

# The reflection on China's contemporary aesthetic education in higher education

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# Outline

1. The concept of aesthetic education
2. Evidence: the effect of art education on critical thinking
3. Aesthetic education in higher education in China
4. Reflection



# 1. The concept of aesthetic education

- Aesthetic education is the education for harmonious development of all kinds of attributes such as morality, social responsibility, wisdom, exquisite aesthetical ability, and healthy life attitude, complement of psychological structure, perfect personality, humanity, justice, and freedom.

General education

Aesthetic education

Art education

A Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. The top-left circle is light green and labeled 'Education'. The bottom-left circle is pink and labeled 'Psychology'. The bottom-right circle is yellow and labeled 'Aesthetics'. The central intersection of all three circles is labeled 'Aesthetic education'. The intersection of 'Education' and 'Psychology' is a greyish-blue. The intersection of 'Education' and 'Aesthetics' is a blue-green. The intersection of 'Psychology' and 'Aesthetics' is a purple-orange. The background is white with a blue wavy border at the top.

Education

Aesthetic education

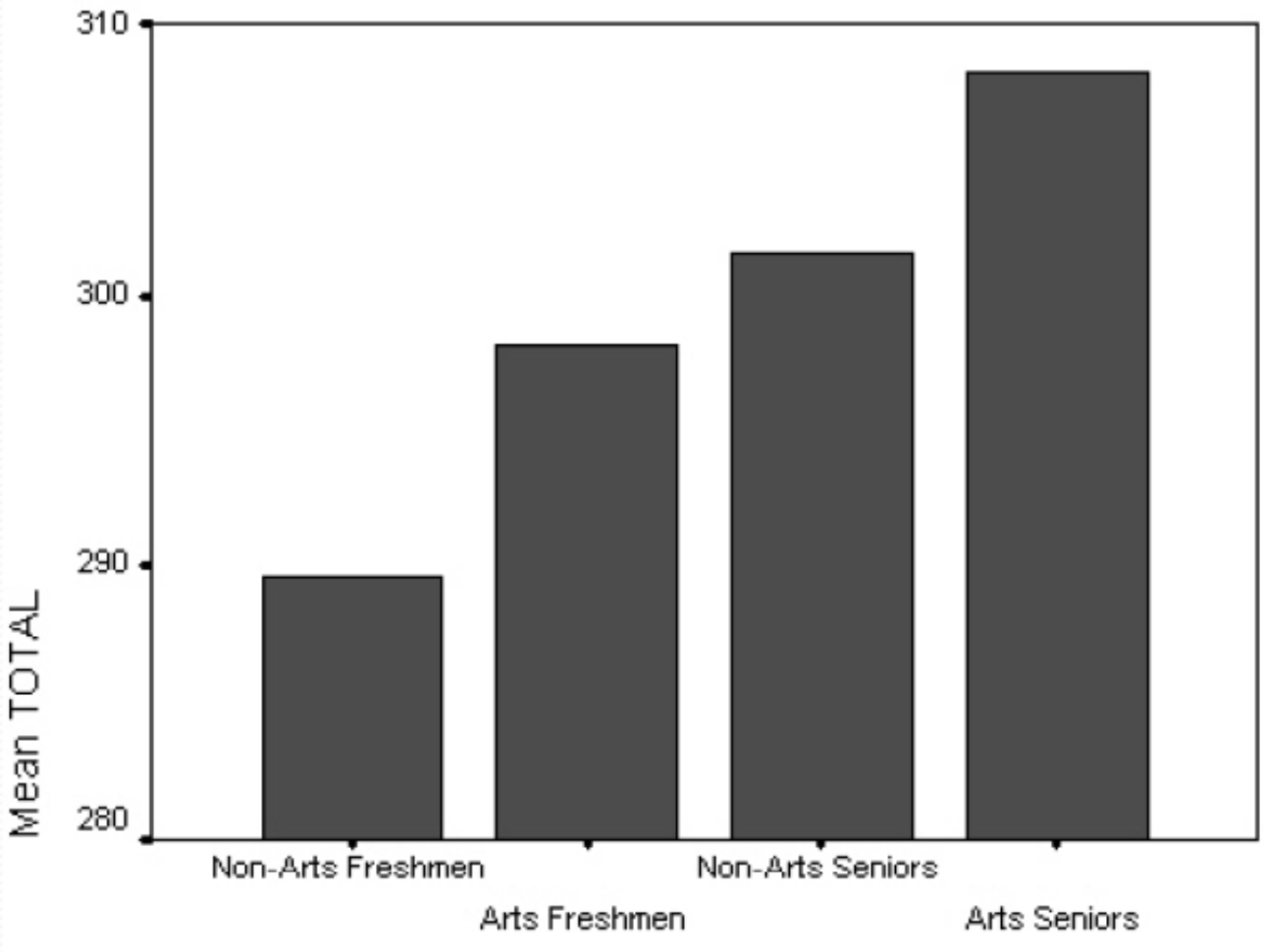
Psychology

Aesthetics

## 2. Evidence: the effect of art education on critical thinking

- *Critical Thinking Dispositions as an Outcome of Undergraduate Education, The Journal of General Education, Volume 56, Number 1, 2007*
- Conclusion: art curriculum and instruction enhance the disposition to think critically.

**Figure 1.** Graphic Mean Comparison of the Four Groups' Total California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory Scores



Data Source: Lampert (2007) - the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI)



### **3. Aesthetic education in higher education in China**

- Necessity of aesthetic education in China
- Contemporary situation in China
- Problems
- Action – two case studies of general education curriculum design in Chinese universities





## 3.1 The necessity of aesthetic education in higher education

- Higher education as the best stage for aesthetic education in China
- Chinese students lack imagination and creativity
  - A survey by an international education evaluation group in 2009 shows that of 29 countries, Chinese children's calculation ability ranks first in the world, while their imagination ranks last, and their creativity ranks fifth from the bottom.
    - *(By Liang Jun, People's Daily Online 16:29, August 04, 2010)*
- The quality of higher education is declining



## 3.2 The contemporary aesthetic education

- *The outline of the medium & long-term educational reform and development plan (2010-2020)*
- Chinese government emphasizes the enhancement and improvement of aesthetic education, hoping to cultivate students' good aesthetic sentiment and humane quality, promote the organically integration of moral education, intellectual education, physical education and aesthetic education, and improve students' comprehensive quality.
- Aesthetic education: affiliation → independent
- In most Chinese universities general education is popularized, and art courses are open in 80% universities.

## 3.3 The problems of aesthetic education in China

- Lack of suitable teachers and textbooks
- The subordinate status remains.
- Difficult to evaluate aesthetic education
- Difficult to deal with the relationship between knowledge and transformation in aesthetic education
- Many challenges from society and culture



## 3.4 Action

- Some universities in China have already involved aesthetic education researches and practices in their curriculum design and student activities.
- Sun Yat-Sen University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, and Peking University.

# The general education course of Class 2014, School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University

	Courses required by the country and university		Basic skill courses of general education			Core courses of general education		
	Political theory	Physical education	Chinese language art	English	Math	Humanity	Social science	Natural science
Freshman, Fall semester	Moral and law basic	Physical education	Chinese writing	Oral English (1)	Linear algebra	Western civilization	Principals of economics (1)	
Freshman, Spring semester	Outline of Chinese model history	Physical education	Chinese communication	Oral English (2)	Multivariate calculus	Chinese civilization	Principals of economics (2)	
Sophomore, Fall semester	Basic principal of Marxism	Physical education		Written English (1)	Probability theory and statistics	Critical thinking and moral reasoning	Principal of psychology	Introduction of life science
Sophomore, Spring semester	Mao Zedong's thought and the introduction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics	Physical education		Written English (2)		Art of aesthetic education (a series of courses)	China and the world (a series of courses)	Introduction of physics

# The general education course of Liberal arts college of Sun Yat-Sen University – 2010 Fall

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 (8: 00-8: 45)	Latin		Latin		Latin
2 (8: 55-9: 40)					
3 (9: 50-10: 35)					
4 (10: 45-11: 30)	The classic of poetry	The classic of poetry		English	The classic of poetry
5 (11: 40-12: 25)					
6 (12: 35-13: 20)					
7 (13: 30-14: 15)					
8 (14: 25-15: 10)	Plato	Science fiction film and postmodern		Song poems and the Song society	Drawing
9 (15: 20-16: 05)					
10 (16: 15-17: 00)					Physical education
11 (17: 10-17: 55)					
13 (19:00-19:45)		Foreign art history			
14 (19:55-20:40)					



## 3.4 Action – Chinese traditional culture

- Chinese traditional culture has rich resources in aesthetic education.
  - Confucius: music education is the final phase of respectable man
  - Lao Tzu and Chuang Tze: self-education to gain the Great Beauty and realize freedom
  - Buddhism: purify one's mind to achieve enlightenment.
- Aesthetic education in China does not mean complete westernization, but the perfect integration of the native and western cultural resources.

## 4. The reflection of aesthetic education in higher education

- **Curriculum design**
- Aesthetic education is a systematical education. For university students, the curriculum can involve introduction of aesthetics, aesthetic experience, appreciation and criticism of literature and arts, literary (arts) theories, artistic activities and so on.
- The ancient masterpieces of western and oriental civilizations are the foundation of aesthetic education.



## 4. The reflection of aesthetic education in higher education

- **Pedagogy and idea**
- The cultivation of imagination and critical thinking are the key pedagogies in aesthetic education.
- “Encounters with the arts have a unique power to release imagination.” – Maxine Greene
- “We will ... help to construct and create authentic and meaningful communities.” – Maxine Greene



Thank you