



An Exploration of the Integration Path of Music Education and Examination in Primary and Secondary Schools in China

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Abstract: Aesthetic education makes full use of all aesthetic phenomena that exist in human society. In particular, the perception and understanding of beauty in work and the development of the human ability to make beauty part of the process and outcome of work. Music education is an important part of aesthetic education. By using music as an educational tool, music education develops special abilities and talents in specific types of art. In China, the integration between music examinations and aesthetic education brings a challenge to schools and the public. How will schools put aesthetic subjects in the exam and what should be included in the exam? The paper introduced the background of aesthetic education in China and discussed the roles of music in aesthetic education. To integrate music education with the exams, the paper explores the paths of ability-originate exams, practical skills-originate exams, and mind-developing originate exams, hoping to enlighten the public on the music course development in China.

Keywords: aesthetic education, music education, path, integration

I. Introduction of Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education in China has a long history. As a great philosopher and educator in ancient China, Confucius (559 B. C.~479 B. C.) formed a unique idea of aesthetic education during his exploration of educational practice and theory. Confucius' view of aesthetic education was based on the premise of the "middle way" and the idea of "benevolence" was the core of the aesthetic system: the composition and level of his thought included the aesthetic motivation of the unity of nature, society, and self. In the same period, Mencius (372B. C.~289 B. C.), another well-known philosopher in ancient China, believed that everything in the world has its own nature and that if people follow its nature and develop it, it will be beautiful; if not, it will be evil. Mencius believed that human nature is good, so the "good" is the "true", and the "beauty" is both "good" and "true". Xun Zi (313 B. C.~238 B. C.) thinks that human nature is inherently evil, and he affirms that the normal needs of human nature and human emotions reflect the principles of nature, and therefore calls for letting nature take its course and opposes the suppression of human nature.

Today, aesthetic education has been widespread in countries around the world. In terms of state systems, in socialist societies, aesthetic education serves the public interest and it is based on a common set of scientific and methodological principles. On the other hand, in capitalist countries, aesthetic education is the privilege of the elite. The aesthetic needs of the people are mainly satisfied by "popular culture," which tends to subordinate the consciousness of the masses to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Thus, there is a situation where the communist and working class parties in capitalist countries actively participate in the primitivism and anti-aestheticism of "mass culture."

China is a socialist country whose ultimate goal is to achieve communism. In the communist education system, aesthetic education serves the overall development of the individual. Based on Marxist-Leninist aesthetics and the theory of art as an expression of human immaterial culture, aesthetic education strengthens aesthetic ideals and enhances the understanding of beauty among the people of the country; it cultivates aesthetic interest and the creative ability to bring beauty to life.



For the general public, beauty is not only a means of aesthetic education, but also a result of it. It is concentrated in art, culture, civilization and literature. It is inseparable from nature, human work, everyday life and human relations. Aesthetic education makes full use of all aesthetic phenomena that exist in human society. In particular, the perception and understanding of beauty in work and the development of the human ability to make beauty part of the process and outcome of work. Music education is an important part of aesthetic education. By using music as an educational tool, music education develops special abilities and talents in specific types of art - for example, music, singing, dance, drama, and applied arts.

Aesthetic education is the education that nurtures human visualization and emotion according to the standards and principles of beauty[1]. Its purpose of it is to build man's aesthetic attitude toward reality. The evolution of this attitude, which paralleled the development of human society from its beginning, is embodied in people's physical and intellectual activity. It is connected with people's perception and understanding of the beauty that is found in reality. To understand aesthetic education, two keywords are important: beauty and education. Students are guided to recognize beauty, feel the beauty and create beauty when they receive education.

With the continuous improvement of social productivity, human society will eventually develop toward communism, and aesthetic education will play an increasingly important role in the development of human immaterial culture. Under the socialist system, human beings will be free from the slavery of labor and the aesthetics of life will become increasingly important. In a socially homogenized environment, the principle of artistic creativity will have an important impact on human aesthetics. The aesthetic influence of the environment and the systematic organization of aesthetic education combine into a single system that enriches the cultural life of man. The task of aesthetic education is very important for the socialist countries, because it is to train people to perceive, enjoy and correctly evaluate beauty in art, literature and life. Therefore, art is enriched by the knowledge of life, and working people gradually absorb art to develop correct cultural values.

II. Aesthetic Education in China

In modern China, the idea of "aesthetic education" was first proposed by Wang Guowei, who believed that aesthetic education was as important as moral education; physical education and intellectual education needed to be developed together[2]. In 1912, Cai Yuanpei, a famous Chinese educator, proposed the idea of "reforming national character, cultivating sentiment, and improving personality" [3]. The "Beijing Music Institute", organized by Cai Yuanpei and Xiao Youmei, was founded with the idea of "transmitting Western music while preserving ancient music", which was

an important means to cultivate musical talents. Their ideas were followed by many educated people. Music organizations and orchestras were established in many cities and schools to promote music education. This is the prototype of the development of music education in the context of aesthetic education [4].

In 1999, Chinese government released *Decision of the State Council of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Deepening Educational Reform and Comprehensively Promoting Quality Education*, in which aesthetic education was included in the educational policy as an indispensable form of education [5]. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC and the state have attached great importance to aesthetic education, and significant results have been achieved in aesthetic education in China. By 2022, the curriculum, resource allocation, evaluation system and management mechanism of school aesthetic education have been well-developed. By 2035, a high-quality school-based aesthetic education system with Chinese characteristics is to be formed. [6] General Secretary Xi Jinping, the President of China, has spoken about aesthetic education many times on various occasions. In his speeches, he stressed that "we should comprehensively strengthen and improve aesthetic education in schools, educate people with beauty and culture, and improve students' aesthetic and humanistic qualities." [7] It can be seen that the development of aesthetic education is also an important reflection of the development of China's education, and the exploration of Xi Jinping's important remarks on aesthetic education is an important way to solve the current problems of aesthetic education in Chinese schools.

III. Roles of Music Education in the Aesthetic Education

The value of music education in aesthetic education is self-evident. To integrate music education into aesthetic education, one question has to be answered: How can music education be tested? In the past hundred years, Chinese music education has been adhering to the tradition of Chinese culture, and the tenth article of the "*Primary School Rules and Curriculum*" promulgated in November 1921 stated that "the importance of singing", which reflected the development of music education [8]. However, the goal of the curriculum value of "nurturing beauty and cultivating virtue" has never changed. Such a goal is also in line with the Confucian idea of "aesthetic education", which states that "the best way to change the customs is through music". If the schools can clarify the development idea of "art basic literacy + art aesthetic experience + art special expertise", and give continuous emphasis and practical support to students' art learning, school aesthetic improvement, and cooperation of multiple subjects, the nation can naturally achieve the goal of aesthetic education.

1. Aesthetic education in music education

How can music education be tested in aesthetic education? To answer the question, schools should explore the essence of music, how to implement effective music education, how to improve students' music literacy, and what kind of education process can reflect aesthetic nurturing. The basic approach of music education is to educate people with emotion and beauty. Music is not only about teaching; it is also related to aesthetic perception, aesthetic discovery, aesthetic expression and aesthetic creation. The process of students gaining aesthetic feelings and experiences in music is also a process of aesthetic education.

The way music education is taught is the basis for how music education is tested. The teaching process allows students to gain aesthetic feelings and experiences in music, evokes the beauty of songs and music, and achieves the aesthetic effect of "silent" in expressing students' hearts and infecting their minds with the inspiration of beauty. The essence of music aesthetics is emotional education. The embodiment of emotion is also the embodiment of psychological factors in music aesthetics.

Listening is the most basic feature of music art. By listening and feeling, students can improve their aesthetic sentiment of music. Aural perception is a prerequisite in music education. Students with a good auditory perception can develop excellent musical thinking, which is important not only for appreciation, but also for singing and performing, playing musical instruments, and reading music. Appreciation is the most direct and concrete embodiment of aesthetic education. Music appreciation takes music as the aesthetic object, and it takes the appreciator as the aesthetic subject. It realizes the feeling and cognition of musical beauty while listening. Music appreciation aesthetic education value is mainly reflected in the following two aspects: First, to cultivate aesthetic perception, including music discrimination, music feeling and music memory, which is the basis of music aesthetics; Second, to cultivate aesthetic emotion, including music emotion discrimination and music emotion expression, and music emotion understanding, which are the goal of music aesthetics.

2. Music practice and music creation

Music is an art that emphasizes practice, and only when students are allowed to feel music, experience music, and enjoy music, can they have the ability to create it. When the focus of music education is put on encouraging music creation, expression, and practice, teachers and students will become the creators to enjoy the beauty, which can lead to the overall development of students' concepts, behaviors, and abilities. The creation of music cannot be nourished without the roots of culture. Good absorption of different cultures, styles and genres of music culture can enrich the creation of music.

Music practice is accomplished in music listening, music performance and music creation. Teachers should focus on what is taught in music education under the premise of what

is tested. When developing singing, playing, and comprehensive artistic performance skills, full attention is to be paid to the influence of music practice on students' perception, experience, and creation, and the use of the musical expression to communicate with others for emotional integration is also expected for musical aesthetics. Students are allowed to learn, enjoy, create, and love music in practice, which is the result that every music educator wants to see most.

3. Personality development

For primary and secondary school students, music knowledge, skills, and overall quality are inner experiences, and it is impossible to appreciate them without personally participating in them. James L Mursell, an American music educator, wrote in "The Psychology of School Music Teaching": "If we can arouse in a child a strong enthusiasm for music, if we can prolong this interest for several years and slowly bring it to a higher level, even if he never becomes a great musician, he will find his personal happiness through music and build himself a better life and a broader personality, which, is the main task of music education. [9]" Mursell's opinion proves that music is closely connected with the growth and development of human beings, so music education should be oriented to all students and focus on personality development.

Music, as an important part of aesthetic education, should be carried out under the psychological and age characteristics of primary and secondary students in the teaching design and teaching process. During music education, teachers should focus on all students with aesthetics as the core. While emphasizing music practice, teachers should not neglect personality development. It is necessary to educate all, but it is also critical to focus on personality development so that the education system can cultivate the high-quality talents needed by society.

III. Integration Path of Music Education and Examination

The integration between music examinations and aesthetic education brings a challenge to schools and the public. After all, examinations are a double-edged sword. What should be tested in the exam? In addition to state-mandated art subjects such as music, art, and calligraphy (compulsory), many schools already have school-based aesthetic education courses (optional) in dance, drama, comedy, local art, natural beauty, social beauty, and scientific beauty. It is enough to offer students two aesthetic subjects of their own choice in both compulsory and optional courses. Specifically, the form of the exam should be diversified. Students can choose to express their aesthetic understanding, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic evaluation in written form based on their knowledge of aesthetics; or they can choose the art performance approach. Besides, they can also participate in programs related natural aesthetics, social aesthetics, and

scientific aesthetics activities. Under the guidance of the principle of "beauty with own choice", students can make good use of their strong points to express themselves. It is suggested the aesthetic education examination is composed of two parts: the curriculum examination and the activity level assessment.

1. Ability-originate exams

When the policy of integrating aesthetic education into the secondary school exams, all the schools opened music courses, which caused some challenges. After some field research, the author found that although the music courses were offered, there was no sound of music on the campus, and there was little music practice. Most students had to spend much time memorizing music-related texts. Such learning of music knowledge for the sake of exams is never the original purpose of aesthetic education. The exams aim to cultivate students' ability to use, enjoy and create music in aesthetic education rather than reciting the music texts or events.

2. Practical skills-originate exams

Music education is the process of cultivating the ability to use music practically. If the theory and practice are separated, such an assessment method does not serve the original purpose of aesthetic education. Music practice without theoretical guidance is bound to fail, and the path of learning without music practice is not music learning in the strict sense. The purpose of learning music is not to make a child a performer or musician, instead, the point is to offer the child a chance to develop a basic music cognition and skills, which is an important step in improving the overall quality of the nation.

3. Mind-developing originate exams

Influenced by traditional teaching ideas, the mode of music teaching has long been focusing on imparting knowledge and training skills, and in the teaching method is outdated. In this way, students are not encouraged to develop independent thinking and their minds are imprisoned[10]. This old-school teaching mode needs to be changed and updated, so that the content of the examination will be changed as well. Under the general idea of aesthetic education, students are encouraged to express their independent feelings and opinions about music, and only when students have their own musical experiences in practice can they have a true understanding of music and achieve the aim of developing their talents with a sense of achievement, creativity and quality[11].

Aesthetic education is an aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual education that fosters imaginative richness and innovative thinking. Aesthetic education can give children and parents a sense of "gain" and "happiness", and it is important to focus on the process of aesthetic education than on the results of aesthetic education. The exam is not the goal, but the process and the "original intention" behind the test are the factors that matter most[12]. The "Aesthetic Education in Secondary

School Examination" is to create artistic enlightenment for Chinese youths, so that they can become useful, educated, and confident Chinese people in the new era [13].

IV. Summary

The challenge of integrating aesthetic education into the Chinese secondary school exam has just begun, however, it will lead to a revolutionary change for students, parents, teachers, and society as a whole. Along with the instructions made by General Secretary Xi for the development of aesthetic education, aesthetic education will eventually become a key to enriching students' imagination and stimulating their creativity. It helps to open up a wonderful life for everyone. The path to integrating music education into aesthetic education is a complicated issue, however, it will help the schools and the public if the paths offered in the paper are recognized and put into practical use.

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