

Exploration of Aesthetic and Cultural Education for University Students in the New Era from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract

University students are at a critical stage of establishing their value systems, and the development of cultural confidence is crucial for guiding their future societal values. However, enhancing aesthetic and cultural education cannot be achieved in the short term. It requires a foundation based on national spirit and traditional Chinese culture, focusing on the core development of students to effectively elevate their aesthetic and cultural levels in the context of the new era. This study explores how aesthetic education can improve university students' cultural literacy, cultivate their aesthetic abilities, and foster national pride from the perspective of cultural confidence. Combining the characteristics of the new era, the discussion spans various aspects such as curriculum content, teaching methods, practical teaching, and cross-cultural communication, providing guiding suggestions for the aesthetic and cultural education of university students in the new era.

Keywords: Cultural Confidence, Aesthetic Culture, Educational Models, National Spirit, Innovation in Aesthetic Education

Introduction

The Contemporary Context of Aesthetic Education

With the deepening of globalization, cultural collisions and integrations are intensifying, especially in an era where new media technologies are flourishing. When confronted with diverse cultures, it becomes imperative for students to maintain cultural confidence and cultivate an appreciation and recognition of their indigenous culture, making it a significant topic in higher education. Aesthetic and cultural education, as a vital component of building cultural confidence, plays an important role in helping university students establish correct values and aesthetic views (Yiping, 2022).

In the context of globalization, cultural diversity has become a prominent feature. The collision and fusion of various cultures bring about new aesthetic demands and challenges. Particularly with the rapid development of the internet, new media has become the primary

channel for information dissemination. Different cultural forms continuously permeate people's lives through new media, subtly influencing university students' values and aesthetic perspectives (Lin Meihua, 2021; Wang Zhong & Duan Yishan, 2022; Liu Yun, 2022). Therefore, how to build cultural confidence among university students through aesthetic and cultural education in the new era has become an urgent issue for educators (Liu Ning, 2018; Jiang Heng, 2018).

The Relationship between Cultural Confidence and Aesthetic Education

General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of "cultural confidence," asserting that it is one of the most profound forces in the development of a nation and a people (Xi Jinping, 2019). Cultural confidence is not only a significant manifestation of national spirit but also the spiritual driving force for social development. Aesthetic and cultural education, as an essential link in promoting cultural confidence, can help university students understand the excellent cultural traditions of the Chinese nation and establish a strong sense of identity and pride in their native culture (Liu Na, 2022). In the context of the new era, aesthetic and cultural education for university students must place greater emphasis on promoting national culture while incorporating contemporary characteristics to meet students' psychological development and learning needs.

Through aesthetic and cultural education, students can fully experience the diversity and uniqueness of Chinese culture, comprehend the essence of Chinese aesthetic thought, and thereby enhance their national pride. As Yingjie and Yue (2022) pointed out, aesthetic education is not only about discovering beauty but also about purifying and elevating the soul. By studying art and culture, students can implicitly improve their understanding and recognition of their own culture.

Connotations and Goals of Aesthetic and Cultural Education for University Students

The Concept and Role of Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education refers to the cultivation of students' aesthetic abilities and cultural literacy through the perception, experience, and creation of beauty. It encompasses the appreciation and creation of various art forms, including visual arts, music, and literature, aiming to help students discover beauty in life and elevate their spiritual realm and cultural awareness (Yingjie & Yue, 2022). Aesthetic education is not only about developing individual artistic literacy but also about fostering a complete personality and enhancing cultural identity (Na, 2022; Jian, 2023).

The focus of aesthetic education lies not only in teaching students how to appreciate artworks but also in helping them understand the historical and cultural contexts of art. For example, in music education, it is essential not only to teach students how to play a melody but also to help them understand the creative background and cultural values behind the music. This educational approach can stimulate students' creativity and help them form unique aesthetic experiences while understanding art (Yun, 2022; Meihua, 2021).

The Significance of Aesthetic Education for University Students

For university students, aesthetic education holds multiple significances. Firstly, it helps students establish correct aesthetic views and resist the negative influences of foreign cultures, especially in an era dominated by new media, by enhancing their ability to discern

popular culture through aesthetic education. Secondly, aesthetic education contributes to the cultivation of students' creativity and imagination. By participating in artistic creation, students can develop multi-dimensional thinking and enhance their comprehensive abilities (Na, 2022).

Aesthetic education can also strengthen students' cultural confidence. Through the study of excellent traditional Chinese culture, university students can gain a deeper understanding of the charm of their national culture, thereby establishing a strong sense of identity and pride in Chinese culture. For instance, learning traditional art forms such as Peking opera and Kunqu can help students not only understand their artistic value but also feel the profound cultural heritage of Chinese culture, significantly enhancing national pride (Ning, 2018; Heng, 2018).

Goals of Aesthetic Education from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

From the perspective of cultural confidence, the goals of aesthetic education for university students in the new era should include the following aspects:

- **Cultural Identity:** Through aesthetic education, help students understand the unique value of Chinese culture and enhance their sense of identity with their national culture (Yiping, 2022; Xue, 2021).
- **Aesthetic Literacy:** Cultivate students' aesthetic literacy, enabling them to appreciate artworks and discover and experience beauty in daily life (Yingjie & Yue, 2022; Jian, 2023).
- **Innovation Ability:** Foster students' creative thinking through artistic creation, enabling them to flexibly address various problems in future social life (Na, 2022; Mingjie, 2022).
- **Moral and Spiritual Development:** Help students form correct values and enhance their moral cultivation and spiritual realm through the study of art and culture (Meihua, 2021; Lina, 2020).

Achieving these goals requires not only teaching art knowledge in the classroom but also integrating cultural activities and practical experiences, closely combining art education with life practice. This approach ensures that students can feel the power of culture in their daily lives, thereby enhancing their cultural confidence.

Current Situation and Issues in Aesthetic and Cultural Education for University Students

Limited Curriculum Content and One-Dimensional Forms

Limitations of Curriculum Content

In the current aesthetic and cultural education for universities, the curriculum content is often concentrated on the appreciation and identification of art works, with little exploration of aesthetic theories. The classroom content is restricted to the analysis of single art forms, failing to integrate the connotations of aesthetic culture with the spirit of the Chinese nation. This limitation results in students struggling to truly understand the aesthetic philosophies of Chinese culture while their aesthetic education becomes fragmented and superficial (Yingjie & Yue, 2022).

For example, some universities, when teaching music appreciation, tend to limit themselves to surface-level analysis of works, lacking in-depth exploration of the cultural background and creative intentions behind the music. This teaching method fails to guide students in deeply understanding the cultural connotations behind art works, leaving students only at the level of superficial appreciation without a profound understanding of art (Yun, 2022; Jian, 2023).

Monotonous Teaching Forms

Currently, the forms of aesthetic and cultural education for university students are predominantly teacher-led lectures, lacking interaction and experiential learning. Teachers play art works in the classroom and provide unidirectional explanations, while students passively receive knowledge, making it difficult to stimulate their interest in active learning. In such a scenario, students' aesthetic abilities cannot be effectively cultivated (Na, 2022).

Additionally, some universities emphasize the display of art forms in aesthetic education while neglecting the cultivation of aesthetic abilities. For instance, in fine arts education, teachers often focus solely on teaching painting techniques, ignoring the development of students' aesthetic judgment and creativity. This teaching approach fails to ignite students' passion for art and creative thinking, leading to a loss of interest in aesthetic education.

Neglect of Interdisciplinary Integration and Correlation

Disconnection between Aesthetic Education and Other Disciplines

Aesthetic education needs to be effectively integrated with other disciplines to form a complete educational system. However, current aesthetic education often remains confined to art classes, lacking interdisciplinary integration and correlation. For example, disciplines such as literature, history, and philosophy contain rich aesthetic resources, but these contents are not effectively combined with art education in teaching, leading to fragmented aesthetic learning for students and a lack of depth (Zhong & Yishan, 2022).

For example, literary works contain a wealth of aesthetic content, such as the rhythmic beauty in poetry and character portrayal in novels, which are important resources for aesthetic education. However, many universities fail to fully utilize these resources in literary education, resulting in students' aesthetic understanding of literary works remaining superficial and unable to deeply appreciate their aesthetic value.

Lack of Comprehensive Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education should not only focus on the appreciation of art works but also help students understand the cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts behind them. By integrating aesthetic education with knowledge from other disciplines, students can develop a more comprehensive aesthetic perspective. However, many universities lack such comprehensive approaches in aesthetic education, leading to a disconnect between aesthetic education and other disciplines, and failing to achieve true interdisciplinary integration (Yingjie & Yue, 2022).

For example, historical courses often cover cultural heritage and architectural art, which possess high aesthetic value. These contents can be integrated into aesthetic education through interdisciplinary teaching methods, allowing students to appreciate the charm of art while learning history. However, many teachers do not recognize the importance of these resources in their teaching, resulting in relatively monotonous aesthetic education content that fails to fully stimulate students' interest in learning.

Challenges of Aesthetic and Cultural Education Under the Impact of New Media

The Impact of Fragmented Information on Aesthetic Education

The advent of the new media era has brought about significant changes in information dissemination methods. The popularity of short videos and social media platforms has made students' access to information more fragmented and instantaneous. While this fragmented information dissemination can quickly transmit a large amount of information, it also affects students' deep understanding of information, particularly in aesthetic education, preventing them from forming a systematic aesthetic view (Jianwen, 2021).

For instance, many students watch various art-related videos on short video platforms but only see fragments of art works, lacking a comprehensive understanding of the entire piece. Although this fragmented art experience can quickly attract students' interest, it is difficult to help them form a profound understanding of art works and systematic aesthetic knowledge.

The Double-Edged Sword of New Media in Aesthetic Education

Although new media brings convenience to aesthetic and cultural education, it also poses numerous challenges. On one hand, new media can provide convenient art experiences through virtual reality and online exhibitions; on the other hand, the entertainment and commercialization tendencies of new media can lead to the entertainment of aesthetic education, deviating it from its educational purpose (Yun, 2022).

The widespread use of new media allows students to access a vast number of art works through internet platforms, but it also leads to the proliferation of low-quality cultural content, affecting students' judgment of art. For example, some art-related videos on short video platforms may appear artistic on the surface but lack in-depth analysis of the art works, undermining the effectiveness of aesthetic education and potentially causing students to misunderstand aesthetics.

Optimization Strategies for Aesthetic and Cultural Education of University Students in the New Era

Strengthening National Spirit Education

National spirit is the core of Chinese culture and an indispensable component of aesthetic and cultural education for university students. Strengthening national spirit in aesthetic and cultural education can be achieved by introducing traditional cultural arts. For example, studying ancient Chinese classical painting, calligraphy, and ceramic art allows students to experience the wisdom and spirit of the Chinese nation through art works, enhancing their pride in Chinese culture (Zhong & Yishan, 2022).

Enhancing the Study of Traditional Culture

In the classroom, teachers should guide students to understand the historical origins and development of Chinese traditional culture. For instance, explaining the aesthetic thoughts in ancient Chinese architecture, such as symmetry and harmony, enables students to comprehend the aesthetic standards and philosophical ideas in Chinese culture while appreciating architectural beauty. This approach not only increases students' understanding of traditional culture but also cultivates their aesthetic judgment and artistic perception abilities.

Utilizing Modern Technology to Promote National Spirit

Modern technology provides new platforms for the dissemination and promotion of national spirit. For example, virtual reality technology can allow students to "walk into" ancient cultural sites and experience the charm of traditional culture. This immersive experience can enhance students' understanding and recognition of national culture. For instance, the "Digital Palace Museum" project uses virtual reality technology to recreate the historical appearance of the Forbidden City, allowing students to appreciate its architectural art and cultural connotations in a virtual environment, thereby strengthening their identification with Chinese culture.

Promoting the Construction of Diverse Aesthetic Education Courses

Establishing a Diverse Aesthetic Education Curriculum System

To achieve diversified aesthetic education, schools should incorporate exploration of different art forms into curriculum design, establishing a comprehensive aesthetic education system that includes music, painting, drama, literature, and other fields (Huang Yiping, 2022). By offering a combination of compulsory and elective aesthetic courses, students can gain a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of art, enhancing their aesthetic abilities.

For example, schools can offer elective courses such as "Chinese and Foreign Music Appreciation," "Traditional Handicrafts and Modern Design," and "Aesthetic Thoughts in Literature," helping students form diverse aesthetic perspectives through the study of different art forms. These courses not only improve students' artistic literacy but also enable them to better understand the uniqueness and value of Chinese culture through comparative studies of different cultures.

Strengthening Interdisciplinary Integration to Enrich Aesthetic Education Content

Diverse aesthetic education courses should also emphasize the integration with other disciplines, such as discussing the aesthetic value of poetry in literature classes or understanding the historical development of art styles in history classes. This interdisciplinary teaching approach helps students establish a more complete aesthetic cognition system. For example, introducing aesthetic discussions in philosophy classes can help students understand how different philosophical schools interpret beauty, thereby deepening their understanding of art works (Na, 2022).

Interdisciplinary teaching methods allow students to experience art while learning other subjects. For instance, in science classes, understanding the principle of symmetry in physics can help students grasp the concept of symmetrical beauty in art; in mathematics classes, studying geometric figures can help students understand compositional principles in painting. This integration not only enriches the content of aesthetic education but also enhances students' understanding of art.

Enhancing Practical Components in Aesthetic Education

The Importance of Practical Teaching

Practical teaching is an indispensable part of aesthetic education. In aesthetic education, practical activities not only stimulate students' interest in art but also cultivate their creativity and hands-on abilities (Yingjie & Yue, 2022). Specific implementation methods include organizing students to participate in artistic creation, such as painting, sculpture, and music

creation; visiting museums and art exhibitions; and inviting artists to interact and communicate with students.

For example, by visiting art galleries and museums, students can experience the impact of artworks in a real art environment, gaining a deeper understanding of art. Additionally, schools can organize art workshops where professional artists provide guidance, allowing students to enjoy the fun of creating art through hands-on experiences.

Innovative Forms in Practical Teaching

In the context of the new era, practical teaching should emphasize innovation. For example, utilizing new media platforms to organize online art exhibitions allows students to showcase their works via the internet and share their creative experiences with peers. This form of practical teaching not only stimulates students' creativity but also increases their participation and interaction in aesthetic education.

For instance, schools can establish an online art community where students can share their artistic creations, receive feedback from others, and learn from each other. This community not only provides a platform for students to showcase themselves but also helps them improve through interaction and communication. Additionally, participating in online art exhibitions enables students to engage with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, thereby broadening their international perspectives.

Utilizing New Media Technology to Establish Interactive Communication Platforms

Application of New Media Technology in Aesthetic Education

In today's rapidly developing new media era, aesthetic education needs to integrate with new media to enhance its influence and appeal. Schools can utilize new media technology to build art communication platforms, such as online exhibitions and virtual reality (VR) art experiences (Liu Yun, 2022). Through these platforms, students can share their art works, interact with classmates and teachers, and receive evaluations and suggestions from others, thereby improving their artistic literacy through interaction.

For example, through WeChat public accounts or short video platforms, students can upload their artistic creations, share their creative processes, and gain improvement through peer feedback. This form not only increases students' interest in aesthetic education but also enhances their social and communication skills.

Establishing New Media Interactive Communication Communities

Schools can use new media platforms to establish dedicated art communication communities where students can share their art works and participate in discussions about others' creations. For instance, creating art enthusiast groups on social media platforms and regularly launching themed creative activities can attract student participation. Through such interactions, students can grow by inspiring each other.

Moreover, new media technology can be used to create virtual art exhibitions. For example, using virtual reality technology to create an online exhibition allows students to "visit" the exhibition through VR devices and experience the charm of different art works. This

immersive art experience enables students to understand and appreciate the beauty of art works more profoundly.

Strengthening the Integration of Chinese and Western Cultures in Teaching

Aesthetic Education on Understanding Cultural Differences Between China and the West

In the context of the new era, aesthetic and cultural education needs to place greater emphasis on the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, helping students understand the aesthetic values of different cultures through comparison. For example, by explaining the different development paths of Chinese and Western painting or the differences in musical styles, students can gain a deeper understanding of both Chinese and Western art, thereby enhancing their confidence in Chinese culture (Na, 2022).

In specific teaching practices, teachers can use case studies to guide students in comparative analyses of Chinese and Western art works, fostering cultural inclusiveness and critical thinking. This cultural comparison not only enhances students' sense of cultural identity but also helps them form independent aesthetic judgments and values when faced with foreign cultural impacts.

For instance, teachers can guide students to analyze the different characteristics of ancient Chinese landscape painting and Western landscape painting: Chinese landscape painting emphasizes artistic conception and freehand expression, while Western landscape painting focuses more on realism and lighting effects. Through such comparisons, students can not only understand the differences between Chinese and Western art but also appreciate the unique charm of Chinese art, thereby strengthening their recognition of Chinese culture.

Strengthening the Interaction and Exchange of Chinese and Western Art

In the context of globalization, the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures are increasingly deepening. Emphasizing the interaction and exchange of Chinese and Western art in aesthetic education can help students better understand the aesthetic values of different cultures (Huang Jianwen, 2021). For example, organizing dialogues between Chinese and Western artists or joint creative activities allows students to experience the collision and fusion of cultures through interactions.

In practical implementation, schools can organize Sino-Western art exchange activities, such as inviting foreign artists to communicate at the university or conducting online interactions with foreign art institutions. This form of art exchange enables students to understand the aesthetic thoughts of different cultures through dialogues with foreign artists, broadening their international perspectives while enhancing their confidence and recognition of their own national culture.

Conclusion

From the perspective of cultural confidence, the aesthetic and cultural education of university students is not merely about cultivating artistic literacy but also about shaping the spiritual world of students. By strengthening national spirit education, promoting the diversification of aesthetic education curricula, enhancing practical teaching components, utilizing new media technology, and fostering cross-cultural integration, the aesthetic and cultural education of university students can better adapt to the requirements of the new era. Under

the guidance of cultural confidence, university students will be able to confidently face the impact of diverse cultures, forming a profound recognition and love for their national culture, thereby contributing to the inheritance and innovation of Chinese culture.

The deepening of aesthetic and cultural education not only helps enhance university students' cultural confidence but also lays a solid foundation for building a society rich in creativity and cultural depth. Continuous exploration in teaching practices, seeking innovations in educational content and forms, is necessary to meet the educational demands of the new era and make greater contributions to the comprehensive development of students and the prosperity of Chinese culture. Through comprehensive and diversified aesthetic education, students will gain richer spiritual experiences and deeper cultural identity in their study of art and culture, which is crucial for cultivating modern talents with a global vision and adherence to national spirit.

Research Contributions

This research makes both theoretical and contextual contributions to the current body of knowledge on aesthetic and cultural education in higher education settings. Theoretically, it expands the discourse on “cultural confidence” by linking it directly to aesthetic education, thereby highlighting the role of art and cultural practices as foundational elements in shaping students’ value systems. This perspective underscores the interplay between national cultural heritage and aesthetic literacy, offering a refined analytical framework that situates aesthetic education as a strategic cultural asset rather than a marginal educational supplement. Contextually, the study’s focus on curriculum diversification, practical pedagogy, and the strategic use of new media technologies provides actionable insights for educators and policymakers working within increasingly globalized and digitally mediated learning environments. By translating abstract notions of “cultural confidence” into concrete educational interventions, this research contributes to existing pedagogical approaches, ensuring they are more aligned with the evolving cultural landscapes and the pressing need to foster culturally rooted yet globally engaged student identities. Through this enriched theoretical grounding and practical guidance, the study positions itself as a significant stepping stone for future research and program development in the field of cultural and aesthetic education in the new era.

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