



The Role of the Arts in Education from the Perspective of Psychology and Historiography of Education

Zhi Lu

College of Art, Anhui Xinhua University, Hefei 230001, Anhui, China

Abstract: The role of arts education in the education system cannot be underestimated. Through the study of the importance of art education in Chinese school education from the perspectives of psychology and educational history, the symbiotic relationship between art and education has been strongly supported by the analysis of psychology and educational history. Psychology proposes a suitable method to study the mental activities, behaviors, and emotions of students. According to this, art is widely used in education to help educators solve the psychological problems and growth problems of the educated, and at the same time, the teacher-student relationship is improved. In contrast, the historiography of education helps educators avoid making the same or similar mistakes in current and future education by summarizing and learning from past experiences. At the same time, the transformation of the role of art in the history of education is in line with the changes of the times and the needs of art education.

Keywords: the educational value of the arts, psychological perspectives, a perspective on the history of education

1. Introduction

Education, or human activities that provide schooling for learners of various kinds at various levels, is pivotally important to any society. It preserves, transfers culture, and influences the future of a society. As Aldrich (2003) states, as a field of study education is the core of human existence and values[1]. From the perspective of the society, education contributes to the progress and development of the society. Furthermore, the important role of education is also reflected in the cultivation of the future of the society. As Meyer (1977) states, education is regarded as the development of the individual's ability to prepare the individual's behavior in the future society and the socialization of the individual to influence society[2].

Arts education as a branch of education may have a positive impact on the character and thinking of students as they grow, according to Bianchi (2011), the arts encourage students to be self-reflective and encourage them to actively participate in thinking about diversity of perspectives. Students' education is not only a process of learning cultural and scientific knowledge in the curriculum but also a process of developing a sound personality[3].

Psychology, Parallel to art, psychology as a study of human behavior and processing of mind may also play an important role in helping students maintain mental health and develop good teacher-student relationship. "Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behavior, from communication and memory to thought and emotion" (Barnes, 1995b)[4]. History generally refers to the past and the study of the past, history is a narrative discourse that is discovered, invented, or imagined over time (Aldrich, 2003)[1]. "The historian's prime duty is to record and interpret the events of the past for contemporaries and future generations "(Aldrich, 2003)[1].

The study of history exists in all areas of society and its main purpose of existence is not only to understand the process of development and the main culture of each area but also to learn from the past and develop the future. Historians who study education are responsible not only for history but also for education (Aldrich, 2003)[1]. In this paper, we will start from the concept of art education, and apply a psychological approach as well as a historical one to explore the role played by art education in Chinese school education as well as its important role from two perspectives.

2. About the presentation of the method

2.1 Psychology approach to education

Psychology is an esoteric science, and even though not everyone knows anything about psychology, it is still a science that everyone is involved in. As Barnes (1995b) states Psychology is the study of the psyche and how it influences and governs behavior, whether it is communication between people or memory, thoughts, and emotions[4]. How the mind influences and governs behavior, whether it is interpersonal communication or memory, thoughts, and emotions. Not only that, but psychology is about helping people understand how to solve the complex troubles and problems that arise in society

today (Barnes, 1995b)[4].

Following on from the above, dissemination of knowledge of psychology will be useful for delivery of quality education, and this has given rise to development of educational psychology, which can guide students' behavior. Educational psychology as a particular field of study applies knowledge from different disciplines to enrich the teaching and learning process (Salkind & Rasmussen, 2008b)[5]. Accordingly, educational psychology can broaden students' intellectual horizon.

Moreover, the individual is the active subject who defines himself and presents himself in society (Schachter & Rich, 2011)[6]. The definition of the self can influence the learning experience that follows and the chances of success later (Schachter & Rich, 2011)[6]. The affirmation of the self can contribute to the choices both educators and recipients make in the developmental process and the setting of goals in the face of the future.

2.2 Historiography approach to education

History is the study of the past, and historians, 'primary role is to record and interpret what has happened for the present and for the future (Aldrich, 2003)[1]. The study of history encompasses a wide range of topics, ranging from timeline-based overviews of events and social changes, such as the history of national development and world history, to specialized histories that are researched and analyzed in a variety of fields, such as industrial history.

History of education is the study and objective analysis of the past development of education from a historical perspective, drawing on and assimilating the experiences of the development of education and taking responsibility for the times, according to Aldrich (2003) Historians of education should draw on and use the records and evidence of the past to correctly interpret the present[1]. The history of education can help people to understand why things happened and to avoid anachronistic solutions. It is the responsibility of the historian of education not to abuse as well as misuse the historical records of the past to advance the contemporary cause (Aldrich, 2003)[1]. Therefore, it is important to be relatively objective and important to study and conduct research history.

By means of analysis into educational development from a historical perspective, it may be possible to draw on experience for better understanding of the present. As Aldrich (2003) states, historians of education who work in educational institutions or departments, it is the responsibility of the current generation to learn from the past to better understand the present[1]. Furthermore Students, as recipients of education, are confronted with new knowledge and experiences that relate to their previous knowledge (Schachter & Rich, 2011)[6].

Education entails knowledge of theories and practice: theories are guidance, and practice is an important means of testing validity of theories, while a correct methodology facilitates an application of theories. Through the study of history, it is not difficult to find that theory and methodology are closely related, theory and methodology should not be regarded as two different categories but focus on the relationship between them (McCulloch & Watts, 2003)[7]. Historians of education not only draw deeply on their own experiences, but also on their own methods of deciding how and when things should be done in the theoretical and methodological processes of history, education, and the social sciences (McCulloch & Watts, 2003)[7].

For teachers, the history of education needs to be learnt and understood. The history of education has become part of the professional education of teachers and school staff to some extent (Kliebard, 1995)[8]. Teachers as well as school staff should learn the history of education, and the learning of education can to some extent guide teachers in proper professional behaviour (Kliebard, 1995)[8]. Teachers as the implementers of education cannot be replaced in the education system and having the right professional behaviour helps teachers to guide their students properly.

3. The role of art in Chinese schooling: a psychological and Historiography perspective

3.1 A psychological perspective

The arts have their specificity, unlike other cultural subjects, in which the mastery of knowledge needs to be of a certain standard in schools, cultural and scientific knowledge subjects. The specificity of arts such as painting, music—has different effect on different students. Education can learn adaptability through the study of the arts, and the study of the arts, education can learn more new modes of thinking (Eisner, 2005b)[9]. In Chinese school education, different kinds of disciplines, whether they are social sciences or natural sciences, have their unique research methods.

After learning the arts, students may be able to think about how to settle some problems with knowledge gained in other disciplines. Not only that, art enables students to think independently and build self-awareness to be able to think independently and not just follow instructions from others (Lindström, 2012c)[10].

From a psychological perspective. In the nineteenth century, education as a field of study was guided by psychology in its earliest stages (Eisner, 2005b)[9]. Art education is different from the study of other professional disciplines, Art education in Chinese school education may play a role in the development of students' aesthetic ability, and may help students maintain

mental health through involving them in such art activities as painting, handicrafts, dancing and learning to play a musical instrument, this can enable students to think from different perspectives and enhance their critical thinking skills. Students can use their existing knowledge to gain additional information by interacting and creating with others in the virtual art world, which helps students solve their challenging problems (Athimoolam, 2018)[11].

Furthermore, students solving the challenging problems they face may be able to become more confident and may also improve their recognition of themselves, which not only helps students to grow but also helps to increase their motivation to participate in education. As Schachter and Rich (2011) state identity perspective is that self-identity is an important motivation for students to participate in education[6].

In Chinese schooling, arts education could reduce students' stress to a certain extent. Today's complex social and academic pressures are damaging to students' mental health, with increasing rates of mental disorders, including lack of self-confidence, insecurity, fear of not fitting in, and beliefs that one's performance is not good enough (Waters, 2011)[13]. Participation and learning in arts education activities enable students to understand the world from different perspectives, think creatively, and improve communication between students through hands-on visual arts education activities. This can facilitate students' effort to address some burning issues, for example their mental disorder, difficulty in establishing their self-identity. Self-identity emphasizes beneficial interventions that adopt purposeful behaviors to help students achieve their educational goals (Schachter & Rich, 2011)[6]. In this way, students could get over some obstacles to psychological soundness, while the goals set for them in school education are more likely to be reached.

Moreover, educational psychology understands individual learning and guides the learning process using human development theory as support (Barnes, 1995b)[4]. Teachers may be able to build a better relationship with their students with the help of knowledge of educational psychology so that they can quickly identify students' problems and guide them more appropriately in their learning and development. Taking care of the mental health of students is the responsibility of teachers and school staff, both in the way they teach and in the way they interact with students (Corcoran & Finney, 2014)[12].

3.2 Historiography perspective

Parallel to a psychological perspective, a historical viewpoint is also important. Historically, arts education has evolved without much input from educational history. The process of education is one of constant innovation, and as times evolve, the education system should be updated in response to the times, and education should meet the needs of the times. The value of studying the history of education may not only be in obtaining answers from history, but also in helping to challenge the questions and assumptions left behind and to look to the future. In early art education, artists tested apprentices in different ways (Lindström, 2012c)[10]. Early art education focused on the development of skills, for example in painting, the study of the relationship between colors and the study of the material of the paint. The development of art at its early state was marked by a master-disciple relationship. In early phases of Chinese history, arts were often practiced serving the interest of those upper classes. In that context, almost every art performer or painter was apprenticed to a master via introduction by another individual. In those days, a master taught his apprentices some skills with which the latter could survive.

Nowadays, the content of art education is not only limited to the training of art and art techniques, but art has begun to enter school education, and the significance of art education has become more extensive. Art education not only cultivates students' aesthetic ability and cultivates students' rich thinking, but also combines all subjects in Chinese school education with art to a greater or lesser extent.

Another benefit of adoption of a historical perspective is that it helps students acquire a wide-angled vision of education, and enables teachers to develop curricula more in line with needs and tastes of contemporary society. Nowadays, aesthetic learning is an important issue in art education in Chinese schools, and aesthetic learning and the "artistic approach" are often expected to be reflected in the whole curriculum to promote deeper learning, not only in the arts (Lindström, 2012c) [10]. The arts have their flexibility about other disciplines, and their flexibility can help to broaden thinking across different specialisms, as well as enrich the classroom in other disciplines by taking advantage of the flexibility of the art form. In the long run, combining the arts with other subjects helps students to understand the curriculum (Lindström, 2012c)[10]. A good curriculum not only provides knowledge and understanding but also enriches the lives of students (Kliebard, 1995)[8].

A good education should be reflected not only in the educational outcomes but also in the process of education, and the curriculum of any era should take up the historical experience and prepare for the future. As Kliebard (1995) states Inevitably education is about preparing for the future[8].

4. The similarities and differences between psychology and Historiography in art education

The arts have had a positive impact on education from two different perspectives: psychological and historical. However, that positive impacts have both similarities and differences. Analyses from both psychological and historical perspectives suggest that art education has contributed to the development of education in China, both in terms of its positive impact on the individual student, the teacher-student relationship, and the development of the education system.

From a psychological point of view, the role of art education in education is mainly manifested in helping students in Chinese school education to solve their psychological problems, and positively influencing the development of their personalities. Not only that, but art education can also enrich students' way of thinking to a certain extent and help cultivate their ability to analyze and think about problems from different perspectives. As a discipline, psychology studies human behaviors and the thoughts and emotions behind them through observation, testing, and other means, and draws scientific methodology from them (Barnes, 1995b)[4].

Psychology researches the behaviors thoughts and emotions of participants in art, and through this research, it can make preliminary judgments about the psychological state as well as the character of the participants in art and prepare them for the future. For example, more and more students in China's campus education are suffering from Mental health problems, students' pressure comes from the complexity of society and the pressure of further education, art practice activities can enrich the students' lives to a certain extent and expand their thinking. Not only that, in art, works can reflect the author's ideas (Eisner, 2005b)[9].

In contrast to psychology, from a historical perspective, the study of the history of education does not generalize about an individual or a single event but rather takes a broad view of the development of a line of events from which lessons can be learned and from which a vision of the future can be drawn.

The value of the arts in education has been demonstrated by the fact that from the early days of apprenticeships, they have gradually entered the school system and have become an integral part of education, involving every student. The importance of the arts is not only reflected in the value of the arts themselves but also the relationship between the arts and different disciplines in education. The combination of the arts with other curricula can increase students' understanding of the curriculum, however, the arts may lose their own identity (Lindström, 2012c)[10]. Historically, the evolution of the arts in the educational paradigm reflects our societal shifts and educational needs. By examining the role of the arts through the lens of educational history, we can gain insights into past practices that will enable current and future educators to avoid historical pitfalls and embrace successful strategies. It is not difficult to surmise that in the future, the form of arts education's presence in the education system may once again change, influencing all areas of education.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the study of the importance of art education in the context of Chinese schooling through both psychological and historical perspectives, the symbiotic relationship between art and education is strongly supported by psychological and historical analyses.

Educational psychology proposes an appropriate methodology for a study of students' mental activities, behaviors, and emotions. As a special discipline, art is widely used in education to help education solve the psychological problems and growth problems of the educated, art activities develop the thinking of the educated and improve the motivation of the educated, not only that, the teacher can find out the psychological problems of the students through the students' artworks and guide the students in the right direction to learn and grow in a timely and precise manner, and in this way, the relationship between the teachers and students is also promoted. The relationship between teachers and students is improved in this way.

From a historical point of view, the history of education, through summarizing and learning from past experiences, allows educators and educators to understand the past and to know the past, helping educators to avoid making the same or similar mistakes in the present and future education. The research of historians of education is responsible for the present people and the future, but also the past. The transformation of the role of art in the history of education is in line with the changes of the times and the need for education for art, and the new situation of art in education is in line with the results of the research of the history of education, and also in line with the development of the times. The integration of the arts transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, enriches the curriculum, and promotes interdisciplinary understanding.

The role of arts education in the education system cannot be underestimated, even if it is not emphasized today in some developing countries and in some students' families. Therefore, arts education is indispensable to education in general.

References

- [1] Aldrich, R. J. (2003). The three duties of the historian of education. *History of Education*, 32(2), 133–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00467600304154>
- [2] Meyer, J. W. (1977). The effects of education as an institution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226506>
- [3] Bianchi, J. (2011). Intercultural Identities: Addressing the Global Dimension through Art Education. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 30(2), 279–292. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2011.01697.x>
- [4] Barnes, P. J. (1995b). Personal, social and emotional development of children. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA25228567>
- [5] Salkind, N. J., & Rasmussen, K. (2008b). *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology*. In SAGE Publications, Inc. eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963848>
- [6] Schachter, E. P., & Rich, Y. (2011). Identity Education: A Conceptual framework for educational researchers and practitioners. *Educational Psychologist*, 46(4), 222–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2011.614509>
- [7] McCulloch, G., & Watts, R. (2003). Introduction: Theory, methodology, and the history of education. *History of Education*, 32(2), 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00467600304153>
- [8] Kliebard, H. M. (1995). Why history of education? *The Journal of Educational Research*, 88(4), 194–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1995.9941300>
- [9] Eisner, E. W. (2005b). What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education? In Routledge eBooks (pp. 213–222). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203019078-25>
- [10] Lindström, L. (2012c). Aesthetic Learning about, in, with and through the arts: A Curriculum study. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 31(2), 166–179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2012.01737.x>
- [11] Athiemoolam, L. (2018). The value of drama-in-education as a decolonising pedagogy through embodied drama strategies in a higher education classroom. *Journal of Education (Durban)*, 72. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i72a04>
- [12] Corcoran, T., & Finney, D. (2014). Between education and psychology: school staff perspectives. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(1), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2014.947095>
- [13] Waters, L. (2011). A Review of School-Based Positive Psychology Interventions. *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 28(2), 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.1375/aedp.28.2.75>

Author Bio

Zhi Lu, born in October 1995, male, from Xianghe, Hebei. I am a teacher at Anhui Xinhua University. Research direction: research focus on art education.