Social Practice Model of the "Yikong" Children's Painting Studio: Integrating a Dual-Mentor System to Promote Aesthetic Education and Social Service

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Abstract: This study explores how the "Yikong" Children's Painting Studio at Chongqing Second Normal University utilizes a dual-mentor system to integrate aesthetic education with social service through community practice. Through the collaborative guidance of both on-campus and off-campus mentors, the program not only enhances students' artistic creativity but also strengthens their sense of social responsibility. The study focuses on analyzing the implementation process and outcomes of this model, and reflects on the issues observed in practice.

Keywords: Dual-mentor system; Art education; Cross-disciplinary collaboration; Aesthetic education and social service

1. Study background

Art education today is not only a means of cultivating artistic talent, but also an important avenue for improving overall social quality and fostering civic responsibility. With the deepening of educational reform, the function of art education has continually expanded. It is no longer confined to the teaching of technique; instead, greater emphasis is placed on the cultivation of emotion, aesthetics, creativity, and social responsibility. Consequently, the dual-mentor system has gradually become an innovative educational model, wherein collaboration between on-campus and off-campus mentors provides students with comprehensive guidance in both theory and practice.

As an art education platform with a social service orientation, the "Yikong" Children's Painting Studio strives to combine aesthetic education with social service through social practice, artistic creation, and public welfare activities. How to advance this model through a dual-mentor system has become an important issue in current educational reform [1].

2. Concept of the dual-mentor training model

The dual-mentor system is an innovative educational model that balances theoretical guidance with practical orientation, aligning with art education's integrated training needs of "knowledge–skill–service" [2]. By leveraging the cooperation between on-campus and off-campus mentors, students receive comprehensive guidance in both professional knowledge and skills. The on-campus mentor is responsible for academic guidance and foundational training, while the off-campus mentor draws on industry experience and real-world projects to help students understand the social function of art and enhance their practical abilities.

In the Yikong Children's Painting Studio, the dual-mentor system has not only improved students' artistic creation skills but also helped them accumulate practical experience through social service projects. For example, the on-campus mentor handles basic art instruction, while the off-campus mentor participates in the design and guidance of community art projects, leading students in activities such as public mural painting and rural art revitalization initiatives. This model allows students to enhance their social responsibility and teamwork skills even as they engage in artistic creation.

3. Practical exploration of the "dual-mentor+" talent cultivation model in art education

3.1. Integration of curriculum and practice: Exploring a diversified teaching model

Under the dual-mentor system, on-campus and off-campus mentors jointly design curricula and practical projects. The on-campus mentor focuses on fundamental theory and skill instruction, providing academic support, while the off-campus mentor emphasizes guidance on practical projects, helping students apply theoretical knowledge to their creative work. By integrating classroom teaching with social practice, students not only improve their artistic skills through hands-on projects, but also learn to align art education with societal needs—especially during public welfare projects where they learn how to use art to promote community cultural development.

For instance, the Yikong Studio partnered with local kindergartens to establish aesthetic education practice bases. Guided by off-campus mentors, students entered real early-childhood education settings to design engaging painting activities and lead children in creative projects. This practice not only allowed students to master methods of combining child psychology with aesthetic education, but also extended art education from the campus into the community.

3.2. Driven by social practice: Deep integration of artistic creation and social service

The Yikong Studio leverages social practice projects to encourage students to integrate artistic creation into social service. The on-campus mentor provides theoretical direction and guidance on creative vision, while the off-campus mentor instructs students in solving concrete problems in real settings, such as how art can contribute to local cultural revitalization or environmental beautification. Through involvement in rural revitalization mural projects and community art education programs, students improve their creativity while learning to use art to enhance the environment and disseminate culture. Working across disciplines also enables them to develop the ability to collaborate with professionals from different fields [3]. Additionally, the studio partnered with a hospital to offer a therapeutic painting program for children in recovery. Off-campus mentors teamed up with medical experts to guide students in providing art therapy to these children. This cross-disciplinary initiative not only alleviated patients' anxiety but also trained students to use art in support of mental health and social welfare. These projects gave students a sense of accomplishment in their creative work,

while also strengthening their sense of social responsibility and cultivating their awareness of giving back to society through art.

3.3. Cross-sector collaboration: Deep interaction with industry and community

A key feature of the dual-mentor model is cross-sector collaboration. The studio works not only with art education experts on and off campus, but also with partners in the broader community—such as artists, community organizations, and local government—to carry out social practice projects. The Yikong team actively cooperates with local education departments and community institutions to establish practice bases. Under mentor guidance, students participate in public art projects and community aesthetic education activities, and through these multi-party collaborations, they gain a deeper understanding of the value of art in social development. Off-campus mentors, drawing on their experience, also lead students in larger-scale community and public welfare activities, ensuring that students' artistic creations directly serve societal needs.

Through such extensive cooperation, students not only learn artistic techniques but also how to collaborate with experts from different fields on real-world projects to advance social and cultural development. For example, the studio collaborated with the local cultural department on public art initiatives, through which students enhanced their artistic literacy and social service skills via hands-on creation and cultural exchange. In addition, the studio organized volunteer outreach programs to promote traditional Chinese painting, reaching over 1,500 school teachers, students, and community residents, and garnering multiple media reports. This significantly increased the impact and effectiveness of the activities.

4. Reflections on practice

4.1. Insufficient mentor collaboration: Weak synergy in the dual-mentor system

Although the dual-mentor system has achieved initial success in the Yikong Studio, collaboration between on-campus and off-campus mentors remains insufficient. In some projects, mentors lack effective communication and coordination, resulting in a weak linkage between course design and practical guidance. For example, off-campus mentors sometimes focus too much on artistic creation and neglect to guide students in teaching methods and theoretical learning, so the advantages of the dual-mentor system are not fully realized. To address this issue, it is necessary to strengthen communication and coordination between mentors, encouraging on-campus and off-campus instructors to work closely together to formulate comprehensive training plans for students.

4.2. Limitations in project design: Inadequate integration of artistic creation with social needs

The studio has organized numerous social service activities, but some projects were relatively narrow in design and did not fully reflect the diversity of local culture and societal development. For example, certain mural painting projects provided students with opportunities for artistic creation but did not deeply explore local cultural elements, lacking localized design; as a result, the connection between students' art projects and the community's actual needs was not close enough.

In the future, the studio should tailor social practice projects to different regional cultural characteristics and social needs, designing more targeted and innovative initiatives to further enhance the social contribution of artistic creation [4].

4.3. Insufficient cultivation of social responsibility: Low student engagement and reflection

While students improved their artistic skills through social practice projects, the cultivation of social responsibility tended to remain superficial and was not truly internalized into their actions or thinking. Many students lacked deep reflection after completing projects and failed to recognize the practical role and long-term impact of artistic creation in society and culture. To strengthen this aspect, regular reflection sessions could be introduced to encourage students to share their experiences, thereby deepening their understanding of social responsibility and fostering sustained engagement [5].

5. Conclusion

The exploration of the dual-mentor system in the "Yikong" Children's Painting Studio has successfully integrated art education with social practice, promoting a deep fusion of aesthetic education and social service. Through the joint guidance of on-campus and off-campus mentors, students have not only improved their artistic creation abilities but also strengthened their sense of social responsibility and service. Practice has shown that applying the dual-mentor system in art education is highly valuable: it not only enhances students' professional skills but also improves their ability to adapt to society.

However, there are still some issues in practice, such as insufficient mentor collaboration, limitations in project design, and a lack of depth in cultivating students' social responsibility. In view of these problems, it is necessary to strengthen mentor communication, innovate project design, and increase students' reflection and engagement. Continuously optimizing the dual-mentor system will further deepen the integration of art education and social service, provide students with a broader development platform, and cultivate more talent with artistic literacy and social responsibility [6].

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