

Research on the Cultivation of Aesthetics among Art Students under the New Era Background

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Abstract: Through understanding the history and current situation of aesthetic education in China, this paper explains some misunderstandings in the aesthetics of contemporary university art students, such as the insufficiency of aesthetic value and ability, as well as the inadequacy of students' creativity due to traditional art education. It is also pointed out that the cultivation of core literacy of art students is a multidimensional and comprehensive process, and these problems need to be solved by schools, teachers, and students, so as to strengthen the inner aesthetic education of students and improve their aesthetic awareness and ability. Aesthetic education is not only an important part of the art classroom but also a key part of fostering students' all-round development and enhancing their humanistic literacy. It is necessary to cultivate students' observation, imagination, image-thinking ability, and creativity, so that they can become artistic talents with independent thinking and innovation.

Keywords: Aesthetics; Core literacy; Art education; Creativity; Talent cultivation

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1. Introduction

The term "aesthetic cultivation" was first proposed by the German educationalist Schiller, who advocated that human beings have an aesthetic ability in addition to the three abilities of sensation, perception, and will, and that education for this ability is commonly known as aesthetic education. In the eighteenth century, due to the development of academic knowledge division of labor caused by the phenomenon of personality division, "aesthetic education" was put forward, in order to promote the harmonious development of human sensibility and rationality^[1]. In foreign art education, the focus is on the study of the aestheticization of art, emphasizing the impact of art on human development. This is mainly reflected in the value orientation of art education, research on art classrooms, and the cultivation of students' aesthetic qualities. The approach centers on aestheticizing classroom teaching, fostering aesthetic awareness across various disciplines, and integrating aesthetic education to conduct in-depth research.

Domestically, China's famous modern educator and thinker Yuanpei Cai put forward the ideological

and theoretical idea of “replacing religion with aesthetic education” in his speech on April 8, 1917 at the Divine Principle Society in Beijing. The proposal of this idea caused widespread discussion and concern in the ideological and theoretical circles at that time ^[2]. On June 14, 2022, the General Secretary made it clear at the National Education Conference that we should comprehensively strengthen and improve aesthetic education in schools, insist on educating people with beauty and culture, and improve students’ aesthetic and humanistic qualities. In the context of the new era, the cultivation of the aesthetic core of art students is the focus of aesthetic education, so we need to strengthen students’ “aesthetic education” so that they can understand the differences in human emotions, attitudes, and values, and the richness of human society. In a wide range of cultural contexts, students will learn about the characteristics of beauty, the diversity of artistic expression, and the unique contribution of art to social life ^[3].

The implementation of the curriculum needs to provide a broad platform for teachers’ teaching innovation, which needs to be experienced, recreated, and implemented. In teaching, we should focus on cultivating students’ aesthetic ability, enhancing patriotic feelings, cultivating noble sentiments, and gradually improving students’ observation, imagination, image-thinking ability, and creativity. Aesthetic education has become an important part of the art classroom, aiming to educate beauty with beauty, that is, to cultivate people’s appreciation of natural beauty, social beauty, and artistic beauty and the education of aesthetic point of view ^[4].

2. Insufficient creativity of students resulting from traditional art education

Regarding the art training courses before the Chinese college entrance examination, which is a complex and interesting topic, from a positive point of view, the existence of such training courses has its certain rationality. This is because the reality is that in the entrance exams for higher art colleges, candidates are required to have a certain foundation of art skills, such as sketching and coloring ^[5]. For many candidates who are in contact with art for the first time or whose skills need to be improved, attending a professional art training course can improve their technical level and test-taking skills more effectively.

However, from another perspective, this kind of examination-oriented training also has its drawbacks. Most training courses place too much emphasis on techniques and test-taking, and students are often asked to paint in a particular way, while neglecting to cultivate their creative thinking and aesthetic sensitivity, which precisely limits their imagination and creativity, undermining their potential to develop into independent artists.

In general, art training courses have their value in enhancing the skills of candidates, but educators and students should realize that real art education should not be confined to exams but should pay more attention to cultivating students’ aesthetics and their ability to think independently and creatively.

3. Aesthetic status of contemporary university art students

The main misunderstanding of the aesthetic status quo of contemporary university art students is the insufficiency of aesthetic value and ability, which is caused by the imbalance between the ratio of art skills and inner aesthetics education in university art education. The lack of understanding and exposure to aesthetics has led to a learning process in which students focus only on skills and neglect the cultivation of aesthetic values and abilities ^[6].

Student abilities vary, and among art students at different levels, there are often “fast-track” candidates

who focus solely on developing artistic skills with little understanding of deeper aesthetic values and abilities. When students with differing skill levels enter the same university, they are typically placed into a uniform teaching program. This undifferentiated teaching approach fails to maximize students' aesthetic potential. As a result, the focus on skill development neglects both aesthetic values and the ability to apply them, ultimately hindering college students from fully demonstrating their aesthetic practice abilities.

The fast-paced lifestyle of today's society prevents college students, who are supposed to learn in a slow learning environment, from becoming enthusiastic about their courses. Except for professional art colleges and universities, ordinary colleges and universities do not pay enough attention to the teaching of art students. Courses are short and most college students know little about what they are learning. This mode results in a lack of more subjective consciousness to learn art knowledge and motivation to understand what is beauty. Therefore, it is necessary for colleges and universities to put in place a standardized and appropriate art curriculum to strengthen students' basic skills, while focusing on cultivating students' aesthetic ability. This can enhance students' interest in art learning and improve their aesthetic ability^[7]. Teachers should strengthen students' inner aesthetic education in the teaching process, improve students' aesthetic awareness and ability, and gradually enhance students' observation, imagination, image-thinking ability, and creativity.

4. Countermeasures for cultivating core literacy in art students

4.1. Construction and development of aesthetic education in higher education

We need to deeply understand the unique role of schools in the cultivation of students' aesthetic core literacy. Colleges and universities, as the cradle of nurturing professionals, shoulder the important task of cultivating new-age artistic talents with profound artistic literacy, innovative thinking, and a good sense of social responsibility. In this process, the cultivation of core literacy is particularly important, not only to teach professional knowledge and skills but also to focus on the cultivation of students' core literacy such as creative thinking, aesthetic ability, and critical thinking. These literacies will provide a solid foundation for students' future artistic creation and social participation.

Cultural confidence and social participation are important aspects of the cultivation of core literacy among art students. Schools should guide students to gain an in-depth understanding of the excellent traditional Chinese culture and establish cultural self-confidence through various forms such as curriculum and campus cultural activities^[8]. Meanwhile, social participation is also an important way to cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and practical skills, and students should be encouraged to go out of campus, participate in social practice, understand the needs of society, and accumulate materials and inspiration for artistic creation.

In terms of cultivation paths, student schools should focus on the organic combination of labor education and aesthetic education. Labor education can cultivate students' labor habits, practical skills, and teamwork spirit, while aesthetic education can enhance students' aesthetic quality, innovation ability, and humanistic sentiment. Through the organic combination of these two kinds of education, it can promote the organic unity of students' sensibility and rationality, and achieve the free and comprehensive development of individual students.

Schools need to strengthen the construction and development of aesthetic education, which includes creating an aesthetic environment, perfecting the construction of new media on the Internet, and strengthening the construction of school teachers. By strengthening the construction of campus culture,

improving new media facilities, and upgrading the quality of teachers and other measures, students can be provided with a better aesthetic learning environment and promote the overall development of students.

4.2. Development of students' aesthetic values and abilities

Enhancing students' understanding of the nature of art requires teachers to deepen their understanding of aesthetic education in teaching practice, integrate aesthetic education into the depths of students' souls, and comprehensively stimulate students' aesthetic potential through a carefully created teaching environment and colorful aesthetic activities.

Teachers need to improve the depth of understanding of aesthetic education, which not only involves teaching artistic knowledge and skills but also cultivating students' ability to perceive, appreciate, and create beauty, as well as to shape students' sound personalities and noble sentiments^[9]. Therefore, teachers should explore the connotation of aesthetic education from multiple dimensions and closely integrate it with the overall development of students. Teachers should focus on stimulating students' aesthetic potential from their individuality. Each student has his or her own unique aesthetic talent and personality, and teachers should guide students to discover, recognize, and explore their own aesthetic potential through flexible and diverse teaching methods and means. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to the emotional experience of students in aesthetic activities, so that they appreciate the beauty and create beauty in the process of feeling the charm and value of art.

The teaching environment has an important impact on the implementation of aesthetic education, and efforts are being made to create a teaching environment filled with an artistic atmosphere so that students can be subtly imbued with beauty. This can be achieved by decorating the classroom, displaying works of art, organizing art exhibitions, and so on. Teachers should also actively use modern technological means, such as multimedia and the Internet, to provide students with a more colorful aesthetic experience. Teachers should organize and carry out various forms of aesthetic activities, such as art creation, art performance, and art appreciation, according to students' interests and characteristics. These activities not only allow students to improve their aesthetic ability in practice but also cultivate their teamwork spirit and sense of innovation.

Enhancing college students' understanding of the nature of art education requires teachers to start from many aspects, deepen their understanding of aesthetic education, focus on stimulating students' aesthetic potential, create a good teaching environment, organize and carry out a variety of aesthetic activities, and work with students to study and develop art education^[10]. Only in this way can we truly achieve the goal of art education and cultivate new-era college students with noble sentiments and aesthetic ability.

4.3. Self-improvement of students' aesthetic qualities and abilities

The first step for students to enhance their artistic and aesthetic skills is to break free from the negative impact of rigid exam-focused training courses. These training courses are of great help to students in improving their professional skills and the application process for art colleges, but their exam-focused teaching style and repetitive training methods may also bring some adverse effects, which limit the development of students' creativity and personal style. For art students in universities, they can follow the methods below to improve their artistic and aesthetic skills.

- (1) Broadening artistic horizons: Students can participate in various art exhibitions, art lectures, and art workshops to get in touch with different types and styles of art and observe and learn how various art forms interact and integrate.

- (2) In-depth reading: Students can read books and articles on art theory, art history, and art criticism to understand art from a theoretical and historical perspective, and to enhance their aesthetics and art values.
- (3) Self-practicing: Students can try to create art with their own unique perspective and approach, learning and growing from the process even if the result may not be satisfactory. They should be adventurous and innovative and willing to experiment with new media and techniques.
- (4) Accepting criticism: Students can show their work in public and accept criticism and suggestions from others so that they are aware of their shortcomings and find ways to improve through feedback.
- (5) Keep learning: Art is not learned overnight but requires continuous learning and exploration. Even after graduating from university, students should maintain a passion for art and learning.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the new era, aesthetic education is crucial to the growth of art students. Systematic aesthetic education can cultivate their aesthetic interest and aesthetic judgment so that they can have a more unique aesthetic perspective and expression. At the same time, it can cultivate students' creativity, imagination, observation, and other comprehensive abilities, and improve their personal cultivation and humanistic qualities. Through aesthetic education, art students can understand and learn more deeply about the excellent traditional Chinese culture, feel the artistic charm of the Chinese nation, and thus enhance their sense of identity and belonging to Chinese culture. As a social phenomenon and cultural carrier, art has a strong social function and influence. Art students can gain a deeper understanding of social reality and livelihood issues, and express their concern and thinking about society through art, so as to better fulfill their social responsibility and mission.

In conclusion, aesthetic education is crucial to the growth of art students, and it is a multi-dimensional and comprehensive process. Colleges and universities should deepen the aesthetic education of art students; teachers should enhance the understanding of aesthetic education and create a good teaching environment; and students should actively improve their self-aesthetic quality. The enhancement of aesthetics is a lifelong process that requires continuous learning and practice. Maintaining a love of art and a passion for life, art first and foremost originates from life, and only those who love life can create works of art that truly touch people's hearts. It is through joint efforts that we can cultivate artistic talents with innovative spirit and practical skills in the new era.

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