

Research on the Development and Cultivation Path of Children's Aesthetic Ability from the Perspective of Family and School Co-education

Mohan Liu*

School of Education, Jilin International Studies University, Changchun 130117, Jilin, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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Abstract: Home-based co-education is an important means to promote the overall development of children's aesthetic abilities. It plays a crucial role in shaping children's early aesthetic perception, stimulating their imagination and releasing their creativity. This article, from the perspective of home-based co-education, systematically elaborates on the development stages and characteristics of children's aesthetic abilities; deeply analyzes the current cooperation status and prominent problems in aesthetic education between families and kindergartens; and constructs a collaborative cultivation path centered on concept transformation, rich activities, and an optimized environment. However, in the current context of home-based co-education, the cultivation of children's aesthetic abilities still faces practical challenges such as weak cooperation awareness, monotonous educational methods, and insufficient environmental support. Based on this, this article proposes that parents should be transformed from "cooperators" to "co-builders," and teachers should be transformed from "leaders" to "guiding collaborators." Through life-oriented and game-based comprehensive activities and open, supportive material and psychological environments, the aesthetic awareness and creative ability of children should be jointly enhanced.

Keywords: Aesthetic judgment; Home-school collaboration; Preschool education; Development path

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1. Introduction

Aesthetic ability, as an important component of individual cognitive and emotional development, is a special ability formed on the basis of innate genetics through the perception, integration, and creation of aesthetic images in the postnatal period. It encompasses multiple dimensions such as aesthetic perception, imagination, and creativity. The early childhood period is a sensitive and crucial stage for the development of aesthetic ability. The accumulation and expression of aesthetic experience during this period directly affect the healthy formation of early personality, the stimulation of creative potential, and the establishment of lifelong

learning qualities. During this process, family and kindergarten, as the two core environments for children's growth, jointly undertake the important educational responsibility of guiding children to perceive beauty, express beauty, and create beauty. In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial), stating that through home-kindergarten collaboration, children's emotions should be enriched, and the ability to initially perceive and express beauty should be cultivated. It also emphasizes respecting children's unique aesthetic experiences and expression methods. Therefore, kindergartens and families bear important responsibilities for the improvement and development of children's aesthetic ability, and should focus on the overall development of children's aesthetic ability.

2. The development characteristics and stages of children's aesthetic ability

The aesthetic ability of young children is a dynamic developmental structure that encompasses multiple dimensions such as perception, imagination, and creation. Its development is not a linear process of knowledge accumulation, but rather a gradual deepening and expansion through interaction with the environment in the context of psychological structure maturation ^[1].

2.1. Deepen children's aesthetic perception ability

Aesthetic perception is the starting point of aesthetic activities, referring to an individual's ability to perceive, identify the external form characteristics of things, and generate initial emotional responses. To deepen children's aesthetic perception, it is necessary to rely on the knowledge and experiences related to beauty accumulated through daily life. Cui Xueqin (2007) proposed that children's aesthetic perception has distinct initiality, intuitiveness, and wholeness. They embrace the world through their senses, not only using their eyes to see and ears to hear, but also touching with their hands and responding with body movements ^[2]. For example, when children appreciate a painting, they may use their fingers to trace the lines or sway their bodies in rhythm with the music. This integration of perception and action is the core feature of their aesthetic experience. Tu Meiru (1997) believed that children's perception has identity and often regard external things as living companions like themselves, and this animistic thinking can perceive objects more vividly and empathetically ^[3]. From the perspective of developmental stages, 3–4 years old is a period when children's aesthetic perception develops rapidly. Li Yingyu's (2007) experimental research shows that 4 years old is a sensitive period for children's aesthetic ability development, and their perception acuity and differentiation ability have significantly improved. At this time, children begin to shift from general perception to the initial differentiation of form elements and show personal preferences ^[4]. Bian Xia (2009) proposed that parents and kindergartens should provide children with rich, diverse, and high-quality aesthetic stimuli to enhance perception acuity and lay the foundation for more complex aesthetic activities ^[5].

2.2. Stimulate children's aesthetic imagination

Aesthetic imagination is a psychological process that involves processing, reorganizing, and innovating aesthetic images based on perception. The imagination of young children is unrestrained and not bound by reality. Art is children's play and expression, and imagination is the core driving force. The development of imagination requires a rich reserve of internal schemas, which come from a large amount of perceptual experiences. Kong Qiying (2010) emphasized that experience is essential for children's aesthetic development. Only when children fully immerse themselves in the experience of nature and art can their

imagination have vivid materials and emotional warmth ^[6]. For example, when appreciating picture books, children not only understand the plot of the story, but also can imagine the inner world of the characters through the colors, composition, and details in the pictures, and even construct pictures beyond the story. Parents and teachers should encourage and protect this spontaneous imagination and avoid restricting it with adult standards such as “whether it looks like it or not.”

2.3. Release the aesthetic creativity of young children

Aesthetic creativity is the highest manifestation of aesthetic ability, and it is the ability of young children to externalize and express their inner aesthetic feelings and imagination through certain forms. Wang Yiyi (2005) believes that children’s creativity is not an imitation of adult art, but a free display of the true expression of their inner world ^[7]. Mr. Chen Hecin has already pointed out that children are born as “artists” and have the potential to express images ^[8]. The release of children’s creativity requires a psychological environment that is safe, free, and encourages exploration. However, there is a prominent problem in current practice. Research has found that adults often emphasize external skill training and neglect the cultivation of internal aesthetic creativity, simplifying art education too early into skill training and suppressing the most genuine creative ideas of children. The task of home-school cooperation is to jointly create an art environment that is prepared for children, provide diverse materials, respect their unique expression methods, and make creation become an enjoyable self-actualization process for children, rather than a burden for pursuing standardized results ^[9].

3. The current situation and problems of preschool children’s aesthetic ability cultivation from the perspective of family and school co-education

3.1. Weak sense of community cooperation

Currently, home-school cooperation largely follows a professionalist paradigm. Li Yan and Gao Fan (2021) found that kindergartens hold an absolutely dominant and controlling position in the co-education activities for cultivating children’s aesthetic abilities, while parents are in a passive cooperating and information-receiving role ^[10]. On the one hand, the communication initiated by kindergartens mostly revolves around notification of matters, and there is less in-depth communication and guidance for the children’s aesthetic development; on the other hand, due to their busy work or lack of professional knowledge, parents have low willingness to actively participate and initiate aesthetic education cooperation, and their participation is limited. This one-way transmission, rather than a two-way co-construction model, leads to the dispersion of educational forces and makes it difficult to form a continuous and in-depth co-education relationship.

3.2. The aesthetic education approach is monotonous.

Whether in families or kindergartens, the methods of aesthetic education tend to be monotonous and skill-oriented. Fang Meihong and Wang Renmei (2021) found that in some cases of art activities in kindergartens, the traditional demonstration and imitation teaching methods were still used, with excessive emphasis on the similarity and quality of children’s works, thereby restricting their individualized expression ^[11]. At home, aesthetic education might be simplified to sending children to participate in interest classes, pursuing grade exams and competition awards, while neglecting the aesthetic opportunities in daily life. This monotonous approach strips the connection between art, emotion, and life, making aesthetic education dull and possibly

stifling children's interests.

3.3. Insufficient support for environmental resources

First, there is the physical environment. Some families and kindergartens have weak awareness of creating an aesthetic environment. The family space may lack dedicated corners for children to explore art, and the materials provided are monotonous; the activity areas in kindergartens are not updated in time, and the materials lack inspiration. Second, there is the spiritual environment. The dominance of adult culture often suppresses the expression of children's culture. They tend to evaluate children's works and activities using their own aesthetic standards and utilitarian purposes, failing to create a relaxed psychological atmosphere that allows "trial and error," encourages taking risks, and respects children's innocence.

4. The cultivation path for promoting young children's aesthetic ability through family and kindergarten collaboration

Based on the aforementioned analysis of the issues, in order to effectively enhance the effectiveness of home-school collaboration in cultivating children's aesthetic abilities, a systematic and operational training path needs to be established. This path will be advanced in a coordinated manner from the three core dimensions of concepts, activities, and environment.

4.1. Change your mindset and establish a cooperative relationship for home and school education

Effective home-school collaboration begins with a profound transformation on both sides, especially in the educational mindset of the adult world. The current professionalist paradigm and the passive participation of parents in the cooperation stem from the failure to establish a truly equal and trusting partnership. To this end, both the home and the school must first achieve three ideological transformations.

Firstly, the parent role should shift from a collaborator to a co-builder. Kindergartens need to actively break down the barriers of information and professionalism, and through various channels, explain to parents the unique value and phased characteristics of children's aesthetic development, helping parents understand that aesthetic education is not high-level skill training, but rather permeates daily life's perception, experience, and expression. For example, regular activities can be held to invite experts or teachers to share how to conduct aesthetic enlightenment through low-cost and highly interactive methods such as parent-child reading, natural observation, and music appreciation at home, enabling parents to transform from mere activity collaborators to implementers of the process.

Secondly, the teacher role should shift from a leader to a guide and collaborator. Teachers should abandon an authoritative mindset and recognize the unique advantages of parents in understanding children's personalities, interests, and family culture. In practice, teachers can use tools such as observation record sheets to jointly record the aesthetic behaviors of children at school and at home with parents, and exchange observations and findings during regular communication to jointly analyze the children's aesthetic interests and development needs.

Thirdly, the interaction between home and school should shift from a transactional communicator to a meaning communicator. Home-school communication should go beyond transactional aspects such as activity notifications and work displays, and delve into the educational philosophy and the meaning of children's

development. Kindergartens can set up children's aesthetic growth archives using digital platforms, recording the creative process, children's self-explanations, and teachers' interpretations in graphic and video formats. Parents can supplement relevant observations and interactions at home. This in-depth communication around children's growth stories can prompt both parties to reach a consensus on the meaning of children's aesthetic world, laying a solid ideological foundation for collaborative education.

4.2. Rich activities to enhance children's scientific aesthetic awareness

The limitations of children's aesthetic objects will affect the accumulation of aesthetic images and the richness of imagination. In response to the monotonous current educational methods, the family and the school should collaborate to design and implement a series of life-oriented, game-based, and comprehensive aesthetic activities, guiding children to consciously perceive, compare, imagine, and express, thereby enhancing their scientific aesthetic awareness.

Firstly, the activity content should be rooted in life and nature. Parents and teachers should become the discoverers and guides of beauty, jointly planning the activities. Let children use multiple senses to experience the rhythm of forms, the harmony of colors, and the beauty of materials in real-life situations. This is far more effective in accumulating vivid and profound aesthetic images than copying sample paintings.

Secondly, the activity forms should integrate multiple intelligences and stimulate deep participation. Drawing on the theory of multiple intelligences, design comprehensive artistic activities that require children to participate using different intelligent methods. For example, in the "Our Emotional Concert" activity, children first listen to music with different emotional tones, then express their feelings through body movements, then choose corresponding colors and lines to draw on the collective canvas, and finally tell the story in the painting.

Finally, the activity process should emphasize dialogue rather than indoctrination. When appreciating artworks, adults should avoid direct telling and instead use open-ended questions to build scaffolds, such as "What do you see in this painting?" "What feelings do these lines and colors give you?" "Guess why the artist drew it this way?" Guide children to independently observe, describe, imagine, and speculate. At the same time, encourage discussions among children and the collision of viewpoints, enabling them to learn to appreciate the work from different perspectives in peer evaluations, understand the diversity of aesthetics, and gradually build their own rational aesthetic judgment framework.

4.3. Optimize the environment and encourage children to engage in aesthetic creation

The environment is an invisible curriculum. Montessori believed that children are born with an inherent sensitivity mechanism. During specific sensitive periods, children will use their absorbent mind to actively and efficiently draw information from the environment and develop specific abilities. Therefore, both the family and the kindergarten must jointly strive to optimize the environment, transforming it from a closed, static, and adult-dominated one to an open, dynamic, and child-centered prepared environment.

At the material environment level. In the family, an art exploration corner can be set up, providing low-structured and highly open materials such as natural materials, discarded items, and safe and diverse tools. The art area in the kindergarten should display materials clearly, richly, and beautifully, and be updated regularly according to themes or children's interests. The key is to allow children to freely access and

independently combine these materials, encouraging them to engage in exploratory creative work without preset goals, rather than merely completing the theme tasks set by teachers.

At the psychological environment level, the core is to create a safe, accepting, encouraging, and adventurous emotional atmosphere. The family and kindergarten should jointly practice appreciation and process-oriented attention. Specifically describe the details observed in the work, and pay attention to the children's concentration, attempts, and problem-solving in the creative process. This feedback will divert the children's attention from anxiety about the finished product to the pleasure and sense of achievement in the creative process itself, thereby boldly releasing their inherent creative potential.

Finally, the family and kindergarten should jointly expand the venue of aesthetic education to the social and cultural space. In these real art and nature fields, children can directly experience the solemnity of art, appreciate the depth of cultural heritage, and establish connections between art and life, as well as history. Before and after the visit, the family and kindergarten can jointly conduct topic preparation and extension activities, making the outing no longer an isolated activity but a continuous exploration project, demonstrating the maximum educational value of environmental resources.

5. Conclusion

Early childhood is a critical sensitive period for the development of aesthetic perception, imagination, and creativity, and collaborative education between families and preschools is a vital pathway for fostering children's aesthetic abilities. Currently, aesthetic education for young children faces challenges such as insufficient awareness of home-school collaboration, utilitarian and monotonous teaching methods, and a lack of environmental support. Parents often assume a passive, supportive role, and adult standards can easily stifle children's authentic aesthetic expressions. In response, both families and kindergartens must first update their educational philosophies: parents should transition from mere collaborators to co-creators, while teachers should shift from being dominant figures to guiding collaborators, engaging in in-depth communication centered on children's aesthetic growth. At the same time, they should conduct game-based aesthetic activities rooted in daily life and nature, minimizing the rote teaching of skills; jointly build an open physical environment and an inclusive psychological atmosphere; prioritize the creative process over standardized outcomes; and make effective use of social resources to expand the scope of aesthetic education. Aesthetic education for young children in the home and school setting focuses on nurturing their innate aesthetic sensibilities rather than training them in artistic skills. Only when families and schools reach a consensus on education and integrate aesthetic education into daily life can they effectively cultivate children's abilities to perceive, express, and create beauty, thereby laying the foundation for their character development and lifelong aesthetic growth.

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