

The Educational Value and Aesthetic Construction of Dance in the Context of the New Curriculum Standards

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ABSTRACT

In the "Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan and Curriculum Standards" issued by the Ministry of Education (2022), it is proposed to take music, dance, drama, fine arts, and film and television as the starting point, to play the role of arts subjects in a coordinated manner, strengthen students' aesthetic literacy, and promote the development of students' physical and mental health. Dance, as an important component of arts education, plays an indispensable and important value in basic education. Based on the concept of the new curriculum standards, this paper explores the educational value and contemporary function of dance in basic education from three aspects: the educational function of dance, the educational criteria, and the aesthetic construction.

Keywords: Basic education, New curriculum standards, Dance, Educational values, Aesthetic development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Art is an important part of human spiritual civilization. The compulsory education art curriculum includes music, fine arts, dance, drama, film and television, etc., which cultivate students' imagination and innovative thinking through art courses, providing important education in aesthetics, moral sentiments, and spiritual education for students. The "Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards" released by the Ministry of Education in 2022, center art education on the "individual", emphasizing aesthetic education and spiritual education to achieve students' comprehensive cultivation in moral education and aesthetic education. The dance curriculum mainly focuses on artistic practice in four parts: performance, creation, appreciation, and integration, with students as the main focus, emphasizing students' perception and aesthetic experience of dance, thus inspiring their practical and innovative abilities. Dance, as an important component of the art curriculum, not only enhances students' core qualities but also strengthens their moral cultivation and self-realization. Based on the new curriculum concept, this article explores the educational value

and contemporary function of dance in basic education from three aspects: the nurturing function of dance, the nurturing criteria, and aesthetic construction.

2. THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF DANCE

2.1 Dance Hones the Morals of "People"

"The Book of Rites: Commentary on the Classics" states, "The three rulers all teach their sons with ritual and music. Music is used to cultivate the inner self, while ritual is used to cultivate the outer. When ritual and music are intertwined, they are manifested externally. Therefore, when they are complete, there is joy, respect, and elegance." Ancient China was a society of ritual and etiquette, with the system of ritual and music education playing a central role in the education of ancient rulers. "Music" refines the inner self, purifying the soul, while "ritual" guides one's behavior to be graceful, humble, and balanced, cultivating individuals of cultivation, capability, and morality. During the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Li Shimin put forward the concept of "dancing with

moral integrity," emphasizing how dancers can enhance moral cultivation through dance. By focusing on the outward form of dance performance and skills, dancers strive to elevate their inner moral character. Dance is a form of emotional expression; only when emotions are involved can one understand the graceful and powerful aspects of dance. Thus, the moral influence of dance is closely related to one's inner qualities. Influenced by Confucian culture, more scholars are encouraged to improve their moral character and self-improvement through dance.

2.2 *Dance Enhances the Perception of "Humanity"*

Susan Langer, in "Feeling and Form," believes that art is a form of emotional symbol for humans. "Art is the presentation of human emotions for people to enjoy, the means of transforming human emotions into visible or audible forms." Therefore, art presents human common emotions through different forms of expression. Dance, by gathering the forces of nature, presents the inner spiritual world of humanity in the form of dance imagery. Mr. Wen Yiduo said, "The function of life is motion and dance is the rhythm of motion, or more precisely, the dynamic transition point of rhythm, so it is a direct performance of the function of life." It can be seen that dance is a manifestation of life force, perceiving life through bodily energy, rhythm, and dynamic regularity, enabling people to reach a state of integration of body and soul in dance, feeling the power of life.

2.3 *Dance Purifies the Aesthetic of "Human"*

The Chinese aesthetic way emphasizes conveying emotions and expressing life realms through aesthetic categories such as artistic conception and charm, focusing on elevating spiritual realms and cultivating moral sentiments through aesthetic activities. It pursues the spiritual realm of "appreciation by both refined and popular tastes" and the unity of nature and humanity. Just as described in the "Laozi": "Great music is transcendent and formless." Dance, with the torso as the axis; high falter, movement under the feet, the body is a special way of expressing dancing. In a small sense, the creation of different dance images gives viewers different aesthetic images. The simple and heavy Han Dynasty, the elegant and refined Wei and Jin dynasties, and the grand and unrestrained Tang Dynasty, different cultural

backgrounds create different dance cultural characteristics, forming a unique dance charm, leading the aesthetic style of an era. In a macro sense, dance as an ontology belongs to nature, with a distant and ethereal charm, where the most beautiful images are integrated with the mind and body, unity of body and mind, experiencing the vividness of life and the realm of invisible great principles in the process of feeling the emotions of life, enhancing one's own aesthetic realm in the process of dance, enriching one's own mind.

3. THE PRINCIPLES OF DANCE EDUCATION

3.1 *Sensitivity to "Aesthetic Perception"*

"The 2022 Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standard" emphasizes that aesthetic perception is the foundation of all artistic activities. By appreciating the beauty of art, students enhance their aesthetic appreciation ability for artistic works, humanities, and nature, purify their minds, and perfect their personalities. Art, as a metaphysical art, requires learners to fully utilize their sensory systems to recognize beauty through visual and auditory senses. During the Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi described in the preface of "Zhong Yong Zhang Ju": "The empty and spiritual perception of the heart is sufficient." Zhu Xi regarded "perception" as the perceptual ability of the heart, which can recognize the essence of things, understand the laws of their development. "Perception" is the unity of multiple dimensions such as thoughts, concepts, and emotions. The cultivation of a unified personality in morals, self-cultivation, and aesthetics requires "perception" and the insight of the heart to appreciate dance and understand the spiritual depth it contains. In "Li Ji -Le Xiang," it is said: "Singing expresses words, dancing expresses poems, words express aspirations; singing expresses voices, dancing expresses forms. The three originate from the heart, and then the joyous energy follows." As a visual-sensory art, dance can only create deeply moving artistic images and convey artistic power when the creator perceives genuine emotions and impulses. Similarly, in basic education, students' learning of dance requires the teacher's personal demonstration, which is actually a transmission of beauty. As viewers at this time, students can only truly perceive and appreciate the aesthetic information conveyed by the teacher to acquire and enjoy genuine aesthetic emotions. Therefore, learners of dance should focus on the cultivation of "aesthetic perception" ability, and the cultivation of

"perception" should also be an aspect that art education should pay attention to, allowing students to experience the entire process of dance and enjoy beauty.

3.2 Enhancement of "Artistic Expression"

The emphasis of the new curriculum standard on student cultivation is to help students understand and experience the cultural connotations of artistic works through their own experiences, and to comprehend the conception and expression of artistic works through practical presentation, establishing a stage awareness. Dance is an art that must be danced through the human body, requiring certain skills, emotions, and physical expressiveness as support for interpretation. On the one hand, our body as a way of expressing skills, whether it is dance or drama, it is an art that relies on the human body as the carrier, requiring a certain level of skill for better understanding and expression. Training in expressions, refinement of posture, and the demand for language expression skills in drama are all necessary skills for students to improve their artistic performance. Furthermore, in the process of emotional expression, Susan Langer emphasizes that art is a perceptual form that creates the expression of human emotions. The ultimate display of any art form is to achieve self-realization. Although different art forms present in different ways, they share commonality in the eruption and transmission of emotions. Therefore, in basic education, art courses emphasize students' subjective initiative and the process of experience. The embodiment in dance courses is actually to promote the comprehensive development of students' body and mind, strengthen students' coordination ability, make students feel the continuous life experience of "dance" in the process of dancing, and also display inner emotions through dance movements, thus discovering oneself, feeling the exchange between body and mind, and enhancing spiritual nourishment.

3.3 Emphasis on "Cultural Understanding"

General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed: "We must fully implement the Party's educational policy, carry out the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, and cultivate socialist builders and successors who are well-rounded in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor development." People build the world on trust, while teachers educate with morality. The

responsibility of teachers is to educate, and the establishment of dance disciplines is also for educating people and cultivating new era artists and educators for the country. Therefore, the training of dance talents should not be limited to practical skills and theoretical knowledge, but should achieve comprehensive improvement in knowledge, morality, artistic cultivation, and aesthetic education. Just as Cai Yuanpei said: "The purpose of aesthetic education is to cultivate a lively and sensitive spirit and develop a noble and pure personality." In "Shuo Wen Jie Zi," beauty is synonymous with goodness. The improvement of students' cultural understanding in the New Curriculum Standards for Art Courses is an important part of their core literacy. The cultivation of a complete personality is a joint practice of beauty and goodness. Confucius set requirements for people: "Sincerity and integrity, self-discipline, family harmony, and governing the country to bring peace to the world." Self-cultivation is the foundation for people, eliminating internal distractions, returning to human nature, and focusing on one's internal moral and intellectual cultivation, which is a kind of intrinsic quality cultivation. Therefore, artistic forms are the most effective way to achieve a perfect personality. Through the non-verbal art of dance, people can freely roam, reflect, experience beauty, and feel the cultural connotations of artistic works.

3.4 Pursuit of "Creative Practice"

Vision refers to the visible range and dimension of a person in a field. Extended to the field of dance: "What can I experience? What can I do?", The Book of Kangxi said, "Creating a new people." A noble person utilizes everything to the fullest. This indicates that human thinking is constantly undergoing innovation and creation, requiring a broad vision and a broad mind. Under the new curriculum standards, the requirements of art courses in terms of creative practice are basically reflected in students' ability to freely apply their knowledge and skills for innovation and broaden the application areas. At the same time, it cultivates open-minded thinking, establishes the awareness of interdisciplinary integration, instills interdisciplinary and cross-domain thinking modes, and fosters students' creative development. Before the development of new media, dance performance and creation were limited to the creativity and development based on the foundation of dance itself. With social progress, the integration of dance and technology now allows various forms of

creation in dance. For example, "Revisiting Pingyao" as a large-scale scenic interpretation project combines dance, drama, theater, laser technology, and on-site scene effects to immerse the audience in different spaces, allowing them to experience the era firsthand in a walk-and-watch form. Among them, the "Betrothal" dance, the "Hanging Wall" men's dance, and the "Bucket" farewell duet cleverly use dance, props, and lighting to give the audience a shocking experience, truly breaking down the barrier between the audience and the art. The success of this large-scale dance drama has organically unified dance forms and stage forms. In this era of diverse information, the combination of diverse arts to create new performance forms is undoubtedly one of the paths for the advancement of dance.

Therefore, in the art curriculum, as a dance student, one should not only limit oneself to the study of dance itself, but also broaden one's horizons and develop abilities in the intersection of multiple art forms. Not only should one explore Chinese traditional culture, but also incorporate world culture into the curriculum. Research on contemporary dance should not be limited to the study of dance history, and the creative development of the essence of dance should not only be defined by ancient literature. From a diversified perspective, classic issues in dance should also be reconsidered and redefined. Based on the depth of one's own reflection on dance, the future development trend of dance, how to inherit and develop the experience of predecessors, through learning to find a position, clarify ideas, and then establish one's own aesthetic context in dance.

4. AESTHETIC CONSTRUCTION OF DANCE

Based on the above considerations, the author proposes insights into the aesthetic construction of dance. The fundamental question of dance education is what kind of people to cultivate. "A teacher is one who imparts knowledge and imparts understanding." In education, the teacher's teaching should take the lead, with the students' learning as the main focus. How should teachers enlighten and develop students, and how should students achieve comprehensive self-improvement in the process of learning? This is not only about acquiring knowledge, but more importantly about how to make students become complete "individuals." In Confucius's Analects, it is stated: "The moral

character of a gentleman lies in his roots; when the roots are established, the Way will grow." This indicates that a complete personality is at the core of an individual's character, reflecting the person's morality and stimulating the return to the essence of humanity. The following will introduce the functions of education, cognition, and aesthetics.

4.1 Construction of Educational Function

Dance education is the activity of cultivating people through education in dance. It can be divided into practice and theory. After determining their own positioning, dance learners need to establish dance ideals. However, regardless of the method, the ultimate goal is to enhance one's character cultivation and moral qualities. Dance is also an important way for people to become complete "humans". In practice, one needs to think about how to transform dance ideas into dance works, possess open-minded thinking, divergent imagination, and creative abilities. In practice, cultivate the ability to discover beauty from the "heart", transform one's own spiritual feelings and unique experiences into unique dance expressions, elevate aesthetic cultivation in the creative process, and gain personal character refinement. Dance theory is essential for dance learners, and dance theory needs to transform dance behavior into theoretical knowledge, possess certain research capabilities, rigorous literary foundation, and solid writing skills. Transforming deep thoughts into writing requires writing skills. In the process, discovering new issues leads to research, using dance as a form to express new discoveries requires creative abilities. In the creative process, understanding excellent cultures at home and abroad, enriching cultural connotations, and enhancing the ability of dance learners to acquire knowledge. Therefore, the cultivation of dance learners needs to be supported by a dual cycle from theory to practice, to build an understanding of comprehensive dance construction and the comprehensive shaping of inner qualities of individuals.

4.2 Construction of Functional Understanding

Dance is an art that combines body and mind, externalizing in form and internalizing in heart. The movement of dance is the continuation and manifestation of life, embodying the enduring experience of life. As the earliest form of art, dance has played a unique role in talent cultivation and

state governance throughout history due to its multiple functions. In the process of dissemination, people strengthen their thoughts through physical expression, ultimately expressing their ideas and emotions through actions. The dance of the body and the tread of the feet lead dance learners to elevate their thinking, exploring the value and deeper meaning of human life. As stated in "The Great Learning": "When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is correct; when the mind is correct, the self is cultivated." Cultivating oneself is fundamental. Dance learners need to be clear in heart, cultivate sincerity and integrity in order to nurture their minds and character. By eliminating desires in the heart and feeling the vitality of dance to human life, one can experience the grand dance of the universe through the small dance of the body, where this cosmic life is the inner self of a person, experiencing the cultivation of the mind in stillness, the cultivation of the mind in dance, and understanding the intrinsic value of dance.

A good dance work has a certain inherent meaning, conveying the value of life. This requires actors and choreographers to think about the resonance between performance and creation, stimulating communication between the actors and the audience. Therefore, in the process of learning, students should strengthen their thinking on "what should dancers do" and find their own paths, forming their own ideological system.

4.3 Construction of Aesthetic Function

How to cultivate a complete person, dance as an art form, guides people's aesthetic concepts, and enhancing aesthetics is the original intention and purpose of cultivating people. The question of what kind of "person" to cultivate is a matter of cultivation. Laozi emphasized: "Heaven and earth have great beauty yet remain silent." This beauty refers to the beauty of nothingness, complete beauty. In the realm of heaven and earth, this is a kind of vast beauty, a magnificent wind, a kind of inclusiveness that accommodates all things in the universe. From the perspective of humans, it refers to a complete personality, possessing a certain level of thinking, a lofty spiritual realm, accomplishments in moral cultivation, and the ability to appreciate aesthetics. In short, the inclusiveness of heaven and earth, the completeness of humans, ultimately conveys the meaning of ultimate beauty, namely ultimate goodness.

Because everything in heaven and earth is in a constant state of flowing change, and "dance" as the most primitive form of life, it is through the expression of the human body's movements that people express their hearts and feel the beauty of cosmic changes as an intermediary. Therefore, dance is a state of life, and the cultivation of people through dance should focus on the cultivation of a complete "person," achieving the realm of "person is dance, dance is person," the unity of person and dance.

5. CONCLUSION

As society and the state attach great importance to art education, dance plays an irreplaceable role in basic education. As an important part of basic education, art courses occupy an important position in the all-round cultivation of people and moral nourishment, playing a "useful" value. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasizes the concept of "cultivating people with morality" in talent training, emphasizing the importance of developing an education powerhouse. In the context of the new curriculum standards, there is a strong integration of music, dance, drama, fine arts, film and television, and other interdisciplinary development, actively promoting and developing this integration, precisely because art plays an important role in the comprehensive shaping of personality. Due to its educational and aesthetic functions since ancient times, dance plays a role in educating and beautifying people in basic education, as well as cultivating people's aesthetic sentiment. Therefore, with the society's increasing demand for comprehensive literacy and abilities, the intrinsic value of dance cannot be ignored, and the aesthetic value of dance must be emphasized. The aesthetic value of dance should be transformed into various sectors of society and promoted. By fully utilizing the intrinsic value and spiritual value of dance, a new model of dance education that "cultivates people" should be constructed, so that the development of dance runs through the entire Chinese humanistic spirit and traditional culture, achieving national "dance-ification" and enhancing the overall quality of the people.

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