

A Study on How Aesthetic Teaching in Contemporary College Music Classes Affects Students' Core Music Literacy: Self-Efficacy as a Mediator

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the development of aesthetic education in the new era that “cultivates people with beauty, influences people with beauty, and nourishes people’s hearts with beauty”, public music courses in universities serve as the main platform for implementing aesthetic education, and aesthetic teaching constitutes the core starting point of music education. This study aims to explore the relationships among aesthetic teaching in college music classes, music learning self-efficacy and students’ core music literacy, and examine the mediating effect of music learning self-efficacy between aesthetic teaching in music classes and core music literacy. Using the questionnaire survey method, college students who took elective public music courses were selected as research participants. Data were collected with the Aesthetic Teaching in Music Classes Scale, Music Learning Self-Efficacy Scale and Core Music Literacy Scale. The results show that aesthetic teaching in music classes significantly and positively predicts college students’ core music literacy; aesthetic teaching in music classes significantly and positively predicts music learning self-efficacy; music learning self-efficacy significantly and positively predicts core music literacy; music learning self-efficacy plays a partial mediating role between aesthetic teaching in music classes and college students’ core music literacy. This study reveals the internal mechanism through which aesthetic teaching affects college students’ core music literacy, and provides theoretical references and practical implications for universities to optimize music classroom teaching design and improve the effectiveness of aesthetic education for college students.

1. Introduction

Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era clearly states that school aesthetic education should take aesthetic teaching as its core focus and strive to enhance students’ aesthetic ability and humanistic literacy. Oriented toward all college students, public music courses in universities do not aim to cultivate professional music

talents. Instead, they serve as a vital carrier of university aesthetic education, fostering students' artistic perception, cultural understanding and artistic expression through music aesthetic experience.

For a long time, the public music classrooms in some universities have prioritized knowledge instruction while neglecting aesthetic experience. Teaching activities are largely confined to the explanation of music theory and song appreciation, lacking immersive aesthetic guidance, which makes it difficult to effectively improve students' core music literacy. In the process of music learning, students' subjective judgment of their own music learning competence, namely music learning self-efficacy, affects their enthusiasm for participating in classroom aesthetic activities. High-quality aesthetic teaching enables students to gain positive and successful music learning experiences, improves their self-efficacy, and further promotes the development of their core music literacy.

Existing studies on music education mainly focus on aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools, while empirical research on public music classrooms for college students remains insufficient. Few studies have explored the internal psychological mechanism behind the impact of aesthetic teaching on core music literacy. Against this background, this study constructs a theoretical model with music learning self-efficacy as the mediator to explore the relationships among aesthetic teaching in music classes, music learning self-efficacy, and core music literacy. It aims to enrich empirical research on college music aesthetic education and provide a basis for the reform of university music courses.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Aesthetic Teaching in Music Classes and Core Music Literacy

Aesthetic teaching in music classes is an aesthetic-oriented teaching model. Centered on aesthetic cultivation, it adopts diversified classroom activities including music works appreciation, immersive music experience, and emotional perception. Such teaching approaches guide students to perceive basic musical elements such as melody, rhythm and timbre, and further gain authentic and profound aesthetic experience during music learning. Core music literacy in this study consists of three core dimensions: aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and cultural understanding.

Aesthetic teaching serves as a direct and effective approach to improving students' core music literacy. It effectively guides students to capture the aesthetic beauty contained in musical works, encourages them to conduct innovative artistic expression and emotional presentation, and explores the profound humanistic and cultural connotations behind musical works. Continuous aesthetic guidance and experiential learning can comprehensively promote the development of students' aesthetic perception ability, artistic expression level and musical cultural cognition, thereby facilitating the overall improvement of students' core music literacy. On the basis of the above theoretical analysis, the first research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1 Aesthetic teaching in college music classes significantly and positively predicts college students' core music literacy.

2.2 Aesthetic Teaching in Music Classes and Music Learning Self-Efficacy

Music learning self-efficacy refers to students' subjective judgment and confidence in their ability to complete music learning tasks, including music appreciation and musical expression. In high-quality aesthetic music classrooms, teachers design hierarchical and experiential teaching tasks. During diverse classroom activities such as music appreciation, singing practice, and musical improvisation, students continuously acquire positive learning experiences. Such supportive learning atmosphere effectively reduces students' fear and difficulty perception in

music learning and improves their self-evaluation of personal musical competence. Therefore, rich and immersive aesthetic experiences generated by systematic classroom aesthetic teaching are conducive to the enhancement of students' music learning self-efficacy. Based on the above theoretical reasoning, Hypothesis 2 is proposed:

H2 Aesthetic teaching in college music classes significantly and positively predicts college students' music learning self-efficacy.

2.3 Music Learning Self-Efficacy and Core Music Literacy

Self-efficacy theory suggests that individuals' self-efficacy level significantly influences their learning engagement and subsequent learning outcomes. Students with high music learning self-efficacy demonstrate greater willingness to actively participate in classroom activities such as music appreciation and artistic presentation. They proactively explore the cultural connotations of musical works and continuously develop their capabilities in aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and cultural understanding. Such positive and proactive learning behaviors further contribute to the comprehensive improvement of students' core music literacy. Based on the theoretical foundation mentioned above, the third hypothesis is formulated:

H3 Music learning self-efficacy significantly and positively predicts college students' core music literacy.

2.4 The Mediating Effect of Music Learning Self-Efficacy

Integrating the above research hypotheses, aesthetic teaching in music classes can exert a direct influence on students' core music literacy. More importantly, aesthetic teaching can also enhance students' music learning self-efficacy. Improved self-efficacy further motivates students to participate actively in music learning activities, which indirectly promotes the development of core music literacy. Therefore, music learning self-efficacy serves as a vital intermediate psychological variable linking classroom aesthetic teaching and music literacy development. On this basis, the mediating hypothesis is proposed:

H4 Music learning self-efficacy mediates the relationship between aesthetic teaching in music classes and college students' core music literacy.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Participants

This study adopted the convenience sampling method to select college students from several domestic universities who took public music courses as research subjects. A total of 365 questionnaires were distributed online. After eliminating invalid questionnaires with regular responses and excessively short filling time, 328 valid questionnaires were finally collected, with an effective recovery rate of 89.86%.

The demographic statistical results of the valid samples are as follows: in terms of gender, there were 124 male students (37.80%) and 204 female students (62.20%). In terms of grade distribution, 106 students were freshmen (32.32%), 112 were sophomores (34.15%), 68 were juniors (20.73%), and 42 were seniors (12.80%). In terms of musical learning experience, 119 students had musical instrument learning experience (36.28%), while 209 students had no relevant experience (63.72%).

3.2 Research Instruments

All scales in this study adopted a five-point Likert scoring system, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

(1) Aesthetic Teaching in Music Classes Scale

Developed based on previous aesthetic education research, this scale consists of 16 items

covering four dimensions: aesthetic perception guidance, music experience activities, diversified works appreciation, and emotional enlightenment. In this study, the Cronbach’s α coefficient of the scale was 0.876, indicating excellent internal consistency.

(2) Music Learning Self-Efficacy Scale

Adapted from the academic self-efficacy scale and revised to fit the music learning context, this scale contains 8 items with two dimensions: ability perception and learning confidence. The Cronbach’s α coefficient in the present study was 0.831, demonstrating good reliability.

(3) Core Music Literacy Scale

Formulated in accordance with national art curriculum standards, this scale includes 12 items and three core dimensions: aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and cultural understanding. Its Cronbach’s α coefficient in this study was 0.859, suggesting favorable internal reliability.

3.3 Data Processing and Analytical Methods

IBM SPSS 26.0 and the PROCESS macro (Model 4) were utilized for data analysis. The analytical procedures included reliability test, common method bias test, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The Bootstrap method with 5000 resamples was adopted to examine the mediating effect.

4. Research Results

4.1 Reliability Test

The Cronbach’s α coefficients of the Aesthetic Teaching in Music Classes Scale, Music Learning Self-Efficacy Scale and Core Music Literacy Scale were 0.876, 0.831 and 0.859 respectively. All coefficients were greater than 0.8, which indicated favorable internal consistency of the scales and acceptable reliability for further data analysis.

4.2 Common Method Bias Test

Since all data in this study were collected via participants’ self-reports, the Harman single-factor test was performed to examine common method bias. Unrotated exploratory factor analysis was conducted on all questionnaire items. The results showed that eight common factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted. The first factor accounted for 29.67% of the total variance, which was below the critical threshold of 40%. It demonstrated that there was no serious common method bias in this research.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation matrix of each variable are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Variables (N=328)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Aesthetic teaching in music classes	3.68	0.64	1		
Music learning self-efficacy	3.42	0.67	$\backslash(0.54^{\{***\}}\backslash)$	1	
Core music literacy	3.51	0.62	$\backslash(0.51^{\{***\}}\backslash)$	$\backslash(0.58^{\{** * \}}\backslash)$	1

Note: $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.001$. The same below.
The results of Pearson correlation analysis indicated significant positive correlations among

all core variables. Specifically, aesthetic teaching in music classes was significantly positively correlated with music learning self-efficacy ($r=0.54$, $p<0.001$). Aesthetic teaching in music classes also had a significant positive association with core music literacy ($r=0.51$, $p<0.001$). In addition, music learning self-efficacy was significantly and positively correlated with core music literacy ($r=0.58$, $p<0.001$). The correlation direction among variables was consistent with the theoretical expectation, which provided preliminary empirical support for the research hypotheses of this study.

4.4 Regression Analysis and Mediating Effect Test (PROCESS Model 4)

The PROCESS macro Model 4 developed by Hayes was used to test the mediating effect. The regression results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Mediating Effect Test Results of Music Learning Self-Efficacy (N=328)

Regression Equations	Predictor	β	SE	t	R^2	F
Equation 1 (Y: Core music literacy)	Aesthetic teaching in music classes	0.382	0.036	10.676 ^{***}	0.260	114.071 ^{***}
Equation 2 (M: Music learning self-efficacy)	Aesthetic teaching in music classes	0.564	0.049	11.583 ^{***}	0.292	134.168 ^{***}
Equation 3 (Y: Core music literacy)	Aesthetic teaching in music classes	0.216	0.038	5.684 ^{***}	0.365	93.052 ^{***}
	Music learning self-efficacy	0.294	0.041	7.171 ^{***}		

Model 1 took core music literacy as the dependent variable and aesthetic teaching in music classes as the independent variable. The results showed that aesthetic teaching in music classes significantly and positively predicted core music literacy ($\beta=0.382$, $p<0.001$), supporting H1.

Model 2 took music learning self-efficacy as the dependent variable and aesthetic teaching in music classes as the independent variable. The results showed that aesthetic teaching in music classes significantly and positively predicted music learning self-efficacy ($\beta=0.564$, $p<0.001$), supporting H2.

Model 3 took core music literacy as the dependent variable, with both aesthetic teaching in music classes and music learning self-efficacy entered simultaneously into the regression equation. The results indicated that music learning self-efficacy significantly and positively predicted core music literacy ($\beta=0.294$, $p<0.001$), supporting H3. The direct effect of aesthetic teaching in music classes on core music literacy remained significant ($\beta=0.216$, $p<0.001$), which suggested that music learning self-efficacy played a partial mediating role.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

(1) Aesthetic teaching in music classes, music learning self-efficacy, and college students' core music literacy were significantly positively correlated in pairs. (2) Aesthetic teaching in music

classes significantly and positively predicted college students' core music literacy. (3) Aesthetic teaching in music classes positively predicted music learning self-efficacy; music learning self-efficacy positively predicted core music literacy. (4) Music learning self-efficacy exerted a partial mediating effect between aesthetic teaching in music classes and college students' core music literacy, and the mediating effect accounted for 43.46% of the total effect.

First, public music courses in colleges and universities should adhere to the aesthetic-oriented teaching philosophy and optimize teaching design. Colleges ought to enrich teaching content with national music and classic music appreciation, and design experiential teaching activities such as music listening, group discussion, and impromptu performance to construct fully aesthetic music classrooms.

Second, attach importance to the cultivation of students' music learning self-efficacy. Teachers should arrange learning tasks with appropriate difficulty levels and provide sufficient encouraging evaluation. Such teaching strategies can reduce students' fear of music learning caused by insufficient singing skills and music theoretical knowledge, and effectively help students build confidence in music learning.

Third, pay close attention to students' psychological state in classroom teaching. Aesthetic education is not only the transmission of artistic knowledge, but also affective education. By creating a relaxed and inclusive classroom atmosphere, teachers can enable students to gain positive aesthetic experiences and finally realize the fundamental goal of educating people through aesthetics.

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