

Aesthetic Education Function and Practical Exploration of Ethnic Traditional Sports in School Physical Education

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Abstract: As a form of physical activity that carries ethnic culture and spirit, traditional ethnic sports not only serve to strengthen the body but also possess significant aesthetic education functions. Through traditional ethnic sports, students can not only enhance their physical fitness and motor skills but also experience artistic beauty, shape correct values and outlooks on life, and inherit ethnic culture and spirit. Therefore, how to effectively realize the aesthetic education function of traditional ethnic sports in school physical education is an important issue that urgently needs to be addressed in the field of education. This paper explores four pathways to achieve the aesthetic education function of traditional ethnic sports, including diversified curriculum design, strengthening teacher expertise, emphasizing cultural inheritance and innovation, and fostering a supportive campus environment.

1. Introduction

Ethnic traditional sports are not only an important part of physical education but also a crucial carrier of aesthetic education. Through the practice of ethnic traditional sports, students can enhance their aesthetic literacy while improving physical fitness, experience the charm of traditional culture, and strengthen their sense of national pride and identity. In the modern educational system, the aesthetic function of ethnic traditional sports should be fully recognized and applied. By means of curriculum design, event organization, and interdisciplinary integration, their widespread practice in school sports should be promoted. In the future, as ethnic traditional sports continue to develop and innovate, their aesthetic function in school sports will play an even greater role, providing students with a richer and more diverse educational experience for their all-round development.

2. Analysis of the Aesthetic Education Function of Ethnic Traditional Sports

2.1 Cultivation of Physical Beauty

Ethnic traditional sports typically possess unique movement standards and artistic expressions, where the actions are not merely means of physical exercise but also manifestations of aesthetics. Whether it is Chinese traditional martial arts, dance, or sports from other ethnic groups, they all present a distinctive sense of beauty through graceful movements and rhythms. For example, Tai Chi is renowned for its gentle and fluid motions, emphasizing the philosophy of "overcoming hardness with softness," while traditional dances showcase the harmony and beauty of the body through dynamic forms such as rises and falls, spins, and leaps. ^[1]

In school physical education, when students participate in ethnic traditional sports, they must master the movement techniques of these traditional activities. This process is not only about skill acquisition but also cultivates their aesthetic appreciation. Through repeated practice and continuous improvement, students gradually experience the beauty of these movements, reaching new heights in bodily coordination, strength control, and movement fluidity. By appreciating the aesthetic aspects of physical movement, students not only enhance their physical fitness but also deepen their perception and understanding of beauty, transforming exercise into an artistic enjoyment. ^[2]

Moreover, the physical beauty of ethnic traditional sports helps students build confidence. In

sports activities, especially those involving ethnic traditional sports, precise techniques and high levels of bodily control are required. When students master a traditional sport and perform challenging movements, they develop a strong sense of achievement. This boost in confidence not only benefits their performance in other areas but also lays a foundation for their overall development.

2.2 Shaping of Spiritual Beauty

Ethnic traditional sports are not just about physical exercise; they also carry profound spiritual connotations. In many traditional sports, the expression and training methods are closely linked to personal moral cultivation and spiritual growth. For instance, Chinese martial arts emphasize "martial virtue" education, incorporating the philosophy of "cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world." This requires athletes not only to possess exceptional skills but also to develop perseverance, respect for teachers, teamwork, and other moral qualities during their training.

In school physical education, ethnic traditional sports provide students with opportunities to shape good character. By participating in these activities, students not only exercise their bodies but also unconsciously cultivate inner strength. ^[3]For example, the "etiquette" training and "internal cultivation" in traditional martial arts require students to focus not only on external performance but also on inner refinement and spiritual pursuits. Under the guidance of teachers, students gradually develop traits such as resilience and composure through practice, while also fostering a tenacious willpower by continuously surpassing themselves and overcoming challenges.

Additionally, group activities in ethnic traditional sports, such as dance team rehearsals or traditional ball games, help students cultivate teamwork and collectivist values. In these activities, students must collaborate and communicate to achieve collective goals, thereby developing a more harmonious social character and sense of community. Through the shaping of spiritual beauty, ethnic traditional sports lay a moral foundation for students' holistic development.

2.3 Inheritance of Cultural Beauty

Ethnic traditional sports are not merely a form of exercise; they are an integral part of ethnic culture, embodying profound historical accumulation and cultural heritage. Introducing ethnic traditional sports into school physical education not only helps students improve their physical fitness and aesthetic abilities but also enables them to understand and inherit their ethnic culture. ^[4]For example, Chinese martial arts, dance, wrestling, and other sports not only possess unique techniques and aesthetic value but are also infused with rich philosophical ideas, historical narratives, and ethnic spirit.

By participating in ethnic traditional sports, students can appreciate the cultural significance behind these activities, further strengthening their sense of identity and pride in their ethnic culture. For instance, when learning traditional martial arts, students may encounter philosophical concepts such as "Qigong" and the "Yin-Yang Five Elements," gaining insights into the harmony between humans and nature. When studying ethnic dances, they may learn about the seasonal changes, folk stories, and cultural customs behind these dances, experiencing a deep cultural heritage.

The cultural beauty of ethnic traditional sports can also broaden students' global perspectives. By engaging with sports from different ethnic groups and regions, students become aware of the diversity and uniqueness of cultures worldwide. Such cultural exchange not only enhances their aesthetic appreciation but also promotes cross-cultural understanding and respect. In the context of globalization, the cultural beauty of ethnic traditional sports has become an important means of cultural inheritance in modern education.

3. Challenges in Promoting Ethnic Traditional Sports in School Physical Education

3.1 Insufficient Resources and Facilities

One of the most immediate obstacles to the promotion of ethnic traditional sports is the lack of

resources and facilities. In many schools, particularly small and medium-sized ones, sports facilities are primarily allocated to mainstream sports such as basketball, soccer, and volleyball, with minimal investment in the specialized venues and equipment required for ethnic traditional sports. Certain traditional sports, like martial arts and ethnic dances, demand specific spaces and tools for practice and performance, yet these necessities are often inadequately provided.

For instance, martial arts training requires not only open spaces for movement practice but also specialized mats and protective gear. Dance-based activities, on the other hand, need dedicated studios with mirrors to help students correct and refine their movements. The scarcity of such resources severely limits the effective implementation of ethnic traditional sports in schools. ^[5]In economically underdeveloped regions, tight school budgets make it difficult to procure and maintain these specialized facilities, often reducing the teaching and promotion of ethnic traditional sports to theoretical discussions rather than practical application.

Moreover, the shortage extends to teaching materials and digital resources. Currently, systematic textbooks and digital teaching aids for ethnic traditional sports are limited, leaving teachers without comprehensive instructional tools. This deficiency significantly impacts teaching quality. Additionally, when schools plan their sports facilities, ethnic traditional sports are frequently overlooked in major construction projects. This lack of foresight in resource allocation further exacerbates the difficulties in promoting these sports within school physical education programs.

3.2 Lack of Teacher Expertise

The promotion of ethnic traditional sports is closely tied to the professional competence of teachers. However, many physical education instructors currently lack sufficient understanding and mastery of these sports. As activities rooted in deep cultural traditions and requiring specialized skills, ethnic traditional sports demand that teachers possess not only solid foundational techniques but also rich cultural knowledge and teaching experience.

In reality, many physical education teachers have not received specialized training in ethnic traditional sports, making it challenging for them to deliver precise and targeted instruction. First, there is already a shortage of qualified teachers in this field. Most school physical education programs prioritize mainstream sports like soccer and basketball, leaving ethnic traditional sports with minimal attention. Teachers often lack systematic knowledge of these traditional activities, sometimes even struggling with basic familiarity regarding classic forms like martial arts or ethnic dances. Consequently, effectively teaching these sports to students becomes a significant challenge.

Furthermore, teachers with inadequate expertise find it difficult to create an engaging and educationally meaningful atmosphere in the classroom. Students may show little interest in ethnic traditional sports, and without dynamic and captivating teaching methods, teachers struggle to motivate them. This not only diminishes learning outcomes but also strips ethnic traditional sports of their inherent educational value.

More critically, many teachers lack a profound understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions behind these sports. In ethnic traditional sports, cultural transmission and spiritual development are integral components, yet the absence of teacher expertise often leads to the neglect of these aspects. As a result, students miss out on the valuable ideas and philosophies embedded in these traditions.

3.3 Lack of Student Interest

Another major barrier to the promotion of ethnic traditional sports in schools is students' lack of interest. Despite their rich cultural heritage and unique appeal, many students in modern educational settings prefer mainstream sports like soccer, basketball, and volleyball. These sports are widely popular, frequently featured in competitive events, and offer high levels of entertainment and competitiveness, providing students with immediate enjoyment and a sense of achievement.

In contrast, ethnic traditional sports, with their distinctive training methods and relatively lower competitive intensity, often fail to capture students' attention. Many traditional sports involve repetitive and lengthy practice, which can feel tedious. For example, mastering the basic movements and routines of martial arts requires prolonged repetition, and students may grow weary

without immediate feedback. While ethnic dances and wrestling possess artistic and performative qualities, their entertainment and competitive appeal pale in comparison to modern sports like soccer and basketball, leading to dwindling student interest.

Additionally, insufficient promotion of ethnic traditional sports contributes to this disinterest. Most schools prioritize competitive performance and physical fitness in their sports programs, paying little attention to the promotion of traditional sports. Even when schools incorporate traditional sports into their curricula, class time and frequency are often limited and may conflict with mainstream sports. Given the choice, students tend to opt for more competitive and entertaining activities, overlooking the charm of ethnic traditional sports.

From a broader perspective, family and societal attitudes also play a role. Parents generally place greater emphasis on their children's performance in mainstream sports, particularly those with high social recognition and competitive prestige. As a result, students' choices are influenced by external environments, further diminishing their interest in traditional sports.

3.4 Weakening Cultural Identity

Ethnic traditional sports are not merely displays of physical skill but also vehicles for cultural heritage. However, in the context of modernization and globalization, some students exhibit varying degrees of cultural detachment, which in turn affects the promotion of these sports. With the constant influx of foreign cultures, many students have limited exposure to their own ethnic traditions, sometimes even feeling alienated from them.

In this environment, the role of ethnic traditional sports as cultural carriers becomes difficult to fulfill. Many students are more familiar with Western and modern sports cultures, lacking deep engagement with their own ethnic heritage. This is especially true in urban and highly modernized areas, where ethnic traditional sports are often perceived as "outdated" and fail to inspire a sense of identity or enthusiasm among students. Consequently, their interest in these sports naturally declines.

Moreover, school physical education curricula tend to favor modern sports, neglecting the cultural transmission function of ethnic traditional sports. Even when traditional sports are included, students often perceive them as supplementary rather than integral, lacking a sense of belonging or engagement. Teaching in these areas frequently focuses solely on skill acquisition, overlooking the ethnic spirit and cultural connotations embedded within them. This further deepens students' detachment from ethnic traditional sports.

The erosion of cultural identity not only hinders the rooting of ethnic traditional sports among students but also impacts their long-term development in schools. To truly promote these sports, schools must not only provide more resources and support but also implement systematic cultural education to strengthen students' sense of identity and ignite their interest in participating.

4. Pathways to Realizing the Aesthetic Education Function of Ethnic Traditional Sports

4.1 Diversified Curriculum Design

To realize the aesthetic education function of ethnic traditional sports, schools must first incorporate well-designed curricula that emphasize both skill development and cultural enrichment. Courses should highlight the uniqueness of these sports, blending artistry and aesthetics to allow students to appreciate the beauty and philosophy embedded in the movements.

For example, schools can integrate various traditional sports—such as martial arts, ethnic dances, and wrestling—into their programs, offering students a diverse range of cultural and artistic experiences. Each sport has its distinct aesthetic appeal, and through thoughtfully designed lessons, students can develop an appreciation for graceful movements, harmonious postures, and ultimately, their own aesthetic sensibilities.

Additionally, curricula should emphasize cultural context. While teaching skills, instructors should guide students to explore the historical and philosophical foundations of these sports. For instance, martial arts are not just about physical techniques but also incorporate concepts like

"Yin-Yang" and "Qi cultivation." By introducing these ideas, teachers can help students grasp the spiritual dimensions of the sports, enriching both their physical and intellectual growth.

Curriculum design should also align with students' developmental stages. Elementary students might engage with simplified ethnic dances or basic martial arts through gamified and interactive methods, while middle and high school students can tackle more complex movements, teamwork, and competitive elements. This tiered approach gradually enhances students' aesthetic appreciation and artistic perception.

4.2 Strengthening Teacher Expertise

The realization of aesthetic education through ethnic traditional sports relies heavily on a competent teaching workforce. Currently, many physical education teachers lack specialized training in these areas. To address this, schools should invest in professional development programs to enhance teachers' knowledge and instructional capabilities.

Workshops, seminars, and training sessions can deepen teachers' understanding of the cultural and artistic values of ethnic traditional sports. Educators should learn how to integrate aesthetic elements into their teaching, making lessons more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, schools can invite external experts—such as martial arts masters or cultural scholars—to provide guidance and demonstrations, enriching the teaching process.

Teachers should also actively participate in practicing these sports themselves. By immersing in the movements and philosophies, they can better convey the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions to students, fostering a more profound learning experience.

4.3 Cultural Preservation and Innovation

Ethnic traditional sports are vital components of cultural heritage, and their aesthetic function can only be fully realized through a balance of preservation and innovation. Schools should explore creative ways to integrate these sports into modern education while respecting their traditional roots.^[6]

Cultural events, such as traditional sports exhibitions or guest performances by ethnic artists, can deepen students' appreciation. Interactive workshops and lectures on the philosophical and historical aspects of these sports can further enhance cultural understanding.

Innovative teaching methods, such as incorporating virtual reality (VR) for martial arts training or blending traditional dances with contemporary styles, can make these sports more appealing to modern students. Cross-cultural exchanges can also enrich traditional sports, fostering global perspectives while maintaining ethnic identity.

4.4 Fostering a Supportive School Environment

A positive school atmosphere is crucial for promoting ethnic traditional sports. Schools should actively advocate for these sports through posters, lectures, and film screenings, highlighting their cultural and artistic value. Competitions and festivals centered on traditional sports can further integrate them into campus culture.

Incentives, such as scholarships or awards for excellence in traditional sports, can motivate student participation. Extracurricular clubs—like martial arts teams or ethnic dance groups—provide additional opportunities for engagement.

Lastly, schools should improve physical infrastructure by dedicating spaces and equipment to traditional sports, ensuring students have the resources to explore and appreciate these activities fully.

5. Conclusion

The aesthetic education function of ethnic traditional sports in schools can only be realized through multifaceted efforts—diversified curricula, enhanced teacher expertise, cultural innovation, and a supportive environment. With comprehensive promotion, these sports can profoundly impact students' physical, spiritual, and cultural development, enriching their overall growth.

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