



Transnational tomorrows today:

Graduate student futures
and imaginaries for art education

Guest Editors:
Anita Sinner, Kazuyo Nakamura
and Elly Yazdanpanah

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ABOUT THE e-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

JAPAN

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CURRICULA FOR TRAINING ART TEACHERS BETWEEN JAPAN AND CHINA: FOCUSING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Development Goals include Goal #4, ensuring equal access to quality education for all. This goal is critical to our future, and effort must be made to further broadening learning opportunities for quality education. The art teacher plays a key role in assisting children in acquiring basic skills and abilities related to their cultural lives. Thus, teacher training programs must integrate the goal of quality education in the curriculum from a cultural standpoint. This research presents an aesthetic approach to art teacher training based on case study research about Chinese and Japanese art teachers' views regarding their college learning in relation to classroom teaching. The study revealed that teachers were likely to enhance their sense of beauty when engaging in active learning. Hence, it is critical for teacher training to provide such active learning in which aesthetics is taught in relation to educational practice in schools.

KEYWORDS

art teacher training, aesthetic education, aesthetic experience, Chinese art education, case study, SDGs

When teachers see beauty, they are able to impart the recognition of beauty through their teaching practice. An enthusiastic and energetic teacher can impress upon students an admiration and delight for beauty during their teaching. Therefore, aesthetic education that develops sensibility for beauty and facilitates the experience of creating, evaluating, and expressing is essential in art teacher training. In the new era in China, quality education

has advanced with the vigorous development of education. Art education, as a basic approach to quality education in schools, has become an important element of overall school education (Guohong & Yungang 2011). However, the mechanization of art education remains a prevalent problem in Chinese schools. To resolve this problem, aesthetic education should become integrated more fully in art teacher training (Youxi 2009). This study investigates Chinese and Japanese art teachers' views regarding their learning during their college years in relation to their teaching in the classroom, and suggests an aesthetic approach to art teacher training.

AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY REQUIRED OF TEACHERS

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and structure of beauty as a phenomenon. According to Dewey (1997), the essence of art is explained by its ability to provoke an emotional response. Aesthetics refers to the way people relate to the world, that is, people using their own perception, life experiences and knowledge to sense, experience, associate, analyse and understand artwork. Through art appreciation, 'aesthetic sensibility' can be generated to enrich people's daily lives.

Aesthetic sensibility is developed not only through personal experience but also through training on art and aesthetics. For instance, those with art experience enjoy appreciating and savouring information conveyed through paintings from the perspectives of history, technique, structure, and so on, while those with little experience rarely enjoy these aspects of art. Studying art is not only about developing technical skills; it also involves acquiring and understanding information and concepts related to art and the viewer's life experiences. With aesthetic sensibility, teachers can help students enhance their ability to appreciate works of art as well as help them analyse and examine aesthetic aspects of daily life, thereby enriching their cultural lives.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHERS' AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

I consider aesthetic development in teachers based on Frank Sibley's view of aesthetics (Broiles 1964). He discusses two types of judgments involved in aesthetic sensibility: non-aesthetic and aesthetic.

Category 1. Non-aesthetic judgments (culture, history):

Non-aesthetic judgments relate to the perception of art in the context of culture and the understanding of the politics, economics, history, and culture that influence art. The various ideas and notions reflected in works of art are related to the fact that artists are influenced by a particular political, economic, historical, and cultural background. Art does not exist in abstraction or in fantasy; it embodies the characteristics of a particular social life. Various creative purposes and social backgrounds inspire artists. From the standpoint of non-aesthetic judgment, teachers should gain abilities to explore the theme of the work and discover the work's unique perspective in relation to certain cultural and historical backgrounds, providing the relevant knowledge of politics, economics, history, and culture in the classroom.

Category 2. Aesthetic judgments (sensitivity):

Complex, elusive, and intuitive mental workings are experienced when one appreciates art, which reflects one's sensitivity (Miyashita, Kimura, & Oka 2015). The curriculum for developing aesthetic sensibility requires learners to view works of art with imagination and passion based primarily on their own experiences. The content of experience is both evoked and governed by the senses, and the artist's emotions, including feelings, impulses, and desires associated with the senses, are thus expressed through subjective images. Teacher should be responsive and sensitive to the emotional quality of the work of art.

It is important for teachers to possess both types of judgments that lead to the coherent development of learning involving sensibility. By paying attention to non-aesthetic and aesthetic aspects of art, teachers can help students deepen their learning experiences of art in the classroom. When using their own aesthetic sensibility, teachers can be mindful of students' existing knowledge and beliefs and construct individualized learning suitable to each student.

RESEARCH METHODS

I conducted semi-structured interviews with six elementary school art teachers in their 20s and 30s from Japan and China using Kinoshita's (2007) M-GTA qualitative research methods. Telephone interviews, which lasted approximately one half hour, with each participant were conducted from April to November 2021 and were followed up with email interviews. The purpose of this interview study was to understand the relationship between the teachers' aesthetic sensibility and the influence on their teaching in the classroom. The four main topics of the interview questions included 'experience in college courses', 'attitudes toward college courses', 'the possession of aesthetic sensibility', and 'educational practices'. By focusing on these four topics, I analysed teachers' formation of aesthetic sensibility, which influenced their teaching in the art classroom as well as the quality of their teaching.

CASE STUDY OF CHINESE AND JAPANESE ART TEACHERS

Here, I present one case selected from among the Japanese participants who volunteered to join my research as well as a case from the Chinese participants.

Rong, a Chinese teacher, graduated from Jiangnan University in China (interview date: 15 November 2021). She recalled her college learning experience and stated in the interview that 'the university curriculum seems very rich in content, and I actually don't have a strong opinion about the fact that there are many painting classes, but many classes are based on traditional content and teaching methods. The course lacks contemporary subject matter, both theoretically and practically'. Reflecting on her college courses, she stated, 'I remember a lot of them that interested me'. However, she continued, 'I took a lot of theoretical courses at the university, but when I became a teacher, I felt that what I learned at the university was not digested for educational practice in schools'.

Regarding courses related to aesthetics, Rong recalled, 'The aim of university courses on aesthetics is to let students explore a wide variety of

works, taste the appeal of different works, and then let them choose the one that best suits their interests and needs'. As indicated in this statement, she felt that aesthetics was treated as a personal matter. However, she viewed the knowledge and abilities that her teachers imparted to her during college years as follows: 'It became part of what shapes my life. I think I gained self-awareness when the process was active learning in art related to myself'.

In terms of what she valued in her own art teaching, Rong believed that 'teachers cannot determine the aesthetic sensibility of children but should guide them to develop their own way of feeling and thinking'. Additionally, she stated that 'only after the basic skills are acquired can deeper learning take place... As for children's art education, we must first give them basic techniques for expression and then keep assisting them to bring out their personality and character'. Rong emphasized that the agenda of art teachers should be identified based on the understanding of the individuality of the child and that an inferior or superior aesthetic sensibility does not exist. She stressed this point and stated, 'Two children will take the same class and get different results, but there is nothing better or worse about them'.

When asked about the types of classes she wished to have taken at college, Rong responded, 'Classes where I could go and see the artwork I want to see in person', indicating that she sought exposure to numerous works of art. Rong believed that experience with many types of art would develop aesthetic sensibility, which influences teaching in the art classroom.

What Fuji from Hiroshima University in Japan (interview date: 15 May 2021) valued most in his art education was the autonomy and willingness of children to create and try things. He stated in the interview, 'Creating a curriculum where the children's desire to try things means connecting their skills to what they want to express'.

As for the university courses that may have had an impact on his aesthetic sensibility, Fuji recalled learning about the educational philosophy of Dewey and Rousseau. This learning helped him deepen his understanding of education and his feelings toward it. He also stated that this learning increased his knowledge of aesthetics and promoted his 'thinking about learning from

a child's perspective'. Regarding the courses he took at university related to aesthetics, he recalled, 'I am afraid that there is insufficient instruction on the skills needed to put the "thoughts" into the work'. When he became a teacher, Fuji realized that he lacked teaching skills to handle aesthetic materials and that it was important to acquire such skills.

Fuji recognized that practical instruction in aesthetics should be developed during one's college years. Fuji liked art personally and stated, 'All art is good because it contains the feelings and thoughts of the creator'. However, according to Fuji, 'in the current teacher training curriculum students are preoccupied with taking required courses, and little time is available for learning aesthetics that are useful for educational practice. I think it is more important to have time to encounter works of art that are being created in our time. Of course, aesthetics and art history are important, but I think there is more to be learned from experiencing the many contemporary works of art created by the artists who are living now and what they are thinking about when they create them'.

What Fuji valued for his art teaching changed after he began to teach in the elementary school: 'I value the children's desire to create and try things themselves'. When asked about the types of classes he wished he had taken during college years, Fuji said, 'I liked to take classes that covered artwork that was being created in our time'. He continued, 'I think it would be good to have a class where students can come into contact with artwork that is currently being created or a class where students can actually go and see the works they want to see... I believe that encountering a good work of art can teach you a lot beyond your own experience'.

On the subject of college courses that affected aesthetic sensibility, both Rong, who was Chinese, and Fuji, who was Japanese, recognized the influence of theory on their own aesthetic perceptions; however, in terms of specific directions, Rong preferred the theoretical aspects of aesthetics, while Fuji tended to value artistic practices based on educational theory. In particular, Fuji regarded the process of becoming aware of the importance of his own aesthetic sensibility as valuable in his teaching in the classroom. He felt that

learning aesthetics from an educational standpoint was highly critical during the college years. Fuji also considered it significant to develop one's own aesthetic sensibility from the beginning of learning art and aesthetics during one's college years.

With regard to the development of aesthetic sensibility, both Rong and Fuji recognized the effect of viewing many works of art in relation to their own experiences. In the case of Rong, she viewed encountering artwork that would help her find and deepen herself as critical. On the other hand, Fuji believed that there was value in the artist's 'thoughts' that are present in the artwork, and he felt that those thoughts make all art valuable.

Regarding prospective courses on aesthetics during college years, both of the teachers preferred classes in which they could actually see the artwork. This indicated that these teachers' needs were not satisfied by simply looking at artwork in books and suggested that deeper and individualized experiences are needed in the learning process that would help them interact more with the environment using their own aesthetic sensibilities. Both teachers stressed the importance of having more 'practical experience' in relation to aesthetics during their college years to enhance aesthetic aspects of children's experiences in the classroom.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Chinese art education, learning outcomes are set based on a uniform standard, and subject outcomes must be clearly evaluated according to that standard. A painting has 'value' if it expresses thoughts, understanding, emotions, and impulses for expression. If all that one sees in a painting are imitations and decorations, then this does not reflect what the painting means for the development of the individual's aesthetic sensibility. As Dewey (1997) notes, we must remember that individuals are not only material beings but also beings with impulses, feelings, and values. The teacher's observation should work through their aesthetic sensibility to be able to address quality education pursued in the art classroom.

This case study research suggests that to develop teachers' aesthetic sensibility, learning must be accompanied by a deep understanding through practical experience. If a teacher actively uses their experiences, that is, their feelings and knowledge in an actual situation, they are likely to enhance their aesthetic sensibility, which can be applied in their classroom teaching. The increase of teachers' own aesthetic experiences leads to enhancing their sense of beauty, which can facilitate handling aesthetic aspects of children's experiences in the classroom. To approach the goal of quality education as specified in the Sustainable Development Goals, it is critical to provide such learning opportunities during the pre-service education stage, in which art teacher candidates can gain aesthetic sensibility that can be functional in an actual classroom setting.

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