

Ecological Art Education

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ABSTRACT Art exists in the development of human beings' civilization as an important part of human life. Colorful kinds of art can be a reflection of human emotion, which brings them aesthetic pleasure and creates a variety of enlightenments for human beings. Unfortunately, the rapid development of society has exerted a sharp influence on peoples' life and the sustainable development of Art. Due to the weakness in art education, the ecology is suffering from an unprecedented disease. Nowadays, due to the deterioration of ecological environment, a lot of people are talking about the ecological view and the sustainable development of nature, but they tend to ignore the issue that ecological crisis is embedded in the serious relationship between man and nature. How to equip a society with sustainable development has become an unavoidable problem in the modern society. The ecological art education may be a positive solution for the problem.

INTRODUCTION

Art exists in the development of human beings and civilization, which is an indispensable element in all kinds of cultures and is an important part of human life. From the lifelike murals in Spanish Altamira cave to the neat and elegant painted pottery basin with human face and fish pattern unearthed in Shanxi Banpo relics; from the symphony of "Pathetique" with plain melody to "War and Peace" describing the throb of life and the joy and pain of human; from the mysterious smile of Mona Lisa to "Stray Birds" showing the thought of love; from the sculpture "David" with open-minded expression to Chinese painting intermingled deficiency and excess and chequered with black and white. We can feel the relationship between art and life deeply here and there. Colorful kinds of art can be a performance and reflection of human feeling and emotion, accumulating and strengthening the understanding of human beings to their own lives, both bring them the aesthetic pleasure and creates a variety of philosophic enlightenments for human beings. Unfortunately, the change of times and the rapid development of society have exerted sharp influence on people's life and spirit and the sustainable development of art. Art, due to the weakness in art education, is suffering from an unprecedented disease. Nowadays, due to the deterioration of ecological environment, a lot of people are talking about ecological view and the sustainable development of nature, but at the same time, they tend to ignore the issue that ecological crisis is not only embedded in the serious relationship between man and

nature but also resulted from the relationship between man and society which is known as social and spiritual crisis. How to equip a society with sustainable development has become an unavoidable problem in modern society. The ecological art education which is based on the concept of ecology may be the positive solution of the problem.

The recent studies in China on ecological art education mainly can be divided into three categories.

First, the theoretical approach to art education from the perspective of ecology, which mainly includes Teng's (2003) On "Ecological-styled Education of Art", Meng and Liu's (2013) "Interpretation of ecological art education", Li's (2013) "The educational value of kindergarten's ecological art environment", Bao's (2015) "Exploring art teachers' resource and maintaining ecological art education development" and so on. In conclusion, theoretical studies mainly focus on the theoretical analysis of ecological art education and the specific theoretical value of ecological art education, which lacks of practical value.

Second, studies on ecological art education in a certain field. Researchers Chen (2012) from the perspective of childrens' aesthetics; Meng (2013) from the perspective of instrumental music education; and Liu (2015) from the perspective of music education discussed the applicative value of ecology in art education, which opens the history of the classified studies on ecological art education in China.

Third, researchers such as Du (2013), Liu (2014) and Lu (2014) mainly conducted studies on the practical application of ecological art ed-

ucation in early childhood education, which lays a foundation for the practical research of ecological art's application in school education.

All the above mentioned studies have shown that China is introducing ecology to the art education of school, which not only shows the necessity and tendency of ecological art education, but also provides a theoretical and practical basis for the further studies on ecological art education.

The Dependent Ecological View

Ecological art education is based on the contemporary ecological view. Modern industrial revolution, due to the excessive plundering to natural resources, brought human beings rich material wealth and lead to the deterioration of the natural environment and ecological crisis. Air pollution, soil erosion, abnormal climate, forest depletion, species extinction, land desertification and other kinds of natural disasters occur frequently. Ecological crisis triggers the ecological movement and the rise of ecological movement also promotes the development of ecology, so, ecological concept is bound to be introduced to the field of humanities and social science. The famous American ecologist Odum (2006) once put forward that ecology will provide "link between natural science and social science" and "it will appear as a new comprehensive science in the 1960s".

The development of ecology is accompanied by the establishment of ecological concept and a cross from other disciplines, which understands man and nature taking life and environment as an organic integrity with interdependence and interaction. From the inner essence of spirit, it corresponds to the eastern traditional culture to a large extent, especially in accordance with the thought of Taoism. In the great religious traditions, Taoism provides one of the most profound and beautiful expressions in ecological wisdom, which emphasizes the uniqueness of source and the dynamic nature of all natural and social phenomena (Ge 1991), namely the so-called "Heaven and earth change but connect with each other" and "All things on earth do are inseparable". Since Yin and Yang are in good order and man is an integral part of nature, the world can be regarded as an integrity with all parts of it connect with each other while all things on earth are continuously reproducing and breeding in an end-

less succession. Chinese ancient Taoist taking "dao" as the core philosophy is the fundamental principle of nature involves a profound ecological wisdom.

The ecological view which develops from the relationship between man and nature shows a strong vitality and quickly penetrates into all fields of social life, whose view is organic and inner related. From the ecological point of view, the whole world including man, nature and society is an organic ecosystem, and there is an objective logic and rules in its movement. With new theoretical perspective and thinking way in ecological concept, there will be various understandings towards the same issue, which also provides a new horizon for us to understand modern art education and grasp its connotation.

The Concept of Sustainable Development of Man

Man is the object of art education. Today, art education in our country has many problems; of course, the most prominent one is the awareness of "man". For a long time, because of the lack of full understanding of the essence of art education, students' role in class is totally ignored. What's worse, art education in school merely aims at learning skills rather than enriching the important part of students' lives, which has inevitably caused the alienation of art education development. While, ecological thought provides the possibility for us to understand man and provides theoretical basis for the reform and development of art education.

The Ecological Essence of Man

Man, first of all, is the subject of life. In the view of ecology, man's life is full of vivid and substantial joys and sorrows. This requires that education should be geared to the needs of the "integrated man", and the purpose of education is to enable man to obtain a rational understanding and satisfy in aspect of emotion, will and creativity aiming to promote the development of man's whole life. Therefore, education is not only a means for cultivating survival skills, but also a way of existence to improve mans' hierarchy of needs and enriching mans' spiritual world.

Man, as the subject of life, has unlimited ideas about the physiological and psychological level and has self-initiative life feature, which determines mans' constantly communicating with the

outside world and continually creating their own existence, and thus enabling themselves to accumulate a huge potency which provides more possibilities for their development. So, education should be geared to the needs of mans' spiritual richness, which makes education become an important part full of value and meaning in mans' life, truly achieving the cultivation, breeding and improvement of education for human life.

Social Attributes of Man

As a living creature in the world, man is not an isolated entity but co-existing with everything in the ecological cycle interdependently, forming a symbiosis relationship. In various kinds of relations in the ecological chain, the most important thing is the interpersonal relationship between men. The survival and development of man, both in physical or mental aspect, suggests the survival and development of a relationship. The existence of each man can be presented and confirmed in the presence of others (Lu 2002). Therefore, the relational existence of man determines that man is socially related. The personality of man must be based on social groups to achieve its existence and individuals cannot be separated from social groups. It determines that all the activities of man will be in a relationship and can only happen in the relationship, so, education, as a kind of practical activity, is no exception certainly.

Ecology of Art Education

Yang (2011) says that education is the foundation of all science and art, and art education is the foundation of all kinds of education. Ecological art develops from traditional ecological education, emphasizing man's survival with ecological art. From the perspective of ecology, art education can be discussed with its objective premise focusing on ecological art education itself. Similar to natural ecosystem, ecology of the art education is the state of life with the inner components keeping an organic and interactive relationship with the environment.

Life Characteristics of Art Education

The most essential characteristic of art education is its life relatedness. Art education cannot be separated from life. First of all, the compo-

nent of art education is a kind of living organism. Man is the main body of education because man's life enables the possibility of art education activities. Secondly, art itself also has the inner characteristic. Art education is a dynamic process which is full of vitality and associated with the spiritual, emotional, changeable, reflective and organic spirit of the living organism. In this dynamic process, teachers enhance the value of their own life through the display of knowledge, ability and personality charm. Students improve the artistic skills and cultivate the emotion both, understand the appreciation and aesthetics and improve the quality of their life through the learning process. Finally, the vitality of art education is also reflected in close contact with mans' life. Art comes from life and is the source of mans' life. Art education obtains continuous development in the relationship and interaction with mans' lives. In a word, it is the existence of art education that promotes the development of art education to the ecology.

The Connectivity of Art Education

Art education itself has the overall connectivity, which is firstly reflected in the internal main elements in the art education system. From the perspective of the internal elements in the art education system, art education is composed by teachers, students, curriculum, teaching and evaluation, and the reasonable structure and combined action among various elements can promote the sustainable development of art education. Secondly, it is reflected in the content of art education. Ecological art education, in accordance with the human ecological awareness, takes dance, drama, music and art as a whole in harmony according to the ecological relationship, each part of the integrity complements and supports each other and develops the students' ability of art at a faster speed and in more interesting form (Teng 2008). Art education course is not the pure bundling or mechanical overlay, it emphasizes the mutual fusion, link, the development and complement between each other, forming synesthesia art ability in multiple connectivity, then man's creation and performance should be emphasized in the medium term, and reflection and evaluation is given in the later term. In the process, students are enabled to grasp art as a whole and eventually improve their artistic ability and achieve the sustainable development of

the humanities accomplishment. Thirdly, it is reflected in the connectivity between art education and the external environment. Art education prompts the coordinated development of its elements through the connectivity with external environment. Under the concept of ecology, a perfect art education system can be established and the narrow category of school education can be broken through, thus, the intangible tangible school art education forms a dynamic balance between art education in community, family and society. Just as aesthetic education advocated by the famous educator Cai Yuanpei, full implementation of “the concept of national art education” among family, school and society should be accomplished (Zhang 1992).

The connectivity of art education can be presented in the Figure 1 to describe how the inner relationship of art education influences the art cultivation in each term.

Moving towards Ecology-Pursuit of Art Education

The specialization of domestic art education began in the early 20th century, and the most representative ones are the establishment of Beijing National Art School (Fu 2012) and Shanghai Private Normal School (Chen 2010). After the de-

velopment in more than a century, art education showed an unprecedented development momentum and catered to the needs of the development of art education in our country, there is no doubt that it also promotes the development of the systemization and standardization of art education in China. According to statistics, by 2010, among the 2358 ordinary universities in China, the number of art-majored universities determined by the ministry of education roared up to 819, including the 31 independently-settled art colleges and other 788 universities related to art. The number of annual recruit students is nearly 300,000 (Bie 2013). According to the calculation, art related professional colleges and students accounts for 34.73 percent and 5.38 percent respectively in the total number, forming a complete professional and large-scale art education system. But the specialization of art education has a far-reaching influence on art education, which leads to art education developing from solidarity to split.

At the beginning of the 21st century, human society has been into the ecological civilization era, art education model with separated discipline, simplex target and rational technique cannot cope with the needs of the development of the new civilization. With regard to art education, ecological concept points out the new di-

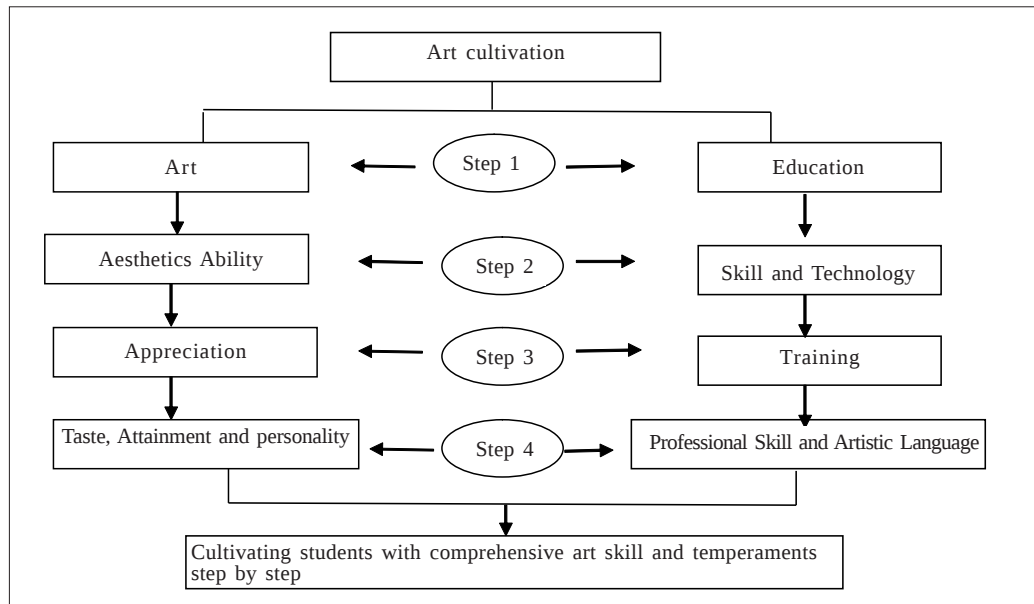


Fig. 1. The inner relationship of art education influences the art cultivation in each term.
Source: Author

rection for the improvement of the modern art education with its unique theoretical view, whose advocated ecological integrity achieves the communion of human beings and the world, providing a new fulcrum and thinking dimension for the study of the art education discourse.

The Tight Relationship between the Sustainable Development of Man and Ecological Art Education

Chinese art educator Teng Shou Yao said: The important symbol of the sustainable development of the individual is having an open psychology and mentality welcoming all rivers running into the sea, and art is an important way to form this mindset (Teng 2008). A man, in order to have sustainable development, is required to be equipped with certain skills, accept and absorb all kinds of different knowledge and opinions, thus, emotion can become richer, realm can be improved and all aspects of literacy can be completed. British scholar Anaheim once said the best of things he could hear and see in his mind is literature and art. But how can be art made to perfection through its own efforts? The author has some viewpoints as follows:

1. Reflection on the Classification of Academic Disciplines

Specialized education turns humans into a slave of labor division. Modern education has been a result dominated by scientific thinking, whose conception of talent cultivation focuses on specialized education and discipline classification. Such educational mode gives priority to “classification” which makes a clear distinction between purity and impurity, as a result, all the subjects never interfere with one another and it is becoming increasingly fierce.

Such “classification” mode is not only reflected in the aspect of subject education but also expanded into the separation of education and life, thoughts and emotions, reason and sensibility, and creation and reflection, etc. In terms of the learning content, all the subjects, mathematics, Chinese, English, Politics, Physics, Chemistry, Music, Sports and Art, also split and separate from one another. The word “expertise” is reflected incisively and vividly in this way. Knowledge without intersection, lacks of co-ordination, as a result, a large number of children

suffer from psychological and physiological abnormalities. In modern society, people with high IQ and low EQ are by no means rare. They make themselves lost and lack the ability to communicate with others, and they have no sense of being with nature and lack the ability to actively integrate into the society. Just as a famous philosopher Heidegger said: “Today, Man can’t greet with himself and meet with his nature everywhere.”

While, ecological art education emphasizes integrity, symbiosis, connection and development, which makes learning become an interesting and meaningful thing, as a matter of course, students in the process of learning can experience happiness, establish healthy life attitude and belief and enrich their emotional experience. In this way, they can be accessible to perception, imagination and communication so that wisdom is developed.

2. Synesthesia of Sense

Synesthesia, based on human sense organs, is a kind of sensory feeling and belongs to physiological “synaesthesia”. “Synaesthesia” refers to a psychological phenomenon of interaction, mutual contact, transformation and communication between different feelings (Wang 2012). Scientific research shows that parts of peoples’ feeling of senses can intersect with one another in their brain and it is the physiological basis on which people are able to describe the objective phenomenon and inner feelings by means of synaesthesia (Huang 1994). A healthy man is born with senses of vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell, that is the beginning of access to information, and the experience of each sense is not isolated but link together in the mind. For example, when a man is watching a plain handicraft, he seems to feel the creators’ body temperature; We tend to use “obscurity” “crudity” and “charred” to describe color; “Silk” is described as chocolate or smooth; Red generally corresponds to round, blue square and yellow triangle; A thin line is like the sound of the violin and a thick line is like the sound of cello. As Qian said, in the daily experience, vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste often can get through eye, ear, tongue, nose and body regardless of boundaries (Qian 2002).

Color seems to have a temperature, voice seems to have image, changes in temperature is

likely to have weight, and smell seems to have display of ability. It is visible that the synesthesia of sense is a weapon which helps people perceive and understand the world. The author tries to use the Figure 2 to show the generating process of synesthesia.

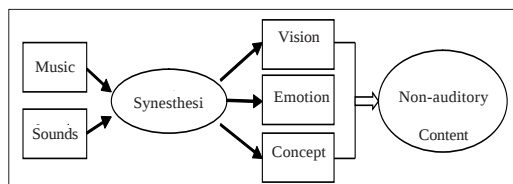


Fig. 2. The generating process of synesthesia
Source: Author

The tendency of man's natural synesthesia, however, may be long-stalled and ruined because of culture. As the saying goes that, the sharper the knife is, the more it is sharpened and the cleverer brain is, the more it is beaten. Organs play an important role in man's life, like a piece of land to be cultivated, a tree remains to bud, and a flower remains to bear fruit, which is hidden like a candle, if it is not burned, it never shines. Although all people have eyes and ears, in the face of a picture, someone can comprehend the deep meaning while others see nothing into it; In face of a symphony, someone chock up with emotions while others settle their minds as still as water. As it is put in Merchant of Venice, man without music in his soul cannot be moved by the sweet and harmonious sounds.

The role ecological art education is to arouse the potential consciousness of man through the effect of synesthesia and develop sensory ability in terms of eyes and ears. Man perceives sculpture, painting, music and dance through senses of vision, hearing and touch. Suppose that all the senses have nothing to do with one another, it doesn't accord with man's nervous system and goes against the basic characteristics of man's organic structure. So, we can understand why music is called a flowing image, building is called solid music and dance is known as an art of time and space.

DISCUSSION

Once human senses become sensitive, they also need a process to the aesthetic perception. Common people often can only be keen on utilitarian targets. That is, people can see and hear

things useful to their target activities or can only see the useful part of things. This kind of target-oriented consciousness often lets a person judge too simple about things. They turn a blind eye to things that they aren't familiar with or lack of interest. In this case, many people just look around without deep appreciation when they encounter a masterpiece, and the bluntness of the perception is really regretful. How to arouse the dull consciousness? Ecological art education is indispensable to play its role. As it is previously mentioned, the ecological art education focuses on the organic connection between perception and experience, creation and performance, reflection and evaluation. Usually, in the face of the aesthetic object, man cannot stop at the surface of vision or hearing, instead, they can inspire aesthetic experience and actively involve into the experience with association of activity and inertia, which is a happy and interesting experience with the joint work of each sense. As the master of abstract painting Kandinsky put it: "for people who are sensitive, connection in the mind is very direct, and heart itself is also easy to move, therefore, impression of any taste can pass on very quickly to the heart, and then to the other senses" (Kandinsky 2003).

Beauty is closely linked to the rich variety of man's life. Ecological art education guides student to pay attention to the aesthetic characteristics of artwork or things and empathize with artists (Hussein and Similan 2015). The following tune presents a lively picture in the presence of us, which is a reflection of aesthetic experience.

Tune: Tian Jing Sha•Thinking in Autumn
 Withered vines hanging on old branches
 Returning crows croaking at dusk
 A few houses hidden past a narrow bridge
 And below the bridge a quiet creek running
 Down a worn path, in the west wind
 A lean horse comes plodding
 The sun dips down in the west
 And the lovesick traveler is still at the end
 of the world

Ecological art education, therefore, can make man become sensitive to the changes of nature and cultivate the aesthetic feeling.

Art comes from life, which is the expression of emotion. Therefore, the importance of emotional experience of education is also unarguable. Compared with the classification-oriented education which is given priority to the tradi-

tional education mode, the ultimate goal of art education is to experience the subtle changes of emotional feelings instead of learning skills. Otherwise, it disregards the ecological development of man's mentality and also ignores things embodying the artist's spirit and emotion in human history.

Ecological art education focusing on emotional experience enables common people to feel the emotional changes of the author through appreciating the artistic masterpieces. Emotional world of human beings which is reflected in art works also creates an invisible inspiration and education for human beings and makes them face up to the reality, take the responsibility and accept challenges. So, art works are also a source of positive energy. Listening to Beethoven's symphonies of fate, we can feel the loneliness of an individual and the conflict between human and the world, showing the fierce struggle of man's spiritual world against the outside world and the joy of triumph in spiritual free, and giving a person a kind of unutterable touch and shock. When we are attracted deeply to art, our hearts achieve the same inner experience with the characters in the art so that we catch an invaluable emotional feeling.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the author does research on the relationship between sustainable development of human and ecological art education. Nowadays, due to the deterioration of ecological environment, a lot of people are talking about ecological view and the sustainable development of nature, but at the same time, they tend to ignore the issue that ecological crisis is not only embedded in the serious relationship between man and nature but also resulted from the relationship between man and society which is known as social and spiritual crisis. The paper concludes that knowledge without intersection lacks co-ordination, and as a result, a large number of children suffer from psychological and physiological abnormalities. In modern society, people with high IQ and low EQ are by no means rare.

For future studies, the researchers can pay attention to the basis for forming art attainments which relies on the environment of art education and the latter relies on a natural, harmonious, open and creative ecological education system.

Coming back to life is neither retrieving nor going backwards blindly without paying attention to the natural instinct of the learners. It is a concept of human-centered on vocational art education which respecting the artistic nature of the learners and the rules of developing art education. It stresses on the value of ecological harmony that causes the learner to develop vividly and harmoniously. Those would help the later researchers find out how to cultivate artistic interest in art and to stimulate artistic potential of the learners'. As a result, we can reach the goal of combining and developing art capacity and humanities attainments. Based on these analyses, this paper probed in the operation of ecological art education, and also the basic rules and authors' opinions in art education in the view of ecological harmony.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of art education always follows the specific trend of social and cultural ideology. The advent of ecological civilization in the 21st century enables ecological and sustainable development to become the main melody of times. Art education will enter a new stage of the harmonious, multiple and coexistent development.

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