

## Museum Aesthetics For Troubled Juveniles

Lingfei Wei

Montverde Academy Shanghai, Shanghai, 200000, China

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**Abstract:** Taking museums' collections as the main reference, we should conduct a comprehensive aesthetic education, including art, history, humanity, philosophy and other aspects, to the troubled teens so as to imbue them with beauty, correct their crimes and inappropriate behaviors, and help them regain the harmony of life. The main theme of this paper is to utilizing the unique advantages of aesthetic education to provide the troubled teens a more fathomable and intriguing means of rehabilitation, especially the education of aesthetic values found in museums, ("museum aesthetics" in short), and assist them to return to the society more smoothly.

For young teens represent the future of the nation, it is also necessary to correct and prevent juvenile delinquency, thus, this paper puts forward a new way to educate the troubled teens, that is, developing a vivid education program that includes art, history, philosophy, psychology and other comprehensive courses based mainly on museums' manifold collections.

### 1. The significance of "museum aesthetics" for the troubled teens

#### 1.1 Troubled teens and "museum aesthetics"

Troubled teens refers to juveniles who embark on the road of crime due to various factors, such as unbalanced psychological development, lack of education from family, school or the society etc.. In this paper, troubled teens refer to juvenile delinquents and students from reformatory schools [1]. According to the survey, 32,778 juvenile delinquency cases in China in 2017; hundreds of thousands of youngsters who should have grown up jovially now suffer from minor or serious problems spiritually, morally and psychologically. In order to understand the level of art education in reformatory schools and juvenile prisons, a questionnaire was conducted. In addition to the questionnaire, several in-depth interviews with curators or other administrators of museums were carried out to evaluate the degree to which museums are or will be able to support the troubled teens. The results showed that the opportunities for troubled teens to receive proper aesthetic education in China are far lower than those of ordinary teenagers. Therefore, it is of great urgency to carry out aesthetic education based on museums for the troubled teens in order to establish a better form of rehabilitation.[2].

Traditional aesthetic education (such as music, painting or other art courses) has insufficient historical and humanistic connotations, which fails to comprehensively improve the cultural accomplishment, moral level and aesthetic sentiment of troubled teens.

"Museum aesthetics" means that: taking the rich art collections of museums as the main reference and combining those works of art with the connotation in aesthetics, culture, geography, politics, national spirits, philosophy and psychology, museum education would be able to provide the troubled teens a more comprehensive education that revolves around the concept of art and therefore promote the overall development of the manners of trouble youngsters as well as correct and prevent further missteps [3].

Different from the dogmatic preaching and the traditional aesthetic education in art or music that focus mainly on the skills rather than the humanistic values within art, the "great aesthetic education" proposed by this article is rooted in the concrete and vivid art collections that are endowed with profound denotations in historical traditions, arts and philosophy. After designing the felicitous curriculum and textbook, the "great aesthetics" education would definitely become appealing to the troubled juveniles and thus ensure that those teenagers can be offered education in a profound and



comprehensive way about myriad subjects such as history, humanities, traditions and aesthetics so as to improve their overall manners [4].

"Museum aesthetics" education differs from the simple traditional aesthetic education and should be applied to the group of troubled teens who are currently extremely lack of and longing for the opportunities of "museum aesthetic" education.

"Museum aesthetics" related curriculum should be designed in a comprehensive way that integrates knowledge from literature, history and arts into the museums' collections to conduct interdisciplinary education. Moreover, the troubled teens should be provided with various pragmatic workshops that match the textbook contents to cultivate their artistic craftsmanship and stimulate their potentials in art. Likewise, they should also be offered with practical vocational skill trainings in art to prepare them for their return to society.

## **1.2 The potential influence of "museum aesthetics" education on troubled teens**

According to experts' researchers on the causes of unseemly behaviors of troubled teens, personality defect is one of the major reasons that leads to their inappropriate behaviors while the main causes of their mental illness include the deficiency and lack of education in aesthetics, culture, history etc.[5]. The aesthetic education based on "museum aesthetics" is critical to the prevention juvenile delinquencies due to its straightforwardness and rich meanings. [65].First of all, the scientific design of the museum, its unique way of display and the use of modern audio-visual technology to enhance the appeal of the collection, can give the teenagers a multi-dimensional impression once they entered the museum, and thus they would feel a natural connection to the glamorous collections, and then, out of curiosity and interest, they would voluntarily want to study and understand the history or even the philosophical connotation hidden in the collections. Secondly, the aesthetic education based on museums is characterized with diversity. The existing collections, featuring exquisite craftsmanship and rich content, are able to display knowledge of art, history, literature, and geography from different periods of time in a vivid way. The collections would be a diversified and suitable source of materials for the "museum aesthetics" curriculum without concerning about the educational meanings these materials contain. Therefore, an unique education system for troubled teens can be easily designed once the materials are properly arranged.

## **2. An important reason for the lack of aesthetic education to troubled teens**

In order to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquencies, it is essential to solve the root cause of the problem: the lack of aesthetic education. In fact, aesthetic education is crucial to the growth of teenagers [7]. Luochuan Jia 's *Reflections on the Aesthetic Significance of Criminal Reform* [8] and *The Structure of Criminal Contradiction -- Foucault's Thoughts on The Aesthetic Reform of Crime* [9], hold that there is a significant causal relationship between the reform of troubled teens and aesthetic education. A summary based on a corresponding investigation of the reasons why troubled teens receive insufficient aesthetic education is listed below.

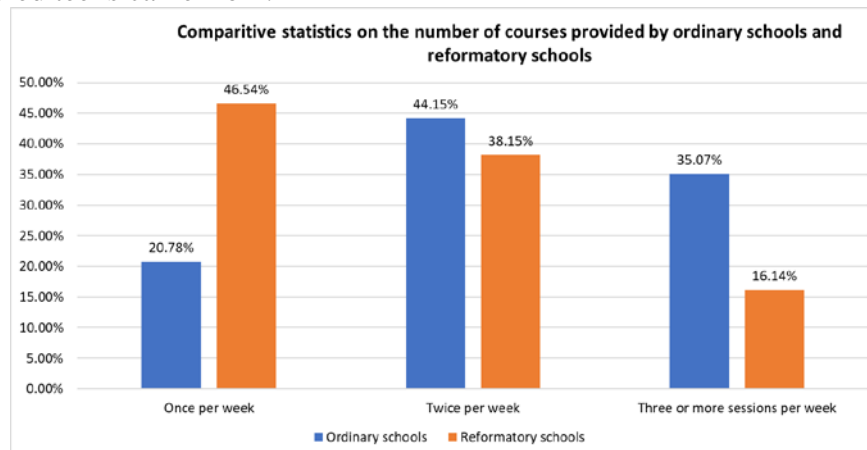
### **2.1 From the perspective of government**

The government is the major supporter of education in China, and the development of aesthetic education likewise needs assistance from the government. However, through an investigation on the reformatory education in Shanghai Education Department for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency and the Education Centre of Shanghai Juvenile Prison, it turned out that the financial budget for psychological education claims only 4.5% of the entire budget expenditure for the prevention of juvenile crimes. Furthermore, in the final account of Shanghai Juvenile Delinquent Education Institute in 2017, the expenditure on culture and education was 0. According to the two investigations above, it is clear that the government is currently not paying enough attention to the aesthetic education for troubled teens, and that the financial support from the government needs to be strengthened.

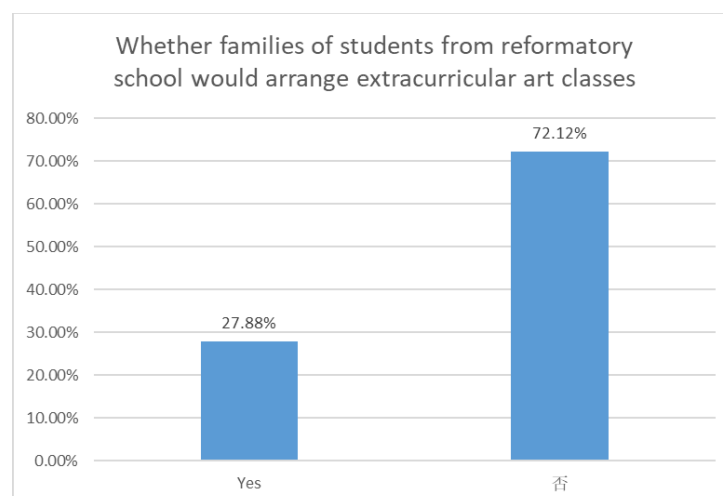
### **2.2 From the perspective of schools**



School is the vanguard of education as well as where most aesthetic education for young people. An analysis was made to compare the aesthetic education accessible to the troubled teens in reformatory schools and juvenile prisons with that of ordinary students. The content of the survey mainly includes the number of art courses, the system for art education etc. In the survey, 529 questionnaires were collected from reformatory schools and 95 from ordinary schools. 20.78% of the ordinary schools would have one art course per week and 44.15% of them have two art courses per week, and 35.07% of them have more than 3 arts courses per week. In contrast, only 9.83% of the reformatory schools would set up arts courses, within those schools, 46.54% would hold one art course per week, and 38.15% would hold two classes per week, and 16.14% (as shown in Figure 1) of them offer three arts courses per week. It is clear that the number of art courses provided by regular school is beyond that of reformatory schools. Moreover, for ordinary students, courses related to humanity and arts take up 18.31% of the whole curriculum, while for troubled teens, only 7.75% of all the classes are humanity and art related. In addition, according to Figure 2,3,4, the survey reveal that that 35.9% of the families that juvenile criminals came from would arrange extracurricular arts courses ; 27.87% of families that students from reformatory schools came from would arrange extracurricular arts courses, whereas up to 77.89% of the ordinary families would arrange extracurricular arts courses. This shows that at least the number of aesthetic education courses offered by reformatory schools is far fewer than that offered by ordinary schools. Meanwhile, it also reflects that ordinary families pay more attention to aesthetic education than families that troubled teens came from.

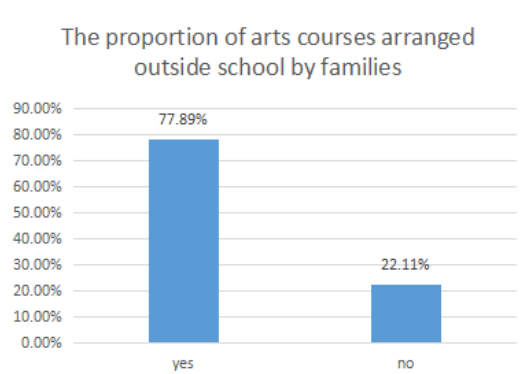


**Figure 1.** Comparison of the set of arts courses of ordinary schools and reformatory schools per week

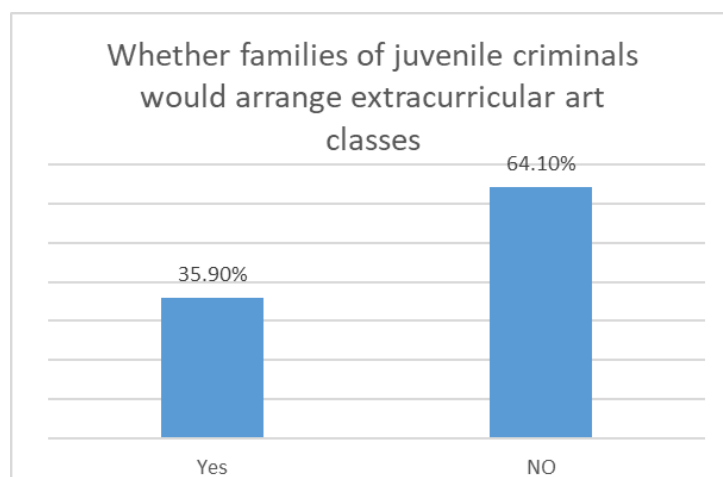


**Figure 2.** Whether families would arrange extracurricular art classes





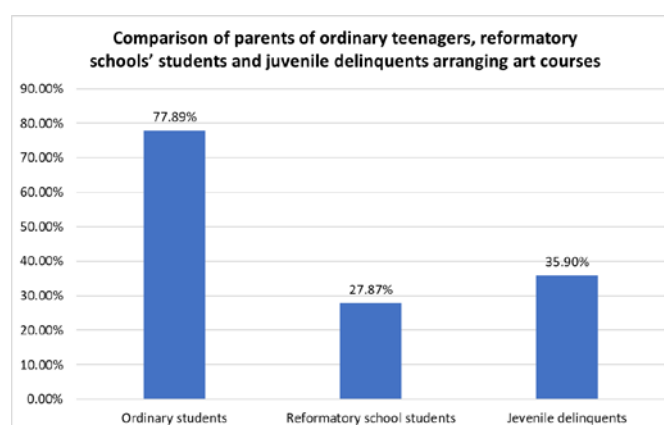
**Figure 3.** Whether families would arrange extracurricular art classes children



**Figure 4.** Whether families would arrange extracurricular art classes

### 2.3 From the perspective of familie

Parents are sometimes the best teachers, and family plays an indispensable role in aesthetic education. An investigation was made on the degree of aesthetic education of both ordinary students and troubled teens as well as the families they came from. According to the survey results, 77.89% of ordinary students received extra-curricular arts courses arranged by their families, while only 27.87% of work-study students and 35.90% of juvenile offenders received after-school arts courses arranged by their families (see Figure 2). It can be seen that the opportunities for misbehaving teenagers to receive aesthetic education outside the classroom are far less than those of ordinary students.



**Figure 5.** comparison of parents arranging extracurricular art courses, reformatory schools' students and juvenile delinquents arranging art courses

### 3. Effective measures to integrate "museum aesthetics" into the curriculum of troubled teens

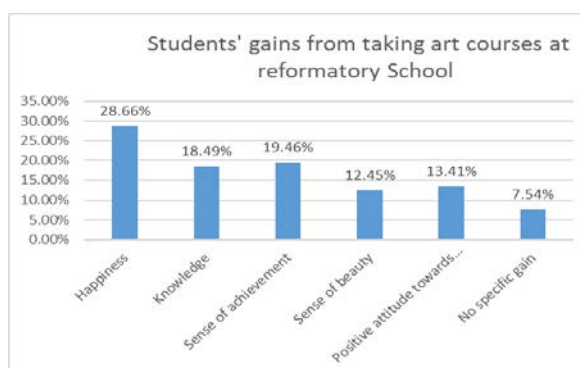


Jixiang Shan, the former curator of the National Museum of China, pointed out in his book *Social Responsibility and Social Education of Museums* that education is one of the functions of museums, and by rehabilitating the troubled teens through “museum aesthetics”, museum education, family education and school education could truly be close-knit.

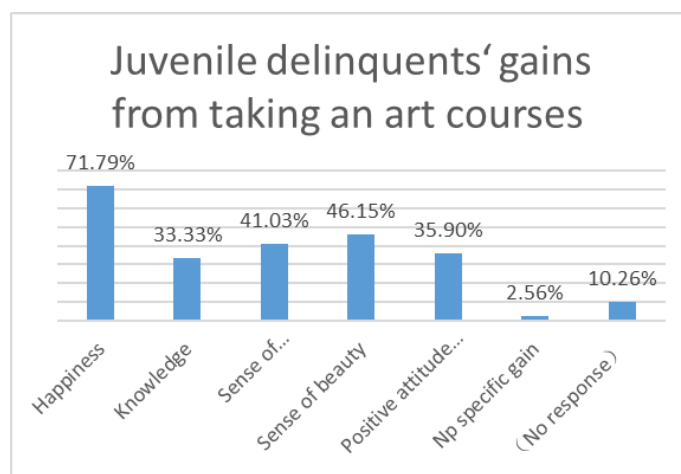
### 3.1 Increasing the investment of governments to support the education of "museum aesthetics" for the troubled teens

In the questionnaire, it is found that only 11.25% of the ordinary students expressed no interest after visiting museums, while 32.48% of students from reformatory schools expressed no interest, and 71.43% of juvenile offenders showed no interest in the museums they visited. This revealed that, compared with ordinary teenagers, the troubled teens are not competent enough to understand and appreciate the museum collections, which further indicates their lack of comprehensive ability related to "grand aesthetics" including history, geography, culture, aesthetics, art history, philosophy etc.

In addition, the survey suggests that although troubled teens have far less accessible opportunities to receive art education than ordinary students do, their enthusiasm for art courses (such as existing painting, music, etc.) should not to be underestimated. According to the results from reformatory schools' students (as shown in Figure 6, 7), nearly 92.46% of those students testified that they experienced positive impact and held a passion for art after attending art courses. Meanwhile, 87.18% of the juvenile offenders believe that the art courses are meaningful and interesting.



**Figure 6.** Students' gains from taking art courses at reformatory School



**Figure 7** Juvenile delinquents' gains from taking an art courses

Considering that the troubled teens are not able to receive a comprehensive education due to the lack of "great aesthetics" education, which may be one of the reasons for the inappropriate behaviors they committed, the government should pay more attention to the education of "great aesthetics", the kind of "museum aesthetics" education mentioned in this paper. The education of "museum aesthetics" would offer the troubled teens a comprehensive, intriguing and pragmatic



education.

To be more specific, the government should take progressive action, for instance, provide financial support, appoint experts on children's education to device a "grand aesthetic" curriculum based mainly on museum collections that covers history, humanity, aesthetics, philosophy and psychology for reformatory schools' students, and organize regular trips to museums. Meanwhile, together with museums, reformatory schools and juvenile prisons, the Education Department should develop a series of aesthetic courses about history, humanities and arts, skill trainings workshops as an assistance unit. Museums should be encouraged to become a part of the rehabilitation for troubled teens, experts of museum-related fields should be encouraged to provide lectures and courses, educational and judicial departments should be encouraged to cooperate with museums to device relevant training for teachers in reformatory schools. Through refining the aesthetic education curriculum for troubled teens, the overall manners of the troubled teens can be improved, and their interest in the various sorts of knowledge hidden in museum collections can be intrigued. Eventually, their aesthetic standards and artistic skills can be improved as well as their confidence and determination to start a new life and rejoin the society.

### **3.2 "museum aesthetics" and other "great aesthetics" courses should be added to reformatory schools and juvenile detention centers**

Reformatory schools and juvenile detention centers, where most of the education for troubled teens take place, should incorporate the necessitous art course into the existing curriculum. Through investigation, it turned out that the traditional painting and music courses are favored by the vast majority of troubled teens, yet, the number of such courses offered in reformatory schools is far fewer than that of ordinary schools. Therefore, it is feasible and essential for reformatory schools and juvenile detention centers to incorporate "museum aesthetics" courses. Taking art and aesthetics as the starting point, the special education for troubled teens can be naturally extended to other fields like literature, history and philosophy so as to provide a suitable education that meets the special needs of troubled teens.

### **3.3 Integration of museum aesthetics and families**

As indicated by the survey, families of juvenile delinquents invest much fewer efforts in aesthetic education than ordinary families do. It is crucial to introduce the special education system, the "museum aesthetic" curriculum, that the society promulgates, into the families of the trouble youngsters to help parents extend and further develop the "aesthetics" curriculum so as to better assist the trouble teens improve their aesthetic and moral standards, which in return, would help the troubled teens stay away from the unseemly habits.

With joint effort of the society, the school and the family, even if the troubled teenagers would not be able to master an artistic skill through this kind of courses, their ability to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, beauty from ugliness will be greatly improve, and thus reduce the possibility of further missteps.

## **Conclusion**

Through the questionnaires, interviews and other research methods, it can be concluded that in Shanghai, troubled teens received far fewer aesthetic education courses than ordinary students. Meanwhile, their love for aesthetic courses is not being taken seriously. There is a causal relationship between the lack of general aesthetic education and their inappropriate behaviors. Even in Shanghai, one of the most important cultural metropolises in China, the level of aesthetic education of troubled teens is in such shape, not to mention the condition in the whole country. Therefore, it is urgent to raise awareness of the current lack of aesthetic education in troubled the country academics.

Different from the traditional aesthetic education that focuses mainly on the pragmatic skills, the unique education mode of " museum aesthetics " can provide troubled youngsters with interdisciplinary knowledge that are more fathomable and intriguing, which not only would help the



troubled teens better understand the teaching content, but also could stimulate their potential and love for learning as well as improve their aesthetic standards, and thus correct their unseemly behaviors and prevent further missteps.

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