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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHALLENGES RESEARCH ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF IMPLEMENTING ART EDUCATION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS OF YUNNAN PROVINCE OF CHINA - A CASE STUDY OF FIVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN YUNNAN PROVINCE

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Abstract

In the digital age, education is increasingly emphasizing the comprehensive cultivation of students' overall quality, and therefore art education is more and more attention. This study was conducted to investigate the current status of art education in China at this stage, such as the challenges facing art education, students' interest tendencies and teachers' teaching methods, teaching evaluation and excellence strategies. Therefore, a purposive sampling method was used to select five junior high schools in Yunnan Province as the research object. In order to ensure the accuracy of the findings, this study utilized a mixed study where both questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. 330 students received online questionnaires and 10 art teachers were interviewed in depth. The main reasons are: first, the lack of attention to junior high school art education, the attitude of school administrators and students' learning mentality need to be improved; second, the teachers' qualifications vary widely, there are few full-time art teachers, teachers' art professionalism needs to be improved, and teachers' training mechanism needs to be perfected; third, the content of the teaching can't keep up with the times, and the students' interest is gradually decreasing. Finally, combined with the author's experience in art teaching work put forward some feasible strategies for improvement, the most important point is to create a distinctive brand, the teaching content should be integrated with the regional culture to design art courses. This study provides some theoretical basis and practical reference for the development of junior high school art education programs in line with the development trend of education as well as with regional characteristics.

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Introduction:-

Art education is an important way to cultivate students' personality and creative thinking, and can help students develop a scientific aesthetic outlook (Wan, 2020). Art education in junior high school occupies an important position in the cultivation of students' aesthetic ability. By stimulating students' interest in learning art and cultivating their

hobbies in art learning, junior high school students' hands-on ability and creativity can be further enhanced. China attaches great importance to art education in junior high schools, and has introduced a series of policies and measures to promote the enhancement of junior high school students' ability in aesthetic education. For example, in 2020, the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the Work of Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era put forward the need to incorporate aesthetic education into the whole process of cultivating talents in all types of schools at all levels and throughout the various segments of school education, and to cultivate socialist builders and successors who are all-aroundly developed in terms of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor. Since the reform of art education in China, through the active promotion and scientific practice of educational institutions and schools at all levels, junior high school art education has made unprecedented achievements (Yang & Ren, 2015). At the same time, it is also noted that many regions of China's junior high school art education is still faced with the reality of unscientific curriculum design, insufficient teachers, class time is difficult to ensure that the problems (Zhang, 2019). As a worker in art education, the author has a deeper understanding of the current society, schools and parents generally ignore junior high school art education, that art classes are dispensable, unwilling to invest too much in art education and other issues, to enhance the level of junior high school art education has a strong sense of crisis and sense of mission. Therefore, this project focuses on the combination of theory and practice, conducts in-depth research on the current situation of junior high school art education in a specific Chinese province, Yunnan, and explores feasible strategies to crack the bottleneck of junior high school art education in China.

Materials and Methods:-

Under the impetus of the new curriculum reform in China, the teaching methods of junior high school art have undergone certain improvements, but there are still issues related to innovation overall. In the article published by Wang (2025) in March, the reasons for the existence of the innovation issue were elaborated. On one hand, the traditional teaching model in China makes many teachers still adopt the indoctrination-based teaching method in art education, ignoring the students' dominant position and initiative, resulting in a dull classroom atmosphere, lack of students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, and difficulty in cultivating students' innovation and practical abilities. On the other hand, art learning requires students' active participation and mutual communication. However, in actual teaching, teachers often neglect students' interaction and cooperation, causing students to lack opportunities for communication and collaboration in learning, unable to fully exert their imagination and creativity, and also having adverse effects on the development of art classroom activities, which is not conducive to the scientific development of teaching work. Students' preferences vary, so a successful art course should allow the greatest freedom in the selection of works, processes, media, and themes. These data should enable each teacher to discover whether certain popular art forms have been overlooked. Teachers who hope to help students make autonomous choices of projects can conveniently organize these lists and provide them as a guide to students (Traill & Harap, 1934). The research on art education started earlier in Western countries and has produced many far-reaching theories on art education, especially the more systematic elaboration of the functions of art education. As Du Wei, a scholar of aesthetic education, pointed out, aesthetic education, as an indispensable part of quality education, is crucial to meeting the psychological needs of young people and the development of comprehensive quality, and the implementation of aesthetic education programs indirectly builds a bridge for the cultivation of students' complete personalities (Du, 2000). In China, most of the research on junior high school art education lies in the analysis of empirical examples, and it is basically based on the compulsory education stage to conduct research on specific samples (Hu, 2018; Zhong, 2005; Li, 2019). There are not many targeted research results on how to meet the requirements of the new era, strengthen the value of educating people, and enhance the strength of teachers. On the basis of the existing results, this study investigates the implementation status of art teaching in five junior high schools in Yunnan Province, and explores scientific and effective countermeasures for improvement.

Therefore, this study adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. On one hand, purposive sampling was employed to select 5 middle schools in Yunnan Province (GD Middle School, KM Middle School, QJ Middle School, YX Middle School, and DL Middle School) as the research subjects. Ten teachers were purposefully selected from these 5 middle schools as interviewees. The specific information of the participants is shown in Table 1. It can be seen from the table that the participants were 4 males and 6 females. All 10 participating teachers taught junior high school art courses, and their ages ranged from 28 to 44 years old (Mean = 34.2). Moreover, they had 2 to 22 years of teaching experience in junior high schools (Mean = 10.4). The sampling subjects included both young teachers with shorter service periods and experienced teachers. When designing the interview content, the main basis was the statistical analysis method. Randomly selected art teachers from each school were sought to obtain answers regarding art teacher training and improvement strategies, to support and verify the basic viewpoints of this research topic.

Table 1:- List of Interview Participants' Information.

Coding	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Name of the school
A-1	Female	30	8	GD
A-2	Female	34	11	GD
A-3	Male	31	3	KM
A-4	Male	44	22	KM
A-5	Female	28	2	QJ
A-6	Male	41	17	QJ
A-7	Female	32	7	YX
A-8	Female	37	15	YX
A-9	Male	29	5	DL
A-10	Female	36	14	DL
Average value		34.2	10.4	

On the other hand, 330 students were randomly selected from these five junior high schools and were surveyed online. These 330 students were from the first, second, and third grades of junior high school. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, mainly exploring students' feelings about art courses, as well as their interests, hobbies, motivations, and effects of learning art. By obtaining first-hand information, the current situation of art education in schools was examined.

Results:-

Questionnaire Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to students in grades 1 to 3 of 5 junior high schools. A total of 330 electronic questionnaires were distributed, and 330 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective sample rate of 100%. As shown in Table 2, after analysis and verification by SPSS 27, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.834, indicating good internal consistency; the KMO value of the questionnaire was 0.892, suggesting good validity, which is conducive to further analysis of the questionnaire. In this study, the data of the survey results were analyzed using simple quantitative analysis of frequency and percentage, with SPSS 27 software as the analysis tool. From Table 2, it can be seen that the information of the participants is as follows: a total of 330 valid questionnaires were recovered, including 138 from male students, accounting for 41.82%, and 192 from female students, accounting for 58.18%. There were 138 students in grade 1, accounting for 41.82% of the total; 100 students in grade 2, accounting for 30.3% of the total; and 92 students in grade 3, accounting for 27.88% of the total. Overall, the distribution of students in the three grades was relatively even, and the gender ratio difference was not significant. It can be seen that the survey subjects selected in this study were purposive sampling, which can reflect the scientificity and representativeness of the research results. Ultimately, through data analysis, the problems existing in junior high school art can be understood.

Table 2:- Questionnaire Reliability, Validity and Basic Information.

Item	Sample	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO value
15	330	0.834	0.892
Gender	Male	138	41.82%
	Female□	192	58.18%
Grade	Grade One	138	41.82%
	Grade Two	100	30.3%
	Grade Three	92	27.88%

Analysis of Interview Topics

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 teachers. The interview data were subjected to thematic coding using NVIVO11, and ultimately three themes were obtained: Lack of attention, Outdated teaching content, Teacher quality; and four sub-themes: Lack of school policies, Replaced by the main subject, Major of teacher, Training. As shown in Figure 1, the hierarchical structure and relationships of the themes and sub-themes can be observed. Among them, the three themes that were repeatedly mentioned by the participants during the interviews are the three problems faced by junior high school art classes.

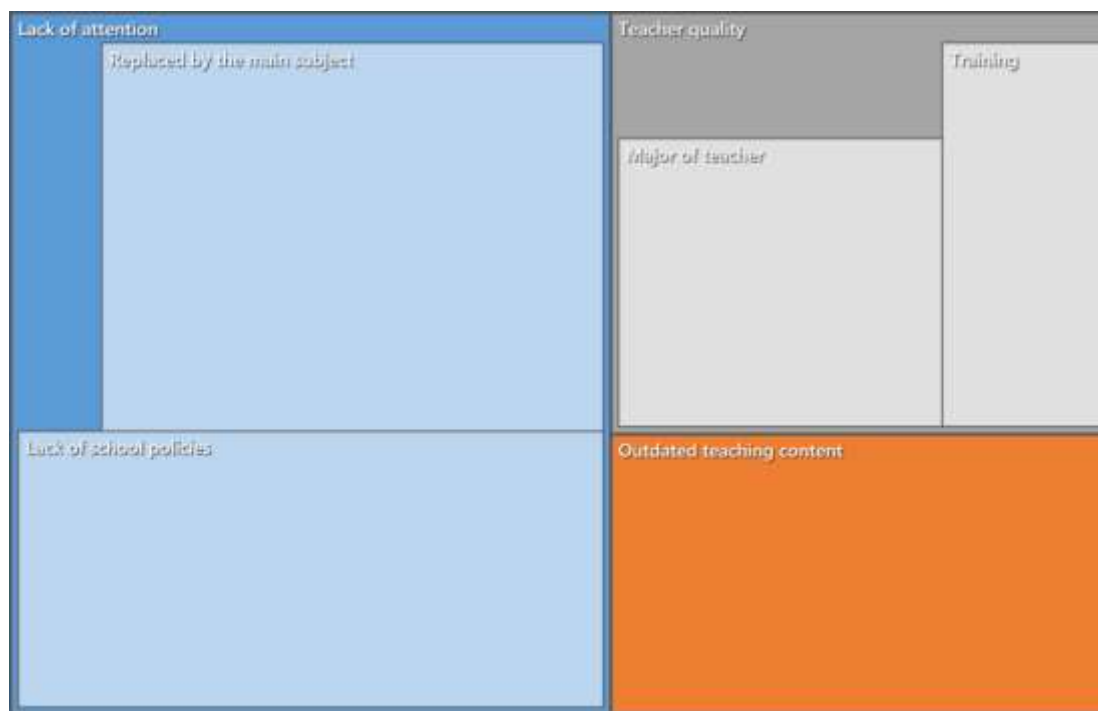


Figure 1:- Node Comparison by Coding Reference Count.

Insufficient attention to middle school art education

Through the analysis of questionnaire data, it was found that in most schools, the art subject has been reduced or even completely occupied. The most common scenario is that the main subject (English, Math, etc.) takes away from art class time, making it difficult to complete the art program on schedule. As can be seen from Figure 1, of the 330 students surveyed on “whether art class is occupied”, 295 students chose ‘yes’, accounting for 89%, and only 35 students chose “no”, accounting for 11%. Only 35 students chose “won’t”, accounting for 11%. The insufficient implementation of the number of art courses also reflects that schools and teachers do not pay enough attention to art education.

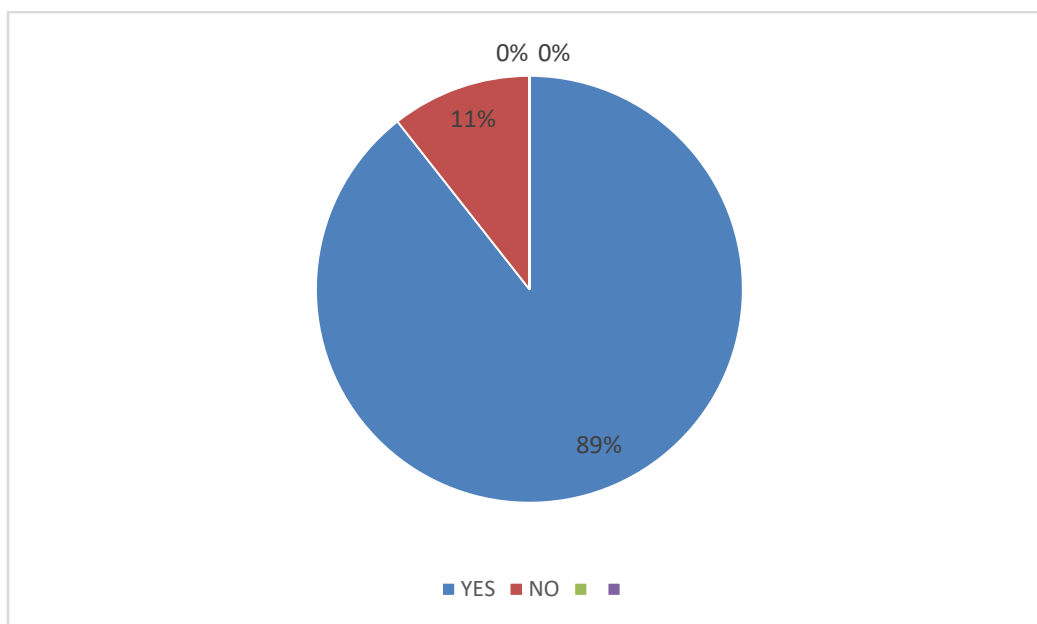


Figure 2:- Statistic implementation of art class.

During the interviews, the participants also mentioned several times that the school's policies do not support art classes. As a result, art classes are often replaced by other main subjects. For instance, a teacher mentioned: Before every final exam, art classes are basically impossible to conduct. The school places more emphasis on the grades of main subjects, and the teachers of main subjects can often use my classes to tutor students.

Teachers are poorly qualified and training mechanisms are in need of improvement

Of the 10 teacher subjects studied in the survey, the educational level was mainly undergraduate, and only one had a postgraduate degree, of which eight graduated with a degree in fine arts and two graduated with a non-fine arts degree. The interviews revealed that some art teachers had not studied art teaching courses or participated in art discipline-specific teaching practices before joining the profession, and that art education and teaching theories were relatively weak. Interviewed art teachers reflected that although they had received training, the professional development of art teachers was limited due to the insufficient attention paid to the art subject in schools, the lack of pertinence in organizing various types of teacher training activities, and the inadequacy of the training mechanism for the enhancement of art teachers' professional competence. For example, a teacher mentioned: I graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, and I am more confident in my ability to draw, but I lack the skills to teach drawing, and very often I am not sure if I can teach my students. In addition, the school lacks a mechanism to develop the professional competence of art teachers, and does not pay enough attention to the selection, training, assessment, and incentives for junior high school art teachers, and the content of teacher training lacks relevance, resulting in a lack of motivation for many junior high school art teachers to participate in training.

Teaching content is not up to date

According to the data analyzed, out of 330 students, 224 students, or 68%, were not very satisfied with their current art instruction, and only 22 students were satisfied with their art classes (Figure 2). Some students felt that the content of the books was boring and could not engage their interest, while others felt that teachers could be more flexible in their teaching methods. Teachers also responded that schools did not develop school-based curricula and teaching materials related to art. A teacher mentioned that: the textbooks for art classes are just standardized, and some of the contents are actually not suitable for the students in our school, I think it is better to update the teaching contents so that they can be interesting to the students. In conclusion, the contents of the current art class are not suitable for the students.

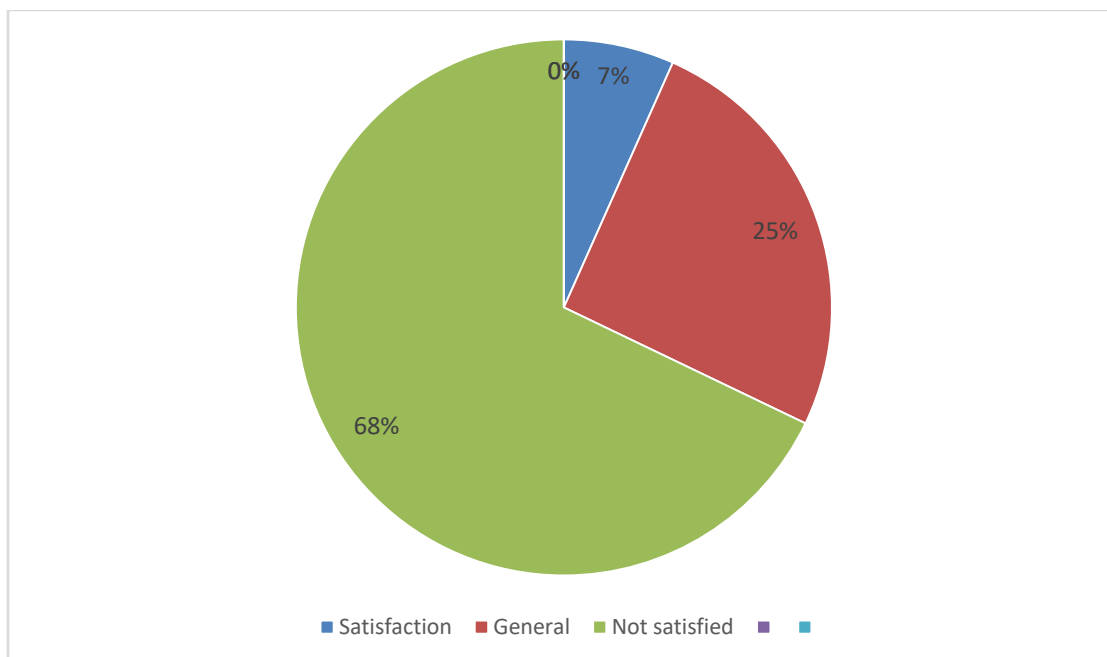


Figure 3:- Statistic satisfaction of art class.

Discussion:-

By investigating the current status of problems in junior high school art education, corresponding solution strategies are proposed.

Emphasis on art education

Cultivate junior high school students aesthetic outlook, outlook on life, with healthy aesthetic education to drive the students' personality development, the most critical is to strictly implement the national provisions of the aesthetic education courses "full open full" rigid requirements, to change the ideological concept, completely abandon the drawbacks of exam-oriented education, in all grades of all classes according to the provisions of the art course, to ensure that the class time meets the requirements. The school should change its mindset and completely abandon the shortcomings of exam-oriented education. Changing the concepts of schools, teachers, parents and students, emphasizing the cultivation of students' emotions and interests.

Enhancement of teachers' core competencies

First of all, we should support and encourage art teachers to participate in the research and establishment of school development goals, and strengthen art teachers' sense of identification with teaching goals. Secondly, we should build a platform for teachers to communicate and learn from each other, understand the practical difficulties of art teachers, and provide personalized care and help for teachers' growth. Finally, we should be good at combining short-term and long-term training for teachers, providing art teachers with a scientific and specific teaching practice support environment, and guiding the generation of art teachers' core literacy.

Building a distinctive brand and improving the design of art curriculum integration

Art education in junior high schools should be tailored to the differences between different regions and schools. For instance, Qin & Min (2015) took Yunnan culture as an example to create an art curriculum. In their article, they explained that Yunnan is a multi-ethnic province, and the abundant ethnic materials and ethnic culture provided a vast amount of ethnic art resources for Yunnan's art education and artistic creation. And in Liu (2025) fifth issue 41 volume research, it was proposed that primary and secondary school art education should integrate resource advantages, widely utilize various social resources such as libraries, museums, exhibition halls, science and technology museums, factories, rural areas, military units and research institutes, as well as rich natural resources, fully explore the educational value of social venues such as art museums, and integrate available resources. On the one hand, art teachers can take into account the cultural characteristics of the local region and select educational content with local characteristics according to local conditions, so as to expand students' art horizons while further enriching the materials for junior high school students' art creation. On the other hand, junior high schools can offer different courses according to their own actual situation, take into full consideration the actual regional culture when designing the art courses, and make appropriate adjustments to the teaching contents within a specific scope according to the actual situation of the schools and students under the premise of complying with the teaching regulations.

Conclusion:-

In the new era of art education, compared with traditional art education, there are new changes in the objects, media, facilities, students, etc. It is necessary to fully understand the current situation, explore and look forward to the future of art education in junior high schools, adjust and optimize the traditional art education methods and concepts, and adapt to the new requirements of the new era of the development of art education. The implementation of art education in five junior high schools in Yunnan Province side by side shows the general status of art education in junior high schools in Yunnan. This project investigates the implementation status of junior high school art education through practice, analyzes the existing problems and proposes improvement strategies to provide some theoretical and practical insights for Yunnan Province junior high school art education.

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