

A Study on the Integration of Campus Spatial Environment Art Design and Educational Management from the Perspective of Aesthetic Education

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Abstract: Grounded in the core values of aesthetic education, this study explores the integration mechanisms between campus spatial environmental art design and educational management from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Aesthetic education serves as a vital pathway for students' holistic development, yet its effective implementation requires coordinated support from environmental frameworks and management systems. However, many schools currently exhibit a disconnect between campus environmental design and educational management: environmental designs tend to prioritize functionality and standardization, while educational management often neglects aesthetic dimensions, thereby limiting the full realization of aesthetic education's potential. Addressing this, the paper proposes an integrated framework centered on aesthetic education, advocating that environmental design incorporate educational principles and that management practices respond to aesthetic experiences, achieving dynamic synergy between environmental and managerial educational approaches. This integrated model enhances the campus cultural ecosystem, elevates students' aesthetic literacy and humanistic spirit, and offers new insights for educational modernization. The study aims to transform campus spaces from mere physical venues into educational hubs, facilitating the integration and internalization of aesthetic education in daily learning and life.

Keywords: Aesthetic education; Campus space; Environmental art design; Educational management; Integration

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1. Introduction

Aesthetic education is a vital component of quality education, with its fundamental mission being to cultivate students' aesthetic abilities, emotional attitudes, and values. Currently, aesthetic education has been explicitly incorporated into the national education policy, serving as a crucial foundation for the overarching goal of fostering virtue and nurturing talents. Campus spaces, as the physical environments where students engage in daily learning and living, influence not only their practical functionality but also subtly shape students' aesthetic perception, emotional development, and cultural identity.

However, current campus environment development often suffers from an imbalance between functionality and artistry, as well as between management efficiency and aesthetic appreciation. For instance, environmental designs tend

to prioritize engineering considerations over the genuine integration of aesthetic education principles, while educational management focuses predominantly on academic discipline and performance metrics, paying scant attention to the environment's aesthetic value. This disconnect has gradually transformed campuses into mechanical "learning factories," marginalizing the role of aesthetic education and stifling students' emotional expression and creative potential. Such fragmentation not only weakens the intrinsic spirit of campus culture but also hinders the overall improvement of educational quality.

Therefore, from the perspective of aesthetic education, exploring how to integrate campus environmental art design with educational management is both practically urgent and theoretically necessary. This study aims to clarify the underlying logic of this integration, establish a corresponding practical framework, and transform campus spaces from passive recipients into active agents of education. By making the environment a dynamic vehicle for aesthetic education and ensuring that management provides systematic support for it, this approach fosters harmonious coexistence within the educational ecosystem.

2. The connotation of aesthetic education and its intrinsic connection with the campus environment

The core of aesthetic education lies in cultivating students' abilities in perception, creativity, and humanistic spirit through aesthetic experiences. Its essence is to guide students to experience emotional resonance and internalize values at the intersection of art and daily life. As the physical embodiment of aesthetic education, campus spaces, their design elements such as architectural forms, landscape arrangements, and color atmospheres, serve as a silent educational language that subtly influences students' aesthetic perceptions and emotional attitudes.

An artistically designed campus environment can stimulate students' sensitivity to beauty and help them gradually develop stable aesthetic habits in daily life. Conversely, a monotonous and unvaried environment tends to foster aesthetic inertia, thereby suppressing emotional expression and creative development. From this perspective, the campus environment is not merely a physical space but also serves as the "third classroom" essential for implementing aesthetic education. If educational administrators overlook this connection, aesthetic education risks being reduced to a few isolated courses and failing to truly integrate into students' daily lives.

From the perspective of aesthetic education, environmental design should be student-centered, integrating artistic and educational elements to make spaces perceptible and interactive, thus creating genuine venues where aesthetic education flourishes. Only in this way can campuses transcend their mere functional roles and become spiritual homelands that nurture students' inner worlds.

3. The practical challenges in artistic design of campus spatial environments

Currently, the campus environment design in many schools remains confined within a functionalist framework, with artistic and educational dimensions significantly diminished. Design work is often entrusted to specialized institutions, leaving educators and students with limited opportunities for participation. This results in a substantial gap between design proposals and actual educational needs. For instance, campuses commonly feature standardized lawns, isolated sculptures, or uniform industrial-style buildings that lack cultural depth and emotional warmth, failing to genuinely resonate aesthetically with students. Design considerations predominantly focus on tangible practical metrics, such as smooth circulation and cost control, while the intangible spiritual dimensions, including emotional belonging and cultural identity, are frequently overlooked. Consequently, campuses become increasingly homogeneous, reduced to interchangeable "space templates," thereby losing their unique role as vehicles for aesthetic education.

The deeper issue lies in the lack of aesthetic education guidance within existing design standards, which fail to incorporate the developmental needs of students' aesthetic abilities into fundamental considerations. For instance,

classroom exterior walls are often merely used as bulletin boards, with little regard for the emotional regulatory effects of color and patterns on students; furniture arrangements in public areas are also rather arbitrary, lacking design considerations for the aesthetic experiences associated with rest and social interaction. This utilitarian approach in environmental design not only wastes the educational potential inherent in the space but also results in aesthetic education on campuses being characterized as “formalistic” and “fragmented.” Ultimately, the root of this design dilemma stems from relatively outdated educational philosophies, aesthetic education is not regarded as an integral component of environmental design but rather treated as an optional decorative element.

4. Reconstructing the role of educational management in aesthetic education

Traditional educational management has primarily focused on administrative order and academic performance, with insufficient attention paid to aesthetic education. This has hindered its effective advancement at the systemic level. To realize aesthetic education, educational management must shift gradually from a “task-oriented” approach to a “student-centered” one, integrating aesthetic education into daily management practices. It should serve both as a guide for environmental design and as a safeguard for enhancing environmental experiences.

This role redefinition must first be grounded in conceptual understanding. Managers need to move beyond the outdated notion that aesthetic education is optional and recognize that the campus environment itself serves as an extension of aesthetic education; the quality of environmental design directly impacts educational outcomes. For example, when formulating construction plans, school planning departments should not focus solely on building scale and budget but also incorporate aesthetic education objectives, such as fostering students’ cultural confidence and stimulating innovative thinking, as key evaluation criteria.

Moreover, operational mechanisms for participation need to be established in management. A cross-departmental aesthetic education task force can be formed, incorporating teachers, student representatives, and art experts to jointly participate in environmental design discussions and decision-making, ensuring the design solutions better align with practical educational needs. Additionally, management should facilitate seamless integration between environmental elements and educational activities. For example, the campus sculpture area could be designated as an art practice base, enabling art classes to extend outdoors rather than being confined to classrooms.

As management roles become increasingly specialized, education shifts from merely “managing people and tasks” to genuinely focusing on “spiritual cultivation”; the campus environment evolves from a “passively utilized” space into a “proactively educational” setting. Only in this way can educational management serve as a crucial link in implementing aesthetic education, bridging the common gap between design and education.

5. Practical development of integration paths from the perspective of aesthetic education

The key to achieving integration lies in establishing a bidirectional interactive mechanism between design and management. On one hand, environmental design must genuinely serve the objectives of aesthetic education; on the other hand, educational management should effectively activate the educational value of the environment. Specifically, this can be approached through the following three aspects.

5.1. Design-oriented integration mechanism

Environmental design should not focus solely on functional requirements but should prioritize aesthetic education objectives as its fundamental starting point. During the planning phase, schools can organize thematic workshops to clearly define these goals, for instance, “cultivating students’ ecological aesthetics through natural landscapes” or “enhancing students’ connection to local history via cultural walls”, before translating them into concrete design language. For example, the campus entrance plaza could be transformed into a “cultural narrative space” featuring reliefs and text

installations that showcase the region's historical context, allowing students to naturally experience cultural continuity during their daily visits. Student participation can also be integrated into the design process, such as through a "My Campus Aesthetic Proposal" campaign, enabling a systematic understanding of students' aesthetic expectations for the space. Design outcomes should avoid being "art for art's sake"; each element should serve a clear educational purpose. For example, the greenery wall outside the library could not only enhance visual appeal but also serve as an outdoor observation point for biology classes. Such an aesthetic education-oriented design strategy transforms campus spaces into perceptible and interactive educational texts.

5.2. Integrated mechanism for management intervention

The involvement of educational management should not wait until the environment is fully established, but should permeate the entire environmental design process. School administrators can develop "Guidelines for Aesthetic Education in Campus Environment Design," specifying the aesthetic elements required in environmental planning (such as emotional guidance and cultural expression), and establish a dedicated evaluation team. The core of managerial intervention lies in creating a dynamic adjustment mechanism: after the environment has been in use for some time, regularly conduct "space experience interviews" with faculty and students to collect their authentic aesthetic feedback (e.g., asking, "Which space makes you feel relaxed?"), and subsequently refine the design accordingly. Management must also coordinate resources to support integrated practices, such as allocating special maintenance funds for artistic installations or collaborating with community artists on thematic creations. As management roles deepen, the environment ceases to be a "static entity" and becomes a "dynamic vehicle for education," allowing aesthetic education to continuously flourish within the space.

5.3. Integration mechanism for environmental and educational activities

The ultimate goal of integration is to achieve seamless synergy between the environment and educational activities. Campus spaces can be designed as "open learning environments" that support diverse aesthetic education practices. For instance, corridors in teaching buildings could feature "interactive art walls" where students express creativity through graffiti or collages, transforming daily passageways into platforms for aesthetic exhibitions; campus pathways could incorporate light-and-sound installations to enhance immersive experiences during music classes. Educational management should also foster organic connections between curricula and the environment, for example, guiding Chinese language classes to campus cultural corners for classical poetry appreciation or art classes to landscape areas for sketching. This integrated approach extends aesthetic education beyond classrooms into daily life, turning the environment itself into a "living textbook" and preventing its detachment from everyday experiences. At its core, this integration strategy shifts campus spaces from "passive use" to "active creation," ensuring the true alignment of environment, education, and management.

6. Challenges and strategies in fusion practice

The integration of aesthetic education faces numerous challenges in practice that require targeted solutions. First, conceptual conflicts are prominent: some administrators view aesthetic education as a "non-core add-on," believing that resource investments yield no immediate returns. To address this, empirical case studies, such as demonstrating improved student engagement and enhanced emotional expression after environmental optimization, can guide administrators to shift from passive compliance to proactive support. Second, resource constraints exist: insufficient funding limits innovative design approaches, while a shortage of specialized talent compromises artistic quality. Practical measures include expanding collaboration channels with cultural institutions or alumni networks for financial and creative support, and organizing campus-based aesthetic education workshops to enhance faculty expertise in environmental design. Third, participation remains low, with both students and teachers often adopting a bystander mentality. Incentive mechanisms, such as establishing a "Campus Aesthetic Education Innovation Award" to encourage submissions, and incorporating

environmental participation into faculty evaluations can strengthen accountability. Finally, the absence of a robust evaluation system, lacking scientific standards to measure integration effectiveness, risking superficial implementation, requires developing qualitative assessment frameworks. These should include observing student behaviors in spaces (e.g., spontaneous visits and discussions) and conducting interviews to gauge aesthetic perceptions, rather than relying solely on quantitative metrics. Addressing these issues demand systematic approaches spanning mindset shifts, resource allocation, participation incentives, and evaluation optimization to establish a closed-loop management system. Through sustained practice, integration can evolve from an ideal concept into a routine practice.

7. Future prospects for integrated development

In the future, the integration of campus spatial environmental art design and educational management will deepen and broaden further. This integration will no longer be confined to individual schools, but will gradually form regional collaborative networks, such as multi-school initiatives to establish “aesthetic education-themed campus clusters,” enabling the sharing of design resources and management expertise. Technological empowerment will also serve as a key driving force, leveraging digital tools like AR (Augmented Reality) to overlay artistic interactive experiences within traditional spaces, thereby enhancing environmental appeal and engagement. Educational management is expected to become more refined, with efforts to establish an “Aesthetic Education Environment Index” system to continuously track the actual impact of the environment on student development. The fundamental goal of this integration is to foster the endogenous growth of campus culture: environmental design shifts from external dominance to co-creation by faculty and students, while educational management evolves from a mere enforcer of regulations to a cultivator of cultural ecosystems. Ultimately, campus spaces will truly transform into an “aesthetic education ecosystem,” where students naturally internalize aesthetic sensibilities and humanistic values take root. This integration is not merely a simple combination of environment and management but a systemic elevation of educational philosophy, ensuring that aesthetic education permeates every space and every daily interaction, making campuses a spiritual soil that nurtures life. Looking ahead, such integrated practices are poised to provide new reference pathways for educational modernization, driving China’s campuses toward a shift from being “functional” to “spiritual,” embodying the humanistic warmth and cultural depth inherent in education.

8. Conclusion

Promoting the integration of artistic design and educational management in campus spaces from an aesthetic education perspective represents a viable approach to addressing current educational challenges. This requires moving beyond functionalist limitations by treating environments as organic vehicles for aesthetic education and management as systemic supports for it. Through three mechanisms, design-oriented approaches, managerial interventions, and the integration of environments with activities, campus spaces can transform from passive containers into active educational hubs, while educational management evolves from routine task handling to spiritual guidance. Although integration still faces challenges in conceptual alignment, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement, its feasibility and practical value have become increasingly evident through sustained systematic strategies. In the future, this integration will become an intrinsic part of campus culture, transitioning aesthetic education from an academic objective to daily practices, where students achieve emotional growth and character development through aesthetic cultivation. This study not only provides actionable methodologies for campus development but also addresses education’s fundamental mission: education extends beyond knowledge transmission to encompass spiritual awakening and character nurturing. Only when environments and management are genuinely integrated can campuses become poetic havens for students’ holistic growth.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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