

Current situation and strategy construction of art teachers' ability improvement under the guidance of new curriculum standards

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Abstract: In order to fulfill the fundamental task of cultivating moral character and promoting quality education, the Ministry of Education of China issued the Art Course Standards for Compulsory Education in 2022, which has had a significant impact on art education in primary and secondary schools. Currently, primary and secondary school art education faces problems such as outdated teacher concepts, insufficient understanding of the comprehensiveness of the art curriculum, a tendency towards specialization in the curriculum, and a relatively backward evaluation system. Art teachers are the implementers and guides of art education. Under the background of the new curriculum standards, effective art education in primary and secondary schools requires the improvement of art teachers' capabilities, including the transformation of art education values, the enhancement of comprehensive art knowledge and skills, the improvement of teaching ability, and the enhancement of the ability to design and evaluate the curriculum. This paper analyzes the current situation of art education and combines the needs of the new curriculum standards to propose the capabilities that art teachers need to improve and the mechanism for building art teachers' capabilities.

Keywords: Art Teachers; New Curriculum Standards; Capability Enhancement

1. Introduction

In recent years, the art education program in China has undergone significant reform and expansion. The emergence of the era of quality education has brought renewed attention to art education. In 2022, the Ministry of Education in China released the Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition), which proposed substantial changes to the offerings of art courses. Throughout the development of art education in China, there has been a strong emphasis on recognizing and supporting the importance of art education and training for personnel at a policy level, highlighting the urgency and necessity of strengthening the construction of art teacher teams in primary and secondary schools. The primary and secondary education stage is crucial for shaping aesthetic consciousness, improving aesthetic ability, as well as fostering creativity and imagination among students. Art education for primary and secondary school students plays a significant role in promoting their complete and comprehensive personality development. As implementers and leaders within classrooms, art teachers play a vital role in this process; thus, their overall quality significantly influences art education work within primary and secondary schools. Therefore, it is urgent to enhance the capacity of art teachers within primary and secondary school teams.

2. The current situation of art education in primary and secondary schools in the context of the new curricular standard

2.1. Teachers often overlook the importance of considering aesthetic perception in their teaching practices

Influenced by historical factors, art education has been historically marginalized in the Chinese school system, resulting in a lack of recognition for the intrinsic and essential value of the art curriculum - its aesthetic significance, as well as a disregard for the role of art education in fostering potential, shaping personality, and nurturing creativity. Art teachers often lack a clear understanding of the aesthetic education within the art curriculum and fail to grasp its goal of "enhancing students' aesthetic and humanistic qualities" or its task of "educating individuals with beauty and cultivating their talents through

beauty". Currently, primary and secondary school art and aesthetic education does not prioritize students' perception of the world; teachers do not convey to students the diversity and completeness of the world, thus failing to elevate them from superficial sensory perception to an understanding of aesthetics.^[1] For instance, in dance classes, teachers focus solely on teaching dance movements without guiding students to appreciate the emotional connotations behind dance works; consequently, students struggle to comprehend their aesthetic meanings or humanistic implications. This situation can be attributed to teachers' one-sided interpretation of the value and goals within the art curriculum as well as insufficient emphasis on beauty perception

2.2. Teachers' lack of awareness and understanding of the comprehensive nature of the arts curriculum

Since the 1950s, China's art education has been divided into two separate courses: music and art. Each course has its own distinct goals, methods, and requirements. However, this segmented approach to teaching is not conducive to the development of students' artistic abilities and humanistic qualities. The traditional focus on music and art alone has limited students' development in aesthetic ability, artistic observation, and understanding. In the current context, most art programs in China are still predominantly taught by single-subject music or art teachers who may lack a comprehensive understanding of other arts disciplines and teaching methods. With the advancement of technology and changes in society, there is a growing need for well-rounded talents across all industries. The new curriculum standard emphasizes an integrated approach to arts education that highlights the interconnectedness between different disciplines while also emphasizing their relationship with nature, life, society, science, and technology. However, some single-subject music or art teachers may not fully grasp the depth of this comprehensive arts curriculum under the new standard; they may view it as merely a superficial combination of music, art, and dance rather than a truly integrated approach. This lack of understanding can lead to issues such as superficial synthesis without true integration which ultimately hinders positive progress in arts education.

2.3. The trend towards specialized art education

Currently, some art educators fail to consider the physical and mental development laws and aesthetic characteristics of primary and secondary school students. There is a strong trend towards specialized teaching content and methods. A significant number of primary and secondary school art teachers from non-teacher training programs focus on professional skills during their studies, but lack mastery of scientific teaching methods. They tend to prioritize knowledge and skills training over artistic performance, teacher-led instruction over student participation, passive imitation over creative ability. This traditional monotonous teaching mode with a tendency towards specialization fails to provide opportunities for active student participation in artistic activities or effectively stimulate their artistic interests. School art education differs from professional art education; transferring the content and teaching methods directly may lead to decreased student interest in learning art, hindering their ability to experience aesthetic pleasure or achieve the true value and goals of art courses.

2.4. The assessment system for arts in primary and secondary schools is relatively antiquated

The evaluation of primary and secondary art courses is a crucial aspect in promoting students' overall development, enhancing teachers' pedagogy, and advancing the continuous improvement of art education. However, the current evaluation system for primary and secondary art education faces several challenges: it tends to focus solely on content, lacks flexibility, and lags behind in terms of cultural relevance. Teachers primarily assess students' performance in art learning and their mastery of basic knowledge and skills without adequately considering aesthetic quality or ability. Furthermore, some teachers opt for convenient yet simplistic evaluation methods that do not effectively monitor students' ongoing progress, leading to decreased accuracy in assessment. Additionally, subjective teacher evaluations lack fairness and objectivity.

3. The Requirements of the New Curriculum for Enhancing the Competence of Art Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools

3.1. Reforming principles in the field of arts education

In the era of evolving educational concepts, faced with student-centered art learning activities, the

role of the art teacher is no longer confined to traditional methods of lecturing, teaching, and explaining. Art teachers need to reevaluate primary and secondary art education in pursuit of promoting "aesthetics". The new standard emphasizes the implementation of core competencies as the main focus, guiding students to actively engage in various art activities, experience beauty, appreciate beauty, express beauty, create beauty, and enrich their aesthetic experiences.^[2] This highlights that the essence of art education lies in aesthetic education - organizing students to participate in vibrant artistic activities through appropriate forms of art to cultivate their interests and provide them with aesthetic experiences. Teachers should closely align with core competency content in arts education by prioritizing emotional attitudes and values as they teach students how to feel emotions through artistic expression so that they can develop a sense of beauty while gaining valuable aesthetic experiences. For instance when students are appreciating a dance performance such as "Fan Dance Danqing", teachers should not only introduce its rich characteristics but also describe its fresh elegance and picturesque world so that students can truly feel the divine charm within Chinese national dance art accompanied by guzheng music. Research in cognitive psychology and aesthetics has shown that aesthetic interests formed during adolescence often become lifelong habits. Therefore prolonged exposure for primary and secondary school students to excellent works of art under teacher guidance helps cultivate aesthetic interests and enhance their abilities. As an integral part of aesthetic education, it is crucial for teachers to correct any instrumentalization tendencies within primary and secondary arts education so that it may truly return back to nurturing human subject development at its core.

3.2. Enhancement of proficiency in general arts knowledge and skills

The guidance document proposed by the Ministry of Education in China emphasizes that the development of aesthetic education curricula in schools should be centered on the art curriculum, with interdisciplinary integration and mutual penetration.^[3] It also stresses the importance of acquiring fundamental knowledge in aesthetic education, enhancing the comprehensiveness of curricula, and strengthening practical activities. Furthermore, it sets higher standards for the overall quality of art teachers. As implementers of art education, teachers need to enhance their comprehensive knowledge and skills in art.

Firstly, educators should enhance the interdisciplinary collaboration and synthesis within diverse art disciplines and facilitate the mutual integration of curricula. Throughout history, Chinese art has always been comprehensive, with ancient literati being proficient in music, chess, calligraphy, painting, and poetry to cultivate their cultural and artistic abilities. The new curriculum emphasizes that "each art subject should be primary while also strengthening its integration with other arts." In arts education, instructors should establish an environment where music, visual arts, drama, dance, and other forms of art mutually support and complement each other. Orff once stated that "music never exists in isolation; it only exists concurrently with movement, dance, and language." At the Orff Academy in Germany, music, dance, languages, and movement are combined to provide comprehensive arts instruction. This updated standard introduces three new subjects: dance, drama (including opera), and film/television (including digital media arts), further advancing the process of integrating arts education. This necessitates that art teachers possess comprehensive artistic abilities and excel at establishing meaningful connections among various forms of art such as music, fine arts, dance, and drama. For instance, music educators must not only have thorough training in fundamental music theory and skills related to sight-singing, listening, vocalization, baton technique, and composition, but also need a deep understanding of other relevant art forms, such as fine arts, dance, and drama connected to music. They must also be capable of integrating music with these related art forms as well as non-art courses associated with music. In this way they can effectively teach art courses and promote the implementation of the new curriculum.

Furthermore, educators should prioritize each art subject and integrate relevant content from other disciplines. The new standard emphasizes the importance of connecting art with other fields of study, leveraging the synergistic function of education, incorporating a wide range of knowledge from various disciplines into artistic activities and works, enriching the essence of art, and harnessing the positive role of art education in fostering students' all-round development. In recent years, there has been increasing attention on STEAM education within the domestic education sector. STEAM education is a comprehensive approach that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics into a multidisciplinary framework with the goal of integrating diverse knowledge and nurturing students' innovation and problem-solving abilities. Educators must possess research synthesis skills to effectively incorporate artistic content or forms into non-art subjects such as mathematics and science through interdisciplinary curriculum integration so that students can learn across disciplines, broaden their knowledge base, deepen their thinking capabilities, and ultimately cultivate well-rounded talents.

Finally, educators should focus on the systematic relationship between art and individuals, art and nature, and art and society. The new standard proposes to "emphasize the interconnectedness of art with nature, society, life, science and technology; to incorporate rich elements of aesthetic education; to convey the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature; and to promote students' physical and mental well-being as well as their all-round development." Therefore, in teaching, educators should not only help students recognize the form, structure, techniques, and elements of art but also create a classroom environment filled with humanistic knowledge and care for diverse artistic experiences and expressions in order to elevate art education to the level of aesthetic education.

3.3. Enhancement of the capacity to employ a variety of instructional techniques

The new curriculum mandates that teachers comprehend the curriculum and teaching from an educational perspective. The primary and secondary art curriculum aims to enhance students' comprehensive abilities and core qualities based on art, rather than cultivating artists in a specific field of specialization. Therefore, teachers should employ pedagogical methods beyond imitation and demonstration in the classroom. For instance, the new curriculum standard promotes project-based teaching, emphasizing task group instruction. Teachers should establish different learning task clusters or project clusters by synthesizing various art disciplines, enabling students to engage with multiple art styles and develop comprehensively. Specific task clusters are designated for different subjects in the new standard; for example, in dance, the curriculum covers "expression," "creation," "appreciation," and "integration" across 14 specific learning contents, organized through diverse forms of learning tasks. Teachers should identify their own teaching focus and utilize tasks as a driving force to foster students' comprehensive quality and ability.

3.4. Enhancement of the Assessment Capability of Design Courses

Under the guidance of the new curriculum standards, course evaluation is gradually transitioning from merely focusing on grades to valuing motivation and improvement, emphasizing the continuous, comprehensive development process of students. Especially for art courses, we use more grading, qualitative, and process-based evaluations to comprehensively assess students' performance, rather than quantitative scores. Given the uniqueness of the art discipline, such as its practical, experiential, and creative nature, teachers must enhance their evaluation capacity when designing course evaluations to ensure that evaluations are comprehensive and diverse. Firstly, teachers should prioritize the overall development of students as the evaluation core. This means that in the evaluation process, we should not only consider the degree to which students have mastered art knowledge and skills, but also pay attention to their growth in emotions, attitudes, values, and cultural cultivation. Secondly, evaluation should be carried out throughout every stage of art learning. From classroom performance to assignment completion, to final examination, teachers should provide timely and targeted feedback to ensure that evaluations are generative. Such evaluation methods can stimulate students' participation enthusiasm, integrate their art course learning with practical activities, and comprehensively examine the core competencies displayed by students in completing art practice tasks. With the continuous advancement of technology, traditional one-dimensional educational evaluation is undergoing new changes. Teachers can use educational information technology to build a monitoring data platform and monitor students' learning status in real time. This evaluation method can not only fully play the diagnostic, motivational and improvement functions of evaluation, but also provide more precise learning guidance for students. Finally, we advocate the establishment of a multi-stakeholder evaluation system. The evaluation community should be composed of students, teachers, parents and society. This evaluation model can not only stimulate students' sense of ownership but also play the educational role of each stakeholder, making the evaluation more comprehensive, objective and fair. Through joint efforts, we hope to create an education environment that is more conducive to the all-round development of students.

4. Mechanism Construction for Enhancing Art Teachers' Competence in the Context of New Curriculum Standards

4.1. Enhancement of art teacher training mechanism

Confronted with the challenges presented by the new curriculum standards, relevant departments should discard conventional thinking and establish a comprehensive and efficient mechanism to enhance the capabilities of art teachers. The enhancement of this mechanism is not only crucial for ensuring the

effective implementation of the new curriculum standards, but also an essential pathway to improving the overall quality of art teachers. Firstly, ensure the training is comprehensive and systematic, targeting all art teachers with clear goals, plans, programs, and measures to encourage learning through participation, gaining insights through practice, and progressing through reflection. Secondly, carefully plan the training content to include an in-depth interpretation of learning tasks, content, and academic quality standards across various art disciplines with particular emphasis on the latest developments in dance, drama and film. Simultaneously, it is essential to clarify the concept of integrated art curriculum design, with an emphasis on the significance of art in students' holistic development and the value of cross-integration among diverse art forms. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of national education policies and relevant policy documents should be conducted to deeply examine curriculum standards, showcasing ideas and methods for implementing the curriculum through specific cases. Additionally, there should be a focus on teaching practice and case analysis. The training program should incorporate a segment dedicated to teaching case analysis, aiding educators in mastering content design, instructional approaches, organizational strategies, and student assessment techniques related to case-based teaching. Moreover, teachers should be encouraged to actively explore fundamental methods for developing and utilizing curriculum resources as well as organizing classrooms in order to enhance their teaching practice abilities. Lastly, diversified training methods should be adopted including special lectures, case studies workshops, and hybrid online/offline seminars that enable teachers to engage in practical application, reflection, and knowledge absorption across multiple contexts, resulting in internalization of knowledge and enhancement of skills.

4.2. Reform of the assessment mechanism for arts educators.

Developing a robust teacher evaluation mechanism is essential for teachers' independent growth, providing solid institutional support and assurance. Firstly, we should adhere to a pluralistic and developmental evaluation concept. This requires comprehensive consideration of teachers from multiple perspectives, including their professional knowledge, teaching philosophy, methodology, content, organizational ability, as well as their ideological concepts, moral and emotional qualities. Secondly, we need to establish a developmental approach to teacher evaluation in order to avoid one-sidedness and subjectivity. Transforming the teacher evaluation process into formative process assessment will focus on the growth and progress of teachers in teaching and provide them with space for independent improvement. Finally, diversifying the evaluators is crucial. Involving students, parents, colleagues, education administration, and third-party organizations will lead to a more comprehensive and fairer evaluation process that promotes scientific assessment of teachers' development in arts education.

4.3. Establishment of incentives for arts teacher development

At present, the lack of specialized art teachers and researchers in many areas has led to the weakening of art teachers' enthusiasm for education and made it difficult to improve the quality of art education. At the same time, art teachers face heavy teaching tasks and are prone to burnout. Therefore, it is crucial to establish an incentive mechanism for the development of art teachers. First of all, the status of art teachers should be upgraded. For a long time, art teachers are often regarded as "secondary subject" teachers, and their importance has been neglected. In order to stimulate the motivation and creativity of art teachers, we must improve the assessment and evaluation indicators, and make long-term plans for the title evaluation and post incentive mechanism of art teachers. This is not only a recognition of their professional value, but also an affirmation of their hard work. Secondly, reduce the teaching load of art teachers. At present, many art teachers are not only responsible for organizing all kinds of art activities in schools, but also leading students to participate in various competitions, and at the same time, they also have to take on the daily teaching tasks of art courses. This heavy workload makes it difficult for them to have enough time and energy to improve their teaching ability. Therefore, we need to reduce their burden through reasonable task allocation and resource integration, so that they can have more time to focus on their own teaching and research. Finally, establish incentive policies, such as setting up an award fund for art curriculum teaching reform, to reward teachers who have achieved remarkable results in art curriculum teaching reform. This is not only an encouragement to their innovative spirit, but also a boost to their teaching confidence. Through such an incentive mechanism, we can stimulate the enthusiasm of the majority of art teachers to carry out teaching reform, promote the sustainable development of art education, and inject new vitality into the enhancement of art teachers' abilities.

4.4. Exploring Integrated Teaching and Research Mechanisms for Art Teachers

In the face of the challenges brought about by the new standards in terms of teaching objectives, contents and methods, teachers are not alone, but need the collective wisdom and collaboration of the teaching and research team. In order to promote the improvement of teaching and learning, the teaching and research group should adopt integrated teaching and research strategies. First, it should integrate formal and informal teaching and research methods, both in-depth discussion of the core themes and encouraging teachers to share their insights of the new standards in their daily communication. Second, breaking the boundaries of subjects, schools and regions, integrating internal and external teaching and research resources, strengthening the construction of regional teaching and research communities through master teachers' workshops and other forms, and promoting in-depth dialogues and exchanges among teachers. In addition, teaching and research groups need to integrate online and offline teaching and research methods. In the age of informationization, the curriculum view pursues openness and dynamics, and teachers should actively innovate ways to develop and utilize resources. By utilizing the Internet platform to carry out online sharing and exchange of the new curriculum, teachers are also encouraged to combine what they learn online with offline teaching practice, to cultivate their ability to use modern educational tools and to explore educational resources that are truly valuable to students' development.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the new curriculum standard presents elevated expectations for the proficiency of art educators. The quality of the art educator team is intricately linked to the reform and advancement of contemporary art education, not only pertaining to the question of "what kind of individuals to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them", but also connected to the establishment of societal cultural refinement. Currently, there still exists a certain gap between the construction and development of primary and secondary school art education in our country and its objectives, necessitating continued efforts, emphasis on enhancing the capabilities of art educators, and improvement in institutional structure. This will further drive forward reform and progress in primary and secondary school art education while achieving the objective of "cultivating individuals with aesthetic appreciation and enriching individuals with beauty", thereby promoting holistic student development.

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