

Analysis of Music Education Rooted in Aesthetic Perception and the Shaping of Students' Core Literacy

Siyu Lu

School of Keyboard Studies, Royal Northern College of Music, M13 9RD, Manchester, UK

Abstract: Research will be conducted on how music education based on aesthetic perception promotes the development of students' core literacy. Instead of viewing music teaching as the transmission of isolated knowledge or performance skills, this paper holds that aesthetic perception provides the experiential foundation for students to construct their understanding of music, emotion-response, cultural awareness, expression, and reflective judgment. Based on the main philosophical discussions in music education and some recent studies on music aesthetic literacy, this essay will examine the values of aesthetic listening, participatory music-making, reflective interpretation and supportive classroom climate in contemporary education. In addition, it proposes that the formation of core literacy in music requires balancing perception and practice, individual feeling and social meaning, and classroom experience with long-term cultural inheritance. Therefore, music education will be more effective if we regard aesthetic perception as the foundation of all knowledge, feelings and being, rather than just an add-on to technical training.

Keywords: Music education, aesthetic perception, core literacy, aesthetic experience, musical understanding, student development.

1. Introduction

Music education has a particular place in school education because it can address cognition, emotion, imagination, expression and culture simultaneously. Music education does not organise through abstract explanations but fosters understanding by listening, responding, participating and reflecting. Therefore, the purpose of this is to provide people with technical skills and leisure.

At present, in educational discussions, the concept of core literacy has been widely used to describe what students need to learn in school gradually. The above ideas generally refer to aesthetic sensitivity, musical literacy, expressive skills, cultural awareness, interpretation and evaluation, and participation in life through art. These abilities are not the result of isolated drills. They appear when students have a positive experience of music.

Aesthetic perception provides a more suitable basis for exploring the educational value of music in this paper. It does not exclude ability, knowledge and experience. It can provide an experience for people to feel and think about music in a more tangible way. Based on the above, this paper will explore the philosophical foundations of aesthetic perception in music education, its connection with the cultivation of students' core literacy, and provide some directions for present-day teaching.

2. Philosophical Basis of Aesthetic Perception in Music Education

Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience can be used to trace the modern educational significance of aesthetic perception in music. Dewey thought that the foundation of art should be actual life experience, not remote observation [1]. This position is good for music education because it can focus on continuity, attention, emotion and meaningful organisation in learning. Students do not experience music genuinely if they only learn by rote. They know it when sound becomes an organised and felt experience.

Elliott's Praxis philosophy is not one such kind; instead, he believes that music can be seen as a type of human activity [2]. This way, the teacher will no longer be persuaded passively; otherwise, they might lose interest. Perception is enriched in the educational environment through singing, performing, improvising, creating and reflecting in life-oriented music. Aesthetic Perception should therefore be understood as active and embodied rather than passive.

Spychiger compares the aesthetics and praxis of different schools of thought and thinks that they may be complementary [3]. This has led to a narrowing of school music education, which is no longer focused on the spirit of 'refined listening and practical musicianship'. For students to develop good musical literacy, they need to be able to feel the mood of a work and participate in music activities meaningfully.

Reimer's ideas have been enduring because, according to him, music education stems from the specific qualities of musical experience and the profound power of meaningful sound to mould people's worldviews [4]. Aesthetics is no longer a supplementary addition to this view. It serves as the foundation for music education. What students hear, discriminate, feel and internally organise serves as the foundation for musical judgement.

Määttäen further clarifies the problem by re-examining the issue of aesthetic experience in relation to music education and rejecting overly vague descriptions of aesthetic response [5]. He has shown that the state of being in one's aesthetic mood is not random. It is perception influenced by behaviour, environment, interpretation and habit. Thus, it can be explained why music education based on aesthetic perception remains both philosophically profound and pedagogically sound.

Tan's reading of Dewey extends the above implications by proposing that aesthetic experience in music education should be understood as a dynamic relationship among sensation, reflection and growth, rather than as an infrequent or exclusive occurrence [6]. This view is very suitable for modern education, and it supports the idea that all students

can be taught music through experience. Aesthetic perception is thus, in principle, inclusive of all students regardless of their background or ability.

Ruleski's real-life critiques are also relatively serious. He believes that music education should not be based on abstract concepts of aesthetics unless they can be translated into practical abilities for students in their daily lives [7]. It is not the end of aesthetics. In short, it wants teachers to link their awareness with real life, society and education.

Together, these positions suggest that aesthetic perception can be viewed as a type of dynamic education. It links sensation, meaning, action and reflection to create an experiential foundation for music learning that is formative rather than procedural.

3. Aesthetic Perception and the Formation of Core Literacy

Music education based on aesthetics will start to foster the core literacy of attention through careful listening. Mamlok suggests that, in the context of active listening, one should be fully present and reflectively process the music experienced [8]. Support the basic educational goals: Students need to be able to recognise contours, contrasts, tenses, textures, timbres and emotions in sound in their music learning. Such listening is not passive absorption. It is restrained sensitivity.

The second type of core literacy is a wide-ranging aesthetic-cultural literacy. Lines believes that aesthetics offers philosophical and practical support for music and arts education in curriculum development [9]. The basic ability of language is not only about feelings but also about learning. Students should be able to learn how the style and situation of a work affect its meaning. Cultivating students' sense of aesthetics in school through cultural interpretation.

The third place is also a learning environment. Zhao and others have shown that classroom climate and self-efficacy are correlated with students' music aesthetic literacy; thus, aesthetic development may be associated with interactional and psychological environments [10]. Perception does not occur in isolation; it also has other roots. When the classroom offers confidence, discussion, risk-taking in interpretation and respect, students can appreciate beauty more deeply.

These recent studies are very convenient to read in conjunction with philosophical works. Reimer's demand for meaningful sound and Tan's Deweyan reading both propose that perception organises experience into significance rather than noise [4, 6]. When students are led to pay attention to listening and to reflect on musical works, they will start to develop judgment, concentration and sensitivity. They are typical examples of music-related core literacy.

The third kind is emotional literacy. Dewey's theory of experience believes that feeling is not an addition to perception but rather a way in which meaning is created in art [1]. This means that in music class, we can learn to describe our emotions in a more organised way by naming and exploring them. Thus, the students have increased their literacy through the connection of emotion and organisation/interpretation.

Participatory musicianship is also required. Elliott believes that active music-making in music education is required to promote in-depth understanding of music [2]. The above does not limit the scope of aesthetics; on the contrary, it expands it. Students feel phrasing, pulse, balance and expressive intentions differently in performance, improvisation,

cooperation with others, or modification of musical choices during practice. Core literacy in music thus develops through the reciprocity of perception and action.

Another type is reflection and comparison judgments. Spychiger and Määttänen both show in different ways that music education should not be limited to technical results or unrestrained emotion [3, 5]. Provide students with various interpretations of the work and have them discuss how different expressive options can be achieved. In this way, the cultivated reflection will form a habit of judgment and be included in the core literacy of education.

Core literacy also includes social and moral awareness. Regelski believed in praxis, so he thought that music could also serve as a means for real-life application and social participation [7]. When the sense of aesthetics is connected with participation in community and culture, students begin to feel that music is part of life for everyone. Core literacy will be applied to explore different musical cultures in a more thoughtful way.

4. Educational Implications for Contemporary Music Teaching

The foundation is aesthetic perception; thus, classroom design should first create conditions for real musical experience. Students need time to listen carefully, compare interpretations, review the work and respond in language, movement, notation or performance. Otherwise, the teaching of music will be too much about facts.

At the same time, philosophy has been evolving and is no longer uniform. Regelski believes that aesthetic demands lose their power when they are not related to actual musical creation and education [7]. Therefore, it can be seen that the teacher should model aesthetic perception for the students. Connect listening and singing in the classroom, discuss and create together, and explore music more deeply.

Elliott's praxis philosophy and Reimer's stress on meaningful sound have already put forward this balanced view, but they do so for different reasons [2, 4]. Do not contradict the perception and practice in class. Design teaching sequences that use listening to prepare for action, refine action through listening, and guide both processes with reflection.

Curriculum coverage is also limited. Deweyan and contemporary discussions are in agreement that music education should cover a wide range of repertoires to enable students to experience various styles and cultures aesthetically [1, 6, 9]. A small repertoire can only train some habits of recognition and is not sufficient for full-fledged core literacy. A large window can offer students many sights and provide material for comparison.

The teaching environment is also required. Mamlok thinks that active music listening is influenced by attention, interpretation and the surrounding educational and social environment [8]. Zhao and others have also shown that classroom climate and self-efficacy are related to music aesthetic literacy [10]. The above research shows that students will be more eager to learn about beauty when they are confident that their own thoughts and feelings will be respected.

Reassess what we believe now. Music education is based on aesthetics; therefore, the assessment should also consider non-technical attributes. Pay attention to listening, interpretively explain, expressively make decisions,

collaboratively respond, and reflectively grow. The above assessment is relatively demanding in terms of technical aspects, but it is also more in line with the actual educational goals of music.

Another is how to have this taught. The teacher of music does not only transmit a body of works and correct technical mistakes. The teacher creates an environment for aesthetics, leads students in listening, and connects their own feelings with the group through shared standards. This role needs to have both teaching ability and musical knowledge, and also be easy to understand for students and educational.

For the above reasons, contemporary music teaching should be organised in a combined manner. Students require musical content and, at the same time, organised opportunities for them to experience sound, learn through experience, and grasp concepts through learning. This is the application of rooting music education in aesthetic perception.

5. Limits and Optimization Directions

Aesthetic perception should be considered the foundation but is not self-sufficient. A persistent problem in music education is that although aesthetic experience is mentioned in elevated language, there are no clear paths for students to learn. Spychiger, Määttänen and Regelski all indicate in different ways that when aesthetic discourse is detached from pedagogy, practice and criteria for growth, it becomes weak [3, 5, 7]. Optimisation of music education should therefore make perceptual growth teachable, discussable and observable.

Secondly, there is a problem of individual freedom and direction. Aesthetic response is subjective, so teachers are reluctant to lead the students too directly. However, Reimer and Tan have jointly proposed that musical perception is improved by the careful arrangement of experience rather than by spontaneity [4, 6]. Educationally, it means giving someone our attention without requiring them to speak, creating a space for listening and allowing for free expression.

A third problem is how aesthetic literacy connects with other kinds of student literacy. According to the above studies, music aesthetic literacy is related to the classroom environment and teaching methods rather than to musical materials themselves [8-10]. Therefore, the cultivation of essential literacy in music is likely to be promoted by institutions, teachers and curricula. Aesthetic perception is the foundation, but the foundation needs to be nurtured in good educational conditions.

A fourth is how to extend the experience of beauty beyond one's own life. Both Elliott and Regelski believe that music education should enable students to live meaningfully in a world of music outside of school [2, 7]. If aesthetic perception is only a short-term impression in class, it will not be fully understood. Students need multiple chances to hear, play, create, discuss and experience music in order to learn it well.

A fifth problem is the compromise of universality and particularity. Although Dewey's idea of aesthetic experience provides broad philosophical support, in practice, music teaching still needs to consider the age, background, repertoire and social environment of the learners [1]. Therefore, optimisation needs both ideals and changes. One should not use a single model of aesthetic education but, instead, modify the basic ideas according to the teaching context.

For this reason, the most promising direction of optimisation is integrative rather than polarised. Teachers can

link listening and performance, aesthetic response and cultural understanding, classroom practice and extracurricular participation, individual feeling and shared interpretation. In this system, aesthetics are still used as the foundation, but now they serve the purpose of cultivating long-term literacy in education rather than providing fleeting pleasure.

In this way, music education can help mould students who are both technically proficient and sensitive; they can also be more perceptive, expressive, reflective and culturally aware. This is the strongest support for rooting music education in aesthetic perception and refusing to isolate that perception from practice and pedagogy.

6. Conclusion

Music education based on aesthetic perception has the ability to cultivate students' basic literacy by integrating emotions, understanding, expression, reflection and cultural participation in a single educational process. Music learning can be used as a way of all-round development for people, rather than just learning some technical skills.

This paper has proposed that aesthetic perception should be regarded as the foundation of experience for the development of musical understanding, participatory musicianship, reflective judgment and cultural awareness. Its value for education is to help people connect what they see and feel with a shared sense of meaning.

For this reason, modern music education should maintain the tradition of aesthetic perception and develop rich teaching strategies to make this perception more active, learnable and socially responsible. Only then will music education be able to contribute to the all-round development of students' core literacy.

References

- [1] Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Minton, Balch & Company.
- [2] Elliott, D. J. (1995). *Music matters: A new philosophy of music education*. Oxford University Press.
- [3] Spychiger, M. B. (1997). Aesthetic and praxial philosophies of music education compared: A semiotic consideration. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 5(1), 33–41.
- [4] Reimer, B. (2003). *A philosophy of music education: Advancing the vision* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- [5] Määttänen, P. (2003). Aesthetic experience and music education. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 11(1), 63–70.
- [6] Tan, L. (2020). Reading John Dewey's "Art as Experience" for music education. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 28(1), 69–87.
- [7] Regelski, T. A. (2022). Musical value and praxial music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 21(1), 15–55.
- [8] Mamluk, D. (2017). Active listening, music education, and society. In G. Noblit (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford University Press.
- [9] Lines, D. (2022). Music and aesthetics in education: Towards a contemporary view. *Beijing International Review of Education*, 4(3), 408–421.
- [10] Zhao, L., Huang, W., Han, B., & Wu, X. (2026). Classroom climate dimensions, self-efficacy, and music aesthetic literacy:

A mediation study with Chinese non-music major college students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, Article 1716470.