

Urban-Rural Disparities in Art Education Resources in China: Mechanisms and Equity Perspectives

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Abstract

This study focuses on the differences in the allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas and their profound impact on students' artistic literacy and all-round development. The study found that urban schools are significantly superior to rural schools in the diversity and richness of art education resources, providing urban students with a wide range of art practice opportunities, thereby promoting the development of their artistic potential. In contrast, due to resource constraints, rural schools have limited opportunities for students in art learning and practice, which not only hinders the cultivation of their innovative thinking, but also affects the improvement of their aesthetic ability. In addition, unequal access to information technology has further exacerbated the imbalance of educational resources. Based on the above findings, this study proposes to optimize resource allocation and ensure fair distribution of educational resources through policy support and technological innovation to achieve the popularization of art education and improve the level of art education for rural students. These strategies are aimed at narrowing the gap in art education resources between urban and rural areas, promoting educational equity, and comprehensively improving students' artistic literacy and comprehensive quality.



Full Text Article



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Theoretical Basis of Educational Equity and Allocation of Art Education Resources

Educational Equity Theory

Educational equity, as a concrete manifestation of social equity in the field of education, is based on the core concept of ensuring that every individual has the right and opportunity to receive equal education without being restricted by factors such as social background, economic conditions, gender, race, etc. This concept is related to equal opportunities for individual development and has become an important cornerstone of social harmony and progress.

The principle of educational equity is mainly reflected in three levels: equity in starting point, equity in process, and equity in outcome. Equity in starting point requires that when distributing educational resources, all students should be guaranteed to have the same starting point and have the opportunity to receive education; equity in process emphasizes that in the educational process, every student should be treated equally and enjoy the same quality of educational services; equity in outcome pursues the equality of educational results and ensures that every student can reach a basic level of development after education ^[1].

In the theoretical schools of thought on educational equity, Rawls's theory of justice occupies an important position. Rawls believes that justice is the primary value of the social system, which requires the protection of the basic rights and freedoms of social members through reasonable institutional design, while regulating social and economic inequalities to make them most beneficial to the most disadvantaged members of society. Educational resources should be tilted to disadvantaged groups first to ensure that they can obtain the same educational opportunities and quality as other students.

Art Education Theory

Art education, as an important part of the education system, has the core value of cultivating students' aesthetic awareness, innovative thinking and humanistic feelings. As a carrier of cultural inheritance and innovation, art education is an important way to promote the all-round development of students. Under the influence of art education, students can learn to appreciate and create beauty, and then form a unique aesthetic perspective and value concept.

Art education has multiple functions. The use of art can improve students' artistic skills and expressiveness, thereby stimulating students' imagination and creativity through the process of art creation and appreciation. Art is a free expression that allows students to break through conventional thinking and look at the world from a unique perspective, thereby cultivating innovative talents. Art education can also improve students' teamwork ability, emotional expression ability and problem-solving ability, which are crucial for students' future development. Art education encourages students to express themselves freely and respects every unique creativity and idea. This atmosphere can stimulate students' creative potential, enable them to dare to challenge themselves and explore the unknown ^[2].

Resource Allocation Theory

The allocation of educational resources aims to achieve the dual goals of efficiency and fairness. In principle, the allocation of resources must follow core principles such as fairness, demand orientation and sustainable development. Fairness requires that the resource allocation

process be transparent and fair, ensuring that every learner has equal access to educational resources regardless of geographical location, economic status and other factors ^[3]. Demand orientation emphasizes that resources should give priority to meeting the actual needs of educational development, especially for disadvantaged areas and groups.

There are various modes of educational resource allocation, including centralized allocation, decentralized management, market competition, etc. In the field of art education, the choice of mode must take into account the particularity of art education and the personalized needs of students. In art education, resource allocation must constantly explore the best balance between efficiency and fairness to achieve both educational equity and the improvement of art education quality.

Analysis on the current situation of allocation of art education resources in urban and rural areas of China

The differences in the allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas are mainly reflected in multiple dimensions such as art curriculum setting, teaching resources, extracurricular activities and art practice opportunities. These differences have a profound impact on the artistic literacy and innovation ability of urban and rural students.

In terms of art curriculum, urban schools usually have more diverse art courses. In addition to basic courses such as music and fine arts, they also offer special courses such as dance, drama, and pottery to meet students' diverse art needs. These courses cultivate students' artistic interests and provide them with a broader perspective and more comprehensive skills. In contrast, the art courses in rural schools are relatively simple ^[4]. The art courses in rural schools are mainly concentrated in the two major areas of music and fine arts, and the course arrangements are often relatively fixed and lack flexibility. Some art course teachers have never received systematic and formal art education. This limitation in curriculum setting may result in rural students being unable to fully explore their artistic interests and potential.

There is also an imbalance in the distribution of teaching resources. Urban schools often have more advanced teaching equipment and rich teaching materials, such as professional music classrooms and art studios, which provide students with a good learning environment. In rural areas, due to funding and resource constraints, many schools lack the necessary art teaching equipment. Even if there are simple musical instruments or painting tools, they may not be able to meet the needs of all students due to insufficient quantity. In addition, art teachers in urban schools generally have high professional qualities and rich teaching experience. They can adopt a variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning; while art teachers in rural schools face the problem of insufficient professional training, which directly affects the quality of teaching.

Urban schools also have significant advantages in extracurricular activities and art practice opportunities. Take a certain experimental primary school in Guangzhou as an example. The school often organizes various art competitions, exhibitions, performances and other activities, providing students with a stage to showcase their talents and exercise their abilities. At the same time, the school has established close cooperative relations with local art institutions to

provide students with more opportunities for art practice. However, in rural areas, due to funding and organizational capacity constraints, similar extracurricular activities are relatively rare. Even if there are, the scale and influence are far less than those in cities. Under such circumstances, rural students rarely have the opportunity to participate in high-level art activities, and their artistic potential is therefore difficult to be fully tapped ^[5]. This undoubtedly limits their artistic vision and development space. Although the government has increased its investment in rural education in recent years, more attention and support are still needed in the field of art education to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and achieve true educational equity.

Through the above analysis, we can see that the difference in the allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas is not only a problem of hardware facilities, but also more deeply reflected in the curriculum, teaching resources, extracurricular activities and art practice opportunities. Solving these problems requires not only increasing financial investment, but also starting from the policy level, promoting the balanced distribution of educational resources, strengthening teacher training, and enriching art education resources in rural areas, so as to provide a fair art education environment for all students.

Analysis of the causes of the differences in allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas

Economic development level and policy orientation

1.1 Economic Development Level

One of the fundamental reasons for the difference in the allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas is the uneven level of economic development. Urban areas, with their higher economic strength, can provide more financial support for the education system, especially in areas such as art education that require a large amount of capital investment.

The economic development of cities has attracted a large number of enterprises and capital, which not only directly invest in educational infrastructure, but also support art education projects through sponsorship and donations, thus forming a virtuous circle. In contrast, rural areas have a weak economic foundation and limited fiscal revenue for local governments, making it difficult to make large-scale investments in art education. Even with transfer payments from the central government, they are often unable to be effectively implemented to meet the actual needs of art education due to tight local finances, resulting in rural schools being at a disadvantage in art education for a long time.

1.2 Policy orientation

Policy guidance plays a key role in the allocation of art education resources. In recent years, although the national level has repeatedly emphasized educational equity and introduced a series of policy measures to promote the balanced development of urban and rural education, in the actual implementation process, the policy bias is still biased towards cities.

On the one hand, urban schools are more likely to receive various special funds and project support, which are mainly used to improve teaching conditions, introduce high-quality teachers, and carry out a variety of art activities. On the other hand, although rural schools can also apply for some funding, they often find it difficult to make full use of these opportunities due to information asymmetry and insufficient application capabilities. In addition, urban schools usually have stronger social networks and can establish cooperative relationships with universities and art institutions to further enrich art education resources. Rural schools, on the other hand, appear to be isolated and helpless in this regard, lacking channels for communication and cooperation with the outside world, resulting in a situation where art education resources are scarce and difficult to break [6].

It is worth noting that the level of economic development and policy orientation do not exist in isolation. The two are intertwined and jointly affect the differences in the allocation of urban and rural art education resources. The level of economic development determines the government's investment capacity in the field of education, which in turn affects the formulation and implementation of policy orientations; the adjustment and optimization of policy orientations can guide economic resources to the field of education and promote educational equity and balanced development. Therefore, in solving the problem of differences in the allocation of urban and rural art education resources, it is necessary to consider the dual factors of economic development level and policy orientation at the same time. It is necessary to increase economic investment and enhance the economic strength of rural areas, and optimize policy orientation to ensure the balanced distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas.

Influence of educational concepts and cultural traditions

Educational concepts, as the core idea guiding educational practice, play an important role in the allocation of art education resources. In urban areas, with the deepening of educational reform and the advancement of quality education, art education has gradually been regarded as an important way to cultivate students' comprehensive quality and innovation ability [7]. Urban parents generally attach importance to the all-round development of their children and are willing to invest more resources in their children's art education. This concept has prompted urban schools to increase investment in art education and optimize resource allocation. In contrast, the educational concept in rural areas is relatively backward. Some parents still pay too much attention to exam-oriented education and scores, and lack awareness of the value of art education, and even regard it as a "side job". This concept has led to rural schools not paying enough attention to art education and relatively weak resource allocation.

In contrast, the educational concept in rural areas is more traditional, focusing more on the study of basic subjects, and believing that art education is not necessary. This concept is rooted in the long-standing pragmatic culture in rural areas, that is, the main purpose of education is to improve children's employment competitiveness and living standards. In this context, art education is often regarded as a luxury rather than a necessity. The economic conditions and cultural level of rural families also limit their support for art education, resulting in rural schools being far less able to obtain and utilize art education resources than urban schools.

Urban areas are more susceptible to the influence of foreign culture and modern art trends due to their high degree of openness and internationalization, forming a diversified art atmosphere. Cultural facilities such as museums, art galleries, and theaters in cities provide students with rich opportunities for art practice and promote the recognition and support of art education by the entire society. On the contrary, due to the remote geographical location and relative lack of cultural facilities in rural areas, coupled with the influence of traditional culture, art education is often regarded as a secondary or even dispensable part. This cultural environment greatly reduces the opportunities for rural students to come into contact with art, further exacerbating the imbalance of urban and rural art education resources [8].

The digital divide gap in informatization

The development of information technology has greatly changed the way educational resources are obtained and used. Especially in the field of art education, digital resources and online platforms have provided students with unprecedented learning opportunities. However, the digital divide between urban and rural areas has become an important obstacle to the allocation of art education resources. With advanced information technology infrastructure and a high Internet penetration rate, urban areas can make full use of digital resources and enrich art education content, while rural areas are unable to enjoy the same educational advantages due to their lagging information technology level.

Urban schools widely use multimedia teaching methods and obtain rich art education resources through online platforms, such as online art courses, virtual museum visits, and remote master lectures. These resources not only broaden students' horizons, but also improve the quality and efficiency of teaching. Urban teachers can use digital tools to design teaching, making classes more lively and interesting, and stimulating students' interest in learning. In addition, urban schools also communicate and cooperate with other schools and artists through online collaborative platforms, providing students with more practice opportunities and display platforms.

However, in rural areas, the digital divide of informatization has become a bottleneck for the development of art education. Due to economic conditions and infrastructure limitations, many rural schools are difficult to equip with modern teaching equipment, let alone use information technology to carry out art teaching. This has led to the dilemma of rural students facing information isolation and lack of resources when obtaining art education resources. They cannot access diversified art courses and excellent works through online platforms like urban students, and it is even more difficult for them to enjoy the convenience and efficiency brought by information technology.

The digital divide is not only reflected in hardware facilities, but also in the acquisition of software and content. Urban schools are able to subscribe to various professional art education platforms and services, which provide rich teaching resources and interactive functions, while rural schools find it difficult to afford these services due to funding constraints. Even if there are free online resources, rural teachers and students may not be able to make full use of them due to the lack of necessary information technology knowledge. In addition, information asymmetry between urban and rural areas is also an important factor. Urban schools can obtain

the latest art education information and technological developments in a timely manner, while rural schools find it difficult to keep up with the times due to information isolation. The digital divide in informatization also affects the opportunities of urban and rural students in artistic practice and creation. Urban students can display their works through online platforms, participate in various online competitions and exhibitions, and obtain feedback and recognition. However, due to the lack of display platforms and technical support, rural students' artistic talents are often not fully displayed. This gap not only limits the artistic development of rural students, but may also put them at a disadvantage in future competition.

The influencing mechanism of the difference in allocation of urban and rural art education resources

Impact on students' artistic literacy

As a highland of economic and cultural development, the richness of the allocation of art education resources in cities provides fertile soil for the cultivation of students' artistic literacy. From hardware facilities to teaching staff, from curriculum settings to activity platforms, urban schools almost cover the entire chain of art education. Here, students can not only be exposed to the most cutting-edge artistic concepts and techniques, but also exercise themselves in rich artistic practices and improve their aesthetic appreciation and creative abilities. This comprehensive and in-depth art education has undoubtedly laid a solid foundation for the accumulation and sublimation of students' artistic literacy.

In contrast, the development of artistic literacy of rural students is greatly restricted in the case of limited art education resources. Due to insufficient teaching staff and lack of teaching facilities, art courses in rural schools are often limited to basic fine arts and music, and it is difficult to cover a wider range of art fields. This not only limits students' understanding of artistic diversity, but also affects their performance in artistic practice. Rural students lack opportunities to participate in high-level art activities, such as visiting art galleries and concerts, which can stimulate students' artistic interest and creativity. In addition, the lack of cultural facilities in rural areas also makes it difficult for students to access high-quality works of art, thus limiting their aesthetic vision. In addition, rural students also face the problem of limited opportunities to participate in art activities and lack a platform to show themselves, communicate and learn, which further aggravates their disadvantages in artistic literacy.

The difference in urban and rural art education resources is also reflected in students' attitudes and cognition of art. In a good art education environment, urban students gradually develop a love and respect for art, and art becomes an indispensable part of their lives. They learn art knowledge in class and deepen their understanding of art through various art activities in their daily lives. This positive attitude and cognition will help them continue to pursue art in their future studies and careers and take it as a lifelong hobby. However, rural students have fewer opportunities to come into contact with art and their cognition of art is relatively shallow. Art education may be just a part of the school curriculum for them, rather than a way of life. This difference in cognition further affects their interest in art and development potential.

Impact on students' all-round development

As a frontier of economic and cultural development, the richness of the city's art education resources provides a broad stage for the all-round development of students. Here, students can receive systematic and professional art education, and can exercise themselves in a variety of art practices, improving their aesthetic appreciation and innovation capabilities. Art has become a bridge connecting knowledge and practice, sensibility and rationality, and has promoted the all-round development of students' cognitive abilities. At the same time, teamwork and interactive communication in art activities provide students with valuable social experience, enhance their social interaction skills, and lay a solid foundation for future social integration and career development.

However, in the vast rural areas, the scarcity of art education resources has become a stumbling block to the all-round development of students. Due to the lack of hardware facilities and weak teaching staff, many rural students have difficulty in accessing formal art education, and the stimulation of their artistic potential is severely restricted^[9]. This leads to insufficient knowledge and skills reserves in the field of art for students, which invisibly weakens the cultivation of their innovative thinking and aesthetic ability. With limited participation in art activities, students' social experience and social interaction skills are also difficult to be fully exercised, which may affect their mental health and the establishment of social confidence.

What is more serious is that the difference in the allocation of art education resources between urban and rural areas may also sow the seeds of "unfairness" in the minds of students, affecting their cognition and recognition of educational equity and social justice. Rural students who have been in a state of resource scarcity for a long time may develop a sense of inferiority and frustration due to the lack of art education, which will have a negative impact on their all-round development. This difference in the psychological level is related to the mental health of individuals and the harmony and stability of the whole society.

Therefore, the difference in the allocation of urban and rural art education resources affects the stimulation of students' artistic potential and the improvement of their artistic literacy, and also affects their all-round development and healthy growth. It reminds us that educational equity is not only a simple resource allocation issue, but also an important issue related to individual growth and social progress. Narrowing the gap in the allocation of urban and rural art education resources is not only a pursuit of educational equity, but also a deep concern for the all-round development and healthy growth of students. In the future, we need to strive to break the barriers to the allocation of urban and rural art education resources through various means such as policy guidance, resource allocation and innovation of education models, provide every student with equal and high-quality art education opportunities, and jointly promote the realization of educational equity and social progress.

Strategic suggestions for optimizing the allocation of urban and rural art education resources

To optimize the allocation of urban and rural art education resources and narrow the educational gap between urban and rural areas, comprehensive measures need to be taken in

terms of policy formulation, capital investment, teacher training, technology application, etc. Through systematic reform and innovation, we can gradually achieve a balanced allocation of educational resources and promote educational equity.

Support at the policy level is the basis for optimizing resource allocation. The government should introduce more targeted policies to clarify the status of art education in basic education and ensure that art education is given due attention in urban and rural schools. Specific art education standards and evaluation systems should be formulated to ensure that all schools can meet basic art education requirements. In addition, special funds can be established to support art education projects in rural areas and provide necessary financial guarantees. The government should also promote cross-departmental cooperation, integrate the resources of cultural, educational, scientific and technological departments, form a joint force, and jointly promote the development of art education.

Build a resource sharing platform for urban and rural art education and promote the flow of resources. Use modern information technology, such as distance education and online art courses, to break geographical restrictions and allow rural students to have access to high-quality art education resources. At the same time, encourage urban and rural schools to establish a pairing assistance mechanism, and through regular teacher exchanges and student visits, enhance the exchange and sharing of urban and rural art education experiences and form a good situation of complementary advantages.

In terms of teacher team building, more flexible strategies for talent introduction and training should be implemented. In response to the shortage of teachers in rural art education, excellent teachers can be attracted and retained by improving their salaries and giving priority to professional title evaluation. At the same time, a regular training system for urban and rural teachers should be established, especially strengthening professional training for rural art teachers, improving their teaching ability and artistic literacy, and ensuring the quality of art education. In addition, projects such as "Silver Age Lectures" and "Artists Entering Campus" should be explored to invite retired artists or professionals to teach in rural schools to enrich teaching content and stimulate students' interest.

same time, it is necessary to establish a monitoring and evaluation system for the allocation of art education resources to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy. Through regular data collection and analysis, the rationality and effectiveness of resource allocation can be evaluated, and strategies can be adjusted in a timely manner to form a closed loop of feedback and optimization. At the same time, social supervision should be strengthened, and parents, communities and third-party institutions should be encouraged to participate in the evaluation, so as to jointly promote the balanced allocation of urban and rural art education resources and achieve educational equity.

In short, optimizing the allocation of urban and rural art education resources is a systematic project that requires the joint efforts of the government, schools, society and families. Through comprehensive measures such as policy support, capital investment, teacher training, technology application, community participation and international cooperation, the gap in art education resources between urban and rural areas can be gradually narrowed, educational equity can be achieved, and the all-round development of all students can be promoted.

Conclusion

The fair distribution of educational resources is the key to achieving social justice. As an important part of the comprehensive education system, the urban-rural differences in the allocation of art education resources significantly affect students' artistic literacy and all-round development. This study shows that urban schools far exceed rural schools in the richness and diversity of art education resources, which not only provides urban students with a wider range of art practice opportunities, but also promotes the all-round development of their artistic potential. In contrast, rural schools, due to the lack of resources, not only limit students' exploration in the field of art, but also weaken the cultivation of their innovative thinking and aesthetic ability. In addition, the information gap between urban and rural areas has exacerbated the imbalance of art education resources. It is difficult for rural students to obtain high-quality art education resources through modern information technology, which further widens the difference between the two in art education. Therefore, to optimize the allocation of urban and rural art education resources, the government needs to increase financial investment and improve the hardware facilities of rural art education, but also realize the effective flow and balanced distribution of resources through policy guidance and education model innovation, so as to ensure that every student can enjoy fair and high-quality art education and jointly promote social equity and progress.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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