

Research on the Construction of Aesthetic Education System for Hearing-Impaired College Students from the Perspective of Deaf Culture

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Abstract: With the development of research on the hearing-impaired population, scholars have regarded "deafness" as a unique cultural phenomenon. The logic of aesthetic education and deaf culture ultimately aligns with the hearing-impaired group's longing for and pursuit of a better life. However, there have long been issues in the aesthetic education of hearing-impaired college students, such as the separation between aesthetic education knowledge and objectives, and the disconnection between aesthetic education disciplines and development. Universities need to address these issues by improving top-level design, strengthening systems and mechanisms, enhancing teacher training, promoting interdisciplinary integration, creating sign language brands, merging various forms of art, leveraging the internet age, and promoting deaf art, in order to establish an aesthetic education system that aligns with the development of the times and the characteristics of hearing-impaired college students.

Keywords: Aesthetic Education; Deaf Culture; Hearing-Impaired College Students

1. Introduction

From a physiological perspective, hearing impairment is a condition, and deaf individuals are those with hearing disabilities. According to statistics, China has the largest number of hearing-impaired individuals in the world, with 27.8 million people living with hearing loss. For a long time, research on aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students has mainly been conducted from the perspective of special education for people with disabilities. With the influence of Western research on deaf communities, many scholars now propose from the perspectives of sociology, ethnology, linguistics, and other disciplines that deafness is not a disability, but a unique cultural phenomenon^[1-2]. This provides a new perspective for aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students in the new era.

2. The Logical Compatibility between Deaf Culture and Aesthetic Education

2.1 Concept of Deaf Culture

The "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," adopted at the 31st session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference on November 2, 2001, defines culture as follows: "Culture is the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize a society or social group; it includes not only arts and literature but also ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions, and beliefs." Deaf culture refers to the language forms, psychological traits, behavioral habits, communication methods, ways of thinking, group spirit, as well as deaf stories, history, and art that are exhibited by the deaf community. Deaf culture is represented by sign language and is based on visual perception. It is one of the diverse cultures of humanity, a subculture within society, and a specific concept of culture. A positive deaf culture can inspire and motivate deaf individuals to develop self-respect, self-confidence, independence, and self-improvement, encouraging them to strive forward and correctly identify with their deaf identity. It can also enhance the cohesion and solidarity of the deaf community. For the deaf community, living within two cultures enables them to understand the similarities and differences between them, helping to avoid the barriers, conflicts, and distress caused by unfamiliarity with cultural differences. For hearing individuals, understanding and mastering deaf culture is a necessary condition

for learning sign language, as well as for effective deaf education and social work [3].

2.2 Definition of Aesthetic Education

In the 18th century, German aesthetist Friedrich Schiller compiled 27 letters discussing aesthetic education, which he had written to the Danish prince, into a publication titled *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, where the term "aesthetic education" was first introduced. Cai Yuanpei was a pioneer in the formation of modern aesthetic education concepts in China. In his work *Aesthetic Education and Life*, he stated: "Everyone has emotions, but not everyone has great and noble actions, which is due to the weak driving force of emotions. The transformation from weakness to strength and from thinness to thickness requires cultivation. The tool for cultivation is beautiful objects; the effect of cultivation is called aesthetic education" [4]. In the new era, aesthetic education has been increasingly emphasized in China. In October 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era," which stated: "Beauty is an important source of pure morality and spiritual richness. Aesthetic education is not only about aesthetic education, emotional education, and spiritual education, but also about enriching imagination and cultivating innovative consciousness." The guidance further proposed that "the goal is to improve students' aesthetic and cultural literacy, promote the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, use beauty to educate people, beautify people, and cultivate them, integrate aesthetic education into the entire talent development process in schools at all levels, covering all stages of school education, and train socialist builders and successors who are well-rounded in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor" [5]. Aesthetic education is education centered around human aesthetic activities. Aesthetic education for college students not only cultivates their ability to search for, appreciate, and create beauty, but also helps students cultivate their emotions, shape their personalities, enlighten their minds, and enhance their morals. It guides students to pursue the realm of beauty, becoming "aesthetic individuals." It plays a significant role in the overall development of college students and in improving their moral and intellectual levels and scientific and cultural qualities.

2.3 Logical Compatibility between the Two

Aesthetic education belongs to the realm of humanities education. Its goal is the perfection of human nature, the pursuit of "truth, goodness, and beauty," the cultivation of aesthetic "sentiment," and the awakening of life "emotions." For deaf culture, aesthetic education fills the content of deaf culture with aesthetic meaning, achieving "an aesthetic life" and "an aesthetic existence" for the deaf community. Culture is "the total of material and spiritual wealth created by humanity" [6]. Hu Shi defined culture as "the way people live." Culture is a beautiful atmosphere, a unique emotion, an eternal memory, and a colorful life. Deaf culture contributes to aesthetic education by incorporating rich elements and methods such as deaf art, deaf literature, and sign language. Ultimately, aesthetic education and deaf culture converge in the deaf community's longing for and pursuit of a better life.

3. The Dilemmas in Aesthetic Education for Hearing-impaired College Students

3.1 Separation between Aesthetic Education Knowledge and Aesthetic Education Goals

The goal of aesthetic education is the perfection of human nature, aiming for the comprehensive, healthy, and harmonious development of knowledge, emotions, and will. In the current aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students, aesthetic education is often taught as a subject at the knowledge level, without approaching it as life education based around aesthetic activities that enlighten and nurture human nature. As aesthetic education receives increasing attention, many universities have introduced theoretical courses such as "University Aesthetic Education" and "Art and Aesthetics." These courses generally focus more on explaining the role of aesthetic education and analyzing how "aesthetic objects" are perceived as beautiful. Students' takeaways from these classes often include learning a few aesthetic principles or memorizing some aesthetic terms, merely preparing for exams. On the other hand, many universities actively establish aesthetic education practice centers and invite high-level art teams to conduct activities like "Bringing High Art into Campus," but some students merely skim the surface, or participate only to complete academic requirements, failing to "gain" beauty on a practical level. They do not experience the freedom of spirit, the value of life, or the sublimation of emotions through dialogue with "aesthetic objects."

3.2 Separation between Aesthetic Education Disciplines and Aesthetic Education Development

Aesthetic education is an interdisciplinary field primarily focused on aesthetics, education, and the arts. Currently, there is no specific discipline or major dedicated to aesthetic education in the academic classification system in China. Due to the lack of academic support, the knowledge system of aesthetic education is pieced together from several different disciplines. As a result, aesthetic education teaching and research are somewhat outdated. This also leads to an imbalance in teacher training, where some focus primarily on aesthetics and educational theory, while others emphasize artistic practice. There is a significant shortage of interdisciplinary aesthetic education teachers who are proficient in both aesthetic theory, educational methodology, and artistic humanistic interpretation, and who also have a strong foundation in artistic practice. Moreover, teachers with expertise in both aesthetic education and special education for hearing-impaired students are extremely rare. Furthermore, aesthetic education focuses on the human spirit and its challenge is not with the natural sciences, but with the "programmable" and "mechanized" nature formed by scientific rationality. The interdisciplinary integration of aesthetic education has not been fully realized, and its alignment with the new era, new technologies, and new cultures remains limited.

4. The Construction of Aesthetic Education System for Hearing-impaired College Students

4.1 Improving Top-level Design, Strengthening Systems and Mechanisms, and Ensuring the Correct Direction for Aesthetic Education of Hearing-impaired College Students

In October 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era," providing an important guideline for the aesthetic education of hearing-impaired college students in the new era. Universities must clarify the educational function of aesthetic education, identify the focal points of aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students, and firmly grasp the correct direction for this education.

First, it is necessary to establish a holistic view of aesthetic education. In order to carry out aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students in the new era, the focus must be on the fundamental task of cultivating moral character, strengthening the guiding role of socialist core values, promoting the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, respecting the growth patterns and identity recognition of hearing-impaired students, and constructing a diversified, characteristic, and multi-directional integration system for aesthetic education. This system should highlight the positive role of aesthetic education in fostering noble moral education, enhancing intellectual education, promoting physical education, and improving labor education, gradually building a comprehensive aesthetic education framework that integrates all students, across all stages, and from all perspectives.

Second, it is necessary to promote the development of aesthetic education as a discipline. Universities should focus on the significance and functions of aesthetic education, the directions of aesthetic education research, the courses offered in aesthetic education, and how to manage the relationships between interdisciplinary fields. Efforts should be made in staffing, establishing institutions, and improving working conditions, as well as in integrating and exploring research objects, scopes, methodologies, and systems. The goal is to gradually build an aesthetic education discipline construction system that aligns with the current era, follows academic principles, and conforms to the development patterns of hearing-impaired college students.

4.2 Strengthening Teacher Training and Promoting Interdisciplinary Integration to Continuously Enhance Aesthetic Education for Hearing-impaired College Students

Teachers are the direct implementers of educational work, and their professional qualities and comprehensive abilities directly impact the effectiveness of aesthetic education. To effectively conduct aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students, it is essential to establish a qualified team of aesthetic education teachers, focusing on both full-time aesthetic education teachers and interdisciplinary aesthetic education teachers.

On one hand, schools should establish aesthetic education course institutions and employ full-time aesthetic education teachers. These teachers should focus on cultivating students' positive aesthetic views, improving their humanistic literacy, and popularizing aesthetic education knowledge. Schools should explore the formation of a public aesthetic education curriculum system in universities, centered

around aesthetics, art studies, and artistic practice. At the same time, it is important to integrate art education with aesthetic education. During the development of full-time aesthetic education teachers, they should not only leverage their professional expertise but also pay more attention to studying and researching the history of aesthetic education, its connotations, and educational approaches, continuously enriching the content and improving the methods of aesthetic education. By using an integrated approach, they can innovatively advance the overall aesthetic education work of the school.

Additionally, full-time aesthetic education teachers should also take on the responsibility of training interdisciplinary aesthetic education teachers, guiding them to apply scientific aesthetic principles to discover the beauty within each discipline.

On the other hand, the broader concept of aesthetic education involves integrating aesthetic principles into the teaching of all subjects. In his article *The Methods of Implementing Aesthetic Education*, Cai Yuanpei stated: "No course in school is unrelated to aesthetic education" [4]. Every subject contains its aesthetic elements. By deeply identifying and exploring these elements, aesthetic education can be integrated into other subjects, which will not only enhance the overall aesthetic education outcomes in schools but also promote the development of other disciplines. This requires revising the course evaluation system, offering specialized aesthetic education training for teachers, and continuously improving teachers' aesthetic education abilities. This will enable teachers to recognize, understand, and trust aesthetic education, allowing each teacher to play a role in shaping students' aesthetic sentiments, inner growth, and life development.

4.3 Creating Sign Language Brands and Integrating Art Forms to Actively Expand the Externally-oriented Path of Aesthetic Education for Hearing-impaired College Students

Sign language is a visual language that uses hand shapes, facial expressions, and body postures, governed by its own grammatical rules. From a linguistic perspective, sign language is also one of human languages. It serves as a tool for deaf individuals to communicate information, express emotions, and engage in thought processes [3]. Sign language is the totem of deaf culture and the most prominent symbol of the deaf community. Art is the most concentrated, pure, and vivid embodiment of human aesthetic experience, and it is a crucial element in aesthetic activities [7]. Dance, as a typical form of artistic activity, also "expresses" emotions, ideas, insights, and meanings through bodily movements and expressions.

Sign language singing emerged in Taiwan, China in the late 1970s. In 1985, Li Mingyang, a young deaf teacher at Shanghai Deaf-Mute Technical School, and Cen Aibin, the deputy leader of the Shanghai Disabled People's New Sprout Dance Troupe, co-created and directed the first Chinese mainland sign language song, *My Chinese Heart*, which was performed by the Shanghai Deaf Art Troupe [8]. Over decades of development, sign language songs have not only integrated deaf culture and dance elements but also continuously enriched the spiritual core of patriotism, socialist core values, and the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education. They have become a powerful way to extend the true, good, and beautiful aspects of deaf culture outward. With the promotion of national standard sign language, sign language songs are gradually entering schools for hearing students, becoming part of their physical education routines and extracurricular activities after the "double reduction" policy.

Aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students should seize the brand culture of sign language songs, offering courses and research on the appreciation and creation of sign language songs in universities. More and broader sign language song works should be created, with a focus on cultivating authentic, profound, and rich aesthetic interests in the creation and interpretation of these works. Through the processing of dance art, these works should meet the aesthetic needs of both deaf and hearing students.

In addition, universities should explore the combination of sign language and other art forms. For example, sign language poetry, which appeared in deaf cultural activities in Western countries from the 1960s to the 1980s, uses rhythmic and melodic sign language to vividly express the rich emotions of the deaf community and reflect social life [9].

Chinese classical poetry, with its long history, is a treasure of Chinese traditional culture and contains the spirit of Chinese traditional aesthetic education. By "reciting" classical poems in sign language, one can use the elements of hand shapes, direction, and movement in sign language to present the beauty of language, rhythm, imagery, and meaning of sign language poetry according to specific rhythms and melodies. This fusion of Chinese traditional culture with deaf culture imbues sign language art with profound cultural connotations, adding a sign language expression to traditional

culture. This approach allows traditional culture to spread in more diverse ways, with the hope of creating new outcomes that are shared by mainstream culture and deaf culture.

4.4 Leveraging the Internet Era and Promoting Deaf Art to Expand the Knowledge Base of Aesthetic Education for Hearing-impaired College Students

Each technological revolution leads to continuous changes in other societal functions, which adapt to the new technology, causing profound social transformations. Today, internet technology is influencing social landscapes and people's ways of living and working. Aesthetic education is highly social and broad in scope, and with the advancement of the internet, these characteristics are fully manifest. Online literature, internet films, and self-media have exploded in development like mushrooms after rain. While many of these works feature positive values and high production quality, they are also filled with a large amount of vulgar, sensational content. Some even maliciously alter history and manipulate classics to attract attention. Many college students find themselves "lost" in the "high and low" sea of content online. However, as students' discernment skills have not yet matured, they are unable to identify the original form of "classics" and are thus led into aesthetic pitfalls online.

As a crucial aspect of education, aesthetic education should fully adapt to the unique advantages of internet dissemination, promote the sharing of high-quality resources, and occupy the high ground in online aesthetics.

"Not all art can serve as a means of aesthetic education" ^[10]. The key to the development of aesthetic education lies in the popularization and dissemination of artistic classics. Only works of art that possess aesthetic and educational value can bring true aesthetic experiences, thus elevating the spiritual realm and nurturing life sentiments. However, no school can provide a comprehensive course system or a faculty of artist-level expertise. To achieve ideal results in university aesthetic education, it is essential to learn from high-quality content with aesthetic value. The internet's "one network in hand, the world is mine" sharing function can solve this issue. Universities such as Peking University have already begun such attempts and made significant efforts. They have invited dozens of renowned scholars, experts in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and artists from across the Taiwan Strait and other regions to design and teach shared courses such as "The First of Intangible Heritage—Classic Art Appreciation of Kunqu," "The Art of Dunhuang," and "The Great Dream of the Red Chamber". These courses, in addition to the art itself, also incorporate the course team's understanding, insights, aesthetic experiences, and the stirrings of Chinese traditional cultural spirit. The aesthetic, historical, and legacy values of these courses are self-evident ^[11].

For hearing-impaired college students, aesthetic education is not simply about "taking" these courses directly; it requires aesthetic education teachers to engage with students, think alongside them, and lead students back to the classics through these courses. Teachers should guide students in ways that are easy for them to understand, allowing them to deeply reflect on the beauty within the classics.

5. Conclusion

Deaf culture and aesthetic education naturally form a complementary and progressive developmental relationship. Deaf culture not only enriches the content and methods of aesthetic education but also brings aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students closer to the receptive scope of the hearing-impaired community. This is a powerful attempt at conducting aesthetic education for hearing-impaired college students within the context of deaf culture. Furthermore, research from the perspective of deaf culture is not limited to aesthetic education but also provides important insights into various aspects of deaf education, including moral, intellectual, physical, and labor education.

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