

# Writing poems of aesthetic education with the body—the aesthetic education value and practice of "dancing child hearts"

Fu'er YU

Qingdao Children's Palace, Qingdao 266000, China

**Abstract:** Aesthetic education constitutes an indispensable component of holistic development education. Dance education, with its unique physicality, emotional engagement, and comprehensive nature, plays an irreplaceable role in aesthetic education for primary and secondary schools. Grounded in the intrinsic characteristics of dance art, this study systematically elucidates the distinctive value of dance education in cultivating aesthetic literacy and fostering well-rounded personalities through four dimensions: bodily cognition, emotional expression, cultural identity, and personality shaping. By addressing current challenges in dance education practices, the research proposes optimization strategies. Findings indicate that dance education transcends mere artistic skill training; it serves as a sensory aesthetic carrier through physical participation. Through the integration of mind and body, it achieves aesthetic enlightenment, emotional cultivation, and value guidance in a subtle yet profound manner, serving as a vital vehicle for realizing the educational objectives of "nurturing individuals through beauty and refining character via aesthetics".

**Keywords:** dance education; aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools; body cognition; aesthetic education value; practical approaches

## 1 Aesthetic education in response to the call of the times

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed the development goal of "significantly enhancing social civilization levels", placing aesthetic education at the forefront of cultural development [1]. The principle of "educating through beauty and culture" has been put forward, providing clear guidance for the development of art education [2]. The essence of art training lies in shaping well-rounded personalities and cultivating humanistic sentiments through artistic immersion. Dance education, taking the body as a medium, transforms abstract aesthetics into tangible physical experiences, serving as an irreplaceable component of primary and secondary aesthetic education. This paper explores the aesthetic educational value and practical approaches of dance education from four dimensions: bodily cognition, emotional expression, cultural identity, and personality development.

## 2 Tracing the origin and returning to essence: The intrinsic integration of dance education and aesthetic education

### 2.1 Beauty inspires truth: contemporary reflections on aesthetic education

Aesthetic education nurtures students' sound aesthetic perspectives and enhances their ability to appreciate and create beauty through artistic, natural, and social aesthetic experiences. Its essence transcends mere artistic skill training, evolving

a synthesis of sensory education, character development, and creative learning. As Schiller observed in *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, aesthetic appreciation is the essential pathway to freedom. In an era marked by "significant advancements in social civilization", aesthetic education has transitioned from a supplementary role to a core component in the all-round development of primary and secondary school students at crucial growth stages, becoming a vital means for nurturing the new generation.

## 2.2 Embodiment as a medium: the ontological dimension of dance

Dance is an art form that primarily employs refined, organized, and aesthetically enhanced human movements as its expressive medium [3]. Compared to other art disciplines, dance education boasts three distinctive characteristics: Physicality—the body functions as both a medium of expression and an aesthetic carrier, emphasizing the integration of mind and body; Synthesis—it incorporate diverse artistic elements such as music, visual arts, and theater; Intuitiveness – it engages viewers visually and emotionally through dynamic human movements, creating profound emotional resonance.

## 2.3 Integration of body and mind: the foundation of dance aesthetic education

The implementation of aesthetic education requires concrete and sensory mediums. Dance education takes the body as its foundation, transforming abstract aesthetic concepts into tangible and actionable physical experiences through movement training and emotional expression [4]. This compensates for the limitations of traditional intellectual-oriented education, which neglects sensory engagement, serving as an effective approach to practicing the experiential and practical principles of aesthetic education. Dance education makes aesthetic appreciation a fully immersive life experience, which precisely embodies the essence of "educating through beauty and cultivating through culture".

# 3 Diversity and symbiosis: dimensions of aesthetic education value in dance education

## 3.1 Nourishing the body and perceiving the foundation of aesthetics

Aesthetic appreciation begins with sensory perception. For primary and secondary school students, the body serves as their primary medium for understanding the world and expressing the self. Dance education facilitates the development of acute bodily awareness through systematic physical training, rhythmic training, and spatial perception training.

In scientific dance training, students mobilize multiple senses—including vision, hearing, kinesthesia, and touch—via coordinated sensory stimulation, which significantly enhances aesthetic perception. By attuning to bodily rhythms and perceiving spatial dimensions, learners develop an acute ability to capture the beauty of life—a competency that textbook knowledge alone cannot replicate. For instance, the acclaimed children's dance piece *Shang Jie Li La!* creatively draws on the core movement pattern of Jiaozhou Yangge—a traditional folk dance—and transforms its distinctive "foot twisting and grinding" technique into child-friendly language, allowing students to experience regional cultural aesthetics through dance.

## 3.2 Expressing emotions and building a bridge of the soul

Primary and secondary school students are in the peak period of emotional development, with rich inner experiences but often lacking appropriate channels for expression. Dance, as a non-verbal form of emotional expression, provides students with an outlet for releasing emotions and venting feelings.

When students physically embody graceful melodies or passionate rhythms, they are not merely imitating movements, but also experiencing emotional empathy and spiritual purification. This process helps transform inner emotions—joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness—into aesthetically valuable artistic expressions, enriching their inner worlds [5]. During group dance rehearsals, students must pay attention to others' movements and emotional states, which cultivates empathy and teamwork awareness. In the dance piece *Gesang Flowers Bloom by the Sea*, the "Hadah Offering" segment creates a collective ritual atmosphere, allowing participants to feel the profound bond of "Shandong–Xizang Fraternal Unity"

through emotional resonance.

### 3.3 Inheriting culture and consolidating cultural identity

Dance is a carrier of ethnic culture and an embodied expression of culture [6]. China's ethnic folk dances and classical dances embody rich historical memories and philosophical thoughts. Conducting ethnic dance education in primary and secondary schools is an effective way to implement the "integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture into schools."

When students learn the "knee tremors" of Tibetan dance, the "shoulder shrugs" of Mongolian dance, and the "twisting and rolling" movements of Jiaozhou Yangko, their bodies directly "perceive" the aesthetic sensibilities of different ethnic groups and regions. This physical experience resonates more profoundly than textbook knowledge. The performance *Let's Go to the Streets!* creatively adapts Qingdao's intangible cultural heritage elements like Gaojia sugar balls and clay sculptures called "tigers" into playful interpretations, allowing students to experience the unique charm of street culture through dance. Meanwhile, *Gesang Flowers Bloom by the Sea* seamlessly integrates Tibetan dance vocabulary with maritime imagery, showcasing cultural diversity of the Chinese nation through the artistic fusion of Tibetan and maritime dance.

### 3.4 Shaping personality and nurturing the spiritual soul

Dance learning is a process characterized by the coexistence of "hardship and beauty". Basic dance skill training involves physiological challenges, during which students develop patience and perseverance. The sense of achievement gained enhances self-confidence and self-efficacy. Dance training requires high levels of concentration, discipline, and attention to detail. This rigorous academic approach helps cultivate good behavioral habits.

Dance education empowers students to develop personalized creative works while building foundational vocabulary. Improvisational dance serves as an effective catalyst for creativity, breaking conventional "right or wrong" mindsets and encouraging bold imagination and trial-and-error approaches. When choreographing dance pieces, students draw on knowledge from music theory, composition, and narrative techniques, honing logical reasoning and strategic planning skills. Through physical discipline, dance education strengthens willpower while nurturing innovative thinking via creative stimulation—exemplifying how artistic training transcends technical instruction to fulfill its core educational purpose.

## **4 Challenges and breakthroughs: a realistic examination and path exploration of dance education**

### 4.1 Analysis of dilemmas: the tension between ideology and reality

Despite the growing recognition of dance education's value, primary and secondary schools still face significant challenges in current practice. Conceptually, some institutions continue to regard dance as a "minor discipline" or "an exclusive field for specially talented students". In terms of faculty, there is a severe shortage of professional dance instructors, with many schools relying on music or physical education teachers to deliver dance instruction, resulting in a lack of systematic and professional instruction. Resource disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as across schools, severely hinder the provision of teaching facilities and curriculum delivery. Additionally, the absence of a scientific evaluation system makes it difficult to quantify teaching outcomes and demonstrate the effectiveness of aesthetic education.

### 4.2 Path exploration: a symphony of adherence to principles and innovation

Shift prevailing mindsets and consolidate institutional foundations. Dance education should be regarded as an essential component of aesthetic education, with rigorous implementation of curriculum standards and guaranteed access to sufficient teaching hours, funding and facilities.

Optimize staffing resources to consolidate the foundation of talent cultivation. Further strengthen the professional

development of dance education, and mitigate staffing shortages through initiatives such as "itinerant teaching and professional service procurement".

Developing curricula to strengthen cultural foundations. By integrating local culture into school-based curriculum development and designing tiered teaching content, dance education can become more child-friendly and life-connected. Successful creative examples, including outstanding works such as *Let's Go Out to the Streets!* and *Gesang Flowers Bloom by the Sea*, demonstrate that dance creations rooted in local culture and connected to children's daily experiences are most effective in evoking emotional resonance.

Multifaceted assessment approaches should return to the core of education. Establish a comprehensive evaluation framework that integrates formative and summative assessment, focusing on students' participation, collaborative awareness, and aesthetic development, thereby aligning evaluations with the original educational objectives.

## **5 Conclusion: Dancing as a vehicle for moral instruction and aesthetic pursuit**

"Crafting the poetry of aesthetic education through physical expression" captures the unique value of dance education. It transforms beauty from abstract concepts into tangible experiences, shifts aesthetic appreciation from passive observation to active participation, and evolves education from one-way indoctrination to immersive engagement. Dance education is not about cultivating elite professional dancers, but rather about fostering holistic development in every child. In an era marked by "significant advancement in social civilization", we must ensure every child have the opportunity to experience bodily freedom and the rhythm of life through dance. Returning dance to its educational purpose and restoring education to its essence of "humanity" not only align with the original intent of aesthetic education but also embodies the fundamental value of dance education.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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