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# Research on Path Innovation Exploration and Value Realization of Vocational Undergraduate Piano Curriculum from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education

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**Abstract:** Against the backdrop of comprehensive enhancement of aesthetic education in schools during the new era, vocational undergraduate education—as a pivotal model integrating higher education and vocational training—undertakes the critical mission of cultivating high-quality applied, interdisciplinary, and innovative talents. Piano courses, serving as core curricula in vocational undergraduate programs such as arts education, early childhood education, and music education, function not only as skill-training platforms but also as essential pathways for aesthetic education implementation, enhancing students’ aesthetic literacy, humanistic spirit, and comprehensive vocational competencies. Currently, some vocational undergraduate piano programs still exhibit issues including overemphasis on technical drills at the expense of aesthetic cultivation, prioritizing technique instruction over cultural immersion, favoring uniform requirements over individual development, and focusing on classroom teaching rather than practical application, which deviate from aesthetic education principles and vocational undergraduate talent cultivation objectives. Grounded in the core tenets of aesthetic education and aligned with vocational undergraduate institutional positioning and talent development goals, this study explores innovative approaches to piano curriculum design in pedagogical philosophy, content development, teaching methodologies, practical implementation, and evaluation systems. It elucidates the educational value and implementation pathways of piano courses within aesthetic education frameworks, providing theoretical references and practical insights for vocational undergraduate piano curriculum reform and aesthetic education integration.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic Education; Vocational Undergraduate Program; Piano Curriculum; Path Innovation; Value Realization

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## 1. Introduction

Aesthetic education cultivates students’ ability to recognize, experience, appreciate, create, and disseminate beauty. As a vital component of moral education, it plays an irreplaceable role in shaping well-rounded personalities, enhancing cultural literacy, and fostering innovative thinking. In 2020, China’s Ministry of Education issued the “Guidelines on Strengthening Aesthetic Education in Schools for the New Era,” mandating the integration of aesthetic education throughout talent

development processes and promoting deep collaboration between aesthetic education and specialized vocational training. Vocational undergraduate programs, guided by industry needs, aim to cultivate high-level technical professionals with solid skills and comprehensive competencies. Piano courses, serving as foundational subjects for arts and education majors, combine technical proficiency, aesthetic appreciation, humanistic values, and practical application, making them a crucial platform for aesthetic education implementation<sup>[1]</sup>.

However, influenced by traditional teaching models, current vocational undergraduate piano courses exhibit prominent issues: disconnection between skill training and aesthetic education, mismatch between specialized instruction and professional demands, as well as separation between classroom learning and practical application. Consequently, the aesthetic educational value and pedagogical functions of these courses remain underutilized. Addressing this challenge, this study adopts an aesthetic education perspective while integrating the distinctive features of vocational undergraduate education. It explores innovative approaches to piano curriculum design, aiming to uncover the aesthetic, professional, and educational dimensions of piano courses. The initiative seeks to transform piano education from a “skills-oriented” model to a “competency-oriented” and “aesthetics-focused” paradigm, ultimately achieving the teaching objectives of cultivating character through beauty, enriching minds through artistry, and enhancing capabilities through technical mastery<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2. Core Connotations and Positioning of Vocational Undergraduate Piano Courses from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education**

### **2.1. Core Connotation**

The vocational undergraduate piano curriculum under aesthetic education philosophy centers on aesthetic cultivation, builds upon skill training, aligns with professional demands, and is supported by humanistic literacy. It breaks away from traditional piano teaching’s limitations of prioritizing technique over artistry and practice over appreciation, integrating aesthetic perception, emotional expression, cultural understanding, creative innovation, and vocational competency development. The program not only requires students to master fundamental skills such as piano performance, accompaniment, and vocal performance, but also emphasizes guiding learners to perceive, comprehend, express, and create beauty through music education. By embedding aesthetic education principles throughout the teaching process, it achieves synergistic development between skill enhancement and holistic literacy cultivation<sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.2. Course Positioning**

The integration of aesthetic education and technical skills aligns with vocational undergraduate education requirements, using piano training as a vehicle for aesthetic cultivation. Through teaching activities such as performance, music appreciation, and composition, students’ aesthetic literacy is enhanced while avoiding utilitarian approaches that prioritize technical mastery over aesthetic values. Vocational training and humanistic education are unified by incorporating demands from preschool education, art education, and social arts programs. Core competencies like piano accompaniment, improvisational performance, classroom demonstrations, and stage acting are strengthened, while integrating music culture, humanistic values, and professional ethics to cultivate versatile professionals with both artistic excellence and ethical integrity. The approach balances universal accessibility and personalized instruction, addressing significant academic disparities among vocational students through tiered teaching methods and tailored learning strategies. By respecting individual interests and strengths, this model ensures every student gains aesthetic experiences and skill development through piano education<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **3. Practical Challenges in Implementing Aesthetic Education in Vocational Undergraduate Piano Programs**

#### **3.1. Deviation in teaching philosophy: Overemphasis on technical skills at the expense of artistic cultivation, with insufficient aesthetic education**

Some teachers equate piano courses with skill training programs, focusing primarily on performance proficiency and technical standardization as core evaluation criteria while neglecting the cultivation of aesthetic experience, emotional expression, and humanistic connotations. This results in students demonstrating technical mastery but lacking aesthetic appeal and artistic depth, leading to a severe deficiency in the aesthetic education function of the curriculum.

#### **3.2. Rigidification of teaching content: Significant Westernization tendency with lack of indigenous culture**

The teaching content is predominantly based on Western classical piano works, with insufficient representation of China's ethnic music, red music, and regional characteristic music pieces. This lacks the cultural depth and spiritual connotation required for aesthetic education, making it difficult to achieve the educational goals of cultivating individuals through culture and enriching hearts with beauty. The evaluation system is one-sided, emphasizing results over processes and neglecting the effectiveness of aesthetic education. Assessments primarily rely on final performance tests, focusing on skill completion while overlooking students' aesthetic expression, emotional articulation, cultural understanding, and practical innovation—key dimensions of aesthetic education. Such evaluations fail to guide teaching back to the essence of aesthetic education<sup>[5,6]</sup>.

#### **3.3. Monotonous teaching model: rote instruction with insufficient aesthetic interaction**

Traditional piano pedagogy predominantly follows the “teacher demonstration, student imitation, error correction, and consolidation” model, with technique instruction at its core. This approach lacks essential aesthetic education components such as listening appreciation, emotional engagement, collaborative exploration, and creative practice, resulting in passive learning that hinders the development of aesthetic perception and creative abilities. Insufficient practical scenarios, classroom isolation, and disconnection between aesthetic education and vocational training have confined piano instruction to practice rooms and classrooms. The absence of immersive environments like stage performances, campus aesthetic programs, and community art services prevents students from integrating aesthetic literacy with professional skills, making it difficult for them to meet the dual demands of aesthetic competence and practical capabilities required in modern workplaces<sup>[7]</sup>.

### **4. Innovative Approaches to Piano Curriculum in Vocational Undergraduate Programs from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education**

#### **4.1. Conceptual Innovation: Establishing the Teaching Philosophy of “Nurturing Aesthetics and Enhancing Competence through Skills”**

We will fully integrate aesthetic education principles into piano curriculum instruction, moving beyond the traditional “skills-first” mindset to establish a teaching philosophy centered on aesthetic appreciation, grounded in technical skills, oriented toward professional development, and aimed at cultivating comprehensive competencies. The curriculum is designed not only to develop students' piano technical proficiency but also to foster healthy aesthetic sensibilities, robust cultural literacy, and well-rounded personality through music education. This approach achieves organic integration of skill training, aesthetic cultivation, and career advancement.

#### **4.2. Content Innovation: Building a Tripartite Curriculum Framework Integrating “Aesthetics + Culture + Profession”**

Enrich aesthetic appreciation content by adding teaching materials such as piano work analysis, fundamentals of music aesthetics, and performance style interpretation, guiding students to listen to piano works of different styles and periods, and to appreciate the beauty of melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre, thereby enhancing their aesthetic perception. Integrate ethnic and red culture by carefully selecting classic Chinese piano works, adaptations of ethnic and folk music, and red-themed piano pieces, incorporating China’s excellent traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture into teaching to strengthen students’ cultural confidence and national identity. Align with occupational job requirements by combining the characteristics of vocational undergraduate programs to reinforce vocational skills such as improvisational accompaniment, piano singing, classroom demonstrations, and children’s piano teaching, integrating aesthetic education with vocational skill training to improve students’ job adaptability.

#### **4.3. Methodological Innovation: Adoption of Diversified Aesthetic Education Teaching Methods**

The Aesthetic Experience Method immerses students in musical beauty through listening, singing, performing, and reflection, guiding them to understand emotional depth and cultural context of musical works, achieving emotional resonance and spiritual enrichment through artistic appreciation. The Tiered Instruction Method categorizes learners into three levels—beginner, intermediate, and professional—based on foundational skills and learning capacities, developing customized teaching content and objectives to ensure individualized development of aesthetic perception and technical proficiency. The Collaborative Inquiry Method fosters teamwork through activities like four-hand coordination, small ensemble performances, and group singing sessions, cultivating collaborative skills and collective aesthetic awareness while enhancing musical expression and creative thinking through interactive exchanges. The Digital Teaching Method leverages multimedia tools, online platforms, and smart pianos to expand educational resources, enriching aesthetic experiences through audio recordings, videos, and virtual performances that spark learning interest<sup>[8]</sup>.

#### **4.4. Practical Innovation: Establishing an Integrated In-Class and Out-of-Class Aesthetic Education Practice Platform**

On-campus aesthetic education initiatives include organizing piano concerts, skills competitions, class showcase performances, and campus art festivals, providing students with stage performance opportunities to enhance their stage presence and aesthetic creativity through practical experience. Vocational aesthetic education programs involve arranging visits to kindergartens, primary/secondary schools, and art training institutions, where students participate in piano teaching demonstrations, art tutoring sessions, and cultural performances, transforming aesthetic abilities into professional service competencies. Social aesthetic education services encourage student participation in community cultural exhibitions, public art classes, and cultural volunteer activities, promoting musical aesthetics while strengthening social responsibility awareness and aesthetic education dissemination capabilities.

#### **4.5. Evaluation Innovation: Establishing a Comprehensive Evaluation System Oriented by Aesthetic Education**

We will establish a process-oriented, diversified, and developmental curriculum evaluation system to move beyond the single outcome assessment model. The evaluation framework encompasses multiple dimensions including performance skills, aesthetic expression, emotional communication, cultural understanding, practical innovation, and professional competence. Assessment methods will integrate classroom participation, regular practice, practical achievements, original composition of works, and final examinations. Evaluation mechanisms will involve teacher assessments, student self-evaluations, peer reviews, and industry evaluations to holistically measure students’ aesthetic literacy and comprehensive abilities. This approach aims to achieve learning enhancement, aesthetic appreciation promotion, and teaching improvement through systematic evaluation practices.

## 5. Value Realization of Piano Courses in Vocational Undergraduate Education from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education

**Educational Value:** Nurturing the mind through beauty to cultivate well-rounded personalities. Piano courses employ aesthetic education to guide students in emotional expression, psychological regulation, and moral refinement, fostering qualities like patience, focus, and resilience while shaping confident, optimistic, and positive character traits—fulfilling the fundamental mission of moral education. **Competency Value:** Inspiring wisdom through beauty to enhance comprehensive literacy. Integrating aesthetic education into piano instruction elevates students' aesthetic perception, artistic expression, cultural understanding, and creative innovation capabilities, promoting coordinated development of humanistic literacy, professional competence, and aesthetic sensibility to empower lifelong growth.

**Professional Value:** Enhancing capabilities through aesthetic education to boost employability. By integrating aesthetic education with vocational skills, we cultivate students' solid piano proficiency, refined aesthetic literacy, and artistic expression capabilities, preparing them for roles in preschool education, art training, and cultural performances. This approach significantly elevates students' career competitiveness and professional growth potential. **Social Value:** Promoting cultural heritage through aesthetics. Piano courses serve as a platform to disseminate ethnic music, revolutionary-themed music, and outstanding cultural traditions, fostering students' cultural confidence and communication skills. This initiative advances the preservation and promotion of China's excellent traditional culture, revolutionary heritage, and contemporary aesthetic education principles.

## 6. Implementation Strategies to Ensure the Realization of Course Value

We will strengthen faculty development by enhancing aesthetic education training for piano teachers, guiding educators to transform teaching philosophies, and improving their aesthetic education capabilities and humanistic literacy. This initiative aims to cultivate a “dual-qualified” teaching team that combines professional skills, aesthetic education competencies, and professional ethics. To ensure teaching resource support, we will increase investment in piano education infrastructure, including standardized practice rooms, multimedia classrooms, and performance venues. Additionally, we will develop specialized aesthetic education piano textbooks and online resource libraries to provide comprehensive support for curriculum instruction.

Establish a sound teaching management system by incorporating aesthetic education into the professional undergraduate piano curriculum standards and talent training programs. Improve systems for teaching management, assessment evaluation, and practical teaching to ensure standardized and routine implementation of aesthetic education.

Create an aesthetic education atmosphere on campus by advancing campus culture development, organizing artistic activities, and promoting aesthetic education initiatives. Foster a campus environment that reveres beauty, pursues beauty, and encourages beauty creation, thereby providing an optimal setting for the implementation of aesthetic education in piano courses.

## 7. Conclusion

From the perspective of aesthetic education, vocational undergraduate piano courses serve as crucial vehicles for nurturing students through artistic appreciation, enriching their minds with creative expression, and enhancing practical skills. They represent an essential requirement for advancing high-quality vocational education and fulfilling the fundamental mission of moral cultivation. Vocational colleges should align with the core principles of aesthetic education and their talent development objectives, driving innovative reforms in piano pedagogy through updated teaching philosophies, curriculum design, instructional methods, practical platforms, and evaluation systems. This approach breaks away from traditional models that prioritize technical drills over artistic expression and mechanical practice over aesthetic appreciation, while

seamlessly integrating aesthetic cultivation, cultural immersion, skill development, and career advancement.

Through curriculum innovation, we fully unleash the educational, literacy, professional, and social values of piano courses. Students experience, comprehend, express, and create beauty through piano learning, achieving dual development in skill enhancement and comprehensive literacy cultivation. This approach nurtures high-level technical professionals with solid vocational skills, refined aesthetic sensibilities, and noble humanistic values, thereby contributing to aesthetic education initiatives and art education reforms in modern vocational undergraduate education.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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