

# On the Contemporary Value and Implementation Path of Dance Aesthetic Education

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**Abstract:** *Dance creates emotional symbols through the dynamic imagery of the human body, which not only entertains people but also subconsciously cultivates their sentiments and provokes their deeper creativity, and works as a means of aesthetic education. Dance is a response to the culture of the times. One of the vital missions of the discipline of dance aesthetic education is to focus on the practical application value of dance aesthetic education, increase the independence and autonomy of the discipline, improve the practical function of dance aesthetic education, integrate multiple disciplines, and promote the cultural building and cultural transmission of dance aesthetic education with a concern for reality. This paper investigates the myopia rate of adolescents and the function of dance aesthetic education in contemporary urban spaces, explores the contemporary value and implementation path of dance aesthetic education, and proposes its development path.*

**Keywords:** *dance aesthetic education; Contemporary values; Social services; Implementation path*

## 1. Introduction

Dance plays a significant role in the aesthetic education of schools and is of positive significance to exercising teenagers' bodies, training their physical coordination, and improving students' artistic qualities. Moreover, dance aesthetic education can enhance teenagers' perception of beauty, stimulate their deep imagination and creativity, and cultivate a healthy and optimistic attitude toward life. Dance plays an essential role in contemporary urban space, and through dance, people express their emotions, experience, inherit, disseminate and promote beauty. Dance aesthetic education should not emphasize excessive skill cultivation but should be actively involved in social services and daily life.

## 2. Functions and health values of dance aesthetic education

What are the functions of dance aesthetic education, and how should it be investigated and practiced? What are the social functions of dance? In the book *Introduction to Dance Art*, Long Yinpei and Xu Erchong indicated that dance has special functions in addition to its general artistic functions. Dance serves in ancient societies as a means to enjoy, offer sacrifices, communicate, keep fit, and educate. In modern society, dance functions as a means to amuse oneself, communicate emotionally, strengthen physical fitness, cultivate sentiment, learn about society, and unite and motivate<sup>[1]</sup>. It can be found that one of the most important functions of dancing in ancient and modern times is to keep fit. Bringing the function of dance aesthetic education to fitness is of great importance to improve the physical health of the general public. Dance and physical education have a common point of physical exercise, but the difference is that dance emphasizes the expression of artistic beauty. Therefore, dance aesthetic education should first cultivate students' awareness of physical beauty. Venues for dancing are generally spacious with wide views, which can change students' prolonged learning at close range. Dance is a high-level artistic sport, and students look far away when dancing, so they can be physically and mentally relaxed through artistic expression and relieve the pressure of myopia to a certain extent. The public generally sees dance as an art and culture with high technical skills. Dance aesthetic education workers should be academically conscious and actively participate in creating social services to meet the public's needs rather than self-appreciation.

From the perspective of art and aesthetics, dance movement is artistic in a specific time and space, unlike the movements in everyday life. In recent years, several studies have demonstrated the effect of dance on visual cognition. It was found that long-term dance training can induce increased levels of spontaneous neuronal activity in these brain areas. During the dance, participants acquire kinematic information about their movements through visual receptors and process their visual perception of

spatial and temporal changes in movements through visual pathways to regulate their neural activity. Prolonged dance practice gradually strengthens the activity of the participants' vision-related brain areas. Studies have suggested that dance can improve and enhance visual cognition<sup>[2]</sup>. The public is highly concerned about the prevention and control of myopia among children and adolescents, and we should think about how to reduce the myopia rate among children and adolescents effectively.

Furthermore, we should make efforts to improve physical education, aesthetic education and labor education. These may seem distant from myopia prevention and control for children and adolescents, but the more thoroughly physical, aesthetic, and labor education is conducted, the more significantly myopia can be prevented and controlled for children and adolescents. Some studies have found that dance positively influences the subjective well-being of young people<sup>[3]</sup>, and has great potential in the fields of health care and psychotherapy. Dance aesthetic education workers should take the initiative to think about the problems such as the myopia rate of teenagers, pay more attention to its practical applications, propose countermeasures and take action. For a long time, I have been investigating aesthetic education in many primary and secondary schools, and I found through observation and on-site interviews that students are highly interested in aesthetic education activities and like dancing and singing. Aesthetic education workers should teach students skills and enable them to have fun and feel happy. Moreover, dance aesthetic education can enhance teenagers' perception of beauty, stimulate their deep imagination and creativity, and cultivate a healthy and optimistic attitude toward life.

For those engaged in dance aesthetic education, what is the intrinsic relationship between teenagers' myopia rate and dance aesthetic education? Dance aesthetic education should be about learning professional skills and passing on dance culture, and improving the awareness of reality and the ability to serve the public. These problems may be alleviated if every student knows his or her body shape properly, sits and stands in a correct posture, follows a healthy and scientific diet, and considers "contracted waist and humpback" unattractive. The results of a questionnaire survey on a sample of children and adolescents show that most of them do not concern themselves with their physical appearance and are not sufficiently aware of their physical beauty. Many problems, such as cervical spondylosis and lumbar disc herniation, are more prevalent among the younger generation. Studies on the effects of dance therapy on body image have shown that physical self-esteem and psychological self-representation are greatly enhanced through dance therapy<sup>[4]</sup>. For a long time, dance aesthetic education has focused more on skill training, and students are trapped in the skill-oriented concept, and more concerned with the physical dancing techniques. The classes of dance aesthetic education should emphasize more than what dance majors should learn and how to dance well. First of all, teachers should cultivate students' perception of physical beauty and actively guide teenagers to develop a sense of mental health.

### **3. Dance aesthetic education in contemporary urban space**

It is of great importance to notice the dance aesthetic education in the urban space for today's cultural industry consumption. In the early stages of humankind, dance was an integral component of production practices, the most direct manifestation of the mood of life, which arose from the needs of human beings and was adapted to their development. Nowadays, dance is more considered as a performing and appreciating art. We should look at the development of dance itself. Dance should not only be active in the theater and the classroom, but we should also consider its applications in more practical fields, so that it can be more innovative. Dance involves a wide range of disciplines, so its studies should also be based on some methodologies from anthropology, sociology, and folklore. I consider it necessary to develop the dance sector by applying its practical value and exploring various ways to serve the community.

Under the effects of globalization and technological intelligence, dance aesthetic education in urban space presents new and complex patterns. In traditional rural society, dance was an indispensable recreational activity, and it was a type of art and culture where people created, enjoyed themselves, and established their own identity. With the continuous economic progress and changes in production and lifestyle, more and more people prefer to develop in cities, thus posing great challenges for the inheritance of traditional folk dances. Folk dance art in rural or remote areas is relatively well preserved and is the preferred choice for many researchers to conduct fieldwork. In modern Chinese cities, square dancing has become a popular cultural and artistic phenomenon in the urban space, dominating the general public's artistic activities and influencing the rural areas' art and culture through a new way of participation.

To some extent, it has become an irreversible trend. In the context of intangible cultural heritage, we should highlight the importance of preserving and transmitting excellent folk arts and culture and note the dance culture phenomena in the urban space. To develop dance aesthetic education, we should teach students about dancing skills and give full play to its service function.

Square dancing has the greatest advantage of not being restricted by time and space, being strongly participatory and self-indulgent, and satisfying most people's desire for dance art. Moreover, square dance is an essential way for the masses to educate themselves aesthetically, and has become a charming artistic landscape. In the beginning, Chinese square dance was mainly performed by middle-aged and older people, and the dance consisted mostly of single movements, mainly for physical fitness. Gradually, many young people started to perform the square dance with dynamic and popular music, featuring strong rhythmic movements and variations in footsteps. In the later stages, traditional folk dances have returned to the urban space. For example, the Yangko dance (also called twisting Yangko dance) and Lantern Dance are widely spread in many cities in China. In recent years, square dance has experienced a boom in China, advocating dance for health and dance for beauty. I conducted several interviews with the participants and the audience. From the research data, people like the dance mainly because of the strong rhythm, difficulty and richer experience of aesthetics. It is also about nostalgia, as many people away from their hometowns express and rest their nostalgia through art. Folk dance is a figurative carrier of many folk activities. According to Professor Xu Ganli of the Institute of Folklore of East China Normal University, "Folklore is the place where nostalgia is rested, and nostalgia itself is folklore, a cultural memory that continues in our acts<sup>[5]</sup>." The return of traditional folk dance in the urban space shows that dance can satisfy people's emotional and spiritual needs to a certain extent. The common answer I have received from those who appreciate it in many cities is that folk dance has unique regional characteristics and is very expressive, creating more aesthetic enjoyment. Dance aesthetic education should work well in the school classroom and society, offering beauty and happiness to more people.

Parks, squares and other relatively open places have been the venues for local people to perform aerobic dance and folk dance. Along with the development of square dancing, people are also striving for innovation, adapting the corresponding folk dance movements or adopting the novel popular songs and dances on the Internet, which have become a brilliant cultural landscape in the city. They hope to turn dancing into a fashion, as it can carry forward the national culture, and enables performers to keep fit and enjoy themselves. It is evident that as material life is enriched, people have an increasingly strong desire for physical and mental health. Field research shows that many tourists may sometimes specifically visit various squares for appreciation and participation in square dance to experience local artistic and cultural activities. Dance plays an essential role in contemporary urban space, and through dance, people express their emotions, experience, inherit, disseminate and promote beauty. We should attach great importance to the protection and inheritance of minority cultural heritage. Most of the materials for contemporary aesthetic education are derived from the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and aesthetic education serves as a key means for college students to inherit and develop the excellent Chinese culture on campus. The excellent Chinese traditional culture is of great significance to contemporary aesthetic education. With the accelerated progress of modernization and urbanization, many traditional folk arts have lost their original sites of transmission. For this reason, we should be concerned about the contemporary urban development space, and further think about how to exert the function of dance aesthetic education in the contemporary urban space.

The phenomenon of dance aesthetic education in contemporary urban space can also be understood as the presence of dance. According to Guo Jianbin, "Presence refers to a structured presence and its symbolic meaning in the media space-time constructed by a specific mass communication system and its corresponding practices<sup>[6]</sup>." Professor Guo Jianbin first proposed the concept of presence regarding mobile movies and media. He argues that the current theoretical concept cannot explain the observed phenomenon well. For the spatial cultural phenomenon of dance, the presence of dance involves the presence of performers and audience, as well as the presence of the cultural connotation expressed by dance. Presence involves a specific space and time, and can be more explanatory when included in studying the spatial cultural phenomenon of dance aesthetic education.

#### **4. Considerations on the discipline structure and future development of dance aesthetic education**

Dance has an irreplaceable effect on people's physiology and psychology, and dance aesthetic education is of great significance to cultivating high-quality, interdisciplinary professionals. I found from my investigation that most of the art classes in many schools are mainly music and fine arts

classes, while dance classes are often taken as hobby classes and rehearsals for extracurricular events. In better cases, teachers incorporate rhythmic and rhythmical exercises with dance in music classes. I propose that dance aesthetic education courses should become compulsory to cultivate students' self-awareness of physical beauty rather than instructing how many dances to perform. Dance as a means of aesthetic education should give full play to educating people, rather than over-emphasizing skills and techniques for dance competitions and performances. Schools should add dance as a compulsory course for children and adolescents to cultivate their awareness of physical beauty from an early age and consciously change their contracted waists and hunched backs. Dance aesthetic education is about teaching dance skills and cultivating students' cultural qualities such as humanistic and aesthetic qualities.

Dance aesthetic education should not emphasize excessive skill cultivation but should be actively involved in social services and daily life. At present, dance aesthetic education is more concentrated on aesthetic education in schools, but less on aesthetic education in society. Consumption in the cultural industry has become one of the hot topics today. Xu Ganli pointed out, "With the rapid development of China's economy, people's lives in urban areas have been greatly improved and consumerism has gradually risen. In the post-modern consumer society, which is mainly characterized by symbolic consumption, people have changed what they consume. The consumption of products is just a superficial form, but the consumption of the meaning and process is where the real value of symbolic consumption lies<sup>[7]</sup>." At present, many scenic spots and commercial streets are featured with local dance performances, fully combining dance and tourism culture development, enhancing the attractiveness of local tourism, and boosting the local economy's development. Most of the cultural tourist attractions are well integrated with local folk dances, attracting a large number of tourists with many programs fully characterized by regional charm. The tourism industry has contributed to the new developments of folk dances, providing more stages for some original ethnic dances. The large-scale show *Dynamic Yunnan* directed by dancer Yang Liping has brought a lot of original folk dances and songs to the stage, creating a vivid dance image and offering the audience an unprecedented aesthetic experience. The development of local tourism resources should not only be considered by tourism management professionals, but also the practitioners of dance aesthetic education should actively engage in social practice, and proactively ponder the consumption of cultural resources behind dance, which is one of the best paths to serve the community.

At present, the majors for training dance professionals in colleges and universities are mostly dance performance, dance education, dance choreography, and dance theory. In the article entitled *Dilemmas and Solutions of Folk Dance Teaching for Dance Major in Normal Universities: Taking Jiaozhou Yangko Classroom Teaching as an Example*, Deng mentioned that "dance majors in normal universities are mainly trained to be teachers of dance art education in primary and secondary schools. Therefore, dance majors should be trained with solid professional knowledge and skills and humanistic, aesthetic, communication and classroom teaching skills, which is extremely significant for cultivating dance professionals in normal universities<sup>[8]</sup>." The cultivation of dance professionals with comprehensive cultural qualities fully embodies the concept of fostering virtue through education and training students in an all-round way. The state has promulgated a series of documents on aesthetic education, and dance aesthetic education may be included in the curriculum of dance majors for undergraduate programs, taking into account the current development of education. In the cultivation of graduate students, universities may consider adding dance aesthetic education research, research on the dance culture industry, and dance technology to keep up with the times and achieve multidisciplinary integration. Dance programs in colleges and universities should cultivate professionals in dance education and dance performance and talents who can serve the development of aesthetic education in the community. Proper strategies can be proposed for the construction of cultural resources and their integration with medical and psychological therapies and digital media.

## 5. Conclusions

Dance aesthetic education carries various functions, and it should emphasize the construction of aesthetic education in schools as well as the practice of social aesthetic education, make full use of local art and cultural resources, and facilitate the transmission of excellent traditional culture. As a result, the discipline of dance aesthetic education can definitely gain more recognition in practice. Dance is a response to the culture of the times. One of the vital missions of the discipline of dance aesthetic education is to focus on the practical application value of dance aesthetic education, increase the independence and autonomy of the discipline, improve the practical function of dance aesthetic education, integrate multiple disciplines, and promote the cultural building and cultural transmission of

dance aesthetic education with a concern for reality. Dance aesthetic education workers should be concerned with the daily life, and they should be both the transmitters and the practitioners of culture. The more people are involved in dance aesthetic education, the wider the audience and the higher the service awareness. In this way, dance aesthetic education is expected to flourish.

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