

Research on Chinese Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract: *Calligraphy is a traditional Chinese art form, and the Chinese characters as the carrier of the art of calligraphy are the crystallization of 5,000 years of wisdom of the Chinese nation. Therefore, calligraphy education not only serves as aesthetic and moral education, but also bears the burden of promoting the excellent culture of the Chinese nation. Nowadays, calligraphy education has been fully implemented in primary and secondary schools in China, but the overall effect is not good. This thesis analyzes the importance of implementing calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools, identifies a series of problems faced by primary and secondary school calligraphy education, and then puts forward specific measures to solve the dilemma of primary and secondary school calligraphy education, in the hope of helping China's primary and secondary school calligraphy education to get better development.*

Keywords: *Calligraphy Education; Aesthetic Education; Calligraphy Teachers*

1. Introduction

In 2011, China's Ministry of Education issued the Opinions on the Development of Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, which for the first time called for the development of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools, and in 2023, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, which proposed that calligraphy education should be incorporated into primary and secondary school teaching systems. Over the past decade or so, the Chinese Ministry of Education has continued to raise the status of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools, not only because calligraphy is an important part of traditional Chinese culture, but also because it combines multiple educational significance, such as moral education, aesthetic education, and the enhancement of cultural literacy.

In ancient China, the education of children between the ages of 8 and 16 was called "Monk's school", and calligraphy education was one of the important contents of "Monk's school". Calligraphy education during this period not only included the teaching tasks of literacy and writing, but also emphasized the moral education, and included the Confucian classics. The teaching content also included the Confucian classics, so that students could develop good behavioral norms and moral concepts while learning to read and write. Since ancient times, there has been a tradition in the calligraphy world that emphasizes the unity of calligraphy and human character, and that if one wants to learn calligraphy well, one must first learn how to be a human being. Yang Xiong in the Western Han Dynasty put forward the "calligraphy for the heart of the painting" point of view, that calligraphy is a true reflection of the ideology and character of the calligrapher, that calligraphy is just a skill, to establish a good character is the first important thing, good character of the person who writes every stroke with the righteousness of the gas. Therefore, learning calligraphy can cultivate the sentiment and improve the overall quality of primary and secondary school students, which is the fundamental implementation of calligraphy education.

In the first year of the Republic of China, Mr. Cai Yuanpei, a famous Chinese educator, published an article entitled "Opinions on New Education", which elevated aesthetic education to an unprecedented level. Mr. Cai Yuanpei believed that aesthetic education should be combined with cultural inheritance, and that the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture would not only enable students to better understand and appreciate art, but also cultivate students' cultural self-confidence and national pride. Calligraphy is a unique form of artistic expression in China and an important part of traditional Chinese culture, so promoting calligraphy education is one of the important ways to popularize aesthetic education. The shape of calligraphy is taken from everything in nature, and thus

every piece of traditional excellent calligraphy work contains the beauty of nature. In the ancient Chinese calligraphy theoretical work, "Brush Formation Diagram", Wei Shuo compares the horizontal strokes in calligraphy to clouds lined up thousands of kilometers away, and the dots to stones falling down from the peaks of mountains. People often call the horizontal strokes in clerical script "silkworm head and goose tail" because the beginning of the horizontal strokes is shaped like the head of a silkworm, while the end of the horizontal strokes is shaped like the tail of a goose. The implementation of calligraphy education not only enhances the artistic aesthetic ability of primary and secondary school students, but also allows them to discover and feel the beauty of nature. At every stage of learning calligraphy, students need to copy the classic works of calligraphy that have been handed down from ancient China to the present day. Students' aesthetic ability will be subconsciously enhanced in the process of repeatedly appreciating and copying the classic works of calligraphy. To sum up, calligraphy education can cultivate primary and secondary school students' ability to feel, appreciate and create beauty, and is an effective way to realize aesthetic education.

In 2009 Chinese calligraphy was officially recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which means that calligraphy, unlike other art disciplines, has not only artistic attributes, but also strong cultural attributes. Many classic calligraphy masterpieces such as Wang Xizhi's Preface of the Orchid Pavilion and Yan Zhenqing's Manuscript of Offering to a Nephew are not only very wonderful in calligraphy proper, but the essays are also insightful and meaningful. When appreciating such calligraphy works, it will not only bring aesthetic pleasure visually, but also trigger the reader's resonance and thinking in terms of cultural content, thus improving students' literary skills. The carrier of the art of calligraphy is the ancient Chinese characters, so calligraphy education is closely related to the cultural education of Chinese characters. Through the teaching of calligraphy theory, students can understand the process of the evolution of Chinese characters and the cultural connotation behind them, which is complementary to language teaching. Calligraphy is a unique cultural symbol of the Chinese nation, and calligraphy education carries China's history and culture as well as the accumulation of humanities. Carrying out calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools is conducive to students' cognition of the national culture from childhood and the establishment of cultural self-confidence.

2. Current situation of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools

The most obvious feature of the current situation of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools is the high shortage of calligraphy teachers, and the shortage of calligraphy teachers is the root cause of the inability to effectively carry out calligraphy teaching in primary and secondary schools. A qualified primary and secondary school calligraphy teacher needs to hold a primary and secondary school teacher's qualification certificate issued by the State Council's education administration department, in addition, the calligraphy teacher also needs to have the basic skills of calligraphy, which includes writing skills, theoretical knowledge of calligraphy, the ability to appreciate and evaluate the works of calligraphy, and a profound cultural heritage^[1]. As a profession, primary and secondary school calligraphy teachers should receive standardized and comprehensive training, and undergraduate and master's degree education in calligraphy is the best channel to cultivate qualified primary and secondary school calligraphy teachers^[2]. According to the 2022 National Education Development Statistics Bulletin released by the Ministry of Education, in 2022, there were 149,100 ordinary elementary school, 52,500 middle schools, and 15,000 ordinary high schools, totaling 216,600 primary and secondary schools in China. According to relevant statistics, China currently has more than 150 colleges and universities with undergraduate calligraphy majors, with annual undergraduate enrollment of about 0.7 million and graduates of about 0.5 million. In 2008, the enrollment of calligraphy majors in China was about 0.08 million; the number of admitted students in 2018 reached 0.64 million; the number of admitted students in 2020 reached 0.65 million; and in 2021 0.7 million people were admitted. At present, there are more than 110 colleges and universities in China enrolling master's degree students specializing in calligraphy, with an annual enrollment scale of only about 0.05 million. It can be seen from this that since the introduction of calligraphy as a major in China's higher education, the total number of undergraduates and master's degree graduates in calligraphy has never exceeded 100,000, thus creating a high shortage of calligraphy teachers in primary and secondary schools in China.

The current situation of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools is also characterized by unprofessional teachers. Due to the primary and secondary schools in the recruitment of teachers, almost rarely specialize in calligraphy teacher positions, so most of the calligraphy teacher position is by the art teacher or language teacher to serve as a part-time teacher, these teachers are

usually not after professional calligraphy study, or although there is a certain degree of basic skills, but can not fully grasp the writing skills of calligraphy, the knowledge of the theoretical aspects of calligraphy is also seldom involved, so the teaching effect is often unsatisfactory. The teaching effect is often unsatisfactory. Even if the recruitment of primary and secondary school teachers with calligraphy teacher positions, is usually a school only set up a post, however, different grades of students, their ability to understand, hands-on ability are not the same, so for different grades of students need to formulate different teaching programs, plus calligraphy teachers are usually asked to organize the students to participate in calligraphy competitions, a teacher is difficult to deal with such a large number of tasks, the quality of teaching will inevitably decline significantly. The quality of teaching is bound to drop drastically. In addition, many primary and secondary schools do not have calligraphy teachers, usually art teachers to recruit calligraphy teachers, resulting in the hired calligraphy teachers can not participate in calligraphy title assessment, can only rely on other disciplines to participate in the title assessment, which creates a calligraphy teacher difficult to promote the situation. This makes many undergraduate calligraphy graduates choose to enter the calligraphy training institutions, galleries and art museums in the community after graduation, or directly to the profession, resulting in a loss and waste of calligraphy education talent.

The current state of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools is also characterized by a lack of awareness of the art of calligraphy among students and parents. Although the task of promoting calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools has been carried out in China since 2013, some primary and secondary schools still do not pay enough attention to calligraphy courses, which are often taken up by cultural courses such as language, math and English. A survey of some primary and secondary school students and their parents revealed that many of them believe that calligraphy is just a writing class, and that the purpose of learning calligraphy is to make students write neatly and beautifully, so that they can get extra score bonus for neatness in their exams for higher education, which is a viewpoint that ignores the connotation of calligraphy education. Although calligraphy is a form of artistic expression using Chinese characters as a carrier, the concepts of writing and calligraphy are completely different. While daily writing of Chinese characters emphasizes neatness and beauty, calligraphy focuses more on artistic aesthetics, so the teaching objectives of the two are completely different. The significance of calligraphy education is not only for students to learn the art of calligraphy, but also for the functions of aesthetic, moral and intellectual education, as well as for the enhancement of students' national self-confidence.

Chinese calligraphy has evolved over thousands of years, and five styles of calligraphy have evolved: Seal Script, Official Script, Regular Script, Running Script, and Cursive Script. However, many primary and secondary school calligraphy classes only arrange for the study of Regular Script, and do not arrange for the study of other styles, or arrange for the study of other styles, but the content of the teaching is still based on the Regular Script, which results in a lot of primary and secondary school students not having a good understanding of the styles of calligraphy other than Regular Script. It can be seen that there is a problem of homogenization of calligraphic styles in the teaching of calligraphy in primary and secondary schools^[3]. There are two general reasons for this, one is that the Regular Script is the closest to the font that students are required to write in the exams, and in order to meet the needs of exam-oriented education, the Regular Script has become the best choice for calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools; the second reason is that the Regular Script is the most popular calligraphy font in China, and most of the non-professional primary and secondary school calligraphy teachers have only ever studied the Regular Script as a calligraphy font, and therefore they can only teach the Regular Script as a calligraphy font in their teaching. Therefore, when teaching, they can only teach the Regular Script. At present, there are roughly three views on the question of the font to be learned as an introduction to calligraphy. According to modern archaeological research, the earliest calligraphic font was the seal script, which, according to the theory of tracing back to the original source, should be the font to be chosen as the introductory calligraphic font. The first opinion is that because the official script was formed between the seal script and the regular script, it has the role of taking up and taking down, so the learning of calligraphy should start from the official script. The third opinion is that scribes teach people to learn the Regular Script first, which implies that the Regular Script is the most appropriate to start with. The author believes that these three views are reasonable, so calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools should not be limited to the Regular Script, and students should be allowed to choose the style of calligraphy they want to learn according to their own preferences.

3. Improvement Measures for the Dilemma of Calligraphy Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

The biggest dilemma of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools in China is the lack of professional teacher resources and the low professional quality of teachers. In the face of this dilemma, measures can be taken from three aspects. The first aspect is to separate calligraphy from the art discipline in the primary and secondary school teacher qualification examination, and set it as an independent discipline. 2022, the calligraphy profession officially became a first-level discipline, and is no longer a second-level discipline under the category of fine arts, but so far, the primary and secondary school teacher qualification examination has not yet been set up for calligraphy as an independent discipline, and teachers of calligraphy can only take part in the qualification examination of fine arts, and the examination content rarely involves professional knowledge of calligraphy, thus resulting in many primary and secondary school teachers of calligraphy not having the professional knowledge of calligraphy. The content of the examination rarely involves professional knowledge of calligraphy, thus causing many primary and secondary school calligraphy teachers do not have sufficient theoretical knowledge and professional skills of calligraphy. The second aspect is to promote the establishment of a sufficient number of calligraphy teachers in primary and secondary schools. The establishment of a teaching staff for calligraphy is to give graduates of higher education institutions specializing in calligraphy more opportunities to find employment in primary and secondary schools, so that teachers of calligraphy and teachers of other disciplines can enjoy the same right to appraise their titles. In this way, not only can we get out of the predicament of the lack of resources for teachers specializing in calligraphy for primary and secondary school students, but also solve the employment problem of some calligraphy graduates. The third aspect is to improve the professional standard of existing calligraphy teachers. Due to the primary and secondary schools, many of the existing calligraphy teachers are by the art teacher or language teacher, they have not been through professional learning, calligraphy theory knowledge and skills are not perfect, so the need to improve the professional standard of the existing calligraphy teachers. Specifically, we can choose to hire professional calligraphy teachers to carry out unified training for primary and secondary school teachers, or let the primary and secondary school teachers to go to professional institutions outside the school for unified training, so that part-time calligraphy teachers can systematically learn the knowledge of calligraphy theory, calligraphy creation skills and knowledge of calligraphy education, in order to improve the professional quality of the existing part-time calligraphy teachers.

Creating a good atmosphere for learning calligraphy on campus will also help to get out of the current dilemma of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools, and we can take measures in two areas. The first is to cultivate students' interest in the art of calligraphy through regular activities that bring famous contemporary calligraphers into primary and secondary school campuses, either from local provincial or municipal calligraphers' associations, or from local university faculty specializing in calligraphy. Promoting the activities of famous calligraphers on campus actually builds a platform for joint participation among students, teachers and calligraphers, which enables famous calligraphers to communicate with teachers and students face-to-face, thus stimulating students' enthusiasm for calligraphy and creating a strong atmosphere of the art of calligraphy on campus. The second aspect is that schools need to provide appropriate material support to maintain the atmosphere of calligraphy learning. The libraries of primary and secondary schools need to be equipped with the necessary materials such as ancient classic calligraphy tablets and posters and books related to ancient and modern calligraphy theories; copies of ancient classic calligraphy works or works of famous calligraphers can be used as campus decorations; and even special calligraphy classrooms can be set up to provide a good learning atmosphere for primary and secondary school calligraphy education.

Finally, a scientific and systematic evaluation system for calligraphy teaching should be established as soon as possible, so as to systematize and standardize the calligraphy curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Promoting calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools requires that the subject of calligraphy be given a status equal to that of other subjects and that the calligraphy curriculum be included in the scope of teaching and research work. Once upon a time, calligraphy courses were not among the compulsory subjects for primary and secondary school students, thus causing students and parents to usually think that calligraphy courses are dispensable and do not pay enough attention to them. With the new round of curriculum reform, calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools urgently needs to establish a set of scientific and systematic teaching evaluation system. This is not only because the teaching evaluation system is an important part of the calligraphy teaching process, but also an effective way to improve the quality of calligraphy teaching, which plays a crucial role in the promotion of calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools. At the same

time, the relevant departments should strengthen the supervision of calligraphy teaching in primary and secondary schools to eliminate the occurrence of calligraphy courses being occupied by other courses. It is believed that under the promotion and protection of many measures, calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools can quickly get out of the predicament and develop well in China.

4. Conclusion

Calligraphy is the intangible cultural heritage of mankind and an important part of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and the inheritance and development of traditional culture cannot be separated from the popularization of calligraphy education. Calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools, as an important part of the popularization of calligraphy, has an unusual significance. Calligraphy is different from other art disciplines in that it contains multiple attributes such as history, humanities and society, etc. Setting up calligraphy courses in primary and secondary schools not only allows students to write well through education, but also helps in the learning of language, history and other courses, and has an important impact on aesthetic and moral education. However, the popularity of calligraphy in primary and secondary schools is still far from enough, calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools is facing multiple difficulties such as weak teachers, imperfect curriculum content, and biased cognition of students and parents towards calligraphy, etc. If we want to get out of this predicament, we should practice the improvement measures as soon as possible, which needs the joint cooperation and efforts of the Chinese government, primary and secondary schools, teachers, and parents of the students. It is believed that under the cooperation of all people, calligraphy education in primary and secondary schools will be developed rapidly.

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