

# An Empirical Analysis of the Current Status of Aesthetic Education Textbook Construction in Jiangsu Applied Undergraduate Universities

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## ABSTRACT

Based on a field survey of aesthetic education and textbook construction in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities, this article summarizes the overall status quo of aesthetic education textbook construction in these institutions. The findings indicate a gradually improving textbook system accompanied by notable differences, an increasing proportion of self-compiled textbooks leading to enhanced innovation, improved textbook quality driven by teaching and research reform projects, coexistence of nationally planned textbooks and imported editions fostering a broader international perspective, and a close integration of textbook construction with the cultivation of applied talents. Through an analysis of representative aesthetic education textbook texts, the article outlines existing issues in content updating, practical components, system construction, and the integration of ideological and political elements. The aim is to provide valuable reference and insights for the construction of aesthetic education textbooks in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities.

## KEYWORDS

aesthetic education textbook; applied undergraduate universities; Jiangsu

## 1 Research Background

Against the backdrop of continuous deepening reforms and innovations within the higher education system, the importance and necessity of aesthetic education textbook construction in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities have become increasingly prominent<sup>[1]</sup>.

A series of policy documents issued by the state and the Ministry of Education have provided clear directions and guidance for the development of aesthetic education textbooks. Documents such as the "Several Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Deepening the Integration of Industry and Education"<sup>[2]</sup> and the "Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Accelerating the Construction of High-Level Undergraduate Education and Comprehensively Improving Talent Cultivation Capabilities"<sup>[3]</sup> have emphasized the pivotal role of aesthetic education in promoting students' all-round development and enhancing their humanistic qualities. They have also pointed out the need to promote the organic integration of aesthetic education with professional courses and strengthen the timeliness, scientificity, and practicality of aesthetic education textbooks.

The "Implementation Plan for the Selection and Construction of First-Class Applied Undergraduate Universities in Jiangsu Province"<sup>[4]</sup> explicitly states the necessity to enhance the construction of industry-education integration-oriented first-class courses and school-enterprise cooperation textbooks, among other teaching resources, to better serve the cultivation of high-quality applied talents.

## 2 Overall Status of Aesthetic Education Textbook Construction in Jiangsu Applied Undergraduate Universities

To comprehensively grasp the actual situation of aesthetic education textbook<sup>[5]</sup> construction in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities, the research team conducted in-depth and meticulous field investigations in 46 applied undergraduate universities within Jiangsu Province. Based on the field investigations and analyses, the overall status of aesthetic education textbook construction in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities can be summarized as follows:

### 2.1 Gradual Improvement of the Textbook System, but with Significant Differences

While all surveyed universities have offered aesthetic education courses and equipped with corresponding textbooks, the level of textbook system construction varies significantly. Some universities have established a relatively comprehensive aesthetic education textbook system, covering various aspects such as art appreciation, artistic creation, and aesthetic theories. In contrast, other universities are still in the initial stages, with limited textbook varieties and outdated content.

## 2.2 Rising Proportion of Self-Compiled Textbooks and Enhanced Innovation

As the significance of aesthetic education becomes increasingly evident, universities have intensified their efforts in developing self-compiled textbooks, striving to incorporate their unique characteristics and industry demands to create more targeted and practical aesthetic education textbooks. This trend has not only enriched the aesthetic education textbook market but also promoted the diversification and personalization of aesthetic education content.

## 2.3 Driven by Teaching and Research Reform Projects, Enhanced Quality of Textbook Construction

By applying for and obtaining multiple teaching and research reform projects related to aesthetic education, universities have invested significant human and material resources in aesthetic education textbook construction. These projects have not only facilitated the updating of aesthetic education content and the reform of teaching methods but also provided scientific research methodologies and rigorous evaluation systems for textbook development, effectively enhancing the quality and standard of aesthetic education textbooks.

## 2.4 Coexistence of Nationally Planned Textbooks and Imported Editions, Broadening International Perspectives

Nationally planned textbooks occupy an important position in the aesthetic education textbook market, providing universities with unified teaching standards and reference frameworks. Meanwhile, some universities actively introduce excellent foreign aesthetic education textbooks to broaden students' international horizons and promote exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and foreign aesthetic education. This diversified trend in textbook use contributes to elevating the overall level and international competitiveness of aesthetic education in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities.

## 2.5 Close Integration of Textbook Construction with Applied Talent Cultivation

In the context of applied undergraduate universities, aesthetic education textbook construction places greater emphasis on practical application. Universities incorporate industrial, professional, and enterprise elements into textbook compilation, aiming to make aesthetic education courses better serve the training objectives of applied talents. This integration not only enhances the practicality and relevance of aesthetic education courses but also improves students' competitiveness and adaptability in their future careers.

# 3 Selection and Textual Analysis of Aesthetic Education Textbooks in Jiangsu Applied Undergraduate Universities

## 3.1 Selection Criteria and Overview of Aesthetic Education Textbooks

To delve into the current status of aesthetic education textbook construction in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities, the research team conducted a comprehensive collation and analysis of aesthetic education textbooks from 46 such institutions. From this pool, ten representative textbooks were selected for detailed examination. The specific textbooks and their relevant information are presented in the following table.

Table 1 Information Table of Representative Aesthetic Education Textbooks

| Serial No. | Textbook Title                        | Publisher                       | Word Count<br>(Thousand Words) | Textbook Level                       | Textbook Awards                                | First-Class Course<br>Construction |
|------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1          | University Aesthetic Education Course | Higher Education Press          | 300                            | Nationally Planned Text-book School- | Ministry of Education Excellent Textbook Award | National First-Class Course        |
| 2          | Introduction to Aesthetic Education   | Jiangsu Normal University Press | 280                            | Compiled Text-book Provincially      | Jiangsu Provincial Excellent Textbook Award    | Provincial First-Class Course      |
| 3          | Introduction to Art                   | Nanjing University Press        | 320                            | Planned Text-book Nationally         | None                                           | Provincial First-Class Course      |
| 4          | History of Chinese Art                | China Academy of Art Press      | 400                            | Planned Text-book                    | Ministry of Education Excellent Textbook Award | National First-Class Course        |

Table 1 Information Table of Representative Aesthetic Education Textbooks (Continued.)

| Serial No. | Textbook Title                       | Publisher                                    | Word Count<br>(Thousand Words) | Textbook Level                      | Textbook Awards                              | First-Class Course<br>Construction |
|------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 5          | Music Appreciation                   | Shanghai Music Publishing House              | 260                            | School-Compiled Text-book           | None                                         | School-Level Quality Course        |
| 6          | Design Aesthetics                    | Tsinghua University Press                    | 350                            | Provincially Planned Text-book      | Jiangsu Provincial Excellent Textbook Award  | Provincial First-Class Course      |
| 7          | Film and Television Art Appreciation | Communication University of China Press      | 380                            | School-Compiled Text-book           | None                                         | School-Level Quality Course        |
| 8          | Calligraphy Art                      | Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House | 290                            | Nationally Characteristic Text-book | Ministry of Culture Excellent Textbook Award | National First-Class Course        |
| 9          | Dance Aesthetics                     | Beijing Dance Academy Press                  | 310                            | School-Compiled Text-book           | None                                         | School-Level Quality Course        |
| 10         | Introduction to Theatrical Art       | China Drama Press                            | 360                            | Provincially Planned Text-book      | Jiangsu Provincial Excellent Textbook Award  | Provincial First-Class Course      |

These ten textbooks encompass various aspects of art history, art appreciation, and artistic creation. They include both nationally planned textbooks and school-compiled textbooks with unique characteristics. Some of these textbooks have received national or provincial excellent textbook awards, and their corresponding courses have been designated as national or provincial first-class courses, demonstrating their high representativeness and research value.

### 3.2 Textual Analysis of Aesthetic Education Textbooks

The research team conducted a statistical analysis of high-frequency words in the texts of these ten representative aesthetic education textbooks. The top 20 high-frequency words and their total frequencies are presented in the following table.

Table 2 Top 20 High-Frequency Words in Representative Aesthetic Education Textbook Texts

| Serial No. | High-Frequency Word | Total Frequency | Serial No. | High-Frequency Word | Total Frequency |
|------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1          | aesthetics          | 1265            | 11         | design              | 187             |
| 2          | art                 | 987             | 12         | history             | 176             |
| 3          | practice            | 876             | 13         | theory              | 165             |
| 4          | innovation          | 765             | 14         | emotion             | 154             |
| 5          | aesthetic education | 654             | 15         | aesthetic education | 143             |
| 6          | culture             | 543             | 16         | artistic works      | 132             |
| 7          | quality             | 432             | 17         | aesthetic ability   | 121             |
| 8          | education           | 321             | 18         | art appreciation    | 110             |
| 9          | appreciation        | 210             | 19         | traditional culture | 109             |
| 10         | creation            | 198             | 20         | aesthetics          | 98              |

From the high-frequency word list, several notable characteristics and trends can be discerned.

Firstly, the term "aesthetics" tops the list with a frequency of 1,265 occurrences, highlighting the paramount importance placed on aesthetic education within the textbooks. In these textbooks, the content of aesthetic education occupies a pivotal position, encompassing diverse aspects such as aesthetic concepts, aesthetic interests, aesthetic judgments, and aesthetic values.

Secondly, the words "art" and "practice" frequently appear, with frequencies of 987 and 876 respectively. This underscores the emphasis on the integration of art and practice in aesthetic education textbooks, emphasizing students' hands-on experiences and perceptions of artistic beauty through practical activities. Art serves as a vital vehicle for aesthetic education, while practice is the crucial link in translating aesthetic ideals into actual actions.

Thirdly, the word "innovation" follows closely with 765 occurrences, reflecting the textbooks' emphasis on innovative education. By incorporating innovative educational content, aesthetic education textbooks aim to stimulate students' creativity and imagination, fostering innovative thinking and capabilities.

Furthermore, the terms "culture" and "quality" also emerge frequently, with counts of 543 and 432 respectively. This

demonstrates the textbooks' focus on nurturing cultural literacy, emphasizing the enhancement of students' aesthetic standards and overall qualities through cognitive and comprehensive understanding of culture.

Lastly, specific vocabulary related to aesthetic education, such as "appreciation," "creation," and "design," are also present in the high-frequency word list. These terms mirror the textbooks' concrete content and focal points, namely, fostering students' artistic appreciation, creative, and design abilities. These skills constitute essential goals of aesthetic education and vital competencies for students' future development and growth.

## **4 Issues and Analysis in the Construction of Aesthetic Education Textbooks in Jiangsu Applied Undergraduate Universities**

Upon an in-depth analysis of the ten representative aesthetic education textbooks, we can delve deeper into several issues pertaining to the current construction of aesthetic education textbooks in Jiangsu applied undergraduate universities.

### **4.1 Outdated Content and Lack of Timeliness**

One significant issue lies in the lagged content of some textbooks, evident in their failure to keep pace with contemporary artistic developments. For instance, the introduction to modern art movements in a particular textbook remains focused on works and artists from the 1980s, with the chapter on "Postmodern Art" merely mentioning early representatives, while overlooking recent artists and works emerging in fields like digital art and environmental art.

This content arrangement evidently fails to mirror the rapid evolution of art, particularly the burgeoning domains of digital art, virtual reality, and more. Aesthetic education textbooks ought to be promptly updated to incorporate these emerging art forms, reflecting the latest trends in the artistic landscape.

### **4.2 Disconnection between Theory and Practice, and Lack of Practicality**

Another notable issue concerns the disjunction between theory and practice, particularly evident in textbooks for "Music Appreciation" courses. While these textbooks offer detailed explanations of various musical genres and representative works, they often lack concrete appreciation activities. Students are thus compelled to rely solely on textual descriptions to envision the emotions and imagery conveyed by music, without the opportunity to experience its charm and power firsthand.

Textbooks should emphasize the integration of theory and practice by designing specific appreciation activities and creative performance tasks. This approach enables students to learn how to appreciate and comprehend artistic works through hands-on experiences.

### **4.3 Incomplete Textbook System and Lack of Coherence**

One textbook exhibits a scattered content organization, with a notable absence of clear logical connections between chapters. For instance, the transition and bridge between the chapters on "Art History" and "Artistic Creation" are insufficient, making it challenging for students to construct a comprehensive knowledge framework during their learning process.

Textbook authors should adopt a holistic approach, scientifically planning the content to ensure that chapters mutually support and enhance each other, forming an organic knowledge system<sup>[6]</sup>. Additionally, emphasis should be placed on interdisciplinary integration to broaden students' intellectual horizons.

### **4.4 Insufficient Integration of Ideological and Political Education Elements, Lacking Guidance**

In the chapter on "Chinese Traditional Art," a textbook primarily introduces foundational knowledge such as the forms and technical characteristics of traditional art. However, it lacks an in-depth exploration and elaboration of the cultural connotations and ideological and political elements embedded within traditional art. Consequently, students may grasp the external manifestations of traditional art but fail to comprehend its intrinsic cultural values, spiritual essence, and positive influences on personal moral cultivation and social responsibility.

Textbook authors should delve into the ideological and political elements within aesthetic education resources and integrate them organically into the content. By profoundly exploring and elucidating traditional art and other aesthetic resources, students can be guided to establish correct values and moral outlooks, fostering their humanistic qualities, social responsibility, and other comprehensive abilities<sup>[7]</sup>.

## 5 Research Conclusions and Limitations

### 5.1 Research Conclusions

Through an empirical study of the aesthetic education textbook texts in Jiangsu's application-oriented undergraduate institutions, this article identifies several issues in the current construction of aesthetic education textbooks, including content updating, practical components, system construction, and integration of ideological and political elements. The findings aim to provide valuable references and insights for the development of aesthetic education textbooks in Jiangsu's application-oriented undergraduate institutions.

### 5.2 Research Limitations

The limited sample size selected may not fully represent the overall situation of aesthetic education textbook development in Jiangsu's application-oriented undergraduate institutions. The analysis of issues in aesthetic education textbook construction primarily relies on textual analysis, lacking in-depth investigations and feedback on students' actual usage. Future research could expand the sample scope and adopt a combination of multiple research methods to obtain more comprehensive and accurate results.

## Funding

2024 General Project of Philosophy and Social Sciences Research in Colleges and Universities, "Research on the High-Quality Construction of Aesthetic Education Textbooks in Jiangsu's Application-Oriented Undergraduate Colleges and Universities" (2024SJYB0681)

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