

Aesthetic Education for Silver Hair: A Study of Chinese Elderly University Students' Art Learning Needs

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Abstract: China's aging problem is intensifying. As an important part of education for the aged, art education is welcomed by the elderly. Art education can enable the elderly to learn and enjoy, and meet their educational needs, improve the quality of life and highlight life while improving their own aesthetic ability the value. Based on the study on the needs of students in four universities for the elderly in Shanxi Province, this study analyzed the characteristics of the learning needs of the current elderly group, proposed the strategy of offering art courses in the education for the elderly, and finally promoted the development and improvement of the public service system of education for the elderly.

Keywords: Senior Citizen Education; Arts Education for the Elderly; Elderly Universities; Learning Needs.

1. Introduction

Currently, population aging has become one of the most concerned issues in the world. According to the Statistical Bulletin of Civil Affairs Development in 2022 by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, by the end of 2022, China's elderly population aged 60 and above reached 280 million and 40 million, accounting for 19.8% of the total population [1]. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs' forecast, the number of elderly people in China will exceed 300 million during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, and society as a whole will move from mild aging to moderate aging [2]. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly stipulates: "Elderly people have the right to continue their education. The State develops education for the elderly, incorporates education for the elderly into the lifelong education system, and encourages society to set up various types of schools for the elderly [3]." This fundamentally guarantees the right to education, including for the elderly. In 2017, the 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Education Program proposed to "promote the gradual incorporation of geriatric education institutions into the local public service system, improve the learning service system for the elderly, set up good universities for the elderly, and effectively expand the supply of resources for senior citizen education." The state has introduced a series of regulations and policies on the development of senior citizen education at the legal level, and the development of this is a general trend. The elderly group in the new era has good health, higher education and higher economic status, and these factors have prompted to produce richer and more diversified learning needs. Hou Huaiyin, Zhang Huiping (2022) argued that adult education, for a long time, the study of geriatric education exists to solve the real social problems of aging, manifesting a strong application [4]. As an important part of lifelong education, art education for the elderly should also be vigorously developed and actively expand new educational content and teaching mode to improve teaching quality. Based on the research on the art learning needs of senior university students, this study analyzes the current learning needs of the elderly group and proposes strategies for the provision of art courses in senior education. In order to

later transform the fine arts learning needs of the elderly into effective needs, promote the development and improvement of the public service system of senior citizen education, provide a useful role in building a learning society, and then promote the high-quality development of senior citizen education and stimulate the vitality of the aging society.

2. Research Concepts

2.1. Senior Citizen Education

China's New Dictionary of Gerontology defines senior citizen education as an activity in which educators exert purposeful, planned and organized influences on the elderly in accordance with certain social requirements, in order to bring about the desired changes in their bodies and minds [5].

2.2. Arts Education for the Elderly

Bi Mouyi in "Exploration of the value of art education and its realization path in the aging society" defines senior citizen art education as taking the elderly as the main body of education, using art as the medium, and in the process of teaching the elderly knowledge and skills of art, it can effectively cultivate the aesthetic, thinking and expression abilities of the elderly, cultivate the sentiment, satisfy the spiritual and cultural needs of the elderly, and help the elderly adapt to the changes in the society in a better way, so as to promote the all-round development of the elderly [6].

2.3. Elderly Universities

Yu zhong hui, in his article "A Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Elderly Education," cites China's senior university as one of the four basic models of senior education [7]. Compared with the other three models of community-based senior citizen education, distance education, and self-indulgent activities organized by the elderly, senior universities are more professional in nature as they are set up and provide teaching by state functionaries. Universities for the elderly are generally referred to as "universities for the third age," and they are places of education specifically for the elderly that do not require entrance examinations or award degrees.

2.4. Learning Needs

Briggs (1981) pointed out in the Instructional Design Process that learning needs refers to the gap between the current state of learning and the desired state of the learner's learning, which is also the concept of learning needs more recognized by academics, i.e., $\text{Gap} = \text{Expectation} - \text{Status Quo}$. Learning needs is a dynamic and holistic concept, which can be understood as the subject's willingness to participate in specific learning activities.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Subjects

This study adopts a questionnaire research method, and 130 students from four senior universities in Shanxi were randomly selected as the research subjects. The inclusion criteria were: students of senior university; age ≥ 50 years old; able to read independently or complete the questionnaire with the help of others; and voluntary participation.

3.2. Content of the Study

The dimensions of learning needs used in this study include the dimensions of motivation, learning content, learning style, learning evaluation and willingness to pay for learning.

3.2.1. Learning Motivation Dimension

In terms of learning motivation, the elderly group has its own special characteristics, the biggest feature is that its utilitarian degree is weakened, and it is more for the purpose of self-improvement and development, which is obviously different from the typical characteristics of other stages of learners. The research on learning motivation provides a direction for the establishment of the future curriculum of senior art education. Lam (2009) found that a compensatory motivation supports older adults (especially women) to participate in lifelong learning - many did not have the opportunity to study at university when they were younger [8]. This study investigated three items through leisure motivation for physical and mental health, interest in knowledge, and social relationships. Occupational motivation survey items are career development, external expectations, social services, and social adaptation. Self-education survey is divided into two motives of self-actualization and compensatory education.

3.2.2. Learning Content Dimension:

the survey was conducted according to the existing classification of art courses in senior universities, course category, course expectations and courses taken by senior university students were studied. The course category investigates the preferences of art learning of senior university students and summarizes the specificity of art learning content of senior learners. The course expectation investigates the interest and demand of elderly university students for art courses, which provides the basis for future senior art education to establish a scientific and precise curriculum system adapted to the needs of the elderly. the studied course option investigates the current status of elderly university students' learning.

3.2.3. Learning Style Dimension:

regarding the learning style of the elderly, Phillipson (2010) mentioned that scholars such as have pointed out that currently little is known about the educational methods suitable for the elderly and their learning needs [9]. Ouyang Zhong ming (2019) based on the literature search of relevant

databases, summarized the three dimensions of academic focus in learning styles of the elderly group: first, individual-centered self-directed learning styles, second, interaction-based learning styles, and third, learning based on information and communication technology [10]. Huang Jiale (2020) categorizes learning styles as self-directed learning styles, experiential learning styles, online learning styles, interactive presentation styles, and classroom learning styles [11]. This study investigates the learning style preferences of the elderly university student population based on these five learning styles to provide a basis for the curricular approach to art classes in senior universities.

3.2.4. Learning Evaluation Dimension:

learning evaluation is an important motivation to motivate learners to continue to participate in learning, many schools are overly concerned about students' performance and neglect their physical and mental health and good behavior, and evaluate students by their scores[12]. Li Jie (2012) pointed out that because of the fact that senior education is always outside the education system, the learning achievements of the elderly are not fairly evaluated and recognized, which makes the elderly unable to produce a strong sense of self-efficacy [13]. Zhou JingJing (2018) summarized five certification methods of adult learning achievements, including the results display method, interview and communication method, quiz and examination method, simulation operation method and archive bag method [14], in the study of the demand for certification of adult community learning achievements.

3.2.5. Willingness to Pay for Learning:

The willingness to pay for learning of the elderly reflects the investment behavior of the elderly in education, even though China's education for the elderly is a quasi-public product, following the principle of universal public welfare, so that in general the elderly spend less on education for the elderly. However, the willingness to pay for education services affects the implementation of senior citizen education, and this study aims to understand the willingness to pay for art learning in order to provide suggestions for improving the level of senior citizen art education services. The senior citizen university is in the form of semester payment, so the willingness to pay survey in this study takes the semester as the research time interval.

4. Data Analysis

Electronic questionnaires were distributed in the form of 130 questionnaires, with a recovery rate of 100%, and 124 samples were finally analyzed after invalid samples were excluded, with a validity rate of 95.3%. After the questionnaire recovery, this study used EXCEL, SPSS to analyze the data.

4.1. Basic Information

4.1.1. Age Structure

This research recovered 124 valid questionnaires, the age structure distribution is as follows: below 50 years old (accounting for 13.56%), 50 to 60 years old (accounting for 57.63%), 60 to 65 years old (accounting for 27.12%), 65 to 75 years old (accounting for) more than 75 years old (accounting for 1.69%). In terms of the age structure of the trainees, the overall age of the trainees is concentrated between 50 and 65 years old, and most of them are newly retired old people with strong desire to learn and high social

participation.

4.1.2. Gender Structure

The gender structure of the survey shows that men (26.35%) and women (73.65%). The number of women participating in elderly education is much larger than that of men. Elderly women have a stronger thirst for knowledge. It can be seen that it is necessary to pay attention to the learning needs of female students and offer more courses that meet the needs of female students.

4.2. General Characteristics of Art Learning Needs of Senior Citizen University Participants

4.2.1. Improvement of Physical and Mental Health and Fulfillment of Hobbies are the Main Purposes of Learning for the Elderly.

According to the survey of this study, "improving physical and mental health (69.37%)" and "satisfying hobbies and interests (61.26%)" are the top two purposes of learning for the elderly in China. The purpose of learning to improve physical and mental health accounted for the largest percentage. Formosa, Marvin (2012) mentions that older adults who participate in lifelong learning can enjoy life more, are confident, and have the ability to be self-sufficient and coping [15]. Senior education is a spiritual cultural demand dominated by non-utilitarian values, with the destination of promoting the overall development of human beings and improving their sense of satisfaction and acquisition [16].

4.2.2. Learning Content Tends to be in Favor of Interesting Course Types, and the Most Expected Courses are Art Appreciation and Arts and Crafts.

The survey of course types shows that older people place more importance on the fun (32.2%) and knowledge (27.12%) of courses in their choice of courses, followed by the practicality of courses (23.73%), and give relatively little consideration to the artistic nature of courses (16.95%). The highest percentage of course interestingness is consistent with the survey data on motivation to learn, and fulfillment of hobbies and interests ranked second in the survey on motivation to learn. Knowledgeability had the second highest percentage (27.12%).

The survey of course expectations shows that the courses that the elderly university students most want to offer are, in order, arts and crafts, painting techniques, sketching expeditions, art appreciation, and life skills. The expectation of arts and crafts courses ranked first, the fun and richness of the courses attracted the elderly, while easy to learn is also one of the reasons, which is consistent with the course type survey in the high proportion of fun data survey. Expectation of learning courses ranked second or traditional painting techniques.

The survey data of the courses studied show that the number of people currently taking the first three courses are Chinese painting (37.84%), calligraphy (24.31%), photography (15.44%), oil painting (12.32%), watercolor (8.67%), and others (1.42%) in order. Chinese painting courses are most popular among the elderly, and even applying for courses requires waiting and reservation.

4.2.3. Learning Mode Demand Tends to be Experiential, and Online Learning Mode is Gradually Favored by the Elderly.

In this study, the survey shows that the most desired learning mode for the elderly is experiential learning mode,

accounting for 59.57%, which focuses on the interaction between the elderly and the surrounding environment, and is welcomed by the elderly because of its situational, experiential, subjective, and sensory characteristics, and it is the most authentic and natural form of learning for the elderly. Secondly, the online learning mode ranked second in the survey group with 35.8%, mainly due to the development and popularization of modern information technology, and the diversification, timeliness, convenience and other characteristics of the Internet have brought rich learning experience to the learning of the elderly, and thus the online learning mode has become one of the important needs of the elderly for the learning mode. Self-directed learning method, accounting for 13.58%, the learning method focuses on the spontaneous and independent learning of the elderly. Physiological reasons for the degradation of the learning ability of the elderly affect the independent learning of the elderly, which requires systematic education by professional teachers.

4.2.4. Achievement Demonstration Method is the Most Desired Evaluation Method for the Elderly.

In this study, presenting to the residents/community and society is the highest demand for evaluation of older learners' art learning, accounting for 46.9%; followed by presenting within the school or learning institution accounting for 23.3%; and after that, participating in relevant competitions and judging activities (18.15%) and obtaining a certificate of course completion from the institution (11.7%).

4.2.5. Whether or not the Elderly are Willing to Pay for the Learning Costs of Participating in Senior Citizen Art Education and How Much They Pay Reflect the Individual Elderly's Consideration of Investment in Education

In this study, the survey shows that most of the older adults mostly tend to choose between RMB 1,000-2,999 per semester in terms of their willingness to pay for their studies (44.21%), while only 6.8% of the older adults have a willingness to pay for their studies of RMB 5,000 and above per month. Considering the special characteristics of the elderly group, the results show that the elderly have a more positive willingness to invest in education, but it needs to be improved.

5. Conclusion

First, we should change the orientation of senior art education and set up a positive aging curriculum structure. In the future, the proportion of knowledge-based courses and entertainment and leisure courses should be balanced in the curriculum system of geriatric art education, which can not only meet the diversified learning needs of the elderly, but also provide diversified geriatric education services for the elderly. The "new" of aging work in the new era is not only embodied in the new era, new situation and new tasks, but also in the new concepts of positive aging and healthy aging.

Senior citation art education can develop art and craft courses, which combine traditional Chinese culture and non-heritage culture, and this generation of elderly people are the experiencers or witnesses of these arts and crafts and non-heritage culture, for example, the art of face molding, embroidery, weaving, tie-dyeing and paper-cutting in arts and crafts, etc., which means that they can learn the knowledge of arts and crafts, and also serve for the inheritance of traditional culture as social art workers after the completion of the

courses, thus enhancing the sense of gain of the elderly. In addition to learning art knowledge, they can also serve as social art workers after completing the course to pass on traditional culture, enhance the sense of obtaining and existence of the elderly, and really participate in social work in their old age, so that they can be productive through learning in their old age.

The content of the course can be combined with local art galleries and museums to realize the transformation of art knowledge into art creation. Contemporary seniors already have a high willingness to pay for art education, so art tours and art sketching courses can be added. For example, the learning of techniques of Chinese painting, oil painting and printmaking can be combined with painting appreciation in art museums, and art sketching courses can be added appropriately to increase the interest of the art courses for the elderly; the learning of arts and crafts courses can be combined with excursions to local folk museums and cultural museums to enrich the form of the courses and increase the participation of the elderly. The traditional evaluation method of teacher marking or handing in homework should be transformed. The end of the course is carried out by organizing art work exhibitions, art work tournaments and art salons to improve the enthusiasm and completion of art learning for the elderly, and to dispel the learning mentality that the elderly can go if they want to, but do not want to go and forget about it. The holding of these artwork exhibitions and tournaments not only requires the curriculum of educational institutions, but also requires more support and assistance from the community and senior citizen service centers to provide support for the implementation of active aging.

Second, fully emphasize the role of the Internet in art education for the elderly, and develop online art learning platforms for the elderly.

The development of art learning platform for the elderly to assist offline course learning or even replace offline learning, and promote the integration of the elderly into the information society, the development of computer network technology, promoting the transformation of the mode of art education for the elderly, and at the same time, also solve the problem of "a difficult to find" situation of the University of the Elderly a realistic path. At present, China's elderly distance education has made great progress, but now this online learning platform does not take into account the use of the experience of the elderly, the complexity of the operation is not convenient to enter the way to eliminate and combat the enthusiasm of the elderly to learn. Therefore, the setting of the online education platform should not only consider the course content, but also take into account the use experience of the elderly, improve the usage rate of the elderly and the convenience of access, so that the content of the elderly art education courses and multimedia information technology, modern information technology, in-depth fusion, to realize the digitalization of efficient art teaching. At the same time, the network art course can not only set up learning videos, but also include timely testing, homework, online discussion and

other online learning activities and learning evaluation, timely understanding of the degree of mastery of the content learned by the elderly to give feedback to improve the degree of completion of network art education.

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