

Exploration and Practice of Calligraphy Aesthetic Education for International Students

-- A Case Study on USST

Jianji Dong

Hujiang College, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai 200093, China

Abstract

In the current education of international students in China, calligraphy aesthetics education is a new field. The development of calligraphy aesthetic education can not only help international students find a more accurate way to understand and write Chinese characters, but also inspire them to grasp the core meaning of Chinese culture more comprehensively. Combining with the exploration and practice of the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (USST), this paper provides reference for colleges and universities in the new era to develop calligraphy aesthetic education for international students.

Keywords

Calligraphy; Aesthetic Education; International Students.

1. Introduction

For a country, the education of international students is an important manifestation of its educational strength and an important carrier of excellent cultural exchanges and mutual learning. As an ancient country with 5,000 years of civilization, China has been welcoming international students with a broad embrace since ancient times. As early as the Sui Dynasty, Japan firstly sent students to China to learn advanced culture. In the Tang Dynasty, countless international students poured into China, among which Japan's *kentoshi* was the most famous. With the rapid rise of China's international influence in recent years, the unique charm of Chinese fine traditional culture has been fully revealed, and the number of international students has increased significantly. In today's China, international students from various countries have become a beautiful scenery and added new vitality to the campus.

At the same time, aesthetic education is increasingly valued in today's universities. In October 2020, China issued an official government document, requiring that aesthetic education be incorporated into the whole process of talent training in schools at all levels and of various types with the goal of improving students' aesthetic and humanistic qualities, promoting the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, cultivating people with the understanding of beauty. [1]

China attaches great importance to the education of international students. Obviously, the aesthetic education of international students is also an important part of talent training in various colleges and universities. To carry out aesthetic education for international students, it is necessary to guide them to realize what is the real beauty of Chinese culture. Among many categories of excellent traditional Chinese culture, calligraphy art is known as 'the most important part of the core of Chinese culture'. [2] Therefore, taking calligraphy art as an important carrier of international students' aesthetic education and guiding them to understand and walk into the palace of beauty has played an important role in international students' education.

2. The Significance of Calligraphy Aesthetic Education for International Students

2.1. Calligraphy Aesthetic Education and Chinese Character Writing

Calligraphy is an important carrier for international students to master Chinese writing methods. As we all know, the ability to recognize and read Chinese characters is an important basis for international students to learn knowledge in China. Calligraphy art is fundamentally based on the daily writing of Chinese characters developed. Therefore, for international students, the process of learning calligraphy can strengthen their awareness of stroke order and writing ability of Chinese characters.

2.2. Calligraphy Aesthetic Education and Chinese Culture

Calligraphy is an important carrier for international students to enter the door of Chinese culture. Although the writing object of calligraphy art is kind of highly abstract block Chinese characters, an excellent calligraphy work is a collection of extensive cultural items. The rich beauty of brushwork, literature, image and rhyme reflected the wisdom and realm of eastern classical philosophy everywhere.

2.3. Calligraphy Aesthetic Education and Self-cultivation

Calligraphy is an important carrier for international students to cultivate their feelings. Liu Xizai of the Qing Dynasty pointed out in *Yi Gai* that 'calligraphy has rich images, reflecting a person's knowledge, talent and interest...' [3] There has always been a saying in China that 'a person's handwriting says a lot about himself'. Therefore, calligraphy art has always been the primary choice for the aesthetic pursuit and emotional cultivation of ancient Chinese literati and scholars. Culture has no borders. At present, when science and technology are developing with each passing day and the pace of life is accelerating, the aesthetic value of calligraphy art is also of great practical significance to international students.

3. Difficulties in Calligraphy Aesthetic Education for International Students

To analyze the difficulties of calligraphy aesthetic education for international students, we need to start from the two dimensions of recipients and implementers of educational activities. From the perspective of the recipients, international students, the calligraphy aesthetic education is mainly faced with the following three bottleneck problems.

3.1. The Understanding of Character Stroke Order

Chinese characters are the only hieroglyphic writing system that has been inherited for thousands of years in the world. Although in the dimension of Chinese character writing, there are different legal systems such as seal script, official script, regular script and cursive script, and there are significant differences in line forms and outline characteristics, the pursuit of legal and core laws of Chinese character writing are consistent and have rules to follow. However, in practice, we find that international students have great differences in the mastery of stroke order of each block of Chinese characters. Many international students almost draw and trace Chinese characters when writing Chinese characters, which has become the primary bottleneck for them to enter the door of calligraphy art.

3.2. The Understanding of the Beauty of the Calligraphy Works

The beauty of calligraphy contains many dimensions. Chairman Mao, who has great attainments in calligraphy, once said 'There are both contradictions and coordination. Chinese calligraphy is full of dialectics.' [4] Shen Yinmo, one of the top calligrapher in modern China

believed that calligraphy art was 'colorless but gorgeous, silent but harmonious'. But in the eyes of most international students, calligraphy works are more like a personalized painting full of abstract lines and black and white tones. Although in the ancient Chinese calligraphy theory, there has been a consensus on bad strokes like 'edges and corners, bamboo joints, broken wood, shoulder pole, ox head, mouse tail, crane knee, bee waist' [5] and other bad strokes, international students still have no way to judge what kind of calligraphy is beautiful. This situation is mainly caused by the lack of understanding of the basic knowledge of Chinese calligraphy, such as classical strokes, the characteristics of bad strokes, the combination of strokes, the sequence of characters, and the standard of lines and columns.

3.3. The Understanding of Aesthetic Empathy

Calligraphy art is extensive and profound because it contains a wealth of dialectical unity. Therefore, an excellent calligraphy work, from a word to a piece, from micro to macro, can fully contain and reflect the writer's aesthetic, thought, and even emotional ups and downs. That is exactly what Sun Guoting, a famous calligrapher and calligraphy theorist in Tang Dynasty, once revealed, 'The art of calligraphy can lead to people's deep feelings, express their joys and sorrows, and turn abstract emotions into concrete and vivid.' [6] The most important thing here is to help international students strengthen their understanding of the unity of writing and appreciation order, as well as the unity of article emotion and stroke form.

In addition, from the perspective of the implementer of calligraphy aesthetic education, there are three main bottlenecks in colleges and universities: First, there is not a broad consensus on calligraphy aesthetic education for international students in various colleges and universities, and relevant systems and mechanisms need to be established and improved; Second, there is a serious shortage of teachers who are interested in calligraphy aesthetic education for international students, and there is a lack of mature model reference for related work. Third, the teaching practice of calligraphy aesthetic education for international students needs to be fully guaranteed.

4. Practice of Calligraphy Aesthetic Education for International Students

In its history of more than 100 years, USST has always attached great importance to opening education to the outside world. International education has become the name card of the university. In recent years, USST has taken the lead in carrying out calligraphy aesthetic education for international students in China, actively exploring and gradually forming a working mechanism with certain reference significance.

4.1. Popularizing Theories Extensively

In the course of teaching international students' Chinese listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, USST focuses on strengthening their understanding and mastery of Chinese stroke order. In the general courses of aesthetic education, USST offers courses such as *History of Chinese Calligraphy* and *Calligraphy Aesthetics*, which systematically teach the history, humanity and aesthetic evolution of calligraphy art to international students in the main class. Through the popularization of these course theories, international students have established a basic cognition of the combination of dots and strokes, the order of Row column, the evolution of calligraphy style and its aesthetic characteristics, etc.

4.2. Guaranteeing Practical Experience

Calligraphy attaches importance to the unity of theory and practice. Theoretical knowledge can guide practice, at the same time, through practice will promote the understanding of theoretical knowledge. In order to help international students to master the basic techniques of calligraphy more smoothly, USST has built a dedicated calligraphy classroom and established a pair activity

mechanism between the college students' calligraphy association and international students' calligraphy lovers, focusing on helping international students to overcome the bottleneck problems of stroke order, stroke technique, copying, aesthetic appreciation and creation.

4.3. Establishing an Ecosystem of Calligraphy Activities

USST gives full play to the role of all kinds of campus cultural activities in fostering the humanistic and artistic atmosphere. USST holds a calligraphy exhibition every year, and the excellent calligraphy works of international students are also exhibited. USST holds an international cultural festival every year, in which the calligraphy exhibition area will attract a large number of international students to queue up to experience. USST will also hold special cultural salons for international students from time to time, presenting the essence of calligraphy, classical Chinese poetry, painting, music and other literary and artistic works around the theme.

4.4. Constantly Improving the Aesthetic Education Support

USST is well aware that aesthetic education cannot be effective in a short time, but must be passed on from generation to generation. USST gives full play to the credit orientation, and makes it clear that each student has completed at least 2 credits of aesthetic education general education courses, and that students who win provincial or ministerial prizes in calligraphy can be converted into corresponding innovation and entrepreneurship credits. USST has established an art education research center, actively expanded the professional teaching staff, and established a master studio to provide more systematic, refined and whole-process calligraphy guidance for international students with different writing skills.

5. Conclusion

Focusing on the aesthetic education of calligraphy for international students and leading them to enter the door of 5,000 years Of Chinese culture through the art of calligraphy, its practical significance cannot be underestimated. For Chinese education authorities, calligraphy aesthetic education for international students not only follows the fundamental orientation of talent cultivation in the new era, but also reflects the core concept of cultural construction in the new era. For international students from all over the world, entering calligraphy art from the simple to the profound can not only meet the pursuit of in-depth experience of Chinese culture, but also contain the long-term value of aesthetic improvement and emotional cultivation. It is hoped that this paper will make a modest contribution to the inheritance and promotion of Chinese traditional culture and the exploration and practice of calligraphy aesthetic education in colleges and universities in the new era.

References

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