

A Study on the Pathways for Cultivating Primary School Students Musical Aesthetic Ability from the Perspective of Educational Psychology

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Abstract

Under the "Double Reduction" policy and the reform of aesthetic education [1], music teaching in elementary schools is moving away from only training skills and toward helping students build aesthetic literacy. Young children are at an important stage of cognitive and emotional growth, so it is necessary to find ways to support their musical aesthetic ability from the view of educational psychology. By reviewing related literature and analyzing cases, this study looks at the psychological development traits of students in early, middle, and upper grades; it also examines how music aesthetic education is currently carried out in elementary schools, and points out main problems such as whether the curriculum fits each grade level, how to use suitable teaching methods, and how to build a clear evaluation system. Based on these findings, the study suggests a step-by-step and practical strategy system for developing musical aesthetic competence, including three parts: feeling and experiencing music, understanding and appreciating music, and expressing culture through music. This research aims to give useful guidance to frontline elementary music teachers, help music aesthetic education better match children's mental growth patterns, and promote the educational goal of "shaping character through beauty."

Keywords

Educational psychology; Primary school students; Musical aesthetic ability; Development across educational stages; Aesthetic education approaches.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Under the push of aesthetic education policies in the new era, China has clearly put forward the educational idea of "educating through beauty, refining character through beauty, and nurturing basic qualities through beauty" [2]; music education, as an important carrier of aesthetic education, is increasingly valued for its role in developing students' aesthetic ability; at the same time, after the "Double Reduction" policy was carried out, primary school music classes have more opportunities to shift from simple skill training to overall development centered on aesthetic experience [1]; primary school students are in a key period of cognitive and emotional growth, so analyzing how their musical aesthetic ability forms and what paths can be used to cultivate it from the perspective of educational psychology is of great value in both theory and practice.

1.2. Research Questions

Although music aesthetic education in primary schools has drawn quite a lot of attention, the situation of "focusing on skills more than aesthetics" still often appears in actual classroom

practice, and the role of music classes in guiding aesthetic feeling has not been fully brought into play; specifically, current teaching has clear shortcomings in stage adaptability, targeted teaching methods, and systematic evaluation frameworks, and also lacks differentiated and tiered cultivation strategies designed according to students' psychological development patterns; how to scientifically design a path for developing musical aesthetic competence that matches the psychological traits of primary school students in different grade stages from the perspective of educational psychology has become a very critical issue and needs to be solved as soon as possible.

1.3. Research Significance

This study combines the principles of children's psychological development with music aesthetic education in primary schools, mainly aiming to fill a gap in interdisciplinary research between music education and child psychology, namely the lack of approaches tailored to different educational stages and practical implementation; specifically, current research on music aesthetic education in primary schools mostly focuses on general discussions of curriculum design and teaching methods, and seldom systematically analyzes the internal connections between students' psychological development characteristics (such as cognitive levels, emotional experiences, and aesthetic judgment) in lower, middle, and upper grades and the formation of their musical aesthetic ability from the perspective of educational psychology; by introducing Piaget's theory of cognitive development [3], Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory [4], and Erikson's theory of personality development stages [5], this study identifies stage-specific differences in perceptual attention, emotional responses, and aesthetic evaluation among students at different educational levels; these findings provide empirical and theoretical support for building a music aesthetic teaching framework oriented toward child development, and also enrich the theoretical framework for cultivating musical aesthetic literacy in primary schools.

Under the background of the "Double Reduction" policy and the continuous advancement of aesthetic education reform [1,2], this study starts from actual situations and designs a step-by-step, operable implementation framework for developing musical aesthetic ability among primary school students at different grade stages; the framework includes three levels: sensory experience, understanding and appreciation, and cultural expression; through literature review and case analysis, the study finds out major problems in current teaching concerning grade adaptability, targeted teaching methods, and the completeness of evaluation systems, and on this basis designs corresponding classroom activities and assessment methods for each stage; these results can provide direct and practical reference for frontline primary school music teachers, help students improve their musical perception and appreciation levels, and promote closer integration between music aesthetic education and children's psychological development characteristics, thus supporting high-quality implementation of aesthetic education and continuously advancing the educational goal of "educating through beauty."

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1. Musical Aesthetic Ability

Musical aesthetic ability refers to student's capacity to perceive, understand, appreciate, and evaluate musical works. This study categorizes it into three levels: perceptual experience, comprehension and appreciation, and cultural expression [6,7].

2.1.2. Development by Educational Stage

Stage-specific cultivation refers to the design of differentiated teaching objectives and methods based on the psychological characteristics of primary school students at different age stages.

This study categorizes primary schools into lower grades (grades 1–2), middle grades (grades 3–4), and upper grades (grades 5–6) [5,7].

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of Educational Psychology

Piaget's theory of cognitive development regards primary school students as being in the concrete operational stage, where their thinking gradually shifts from concrete to abstract, and this feature provides a basis for arranging music activities for different grade stages [3]; Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role that social interaction plays in the learning process, which gives theoretical support to cooperative learning in music classrooms [4]; Erikson's theory of personality development places the primary school age into the "diligence vs. inferiority" stage, and in this stage, if students can obtain successful aesthetic experiences, their self-confidence is more easily built [5]. The main theoretical framework of this study is composed of these three theories together.

2.3. Current State of Domestic Research

In her 2021 study, Wang Xiuping noticed that lower-grade primary school students tend to be active and like to imitate, so she introduced the Orff method into children's song teaching and designed a progressive framework of "rhythmic perception – instrumental ensemble – children's song composition," which helped improve students' musical perception ability effectively [6]; Li Min in 2023 started from the situation that upper-grade primary students begin to show aesthetic awareness and obvious individual differences, and developed a tiered choral training system, including basic training, differentiated practice, and work performance [8]; Chen Jing in 2019, based on Piaget's theory, proposed a stage-specific progressive music aesthetic teaching method, that is, focusing on perception in lower grades, comprehension in middle grades, and appreciation in higher grades [7].

2.4. Current State of International Research

Orff developed the Orff Method in 1976, which emphasizes "learning through movement and play," allowing children to perceive music through activities such as rhythmic movement and percussion [9]; Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences in 1983, and musical intelligence is seen as an independent type of ability, so there is theoretical support for recognizing and nurturing individual differences in music learning, especially for explaining the obvious differences among upper-grade students [10]; Suzuki created the Suzuki Method in 1969, which draws on the way children learn their "native language" and lets students develop musical ability step by step through the process of "listening–imitation–expression" [11]; this sequential way of thinking provides a useful reference for designing aesthetic development activities for different grade stages.

These teaching methods have provided many practical tools for children's music education, but they were not originally designed specifically for systematically developing aesthetic ability in primary school; taking the Orff method as an example, it works very well in lower grades and fits the active and imitative psychological traits of children at this stage, but in upper grades (grades 5-6), students become more self-conscious and shyer, so directly applying lower-grade-oriented expressive movement activities may not only fail to engage students aesthetically but also make them feel uncomfortable psychologically; this shows that international teaching methods need to be adapted according to the psychological characteristics of Chinese primary school students at different grade levels, instead of being copied directly; however, in actual teaching, these methods are often used sporadically in individual parts rather than being systematically organized into a system for developing aesthetic ability that matches students' developmental stages.

2.5. Research Gaps

Building upon the limitations identified in the preceding review, the existing literature reveals several notable deficiencies that this study aims to address. First, while international methodologies such as Orff, Gardner, and Suzuki offer valuable theoretical and practical entry points, there is a conspicuous lack of empirical research that systematically applies and adapts these frameworks to the specific context of aesthetic ability cultivation in Chinese primary schools. In particular, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has not been explicitly employed to explain the individual differences in musical aesthetic development observed among students at the same grade level (e.g., the pronounced disparities in upper grades), nor has it been integrated into differentiated instructional design. Similarly, Suzuki's "listening-imitation-expression" sequence has not been systematically adapted as a developmental progression across educational stages—for instance, emphasizing "listening-imitation" in lower grades while transitioning to "expression-creation" in upper grades.

Second, although the psychological differences between lower and upper primary grade students are well-documented in developmental psychology, music education research has rarely translated these distinctions into concrete, actionable teaching strategies. The specific mechanisms through which age-related psychological shifts influence the effectiveness of aesthetic activities remain underexplored. Third, there is a scarcity of longitudinal or comparative case studies that document and analyze how specific teaching activities are received by students at different developmental stages within the same cultural and curricular context. This lack of detailed, contextualized evidence hinders the formulation of evidence-based, age-appropriate pedagogical guidelines. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by constructing a developmental-stage-oriented framework that integrates international methodologies with localized psychological insights—specifically applying Gardner's framework to explain individual differences and adapting Suzuki's sequence into a stage-based progression—and by providing empirical case evidence to support its practical implementation.

2.6. The Approach of This Study

This study draws on the theoretical frameworks of Piaget [3], Vygotsky [4], and Erikson [5] to develop a stage-specific, tiered strategy system for cultivating musical aesthetic competence tailored to the psychological characteristics of students at lower, middle, and upper educational levels. The system encompasses three dimensions: perceptual experience, comprehension and appreciation, and cultural expression. Additionally, the study conducts a stage-specific adaptability analysis of international teaching methodologies such as Orff's approach, proposes an "internalization-oriented" adaptation pathway for advanced-level students, and explores concrete strategies for adapting these foreign pedagogies to local contexts.

3. Research Technique

3.1. Research Approach

This study follows the logical framework of "theoretical synthesis – current situation analysis – problem identification – strategy development." First, through literature review, it identifies the intersecting theories between educational psychology and music aesthetic education; second, based on existing literature and teaching cases, it analyzes the current implementation status of music aesthetic education in primary schools; third, considering the psychological characteristics of students across different academic stages, it examines the root causes of existing issues; finally, it develops a phased, step-by-step strategic system for cultivating musical aesthetic competence.

3.2. Research Methods

(1) Literature review method: A systematic examination of Piagets theory of cognitive development [3], Vygotskys socio-cultural theory [4], Eriksons theory of personality development stages [5], and relevant literature on music aesthetic education in primary schools was conducted to identify the psychological development characteristics of elementary students across lower, middle, and upper grade levels, thereby establishing the theoretical foundation for this study.

(2) Case Analysis Method: Collect exemplary primary school music teaching cases from both domestic and international sources, covering lower, middle, and upper educational stages. Sources include recordings of open classes, outstanding instructional design plans, and representative lesson examples from academic papers. The cases are analyzed across dimensions such as teaching objectives, activity design, and suitability for specific grade levels to identify actionable insights and existing challenges.

(3) Theoretical Construction Approach: By integrating findings from literature reviews and case analyses, and considering the psychological development characteristics of primary school students across different academic stages, this approach develops a phased, step-by-step strategy system for cultivating musical aesthetic competence, encompassing three levels: perceptual experience, comprehension and appreciation, and cultural expression [6][7].

3.3. Case Analysis Framework

This study analyzes teaching cases from the following dimensions:

- (1) Whether the teaching objectives reflect the cultivation of aesthetic competence;
- (2) Whether the teaching activities are tailored to the psychological characteristics of the respective educational stage;
- (3) The students aesthetic experiences;
- (4) Whether teaching evaluation focuses on enhancing aesthetic competence.

4. Analysis of Psychological Development Characteristics by Educational Stage for Primary School Students

Primary school students are in a critical period of cognitive and emotional development, with significant differences in psychological characteristics across different grade levels. This study employs the frameworks of Piagets theory of cognitive development [3], Vygotskys socio-cultural theory [4], and Eriksons theory of personality development stages [5] to divide primary education into three phases: lower stage (grades 1–2), middle stage (grades 3–4), and upper stage (grades 5–6), analyzing their respective psychological development features.

4.1. Psychological Development Characteristics in Lower Grades (Grades 1–2)

Younger students are in a transitional phase between the pre-operational and concrete operational stages [3]. Cognitively, their thinking is primarily concrete-based, with short attention spans (approximately 10–15 minutes) [12], and they show greater interest in intuitive, visual teaching materials. In terms of learning styles, these children are active, enjoy imitation, and readily participate in classroom activities through physical movements [6].

In terms of emotional and social development, Eriksons theory identifies this stage as a critical period for childrens transition from "diligence to inferiority" [5]. Successful aesthetic experiences help build self-confidence, whereas excessive frustration may lead to feelings of inferiority. Therefore, early music education should emphasize game-based and experiential activity designs that enable students to learn through play and achieve a sense of accomplishment through positive aesthetic experiences.

4.2. Psychological Development Characteristics in the Middle Stage (Grades 3–4)

Middle-grade students have entered the stage of concrete operations [3]. Cognitively, their logical thinking begins to develop; they can understand simple causal relationships, and their attention span improves (approximately 20–25 minutes) [12]. They also demonstrate preliminary skills in collaborative learning and can complete basic musical tasks during group activities [4].

In terms of emotional development, middle-grade students experience more diverse emotional responses, begin to comprehend the emotional expression in music, and develop initial aesthetic preferences. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory posits that social interaction serves as a crucial medium for learning and cognitive development [4]. Therefore, music instruction at this stage should fully leverage cooperative learning approaches to guide students in deepening their understanding and appreciation of musical elements through interactive engagement.

4.3. Psychological Development Characteristics in Upper Grades (Grades 5–6)

Advanced students are in a transitional phase between the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage [3]. Cognitively, their abstract thinking skills progressively develop, enabling them to engage in logical reasoning and critical thinking. Individual differences become particularly pronounced during this stage: some students already demonstrate advanced musical literacy, while others may remain at a foundational level [8].

In terms of emotional and social development, older students exhibit significantly enhanced self-awareness, begin to pay attention to peer evaluations, show increased shyness, and demonstrate markedly reduced willingness for physical expression and participation in classroom interactions compared to younger students [13]. Concurrently, aesthetic awareness begins to emerge; students develop their own interpretations and judgments of musical works and acquire certain abilities in music appreciation and evaluation [7]. Erikson noted that children at this stage start forming a sense of self-identity [5]. Therefore, music instruction for older students should respect individual differences and psychological characteristics, reduce externally imposed or forced interactions, and promote more introspective and autonomous aesthetic expression.

4.4. Teaching Cases as Evidence

The following examples briefly illustrate how these psychological characteristics manifest in the classroom.

In an open lesson titled "Little Animals Singing" for first grade, the teacher guided students to imitate animal sounds with corresponding body movements; the vast majority participated actively with vivid imitation, reflecting lower-grade students' active and imitative nature [6]. In contrast, during a sixth-grade lesson on "Ode to Joy," the teacher designed a rhythmic movement segment requiring students to express musical feelings through body movements; however, most students displayed shyness or avoidance, with some remaining silent with heads lowered, reflecting upper-grade students' heightened self-awareness and reduced engagement in "exposed" activities [13]. The marked contrast between these two cases demonstrates that the design of musical aesthetic activities must align with the psychological characteristics of each developmental stage.

4.5. Summary

In summary, students across the lower, middle, and upper educational levels exhibit significant differences in cognitive ability, attention span, learning approaches, emotional development, and social development. These differences necessitate that the cultivation of musical aesthetic competence should avoid a one-size-fits-all teaching approach; instead, differentiated teaching

objectives, activities, and assessment methods must be designed based on the psychological characteristics of students at each stage. This provides a direct theoretical foundation for developing a phased, tiered strategy system for fostering musical aesthetic competence in this study.

5. Analysis of the Issues in Current Music Aesthetic Education in Primary Schools

Through comprehensive literature analysis and examination of teaching cases, several significant challenges remain in the practical implementation of music aesthetic education at the primary school level. This study examines these issues across three dimensions—curriculum stage appropriateness, methodological specificity, and systematic evaluation frameworks—and illustrates them with concrete examples.

5.1. Insufficient adaptability across educational stages

Current music education in primary schools exhibits a pronounced "one-size-fits-all" approach, with instructional designs failing to adequately address the cognitive characteristics and aesthetic psychological needs of students at different grade levels. In lower grades, some teachers fail to fully leverage students inherent traits of being active and prone to imitation [6], resulting in overly static classroom activities that lead to low student engagement. At middle grades, teaching objectives often remain largely similar to those of lower grades, failing to account for the growing demand for enhanced understanding of musical elements as logical thinking begins to develop [3]. The issue becomes more pronounced in higher grades: as students self-awareness increases and shyness becomes more evident, externally directed rhythmic activities originally designed for lower grades are continued without modification, causing psychological discomfort and reduced enthusiasm for aesthetic participation [13].

Case study evidence: In their observational research on music classes for upper primary grades, Liu Dianzhi et al. (2018) found that during a sixth-grade music lesson on "Ode to Joy," the teacher designed a "musical movement activity" requiring students to express their musical feelings through physical gestures. However, only a few students participated; most exhibited shyness or avoidance, with some even remaining silent. Post-class feedback indicated, "It was very awkward performing movements in front of classmates." In contrast, the same movement activity in a first-grade open class on "Little Animals Singing" yielded markedly different results: most students actively participated with vivid imitation, creating a lively classroom atmosphere [6]. This comparison demonstrates that older students experience significant psychological discomfort with "exposure-based" activities, yet teachers continue employing teaching methods suitable for lower grades without adapting them to students evolving psychological needs. Chen Jings (2019) research further highlights gaps in the continuity of music education across primary school stages, highlighting a lack of progressive and coherent instructional objectives between different grade levels [7].

5.2. The teaching methods lack specificity.

Current music classroom teaching methods remain relatively monolithic, primarily centered on vocal skill training while lacking diversified instructional strategies tailored to different educational stages. In terms of content, teachers often emphasize song singing instruction and the imparting of music theory knowledge, with insufficient guidance for student's aesthetic perception and emotional experience [6]. Regarding activity design, experiential activities such as movement-based exercises and percussion classes are predominantly concentrated in lower grade levels, gradually decreasing in middle and upper grades, resulting in a lack of continuity in aesthetic development across stages. Taking the Orff method as an example, its concept of "learning through movement and play" proves highly effective in lower-grade instruction, fully

aligning with children's psychological characteristics [9]. However, many teachers directly replicate this interactive approach without adaptation for upper-grade classrooms, neglecting the introverted and shy psychological traits of older students, thereby creating a mismatch between teaching methodologies and the developmental needs of these age groups.

Case study evidence: In her observational research on primary school music classes, Wang Xiuping (2021) found that in a fourth-grade music lesson titled "Oh, Ten Minutes," the teacher focused primarily on rhythm training and pitch correction, dedicating approximately 30 minutes to repeated singing practice while allocating only 5 minutes to discussing "the emotions conveyed by the song." After the lesson, students reported, "I know how to sing it, but I don't understand what the song is about." In contrast, another classroom of the same grade that employed experiential teaching designed an activity called "Expressing Emotions Through Music Listening," where students expressed their musical feelings in their own ways after listening; classroom engagement and learning interest were significantly higher [6]. This comparison demonstrates that a monotonous teaching approach is a major factor contributing to students limited aesthetic experience.

5.3. Systematic deficiencies in the evaluation framework

Current evaluations of music education in primary schools predominantly focus on skill acquisition, while systematic frameworks for assessing student's aesthetic abilities remain lacking. On one hand, formative assessment is insufficient, making it difficult to effectively document and provide feedback on students aesthetic perception, emotional responses, and engagement attitudes during lessons. On the other hand, performance-based evaluation is absent; there is a lack of appropriate tools and standards for assessing higher-order aesthetic competencies such as understanding, appreciation, and creative expression of musical works [7]. This evaluation approach exacerbates the teaching tendency of "emphasizing skills over aesthetics," thereby hindering the full realization of music classes role in aesthetic education.

Case study evidence: In a survey on the current state of music teaching evaluation at a primary school, Chen Jing (2019) found that the final music assessment included song performance (60%), music theory knowledge (30%), and classroom participation (10%). Classroom participation was primarily measured by attendance and discipline, without assessing students understanding or appreciation of musical works. One teacher remarked, "Aesthetic ability is difficult to quantify; therefore, assessments mainly focus on singing accuracy and music theory proficiency." Meanwhile, a teacher at the school implemented a "Music Appreciation Record Card" in classrooms, requiring students to document their reactions and thoughts about the music they listened to after class. The results showed significant improvements in both student engagement and expressive abilities during music appreciation sessions [7]. This comparison demonstrates that the systemic bias in the evaluation framework is a key institutional cause of the phenomenon of "emphasizing skills over aesthetics," while the introduction of process-oriented and performance-based evaluations can effectively address this issue.

5.4. Analysis of the Causes of the Problem

Based on the above analysis, there are three main causes of the current issue:

- (1) At the teacher level, some educators lack sufficient understanding of students psychological development patterns and fail to adopt teaching strategies tailored to different educational stages, often unconsciously applying a uniform set of instructional methods [6].
- (2) Resource perspective. Given the limited class hours for music education in primary schools, teachers tend to opt for more efficient skill-training approaches, while time and space requirements for aesthetic experience activities remain insufficient.

(3) Evaluation dimension. The current evaluation system lacks clear requirements for aesthetic ability, and the prevailing notion that "aesthetic ability is difficult to quantify" has led to aesthetic cultivation being relegated to a secondary position in teaching [7].

In conclusion, current music aesthetic education in primary schools still exhibits significant shortcomings in terms of age-appropriate adaptation, targeted teaching methods, and systematic evaluation frameworks. There is an urgent need to develop differentiated, tiered cultivation strategies grounded in student's psychological development patterns.

6. A Strategic Framework for Cultivating Music Aesthetic Competence in Primary School Students

Building on the preceding analysis, this chapter establishes a phased, step-by-step, and actionable framework for cultivating musical aesthetic competence, encompassing three levels: perceptual experience, comprehension and appreciation, and cultural expression.

6.1. The Overall Framework of the Strategy System

The strategic framework of this study is based on a "three-tier, three-stage" structure. For the lower grades (grades 1–2), the core focus is "perceptual experience," with a teaching orientation centered on "perceiving through play"; for the middle grades (grades 3–4), the core focus is "understanding and appreciation," guided by the principle of "understanding through knowledge"; for the upper grades (grades 5–6), the core focus is "cultural expression," with instruction emphasizing "expression through creation." These three tiers progress in a stepwise manner: perceptual experience forms the foundation, understanding and appreciation facilitate deeper comprehension, and cultural expression represents the ultimate elevation.

6.2. Early-stage Development Strategy: Centered on Sensory Experience

Younger students exhibit characteristics such as high activity levels, a tendency to imitate, and short attention spans [3][6]; therefore, the approach should focus on "perceptual experience" to help them develop initial aesthetic awareness through play.

Strategy 1: Gamified Rhythmic Instruction. Integrating the Orff method, this approach employs vocal movements and percussion ensembles to enable students to learn through physical activity and play [9].

Strategy 2: Contextualized Listening Experience. Utilize multimedia to create musical contexts by integrating music with stories and visuals, thereby stimulating auditory interest.

Strategy 3: Imitative participation activities. Design activities such as singing along and imitative performance to help students develop a sense of rhythm and pitch through imitation [6].

Case: In a public first-grade lesson titled "Small Animals Singing," Wang Xiuping employed the aforementioned strategy, having students imitate animal sounds accompanied by physical movements, resulting in a lively classroom atmosphere [6].

6.3. Mid-stage cultivation strategy: centered on understanding and appreciation

Middle-grade students exhibit budding logical thinking, rich emotional experiences, and strong collaborative learning abilities [3][4]. The teaching approach should focus on "understanding and appreciation," guiding students to comprehend musical elements and their emotional expressions based on perceptual engagement.

Strategy 1: Element-based decomposition teaching. Guide students to identify elements such as rhythm, melody, and dynamics, and understand their role in shaping musical imagery.

Strategy 2: Collaborative inquiry-based learning. Design group tasks, such as discussing the emotional changes in musical pieces and expressing them verbally or visually [4].

Strategy 3: Emotional Connection-Based Appreciation. Link musical works to students life experiences to enhance emotional resonance.

Case Study: In Wang Xiupings (2021) research, a fourth-grade classroom activity titled "Listening to Music and Expressing Emotions" demonstrated significantly higher student engagement and interest compared to traditional teaching classes [6].

6.4. Advanced Development Strategy: Centered on Cultural Expression

Advanced students demonstrate enhanced abstract thinking, yet exhibit heightened self-awareness and pronounced shyness [3][13]. Therefore, the approach should center on "cultural expression," guiding students toward deep appreciation and creative articulation while emphasizing a more restrained teaching methodology.

Strategy 1: Deep listening and discussion. Guide students to analyze the work from multiple perspectives—including melody, structure, and context—to cultivate critical aesthetic thinking.

Strategy 2: Cross-cultural comparative appreciation. Introduce musical works from diverse cultural backgrounds to broaden aesthetic horizons.

Strategy 3: Creative expression practice. Encourage activities such as composition, improvisation, music criticism, or more introspective forms like writing and painting [13].

Strategy 4: An "internalization-based" modification of the Orff Method. It transforms large-scale rhythmic movements into subtle bodily perceptions (e.g., fingertip tapping), elevates imitative ensemble performance to improvisational composition, and elevates "play" to "insight through creation" [9].

Case study: Liu Dianzhi et al. (2018) demonstrated that using introspective expression methods such as writing and drawing in advanced stages of learning is more effective than extroverted rhythmic activities in enhancing students participation willingness [13].

6.5. Recommendations for Teaching Evaluation

First, process evaluation focuses on participation level, concentration, and emotional responses; second, performance evaluation assesses aesthetic ability through tools such as the "Music Appreciation Record Card" and creative presentation activities [7]; third, evaluation standards vary by grade level: lower grades emphasize participation attitude, middle grades focus on comprehension depth, while higher grades prioritize critical expression.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Research Conclusion

From the perspective of educational psychology, this study conducts a systematic investigation into the pathways for cultivating elementary school students musical aesthetic competence and yields the following key conclusions.

First, the cultivation of elementary students musical aesthetic ability must be based on the psychological development characteristics of each educational stage. This study found significant differences among students at the lower, middle, and upper levels in terms of cognitive ability, attention span, learning approaches, emotional development, and social development. Lower-grade students are active and prone to imitation, making them well-suited for gamified and rhythmic perceptual activities; middle-grade students exhibit budding logical thinking, making cooperative inquiry-based understanding and appreciation activities appropriate; upper-grade students demonstrate enhanced abstract thinking but also exhibit pronounced shyness, thus benefiting from more reserved forms of cultural expression. A one-

size-fits-all teaching approach that ignores these differences is unlikely to effectively enhance students' musical aesthetic ability.

Second, current music aesthetic education in primary schools faces three core issues. First, there is insufficient alignment across educational stages, as teaching activities fail to match the psychological characteristics of students at different levels; second, teaching methods lack specificity, focusing predominantly on singing skill training while providing inadequate guidance for aesthetic experience; third, the evaluation system lacks systematicness, with a deficiency in process-based and performance-based assessments, which reinforces a tendency to prioritize technical skills over aesthetic appreciation [6][7][13].

Third, the phased, step-by-step cultivation strategy is highly practical. The three-tiered framework of "perceptual experience – comprehension and appreciation – cultural expression" developed in this study establishes differentiated teaching objectives, activities, and assessment methods tailored to each educational stage. Through specific strategies such as an "internalization-oriented" adaptation of the Orff method, it provides frontline educators with actionable teaching solutions [9][13].

7.2. Teaching Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, this study puts forward the following teaching suggestions: first, teachers need to improve their understanding of educational psychology, and content about children's psychological development can be included in teacher training, so that teachers can understand the psychological traits of students at different grade stages and become more capable of designing differentiated instruction; second, music classrooms should be promoted to shift from skill training to aesthetic experience, and in lower grades more game-like and rhythmic activities can be arranged, while in middle grades students can be encouraged to work together and become more emotionally involved, and in upper grades more attention should be given to deep appreciation and students' own creative expression, with teaching methods also adjusted slightly [6][7]; third, a diversified evaluation approach should be established, using both process-based assessment (such as classroom observation records and learning journals) and performance-based assessment (such as music appreciation record cards and presentations of original compositions), so that the evaluation system formed can match the development goals of each grade stage [7].

7.3. Research Limitations and Prospects

This study still has some shortcomings. First, it mainly relies on literature analysis and case studies, lacking actual data support, and the effectiveness of the proposed strategies still needs to be verified through later teaching experiments; second, the sources of cases are quite limited and do not cover schools from different regions or types, so the generalizability of the research findings should be viewed with caution.

Future research can be carried out in the following aspects: first, conducting empirical studies to test the practical effectiveness of the strategy framework established in this study through teaching experiments; second, expanding the case scope to include teaching practices in both rural and urban schools as well as schools of different sizes; third, deeply exploring the connection ways of aesthetic ability development between different grade stages, so as to build a more complete and tiered cultivation system.

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