

The Functional Positioning and Development Path of Dance Education in Universities under the Policy of Aesthetic Education

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Abstract: The continuous promotion of aesthetic education policies in the new era has led to a re-examination of the functional positioning and teaching methods of public dance courses in ordinary universities. The emphasis on skill training in previous teaching has been difficult to effectively respond to the current demand for aesthetic literacy and innovation ability in talent cultivation. This article starts with the functional reconstruction of dance education in universities under the context of the times, analyzes the transformation of training objectives brought about by policy guidance, sorts out the structural problems in curriculum design, teaching methods, and evaluation mechanisms, and explores the reform path of dance teaching for ordinary students.

Keywords: Art Education Policy; Dance Education; Institutions of Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Entering the current ordinary universities, public dance courses are at a subtle crossroads. On the one hand, aesthetic education has been elevated to the level of national education strategy, and dance, as an important carrier, should play a more profound role in talent cultivation; On the other hand, when the focus returns to the real classroom, problems such as vague curriculum positioning, single teaching methods, and lagging evaluation mechanisms make it difficult for dance education to fully unleash its educational potential. The gap between high expectations at the policy level and low efficiency at the practical level constitutes the starting point of this study. [1-2]

After observing public dance classes in multiple universities, the author couldn't help but have a vivid feeling: students in the classroom are often busy imitating movements and sticking to the rhythm, their bodies are trained to be more neat, and the emotions and thoughts that belong to individuals in their eyes are quietly fading away. This inevitably raises the question: What does dance education for non-dance majors bring to students? Is it the improvement of skills or the establishment of the ability to communicate with the world through the body? Obviously, there cannot be a simple equivalence between the training mode of professional colleges and the general education goals of ordinary universities. When the goal of dance education shifts from cultivating "dancers" to shaping "well-rounded individuals," the functionality, content, and methods of the curriculum need to be re-examined.

Based on this, this study attempts to place public dance courses in ordinary universities in the context of aesthetic education in the new era. Firstly, it clarifies the transformation direction of their functional positioning, then faces the real difficulties in current curriculum design and teaching practice, and finally explores feasible reform paths from the dimensions of curriculum reconstruction, teaching methods, and evaluation mechanisms. The original intention of the research is not to provide a universal solution, but to provide some reflective materials for colleagues on the front line of

teaching through theoretical analysis and practical observation, and to lay the foundation for promoting the true return of this course to the essence of aesthetic education.

2. Functional Reconstruction of Dance Education in Higher Education Institutions under the Context of the Times

2.1. Interpretation of Policy Orientation

Understanding the current functional transformation of dance education in universities cannot avoid a series of aesthetic education policy documents that have been intensively introduced at the national level in recent years. The "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving School Art Education in the New Era" issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, as well as the subsequent "School Art Education Infiltration Action", have pushed art education from the edge of previous school education to the forefront. These documents send a clear signal: aesthetic education is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of artistic talents, nor is it a decorative literary activity, but should be included in the entire process of talent cultivation, exerting its unique educational value of cultivating sentiment, warming the soul, and stimulating innovation and creativity. Dance, as an important art form, has been given unprecedented expectations in this round of policy adjustments. [3]

The two key words that repeatedly appear in policy texts are worth exploring: one is "aesthetic infiltration", and the other is "humanistic literacy". The former emphasizes that the implementation method of aesthetic education is not indoctrination preaching, but through the unique infectivity and penetration of art, allowing students to obtain emotional sublimation and spiritual nourishment unconsciously. The latter points to the goal positioning of aesthetic education, which is not to cultivate skilled performers, but to shape "people" with aesthetic style and humanistic heritage. The subtle change in this expression is actually redirecting dance education in universities: the focus of classroom teaching

needs to shift from standardizing movements to deepening experiences, from mechanically copying dance vocabulary to understanding and comprehending the cultural connotations behind dance.

Another fundamental shift brought about by policy guidance is the redefinition of training objectives. For a long time, dance education in universities has consciously or unconsciously applied the same discourse system to both professional and ordinary students - "basic training," "skills," and "plays" constitute the three cornerstones of the curriculum, and cultivating "people who can dance" has become an self-evident teaching pursuit. But the aesthetic education policy explicitly requires that "well-rounded individuals" be the core training goal. This means that for public dance courses, the measure of teaching effectiveness is no longer how many difficult movements students have mastered, but whether they have established the ability to communicate with their bodies, whether they have gained aesthetic pleasure and self-expression channels in dance, and whether they can transfer the perception and creativity learned in dance classes to professional learning and daily life. Professor Wang Jie from Beijing Normal University mentioned in an academic lecture that the core competency orientation of education reform in the new era is essentially to promote the fundamental transformation of talent concept - from traditional skilled talents to innovative talents with innovative consciousness and thinking. This judgment provides an important theoretical footnote for understanding the functional reconstruction of dance education in universities.[4]

2.2. Diversified Positioning of Core Functions

Against the backdrop of profound changes in policy context, the functional positioning of public dance courses in ordinary universities needs to break away from the one-dimensional thinking of "skill imparting" and shift towards a more diverse and inclusive functional framework. This is not a dissolution of the intrinsic value of dance, but a deep exploration of its educational potential.

The cultivation of aesthetic perception should be the most fundamental and core function of dance education. The so-called aesthetic perception is not only the ability to appreciate beautiful works, but also a sensory connection established through the body with the world. The particularity of dance teaching lies in that it allows students to experience both perception and internalization, as well as expression and externalization, in the same medium - the body. When students follow music to complete an impromptu exercise in class, and repeatedly ponder the emotional weight of a certain action during rehearsal, they are actually engaging in an aesthetic experience activity with the body as the venue. This experience cannot be replaced by abstract concept transmission, nor can it be exhausted by book knowledge. It is in this sense that dance courses undertake a unique mission to enhance students' artistic sensitivity, emotional experience, and aesthetic judgment, which is irreplaceable by other disciplines.

Cultural inheritance and innovation are another important function that dance education cannot avoid. Dance is never just a combination of movements, it carries the physical memory and emotional expression of a nation. The practical exploration of the School of Music at Shanxi University provides a noteworthy example. They have created a series of exhibition brands such as "Dance Comes from the Yellow

River" and "Yungang Random Thoughts" around the cultural resources of the Three Jin Dynasties, guiding students to draw creative inspiration from Yellow River culture, Yungang Grottoes, and Shanxi folk dance. This approach of transforming local cultural resources into curriculum content not only solves the problem of homogenization of teaching content, but also allows students to establish a deep connection with local culture through physical practice. The step-by-step path explored by the Dance School of Northwest Minzu University in Dunhuang dance teaching, which includes "understanding the origin of image - imitating classic body posture - perceiving spiritual connotations - transforming dance vocabulary - shaping vivid images", also reflects the deep integration of cultural gene decoding and body language reconstruction. For public dance courses in ordinary universities, exploring regional cultural resources and introducing ethnic and folk dance materials are not only enriching teaching content, but also helping students establish cultural identity and cultural confidence.

The function of integrating body and mind and shaping personality has a unique implementation path in dance education. Dance is an art form that uses the body as a medium, which means it has a natural advantage in promoting the harmonious development of students' body and mind. Modern university education places too much emphasis on intellectual training, reducing the body to a container that carries the brain. The educational philosophy of the binary opposition between body and mind leads to a blunting of students' perception and a decline in their emotional expression abilities. Dance classes precisely provide a possibility for repairing physical and mental fission. When students focus on the coordination of breathing and movement, and learn to coordinate with others' rhythms in group dance, they are not only exercising their bodies, but also integrating their senses and consciousness, individual and collective. Some researchers summarize the educational value of dance as the unity of "knowledge emotion intention action". Long term dance training can also cultivate students' tenacious willpower and teamwork spirit, which are indispensable dimensions in personality shaping.

The stimulation of innovative thinking and practical ability is a highly anticipated new function of dance education in contemporary society. The traditional concept regards dance as a 'performing art', emphasizing the faithful reproduction of established works. But in the new era of dance education, there is an increasing emphasis on creative and improvisational abilities, as they involve higher-level mental activities such as imagination, creativity, and problem-solving skills. In the view of Professor Hu Xiao from Xinghai Conservatory of Music, there is a problem of "being proficient in skills but neglecting logic" in the current cultivation of dance talents. It is necessary to achieve a transformation from knowledge imparting to literacy empowerment through the 5C core competency model (cultural understanding and inheritance, innovation, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking). For public dance courses, encouraging students to try cross-border integration and guiding them to combine dance with their professional background to express their understanding of life, society, and the times in choreography is itself a cultivation of innovative ability. The introduction of interdisciplinary integrated teaching and project-based learning is creating more possibilities for the realization of this function.

3. The Development Path of Dance Education in Colleges and Universities under Realistic Examination

3.1. Real-world Dilemma

Entering the current public dance classrooms in universities, a common situation is that the curriculum often follows the skill training logic of professional colleges. Many courses offered to non dance majors still focus on mastering the basic movements of specific dance genres and completing several combinations or finished plays as their core tasks. The direct consequence of this course logic is that the aesthetic education course, which was originally intended for all students, has objectively become a selective teaching method - students with better physical coordination are more likely to gain a sense of achievement, while most students gradually lose interest in dance through mechanical imitation. The homogenization of the curriculum system is also reflected in the selection of content. The teaching of ethnic and folk dances often stays at the level of imitating movement styles, and discussions about the cultural causes, regional characteristics, and the correlation between lifestyle behind movements are rarely included in the classroom. Students acquire forms through repeated practice, but find it difficult to understand the deep logic behind the formation of forms, resulting in a clear disconnect between dance learning and cultural cognition.

The issue of teaching cannot be ignored either. Public dance classes generally continue the traditional model of "oral transmission and hands-on teaching", with teachers standing in front to demonstrate and students practicing in front of the mirror. This model is effective in establishing basic bodily perception, but if it becomes the only form of the classroom, it can easily solidify students in a passive receiving position. The author observed that in many classrooms, the time allocation is highly focused on correcting movements and unifying rhythms, leaving students with extremely limited space to experience music, understand works, and express emotions. What is worth reflecting on is that the introduction of technology has not truly changed the classroom ecology - multimedia devices mostly remain at the level of playing music and recording videos, and virtual simulation, motion capture and other technological means are still scarce in public dance classrooms in ordinary universities. The instrumental use of technological tools has prevented teaching methods from fundamentally breaking through traditional frameworks.

The single orientation of the evaluation mechanism further reinforces the above-mentioned dilemma. The final report performance or final exam occupies a large proportion of the assessment, and the scoring criteria often focus on quantifiable indicators such as action completion, rhythm accuracy, and formation neatness. Students lack corresponding records and evaluations of their thinking, attempts, and even failures in daily practice. This result oriented evaluation logic inevitably tilts teachers' energy allocation towards the final stage, with a large amount of teaching resources invested in action polishing and stage effect optimization, while insufficient attention is paid to students' growth in understanding works, emotional expression, creative ideas, and other aspects. What is even more alarming is that the evaluation thinking based on

competition awards and technical indicators has quietly led dance education towards a utilitarian track, gradually deviating from the goal of infiltrating the soul and cultivating personality pursued by aesthetic education.

3.2. Optimization Strategy

To solve the above difficulties, efforts need to be made systematically from the dimensions of curriculum system, teaching methods, faculty construction, evaluation mechanism, and educational space. Curriculum restructuring is a fundamental step. The public dance courses for ordinary college students should break the linear logic of single skill training and explore modular design ideas. Consider building three levels of "basic perception cultural understanding creative practice": the basic perception level is open to all students, with body development, rhythm training, and improvisation experience as the main content, lowering the technical threshold and allowing more students to gain initial dance experience; The cultural understanding layer focuses on the cultural interpretation of forms such as ethnic folk dance and classical dance, guiding students to understand the historical context and regional characteristics behind the action vocabulary; The creative practice layer provides creative guidance and the possibility of cross-border integration for students who are interested in delving deeper. This course structure not only avoids the "one size fits all" technical requirements, but also provides diverse paths for students with different foundations and needs.

The innovation of teaching methods should return to the experiential essence of dance art. In the classroom, it may be appropriate to compress the time for collective correction and increase the space for individual feelings and expression. For example, in the teaching of ethnic and folk dances, students can be guided to first watch original ecological image materials, discuss the relationship between movements, labor methods, and geographical environment, and then enter the stage of body imitation; In creative teaching, project-based learning can be introduced to create themed works around campus life and social issues, allowing students to observe and reflect on life through the process of organizing actions. Digital technology can become a powerful support for enriching teaching methods - multi angle video playback helps students establish visual cognition of movements, virtual simulation technology expands the possibility of integrating dance with video and digital art, and online platforms provide convenient conditions for the accumulation of procedural materials. But it should be emphasized that technology always serves the deepening of experience, rather than replacing the experience itself.

The improvement of the comprehensive literacy of the teaching staff is a key support. Most of the teachers currently responsible for public dance teaching come from professional dance schools, and their educational experience determines their emphasis on technical training. After shifting towards aesthetic education, teachers need to establish a broader humanistic perspective. This is not to deny the value of technical training, but to establish a comprehensive understanding of aesthetic education, cultural inheritance, and personality shaping based on technology. Teachers should have the ability to interpret the cultural connotations of works, the patience to guide students from physical perception to emotional expression, and the awareness of interdisciplinary dialogue. This requires follow-up from the teacher training system, as well as individual teachers completing self-

renewal through continuous reading and thinking.

The shift of the evaluation system is the institutional guarantee for returning to the essence of aesthetic education. Process evaluation should be the main focus, including improvisation in daily classrooms, contribution in group cooperation, and traces of thinking in the creative process, all of which should be included in the evaluation perspective. The final presentation can be retained, but the weight needs to be adjusted, and the scoring criteria should be expanded from a single technical indicator to a comprehensive consideration of the work's intention, structural arrangement, body language, and theme matching. The writing of aesthetic experience reports, the explanation of creative intentions, and the recording of the process of modifying works can all serve as evaluation criteria. This evaluation shift aims to guide students to view dance learning as a continuous introspection and expression, rather than the completion of phased tasks.

The collaborative cultivation of campus culture and social services provides a broader space for dance education. Dance workshops, art salons, cross departmental exhibitions, and other activities can break the boundaries of time and space in the classroom and integrate dance into daily campus life. Going out of campus and collaborating with community cultural centers, primary and secondary schools, and art venues provides students with opportunities to understand the social functions of dance in real-life scenarios. Participating in community performances, intangible cultural heritage inheritance projects, and public dance teaching is not only the application of skills, but also a personal recognition of the cultural value of dance. This extension allows dance education to no longer be limited to the walls of the classroom, but to fulfill its aesthetic education mission in a broader social context. [5-6]

4. Summary

The fundamental problem with the reform of public dance courses lies not in the partial adjustment of teaching methods, but in the re anchoring of educational goals. The previous analysis attempts to present a basic judgment: when the policy context pushes aesthetic education from the periphery to the center, and dance education is endowed with multiple expectations of aesthetic infiltration, cultural inheritance, and personality shaping, the original skill based teaching paradigm is no longer able to carry these functions. Reform is therefore not about patching up, but rather a comprehensive shift from curriculum objectives, teaching logic to evaluation methods.

The internal logic behind this shift is clear. If the dance classroom still focuses on the achievement of movement specifications as the core concern, students will only gain technical control over their bodies through repeated corrections, rather than aesthetic perception and emotional

expression abilities established through their bodies. What really needs to be changed is the way of understanding "teaching effectiveness" - not how many difficult combinations students have mastered, not the stage effect of the final report, but whether they have gained the ability to communicate with their bodies in the course, whether they have experienced the pleasure of self-expression in improvisation and creation, and whether they can use dance as a way of understanding the world. The "Qinghe Cup" at Shanxi University encourages students to draw creative inspiration from local culture, while Anhui Academy of Arts combines technical training and humanistic cultivation through the study of classic works. The common direction of these explorations is to shift dance learning from imitating "form" to comprehending "meaning".

The adjustment of the practical path has therefore gained a clear direction. The curriculum structure needs to shift from single skill training to modular design of "basic perception cultural understanding creative practice", so that students from different starting points can find a way to enter dance. The teaching method needs to change from the single mode of "oral and personal teaching" to the deep integration of experience and expression to leave room for individual feelings. The evaluation mechanism needs to shift from a results oriented approach to a process and development oriented approach, incorporating daily thinking, collaborative contributions, and creative traces into the perspective. These adjustments are not a negation of technical training, but a repositioning of its value within a more complete educational framework.

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