

# The Current Situation and Improvement of Aesthetic Education for Chinese and Foreign College Students in Polytechnic Colleges and Universities Path Exploration — Taking University G as an Example

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## Abstract

Aesthetic education is an education in aesthetics, a form of humanistic education that holds profound significance in cultivating character and shaping personality. One of the keys to carry out the fundamental task is to do a good job in aesthetic education in colleges and universities, which is an important part of improving the educational system in colleges and universities. At present, there are still some problems in science and engineering universities, such as the lack of aesthetic education and the monotonous form of education. Based on the reality of science and engineering aesthetic education, this paper tries to improve the level of aesthetic education by perfecting the curriculum system, optimizing campus culture and establishing a practice platform.

**Keywords:** aesthetic education, science and engineering universities, aesthetic education for college students, cultural identity of international students

## 1. Introduction

Aesthetic education enhances life by cultivating the ability to perceive and imagine beauty. Aesthetic education plays a catalytic role in the education of morality, intellect, physique, beauty, and labor, and promotes the organic integration of morality, intellect, physique, beauty, and labor. Since the 18th National Congress, the Party and the State have comprehensively strengthened and improved the work of aesthetic education in schools, accelerating the cause of aesthetic education. In

August 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping replied to the veteran professors of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, mentioning the important role of aesthetic education in shaping a beautiful mind, and the need to enhance the work of aesthetic education, adhere to the establishment of moral education, based on life, promote the excellent traditional spirit of the Chinese nation, and help the young generation of the motherland grow up healthily. In April 2019, the Ministry of Education emphasized in the Opinions on Effectively Strengthening

Aesthetic Education in Higher Education in the New Era that “school aesthetic education is the work of cultivating roots and casting souls, improving students’ aesthetic and humanistic qualities, and comprehensively strengthening and improving aesthetic education is an important task for higher education at present and in the future period.” This is an important task for higher education in the current and future period. This is a specific guidance for aesthetic education in higher education in the new era, and also a requirement for the popularization of art education in higher education for all students. Since the humanistic atmosphere of science and engineering colleges and universities is relatively weak, they should not neglect the aesthetic education, and pay more attention to cultivating students’ cognition of beauty, their feeling of beauty and its internalization, so that students can have the ability to understand, appreciate and create beauty.

## 2. Exploration of the Meaning and Value of Aesthetic Education

### 2.1 Aesthetic Education Research at Home and Abroad

The concept of aesthetic education has been around for a long time. Aristotle in ancient Greece summarized the functions of aesthetic education in art: education, purification and spiritual enjoyment. In his *The Republic*, Plato clearly pointed out that the end of education is to cultivate citizens who are “beautiful and good in body and mind”. The Six Arts of the Western Zhou period combined ethical relationships with poetry, song, and dance, and was both a form of education and a legal system. Throughout the history of the development of aesthetic education in China, the sprout of aesthetic education emerged in China during the pre-Qin period. For example, Confucianism, represented by Confucius, advocated the aesthetic thought of “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith”, emphasizing that human behavior and inner emotional needs should be unified with social moral norms; Laozi’s Great Elephant and Formless mentioned in the *Tao Te Ching*; Zhuangzi’s The “unity of heaven and man” of Zhuangzi explains the Taoist aesthetic thought of following the laws of nature. In modern times, the concept of aesthetic education was first introduced by the German aesthete Schiller, who compiled a book entitled *On the Aesthetic*

*Education of Man*, the core of which was to create a “perfectly human” person and to pursue “rational freedom”. Mr. Wang Guowei, the first advocate of aesthetic education in early modern China, pointed out in “On the Purpose of Education” that education is also divided into three parts: intellectual education, moral education (i.e., will), and aesthetic education (i.e., feelings).

### 2.2 The Meaning and Significance of Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education is not just aesthetic education but a way of education in which aesthetic principles are permeated in the teaching of various subjects. Aesthetic education develops students’ ability to understand, perceive, appreciate and create beauty. Although expressed as a sensual activity, aesthetic education objectively dissolves rational social content, accumulates rational human abilities, and educates in a unique way for the all-round development of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic qualities. The consensus of aesthetic education is that by stimulating the aesthetic characteristics and aesthetic consciousness of human beings, it enables them to accumulate creative abilities in constant identification and self-reflection, to liberate themselves from their inner thinking, and to transform and construct creative thinking abilities, thus achieving comprehensive development. Throughout the development of aesthetic education in China, aesthetic education has an important influence on the spiritual world of students, and education can cultivate human character and sentiment at the same time. Aesthetic education plays an important role in school life and can promote the coordination between various disciplines. From the point of view of personal development, aesthetic education is indispensable for the overall development of a person. Aesthetic education plays an important role in the all-round development of human beings and can cultivate students to have the right three views, establish socialist core values, pursue a life in line with socialist core values, promote healthy growth in students’ minds, lives and moral outlook, and inspire upward and hopeful academic development.

## 3. The Current Situation of Aesthetic Education in Science and Engineering Universities

### 3.1 “Aesthetic education” Is Gaining Attention

Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, in response to the weaknesses of school aesthetics, the government has introduced and implemented the National Master Plan for School Art Education (1989-2000), opened aesthetic education courses, trained teachers, and changed the backwardness of aesthetic education from the ground up. With the progress of society, economic globalization, and especially since the 18th Party Congress, China's aesthetic education work has made significant development and progress. The work of aesthetic education was once again mentioned to an unprecedented height in September 2018, when General Secretary Xi Jinping explained at the National Education Conference that: "efforts should be made to build an education system for the comprehensive cultivation of moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic development, and to form a higher level of talent training system." In the process of long-term development, colleges and universities have to continuously strengthen infrastructure construction, improve the construction of campus soft and hard environments, and create a good environment for aesthetic education.

### *3.2 Science and Engineering Colleges Still Have a "Beauty" Deficit*

#### **3.2.1 The Teaching Content of Aesthetic Education Course Is in a Single Form**

At present, universities of science and technology have the inevitable problem of "culture and spirit deficiency" in the education of people. Although professional knowledge education is the top priority of university education, aesthetic education is only a concept for most of the polytechnics colleges and universities, and there are few special courses on aesthetic education, and there is a lack of humanistic and aesthetic education.

#### **3.2.2 Mixed Aesthetic Education with Art Education**

Some colleges and universities do not grasp the connotation of aesthetic education accurately and clearly, ignore the essential attributes of aesthetic education, and simply equate aesthetic education with art education. Aesthetic education is to beautify people's spiritual world, focusing on improving people's ability to feel beauty, appreciate beauty and create beauty. Art education focuses more on specialized knowledge and skills education, so that it can be

developed as a means to earn a living in the future.

#### **3.2.3 Aesthetic Education Activities Are Not Innovative Enough**

Some colleges and universities just blindly pursue "high" art forms, which are detached from the actual capacity of schools and the actual needs of students, so that students do not get the proper education, but lose interest in aesthetic education.

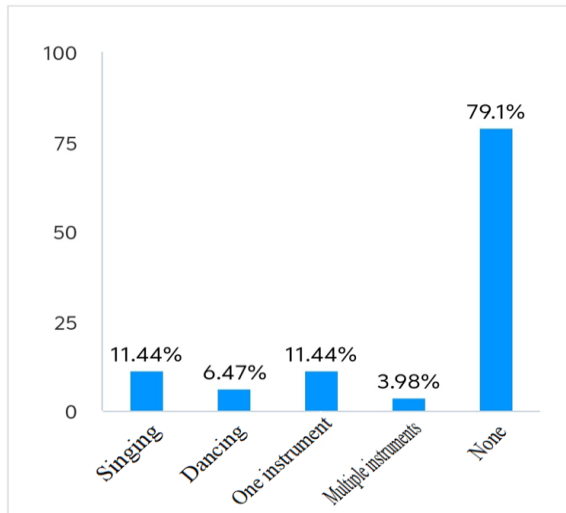
### **4. Questionnaire Analysis of Aesthetic Education of Chinese and Foreign College Students in Science and Engineering Universities**

The author's university, University G, is a regional top-ranking science and technology university with four campuses and more than 40,000 students. Regarding the current situation of aesthetic education in University G, the author conducted a questionnaire survey of Chinese and foreign students at one of the campuses and analyzed the results. A total of 201 questionnaires were distributed, 138 (68.66%) to male students and 63 (31.34%) to female students. The distribution of grades is mainly in the second and third years of undergraduate studies, and the research data is reasonably distributed and has reference value. Several of the questions are analyzed as follows.

#### *4.1 Questions About the Conditions of Acquisition of Aesthetic Education (Music Orientation)*

Question 1: Did you learn one or more musical instruments as well as singing and dancing from a young age?

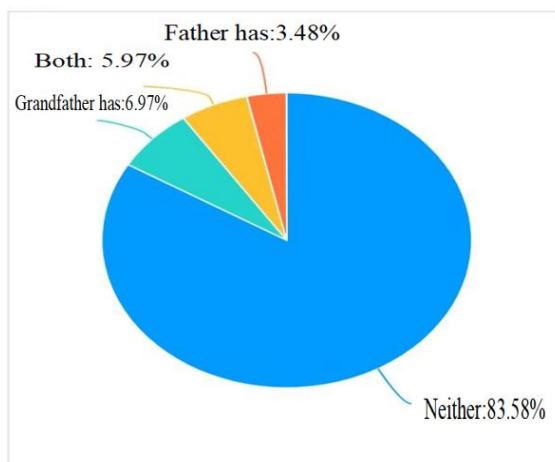
79.1% of students chose "None", 11.44% chose "Singing", 6.47% chose "Dancing", 11.44% chose "One instrument" and only 3.98% chose "Multiple instruments".



**Figure 1.** Learning musical instruments

Question 2: Did grandparents and paternal relatives study music as a hobby or professionally?

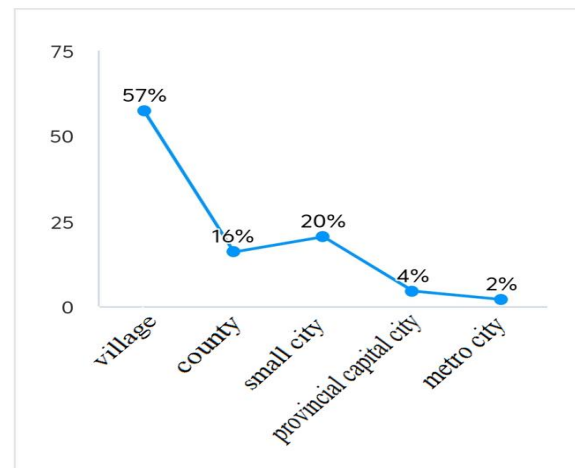
3.48% of the students chose "Father has", 6.97% chose "Grandfather has", 83.58% chose "Neither", and 5.97% chose "Both".



**Figure 2.** Family hobby music situation

Question 3: Where is your home?

57.21% of students chose "village", 20.4% chose "small city", 15.92% chose "county", 4.48% chose "provincial capital city", and 1.99% chose "metro city".



**Figure 3.** Region of home

The above three problems show that conditions such as the musical literacy of family members, the geographical location of the family, and the economic situation of the family have a great influence on the acquisition of aesthetic education (music direction) during the growth of college students. The lack of basic knowledge and general knowledge of art is extremely detrimental to the development of aesthetic ability, perception, and creative thinking, especially for Chinese and Foreign College Students in science and engineering colleges, who are in urgent need of improving these abilities. Combining the above factors, the author believes that as educators in colleges and universities, they should give more resources for aesthetic education cultivation to students who are not equipped from childhood, in order to make up for the lack of each ability as soon as possible.

#### 4.2 Questions About the Basic Competencies of Aesthetic Education (Music Direction)

Question 4: Can you easily tell if the pitch is accurate or not?

68.16% of the students chose "not sure", only 15.92% chose "yes" and the same 15.92% chose "no".

Question 5: Can you easily grasp the basic rhythm of a song?

53.23% of students chose "not sure", 26.87% chose "yes", and 19.9% chose "no".

Question 6: Can you easily grasp the mood of a piece of music?

50.75% of the students chose "yes", 40.3% chose "not sure", and 8.96% chose "no".

These three questions show that most students have a certain understanding of the basic expressions of music such as pitch, rhythm, and emotion, and they have a certain foundation to improve their aesthetic ability. In addition, the fact that most of the students chose “not sure” shows that these students have a certain understanding of music literacy, but the lack of art initiation has led to a lack of confidence in their own music perception ability. However, after a scientific and systematic study of aesthetic education, these “uncertainties” can become “certain/yes” potentials.

To sum up, Chinese and Foreign College Students of science and technology are eager for aesthetic education, but due to various conditions and weak foundation, they are a little short in various aspects of aesthetic education. In this regard, it is particularly important for universities to pay more attention to aesthetic education, and it is an urgent problem to be solved whether to increase the efforts of aesthetic education and give students what they want, their own aesthetic education.

## **5. Exploration of the Path to Improve the Aesthetic Education in Science and Technology Universities**

### *5.1 Improve the Curriculum System of Aesthetic Education and Guide to Deepen the Understanding of “Beauty”*

#### **5.1.1 Pay Attention to the Enrichment and Innovation of the Aesthetic Education Curriculum**

Offer courses related to aesthetic education, and provide opportunities for science and technology students to fully understand and feel the beauty. Strengthen the importance of aesthetic education in schools, build campus aesthetic environment and create a good campus humanistic atmosphere.

#### **5.1.2 Combine Aesthetic Education with Professional Courses**

Promote the coordinated development of “curriculum aesthetic education” and “aesthetic education courses”. To ensure that every college student can get the real “beauty” education, so that Chinese and Foreign College Students can also get the aesthetic practice in the professional courses.

#### **5.1.3 Combine Aesthetic Education and Cultural Quality Education**

Aesthetic education is an important part of

cultural quality education. Only when the two are combined can the noble character of Chinese and foreign college students be cultivated and cultural quality education can be more meaningful.

### *5.2 Enhance the Cultural Atmosphere on Campus and Increase Exposure to “Beauty”*

A good campus cultural atmosphere can positively influence Chinese and Foreign College students’ aesthetic ability and cultivate their humanistic feelings. In addition to theoretical study, colleges and universities of science and technology can carry out diversified campus cultural activities to create a good atmosphere for aesthetic education and cultivate students’ humanistic qualities, so as to further promote the coordinated development of aesthetic education teaching. For example, the campus art atmosphere can be enhanced by establishing aesthetic education societies in order to optimize the lack of beauty environment in which students live and mobilize students’ enthusiasm to participate in aesthetic education.

### *5.3 Take Social Practice as a Carrier to Build a Platform for Experiencing “Beauty”*

Science and engineering colleges and universities can create a platform for learning, communication and demonstration through campus club activities, social practice activities of aesthetic education, general education and extracurricular practice classes, so that Chinese and Foreign College students can further experience the process of beauty in practice, and at the same time, this process is also the process of internalizing and fermenting “beauty” in students’ hearts. For example, we can hold an aesthetic education knowledge competition mainly for Chinese and Foreign College Students to improve their understanding of aesthetic education through exchange, discussion and summary; we can also organize Chinese and Foreign College students to participate in aesthetic education practice activities during winter and summer vacations to promote their humanistic quality.

### *5.4 Combine Aesthetic Education and Thinking and Politics to Enhance the Ability to Create “Beauty”*

Aesthetic education is a subtle process, and as students’ aesthetic ability continues to improve, their demand for “beauty” and their satisfaction with “beauty” also continue to increase, so the corresponding ideological and political



education for students in this process will get half the result with twice the effort. For example: visit patriotic painting exhibition, improve aesthetic ability and patriotic education at the same time; take students to appreciate and learn to sing red songs, and tell the touching story behind the red songs, so as to promote moral education with aesthetic education, make students enhance the sense of historical mission and social responsibility, and further strengthen cultural confidence, so as to create more "beauty".

#### *5.5 Promoting Aesthetic Education as a Way to Enhance the Cultural Identity of International Students*

Aesthetic education has unique advantages in promoting cultural identity. It shows Chinese culture more intuitively and concretely in front of international students through art works and national melodies, so that international students can personally feel the emotions and values therein, which is more profound and moving than textual descriptions. For example, organizing international students to participate in the festivals of local ethnic minorities, listening to the songs of ethnic minorities and experiencing different music styles, and appreciating different "beauties", they can also appreciate the profound cultural heritage of China, which will further enhance the sense of identity of international students with Chinese culture.

### **6. Conclusion and Discussion**

In the Party's 20th Congress report, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that "to fully implement the Party's education policy, the implementation of the fundamental task of moral education, to train the overall development of moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic socialist builders and successors. To cultivate socialist builders and successors, it is necessary to 'raise all the five educations together', and to put the process of cultivating socialist builders and successors in a prominent position by educating people with beauty, educating people with culture and cultivating people with morality". From this point of view, the significance of aesthetic education for Chinese and Foreign College Students of science and technology is very important. It is urgent for the university to raise the importance of aesthetic education, and according to the basic situation of science and technology college

students, let the aesthetic education enter the classroom, club and dormitory in a form that students like to see, and truly integrate into the life of college students, so that students can go from "discovering beauty, experiencing beauty and getting beauty" to "appreciating beauty, innovating beauty and spreading beauty". In the transition and transformation from "discovering beauty, experiencing beauty, acquiring beauty" to "appreciating beauty, innovating beauty, spreading beauty", students will further establish the correct concept of right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Students will be cultivated into new outstanding socialist youth with solid professional knowledge and skills, high humanistic and aesthetic level, and full of national pride and cultural confidence.

### **Fund Project**

Project to improve the basic scientific research capabilities of young and middle-aged teachers in Guangxi universities "Research on the Implementation Paths of Aesthetic Education to Improve the Chinese Cultural Identity of International Students in Colleges and Universities in China" (2023KY0239).

Project to improve the basic scientific research capabilities of young and middle-aged teachers in Guangxi universities "Research on the Creative Transformation and Innovative Development Paths of Guangxi Jing nationality music from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence" (2024KY0255).

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