them as core practitioners and knowledge translators in rural aesthetic education ^[4].

4.2 Strengthening talent development to enhance aesthetic education workforce quality

Achieving sustainable rural aesthetic education requires building a talent pipeline with professional skills and cultural sensitivity. At the foundational level of professional education, provincial teacher training and art institutions should adapt their curricula by adding specialised modules like regional art lineage analysis and rural aesthetic education methodology. Field research and cultural transmission practices must be mandatory to cultivate multifaceted competencies in prospective educators. For incumbent rural teachers, establish training mechanisms to strengthen their capacity to interpret Liaoning's local culture and interdisciplinary project management skills, facilitating their transition from mere skill instructors to cultural collaborators. Implement an "On-Site Aesthetic Education Practitioner" cultivation program within rural communities. Through certification registration, specialised competency training, project-based commissioned execution, and performance-based subsidy incentives, foster an endogenous talent pool capable of independently conducting community aesthetic education practices, bridging the gap in rural self-development capabilities.

4.3 Innovating institutional mechanisms to ensure sustainable aesthetic education

Transitioning aesthetic education from fragmented initiatives to institutionalised practice requires restructuring

governance support systems. Fiscal safeguards must shift from ad hoc allocations to stable funding, establishing dedicated budget items at provincial and county levels while leveraging cultural industry funds to mobilise social capital. Resource allocation should combine process monitoring with performance evaluation, prioritising projects demonstrating villager self-management potential and pathways for activating local resources. Simultaneously, establish a multi-stakeholder governance effectiveness evaluation framework. Evaluation metrics should transcend quantitative data, deeply examining qualitative dimensions such as the strengthening of cultural identity, the density of community relationship networks, and the generation of rural aesthetic symbol systems. At the value realisation level, systematically design pathways for aesthetic education outcomes to permeate the economic sphere. Guide the integration of artistic interventions into rural tourism landscape transformations, facilitate the conversion of local aesthetic symbols into visual branding systems for agricultural innovation products, and promote the functional reinvention of intangible cultural heritage crafts to integrate them into modern consumer chains. Ultimately, this will establish an internal circulation mechanism converting cultural value into economic output ^[5].

5 Conclusion

The rural vitalization practices in Liaoning Province profoundly reveal that rural aesthetic education is by no means a marginal footnote in cultural development. Instead, it serves as a core driving force deeply embedded in the reconstruction of rural cultural identity, the cultivation of endogenous momentum, and the paradigm shift toward sustainable development. The systematic exploration and creative transformation of local aesthetic characteristics can activate the potential for spiritual reconstruction and industrial innovation in Liaoning's rural areas, which face structural transformation pressures.

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