

Original Paper

The Logical Approach of Effectively Integrating Aesthetic Education into College Mental Health Education

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Abstract

Integrating aesthetic education into colleges mental health education is a realistic need to nourish the mind, shape personality, and promote the comprehensive physical and mental development of college students. It is a necessary meaning to implement the educational goal of "nurturing the mind through aesthetics and transforming beauty through the mind", and also a logical direction for maintaining integrity and innovation to promote the connotative development of college mental health education. With "enlightening wisdom and nourishing the mind, and acting towards beauty" as its core, the integration of aesthetic education's concepts, methods, and values with college mental health education can further stimulate the vitality and innovation of college mental health education. Starting from the realistic logic, theoretical logic, practical logic and value logic that are integrated into the two, this article actively explores the necessity, feasibility and importance of integrating aesthetic education into college mental health education, which is conducive to the coordinated development of aesthetic education and mental health education and innovation of college education models.

Keywords

aesthetic education, college mental health education, effective integration

General Secretary pointed out: "To do a good job in aesthetic education, we must adhere to fostering virtue through education, root ourselves in the life of the times, follow the characteristics of aesthetic education, carry forward the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, and ensure that the young generation of the motherland grows up healthy both physically and mentally." College mental health education aims to promote students' physical and mental coordination, shape a healthy and positive mindset, and help students better adapt to society. It can be seen that aesthetic education plays a role in "nurturing the mind", and both aesthetic education and mental health education aim to promote students' better growth. Therefore, exploring the organic integration of aesthetic education and mental health education

is not only an innovative exploration of the college educational, but also an innovation in the working methods of college mental health education. Exploring the mental health education value contained in aesthetic education and integrating it into students' mental health education work will not only help achieve the dual improvement of students' psychological quality and aesthetic experience, but also effectively promote the simultaneous development of the "five educations" (morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor) and realize the all-round development of students. Aesthetic education is not only education on aesthetics, but also education on sentiments and the soul. Effectively refining its educational contents, methods and concepts, integrating them into college mental health education work, and actively exploring important methods for the practice of "nurturing the mind through aesthetics" will help promote the connotative development of college mental health education at the realistic, theoretical, practical and value levels. (Tian & Cai, 2024)

1. Realistic Logic: Practical Motivation for Integrating Aesthetic Education into College Mental Health Education

1.1 Promoting Policy Implementation and Disciplinary Interconnection

The Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Effectively Strengthening College Aesthetic Education in the New Era issued in 2019 emphasizes the need to educate people through beauty, influence people with beauty, and cultivate the essence with beauty, so as to foster socialist builders and successors with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. The Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Students' Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025) issued by 17 departments including the Ministry of Education emphasizes the overall construction of a mental health education system, promoting students' mental health through the "simultaneous development of five educations" (morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor), providing integrated psychological services, and building a mental health service system with Chinese characteristics. It can be seen that policies highlight that aesthetic education, as an important part of the "five educations", plays a positive role in promoting students' physical and mental health. Aesthetic education and mental health education complement each other, with in-depth connections in educational value, methods, and goals. College aesthetic education is a broad concept, and it is most commonly regarded as education in art disciplines in colleges. Giving full play to the advantages of aesthetic disciplines and integrating contents of painting, drama, dance, music, etc., into mental health education can not only promote interdisciplinary integration but also innovate mental health education models, producing positive effects on the effectiveness of mental health education. This is also in line with the policy orientation emphasized in the Guidelines for Mental Health Education of College Students, which focuses on innovating methods to meet the mental health service needs of different student groups.

1.2 Addressing Practical Issues and Innovating Educational Models

With social development, college students currently face common issues such as "empty heart syndrome", high pressure, and difficulty in adaptation, which in turn trigger psychological problems like anxiety and depression. Digital existence has also given rise to new psychological needs, such as emotional compensation through virtual socializing and coping with fragmented attention. Traditional mental health education can no longer meet practical needs. The existing psychological education model relies excessively on Western technologies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and is largely confined to lecture-style psychological counseling like psychological consultation, resulting in insufficient motivation and a single form of mental health education. College aesthetic education also has the misunderstanding that "aesthetic education is equivalent to art education", overemphasizing its instrumentalization and skill orientation. To address these practical issues, it is necessary to root in China's aesthetic education traditions and re-examine the methods of mental health education. For example, we can incorporate traditional aesthetic education practices in Chinese culture that "cultivate one's morality and nurture one's nature", such as calming the mind through calligraphy and regulating breathing through guqin (a traditional Chinese stringed instrument), into mental health education. We can also adopt artistic expressions that break through language barriers, such as painting, music, and drama, or carry out aesthetic experiences and creations like pottery making and poetry writing to purify the soul. Aesthetic education contains a great deal of elements that can promote the connection and activation of our neurons. Through the perception of beauty, it helps us rebuild a sense of life meaning at both material and spiritual levels, thereby better promoting mental health. Therefore, integrating aesthetic education into college mental health education is not only an inevitable choice to meet the psychological development needs of contemporary college students but also an important practice in innovating educational concepts.

2. Theoretical Logic: The Theoretical Basis for Integrating Aesthetic Education into College Mental Health Education

2.1 Taking the Concept of All-round Development as the Entry Point to Identify Key Breakthroughs

Marx and Engels formally put forward the scientific concept of "all-round development of the individual" in *The German Ideology*, and enriched and developed the theory of people's free and all-round development in subsequent works such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. (Li, 2019) The all-round development of people includes the development of four aspects: abilities, needs, social relations, and personality. After China's inheritance and localized development of the principle of people's all-round development, an educational tradition of Confucianism that takes morality as the first and emphasizes the all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, and aesthetics has gradually formed. The thought of "all-round development of people" also had an important enlightenment on Cai Yuanpei's educational thought of "simultaneous development of five educations". Since then, the development of China's educational policy history has been a process of secularizing the

principle of people's all-round development, which has led to the current consensus: human development should be a harmonious unity of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. This highly coincides with the goal of cultivating sound personalities advocated by mental health education.

In the 21st century, the theory of all-round human development has undergone theoretical innovation, emphasizing the unity of material civilization and spiritual civilization, as well as the unity of human development and quality education. This requires more attention to people's physical and mental health and material civilization. All-round development refers to people's physical and mental health and coordinated unity. Aesthetic education is an integral part of this all-round development. From this relationship, it can be inferred that aesthetic education can promote people's physical and mental development, that is, it plays an important role in the development of mental health. Therefore, taking aesthetic education as a carrier of mental health education is a key point and breakthrough for effectively promoting the comprehensive and balanced development of college students' physical and mental health, personality, sociality, and individuality.

2.2 Taking Relevant Psychological Theories as the Foundation to Establish Effective Links

The effective integration of aesthetic education and mental health education cannot be separated from the support of psychological theories. Among them, humanistic psychology represented by Maslow and Rogers focuses on people's development needs and levels, emphasizing self-actualization and the development of potential. The "peak experience" in humanistic psychology has a similar effect to the aesthetic experience emphasized in aesthetic education, both of which can improve individuals' mental health. Seligman's positive psychology focuses on people's positive emotions and happiness, emphasizing "authentic happiness". Aesthetic education can stimulate positive emotions through artistic activities, alleviate anxiety and depression, and in this sense, the two are interlinked. Psychotherapeutic theories also lay a solid foundation for their integration. For example, art therapy releases subconscious conflicts through non-verbal expressions such as painting and dance, promoting emotional regulation and trauma repair. Social constructivism in psychology emphasizes "social connection", stating that people's healthy development cannot be separated from connections with the surrounding environment. Art activities in aesthetic education enhance such connections by building social support networks, thus promoting the coordinated development of physical and mental health. In addition, the neurophysiological research direction in psychology also provides a basis for integrating aesthetic education into mental health education. Among them, aesthetic cognition theory emphasizes that aesthetic activities can effectively activate the brain's Default Mode Network (DMN), promote creative thinking and emotional regulation, thereby reducing stress hormones (such as cortisol) and enhancing parasympathetic nerve activity. ^[3] It can be seen that relevant psychological theories are inextricably linked with the connotative value of aesthetic education, which also lays a solid foundation for their integration.

2.3 Taking the Concept of Synergetic Development as the Key to Continuously Improve the Education Chain

Synergetics was proposed by Hermann Haken, a famous physicist from West Germany, in the 1970s. Synergetic development refers to the collaborative cooperation and innovative development between two or more different resources or individuals based on synergetics theory, so as to achieve common goals and realize a win-win situation of mutual development. ^[4]In the new era, college education work faces more opportunities and challenges. Mental health education is affected by many factors such as educators, educatees, information, and contexts, while aesthetic education has long been in a marginalized position, and the concept of "comprehensive aesthetic education" has remained at the theoretical level. The connotation of synergetic development provides a new way of thinking for us to explore the innovative development of college education mechanisms. As subsystems of the college education system, mental health education and aesthetic education each have rich educational resources. They share commonalities while retaining their own characteristics in goals, concepts, contents, and methods, and can learn from each other in many aspects. Therefore, it is necessary to grasp various conditions, promote mutual cooperation, coordination, integration, support, and resonance between the two and their respective elements, so as to guide other elements in the education system to develop in a coordinated and synchronous manner, continuously improve the chain of college education models, and maximize and optimize the educational function.

3. Practical Logic: Practical Mechanisms for Integrating Aesthetic Education into College Mental Health Education

3.1 Consolidating the Foundation for Integration and Establishing a Curriculum Integration Mechanism with Interconnected Concepts

General Secretar pointed out at the 2018 National Education Conference that "it is necessary to improve the implementation mechanism of fostering virtue through education and pay attention to cultivating students' psychological quality." At the same time, General Secretary also attaches great importance to aesthetic education, regarding it as an important link in implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. It can be seen that both college aesthetic education and mental health education are important components of realizing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. In addition, college aesthetic education emphasizes improving personality through aesthetic experience and emotional cultivation, which is interconnected with the concepts of college mental health education, such as cultivating positive psychological qualities and promoting students' physical and mental health. Therefore, it is necessary to fully explore the relevance of the two courses, establish a college students' mental health education teaching system based on aesthetic education, build a common activity system to improve curriculum settings, and realize curriculum integration. ^[5] For example, modules such as "Art and Emotion" and "Aesthetic Psychological Healing" can be added to public mental health courses, guiding students to understand emotional expression through the

analysis of classic art works such as paintings and dramas. Extracurricular activities can also be carried out, and interdisciplinary courses between psychology and art can be designed and offered, such as "Dance Movement Therapy", "Calligraphy for Mental Calmness", and "Drama Therapy". These courses allow students to concentrate, relieve emotions, and release pressure through aesthetic experiences, ensuring that the integration of aesthetic education and mental health education is truly implemented in students' education and teaching.

3.2 Strengthening Integration Guarantees and Establishing a Resource Guarantee Mechanism for Practical Collaboration

Integrating aesthetic education into college mental health education is a systematic and complex project that requires the full mobilization of human, material, and other resources to ensure its feasibility. Firstly, teacher resources must be guaranteed. The Guidelines for Mental Health Education of College Students emphasizes the construction of a team of college students' mental health education teachers. General Secretar pointed out at the National Education Conference that "we should comprehensively strengthen and improve school aesthetic education and allocate sufficient and qualified aesthetic education teachers." On the basis of ensuring the improvement of teachers in both disciplines, focus should be placed on cultivating integrated teachers, that is, realizing the sharing of teacher resources and joint learning of abilities through training. This enables aesthetic education teachers to understand basic psychological knowledge and possess basic psychological healing skills, and psychology teachers to master basic aesthetic education skills and carry out basic art therapy. In addition, experts in the field can be hired to form collaborative teaching teams.

In terms of material guarantees, the first is the optimization of environmental resources. A fully functional "Spiritual Aesthetic Education Space" should be built, including a dance therapy room, painting therapy room, music relaxation room, drama therapy room, and light and shadow therapy area, to ensure the implementation of integrated activities. In addition, digital empowerment should be utilized to establish VR and AR experience centers for panoramic immersive experiences. At the same time, an online resource library should be developed to integrate digital aesthetic education materials such as "emotional interpretation of famous paintings", "healing playlists", and "psychodrama scripts", building a resource database for integrating aesthetic education into mental health education. The effective use of resources is inseparable from activities. Therefore, it is also necessary to ensure the design of activity carriers, such as establishing art expression workshops and natural aesthetic education practice bases. In addition, brand projects such as the "Aesthetic Education and Mental Health Festival" can be created to achieve physical and mental integration through art work, outdoor healing, and art acquisition.

3.3 Ensuring Integration Effectiveness and Establishing a Positive and Effective Feedback and Improvement Mechanism

The effect of integrating aesthetic education into mental health education is not only related to the highlighting of the role of aesthetic education in nurturing the mind but also a test of innovative

exploration in mental health education. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an effect feedback mechanism to supervise the implementation and improvement of effective integration. Firstly, improve the evaluation and monitoring mechanism, design and select scientific and effective assessment tools, and adopt a mixed evaluation method that includes both process evaluation of courses and result inspection. The integration effect should be inspected throughout the process to facilitate timely feedback and improvement. Secondly, in mental health education, effect inspection is inseparable from quantitative tools and qualitative evaluation. In addition to commonly used psychological scales, quantitative tools should also include newly designed ones based on actual conditions and needs. Qualitative evaluation mainly includes student work analysis and participatory observation records. A dynamic adjustment mechanism should be established for the inspection results. It is necessary to collect and analyze results in a timely manner, optimize activity designs regularly, update the database promptly, and establish psychological files. In addition, management responsibilities should be clarified. The integration of aesthetic education and mental health requires colleges to establish special responsible departments, clarify the main responsibilities, do a good job in coordination and overall planning, ensure that the departments responsible for aesthetic education and mental health education are both independent and cooperative, and make a reasonable budget to ensure the smooth implementation of effective integration, thus forming a spiral upward feedback mechanism.

4. Value Logic: The Value Purport of Integrating Aesthetic Education into College Mental Health Education

4.1 Nurturing the Mind through Aesthetics, Creating a New Pattern for the Development of College Mental Health Education

At the 2016 Conference on Ideological and Political Work, General Secretar pointed out that mental health education should be integrated into various links such as courses, management, and campus culture. This requires colleges and universities to inject vitality into mental health education and pursue innovative development. The influence of aesthetic education is imperceptible, and the spirit conveyed by aesthetic education is mostly internalized into healthy psychological qualities. Aesthetic education courses and aesthetic culture contain rich value for mental education; through integration with aesthetic education, the appeal of mental health education can be effectively enhanced. Art, as an important part of aesthetic education, has a natural function of emotional expression. Nowadays, colleges and universities have begun to pay attention to the important value of aesthetic education in mental health education and have started to innovate the methods of mental health education. The emergence of aesthetic education has broken the traditional language-based psychological counseling and intervention, presenting non-verbal emotional expression and stress release, such as painting therapy and music therapy, which are commonly used. There is still great potential to explore the ways and methods of integrating aesthetic education into mental health education. With the arrival of the digital era, modern concepts, technologies, and means are bound to accelerate the reform of college education

models. "Nurturing the mind through aesthetics" not only provides ideas for colleges and universities to carry out collaborative education but also opens up new forms of college mental health education work, which is also a practice of "all-round education".

4.2 Transforming Beauty through the Mind, Exploring New Ideas for the Development of College Aesthetic Education

Mental health is an inherent condition for the effective implementation of aesthetic education, and good psychological qualities further promote the role of aesthetic education. Firstly, individuals with mental health have stable emotions and clear cognition, enabling them to perceive beauty more acutely and thus more easily understand and create beauty. Secondly, a good mental state brings a greater sense of security and self-acceptance, which not only greatly reduces mental constraints, stimulates imagination and creativity for beauty but also promotes sustained participation in aesthetic activities, making it easier to maintain focus and interest in aesthetic education activities. Most importantly, mentally healthy people have strong empathy, making it easier for them to understand the emotional connotation of art and establish emotional connections with others through aesthetic resonance. Therefore, mental health education is extremely important for the development of college aesthetic education. Taking healthy psychology as a prerequisite for the implementation of aesthetic education is a new idea for college aesthetic education work and a prerequisite for the positive development of college aesthetic education, which plays an important guiding role in college students' outlook on life and values. Beauty exists inherently, but only those with sound minds and kind hearts can perceive the beauty of all things. Thus, a healthy mind is the soil that nourishes beauty. In college education, by "transforming beauty through the mind" and pursuing it continuously, we can move forward towards the goal of "appreciating beauty in harmony, achieving universal peace".

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