

The Construction of Dewey's Pragmatism and Creative Thinking in College Aesthetic Education

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Abstract: Creative thinking refers to a way of thinking that is independent, creative and innovative. With the development of society, the key to cultivating high-quality talents lies in consciously cultivating students' creative thinking abilities. Advocating progressive thinking methods, advocating "laboratory paradigm education," and endowing students with more autonomy is a transformation of life, growth and experience with obvious pragmatic educational philosophy characteristics. Based on the characteristics and scientific attributes of university aesthetic education, a cultivation plan centered on creative thinking is proposed to improve the theoretical system of university aesthetic education.

Keywords: Creative thinking; Pragmatist educational philosophy; Aesthetic education

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1. The important position of creative thinking in college aesthetic education

Creative thinking refers to the thinking process that leads to innovative, valuable or satisfactory content, which is conducive to the improvement of human cognitive level and the exploration and deepening of practical activities. Creativity is of great significance in promoting development, innovation and personal growth at the national, social and individual levels. American educator Dewey's pragmatic educational philosophy believes that the prerequisite for creation is creative thinking and Dewey's understanding of creativity emphasizes "discovery." He believes that the standard for judging originality should not be the discovery of unprecedented "new species." If one seriously discovers, even if thousands of people have made this discovery, he is still creative^[1]. Therefore, the originality emphasized by creative thinking is for oneself, the product of careful thinking discovered by oneself.

China's current state of education also leads to a lack of innovative spirit and ability among students due to the excessive emphasis on combining traditional culture and exam-oriented education. To enable students to be able to create in the future, dare to create and meet the needs of current international competition, the cultivation of creative thinking is both urgent and of special significance for the current aesthetic education in Chinese universities.

To cultivate students' creative thinking, it needs to start by cultivating their critical ability, philosophical

thinking ability and personalized development. In aesthetic education in universities, the first step is to create a creative thinking environment and cultivate students' habits of independent thinking and the courage to express their opinions. Secondly, it is necessary to cultivate students' critical and discriminative abilities, have their own ideas, and be willing to raise reasonable questions about authority. Finally, the personalized cultivation of college students is also particularly important. Everyone is an independent individual and personal characteristics are the soil for the growth of creative thinking. Without personality, there is no creativity.

2. Research on Dewey's educational philosophy and thought

2.1. Dewey's pragmatist educational philosophy

Dewey's educational philosophy is fully elaborated in "People and Education." Compared with the old traditions and ideas of education in the past, he carried out a complete and thorough transformation of philosophy^[2]. The philosophy of education in our country gradually formed from Dewey's lecture in China in 1919. Dewey's educational ideas were widely spread in our country, and his educational philosophy included pragmatic philosophy, emphasizing democracy and practice.

Dewey's philosophy of education takes pragmatism as its theoretical foundation, involving various aspects of individuals, education and society. It inspires us that creative thinking in higher education aesthetic education should be promoted from various aspects such as higher education views, teaching reform, practical teaching and curriculum system construction^[3]. The implementation of higher education in our country should promote a gradual approach, cultivate students' independent thinking and self-planning abilities, have professional ethics and a sense of social responsibility and oppose outdated and dogmatic moral education.

2.2. The philosophy of Dewey's educational experience

The essence of Dewey's philosophy of education is the philosophy of experience. In the early stages of education reform, China borrowed Dewey's philosophy of education and continued to deepen its development. This educational concept that values experience enables the continuity, interactivity and transfer of experiential knowledge to form an accessible mechanism for educational growth. It is particularly necessary to start from Dewey's experiential naturalistic curriculum paradigm and analyze it from three perspectives: student, knowledge, and social. Adhering to the "learning by doing" philosophy, Dewey values educational practice and advocates "laboratory paradigm education." The discovery method of exploration, experimentation, observation and reflection is adopted to give students greater responsibility and open up the foundation for the educational practice of "learning by doing." Experience comes from practice, and Dewey's "learning by doing" philosophy values educational practice, which is a direct response to his experiential educational philosophy^[4].

2.3. The philosophy of democracy and the thought of democratic education

Dewey's educational philosophy is also a democratic philosophy, and his democratic ideals are an expression of his philosophical spirit. He upholds a firm belief in democracy, demands the improvement of democracy, and firmly defends democratic ideas, believing that a progressive and democratic life is the true education. The dissemination and research of Dewey's democratic education ideas in the education sector in China are mainly based on the translation and introduction of "Humanism and Education" by Chinese scholars, which has led to the widespread dissemination of Dewey's democratic education ideas in China. Tu Shiwan believes that Dewey's educational philosophy, with its unique democratic dimension, closely combines anthropology with political philosophy centered on democracy. Based on this, he thinks about educational issues, which not only have a strong idealistic and critical color but also are rooted in reality, with an inherent transcendent

characteristic ^[5]. Chen Taona believes that Dewey's democratic education philosophy emphasizes the close relationship between education and democratic society ^[6]. In Dewey's view, democratic education is an educational approach with democracy as its core value, not only to cultivate democratic citizens but also to promote the development and construction of a democratic society ^[7]. Dewey's educational philosophy and ideas summarize past educational practices and plan future education, providing a theoretical reference for China's educational practice and reform.

3. The construction of Dewey's pragmatism education thought and creative thinking in college aesthetic education

3.1. Progressiveness and creativity of educational ideas

With the development of creative thinking in aesthetic education in colleges and universities today, the innovation of educational concepts is imminent. Colleges must constantly develop the progressiveness and innovation of educational concepts. With the emergence of new trends in the post-war world education reform in Europe and the United States, countries have "reflected" on the educational reform policy. China should take "whether it is suitable for the world trend and national and social needs" as the basis for reform, especially the reform of educational policies ^[8]. The backwardness of educational ideology and the quality of teaching are influenced by various factors, such as the quality of school operation and management standards. Although art and design education has made certain progress with the support of the country and society, problems such as insufficient supervision and implementation, outdated teaching content and low teaching quality still exist. To improve the quality of art and design education, schools need to strengthen teaching management and supervision, ensure that teaching content meets the needs of the times and effectively improve teaching quality. At the same time, schools should also accelerate the construction of the art discipline framework, strengthen the construction of the teaching staff, improve the professional level and teaching ability of teachers and make teaching more targeted and systematic.

For Dewey's practical education practice in the concept of aesthetic education in universities, education needs to start with students, take students as the main body and all activities should revolve around students. Secondly, teachers and students should participate together with good communication built between them. Teaching and learning should be combined with students' understanding, education should be enjoyable, and students' enthusiasm should be enhanced. In teaching practice, students determine the quality and effectiveness of education, so all the teaching activities should revolve around and meet the needs and interests of students, promoting their rapid growth ^[9]. Dewey believed that "Learning is active" and that educational concepts that are solely instilled externally cannot be integrated. It is necessary to enable students to grow through practice, inspire their nature and promote their subjective initiative in learning. Students are the center of education and life in schools ^[10]. Dewey's educational philosophy believes that learning requires the joint participation of teachers and students. The guidance process is based on student feedback and teachers continuously adjust teaching methods. If forced or left unchecked, it will suppress students' minds and creativity, leading to behavioral and cognitive biases. Teachers and students need consensus to amplify the effectiveness of education. Dewey believed that children are born with a strong interest and desire for new things ^[11]. Through activities, they learn the core methods of Dewey's practical education philosophy. Happy learning is also a medium, tool, and means for students to understand things, master knowledge, and develop experience. In teaching practice, it is important to cultivate students' independent thinking, critical thinking and creative thinking abilities, integrating theoretical teaching into practice, and emphasizing the development of students' thinking in activities. These are in line with the cultivation method of creative thinking in aesthetic education in

Chinese universities.

3.2. The openness and richness of educational content

When cultivating creative thinking in aesthetic education in universities, the openness and richness of educational content are particularly important. Art and design are a rapidly developing and changing industry, and the constant emergence of new materials, technologies and design concepts requires designers to have the ability to learn and adapt continuously. In terms of education, teachers should also keep up with the times, exerting importance on cultivating students' creativity and practical abilities to meet the industry's constantly changing needs. In teaching, the role of teachers is also changing, and they need to become leaders in innovative teaching. Based on the characteristics and needs of students, teachers should carry out teaching activities tailored to their needs. In addition, combining theoretical knowledge with practical operations is the key to improving students' comprehensive quality ^[12]. The demand for international development also means that teaching content and methods must align with international standards. Implementing the integration of industry, academia, and research is an important action to support the reform of art and design education. From relevant research reports, it can be found that art students in China still have a relatively low level of innovation and practical operation ability. Therefore, in teaching, research should be conducted on the shortcomings of students, effectively combining teaching and practice, improving their innovation and practical operation ability and promoting the development and progress of art and design education.

3.3. The diversity and innovation of teaching methods

Overemphasizing the foundation of traditional art while neglecting the importance and long-term nature of art design is a common educational problem. Modern art and design education needs to pay more attention to students' innovation ability, problem-solving ability and ability to respond to real-life challenges. Traditional art and craft courses are still important foundations, but teaching content and methods must be constantly updated to meet students' needs and development ^[13]. Teachers should guide students to discover and think about problems and solve them in innovative ways, cultivating their creativity and critical thinking. In addition, compared with foreign students, there is indeed a certain gap in the innovation and expressiveness of works among Chinese art students. This may be related to the openness and freedom of foreign education, where art and design education places more emphasis on the development of students' personalities and innovative practices, giving them more autonomy and exploration space. Therefore, China's art and design education needs to learn more from foreign experiences, introduce open and free teaching concepts, encourage students to actively participate in innovative practices and enhance the innovation and expressiveness of their works.

Due to the relatively limited education and lagging information received by art students in China, their works may lack imagination and creativity ^[14]. Moreover, if too much emphasis is placed on skill development while neglecting the guidance of creative thinking, it is impossible to cultivate truly competitive art talents. Therefore, in the teaching mode, it is necessary to focus on guiding innovative thinking, exploring and cultivating their creative potential ^[15]. In terms of curriculum design, emphasis should be placed on the arrangement of innovative links, guiding students to participate in various innovative practices, and cultivating their innovative spirit and creative thinking ability. In addition, teaching should be based on innovation theory and provide personalized guidance and exploration tailored to the specific situation of students, guiding the cultivation of innovative spirit and the exploration of their own innovative thinking and cultivating excellent art and design talents that meet social needs.

4. Conclusion

The creative thinking of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy should focus on efficient application in aesthetic education in universities and pay attention to cultivating students' personalized thinking patterns, critical thinking abilities, philosophical thinking abilities, creative thinking and curiosity in teaching. Teachers can cultivate students' creative thinking by stimulating their curiosity and encouraging them to discover and solve problems actively^[16]. Due to the current single classroom teaching mode in China, a single classroom teaching mode and teaching methods that rely on textbook knowledge may inhibit students' curiosity and creative thinking, leading to students not thinking and blindly pursuing so-called "correct solutions," lacking participation and initiative, and difficult to stimulate their learning interest and exploration desire. In order to change the backwardness of art and design education in China, teachers can adopt more open and inspiring teaching methods, tap into students' creativity, guide them to develop innovative thinking and enable them to respond more flexibly to future challenges and opportunities, such as project-based learning, exploratory learning, practical learning, etc. Encourage students to actively participate and explore independently and focus on cultivating their critical and creative thinking. At the same time, the teaching content can also be more practical, emphasizing the connection between students' lives and real-life problems and stimulating their interest and curiosity. By using an open classroom teaching model to stimulate students' initiative and creative thinking, students are endowed with more autonomy and exploration space, which enables them to actively participate in learning, express their ideas more freely, promote the cultivation of thinking collision and critical thinking, establish a learning community and cooperative spirit, promote comprehensive development of students, and lay a good foundation for personal and career development in the future.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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