

Article

Research on the Educational Mechanism and Optimization Strategy of Music Aesthetic Education for the Elderly from the Perspective of Lifelong Education

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of deepening social aging and the steady improvement of the national lifelong education system, music aesthetic education for the elderly serves as a crucial approach to implementing the active aging strategy, promoting cultural elderly care, and optimizing the lifelong education system. Currently, domestic music aesthetic education for the elderly generally suffers from superficial cognitive positioning, monotonous curriculum content, fragmented teaching scenarios, and imperfect guarantee mechanisms, while academic research on its in-depth educational mechanism remains insufficient. Based on core theories including lifelong education, active aging, and aesthetic education infiltration, this study constructs a four-dimensional educational mechanism covering physical and mental empowerment, literacy improvement, social integration, and cultural inheritance in accordance with the physical and mental characteristics and lifelong learning rules of the elderly group. It systematically analyzes the internal operational logic and practical dilemmas of music aesthetic education for the elderly. Furthermore, in combination with the development trend of digital aesthetic education and the current situation of grassroots teaching practice, this study proposes optimization paths from four dimensions: cognitive reshaping, gradient curriculum construction, integrated online and offline scenarios, and improved long-term mechanisms. This research compensates for the deficiency of existing studies that overemphasize countermeasures while neglecting internal mechanisms. It provides theoretical support and practical references for the standardized and long-term development of music aesthetic education for the elderly in the new era, and facilitates the implementation of active aging and the construction of a national lifelong learning ecosystem.

Keywords: lifelong education; music education; active aging; aesthetic education; educational mechanism

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The aging population in China continues to deepen, and elderly education has become a vital component of social governance and educational modernization. With socioeconomic advancement, the demands of contemporary elderly people have undergone continuous upgrading, shifting from basic material elderly care to high-quality spiritual and cultural elderly care, which generates an urgent need for inclusive and regular aesthetic education services. Lifelong education advocates continuous whole-life learning and literacy improvement, functioning as a core pillar for building a learning society and empowering active aging. It also provides fundamental theoretical guidelines for the standardized and regular development of aesthetic education for the elderly.

As a core component of lifelong education for the elderly, music aesthetic education for the elderly differs from professional music skill training [1]. Centering on aesthetic infiltration, emotional nourishment, and cultural perception, it delivers multiple values including physical and mental rehabilitation, social connection, and cultural inheritance,

which precisely matches the spiritual needs of contemporary elderly groups. Although grassroots educational carriers such as community aesthetic education courses and music curricula in senior universities have been increasingly popularized in recent years, their overall development remains extensive and unrefined. Most teaching activities merely focus on recreational purposes, failing to form a systematic educational system aligned with the logic of lifelong education. Accordingly, exploring the internal educational mechanism of music aesthetic education for the elderly, sorting out practical bottlenecks, and constructing long-term optimization paths are of great practical significance for improving the national lifelong education system and promoting the high-quality development of elderly aesthetic education.

1.2. Domestic and Foreign Research Status

Foreign research on elderly music education began earlier and has developed a mature empirical research system grounded in theories of active aging, lifelong learning, and mental health. Existing studies primarily examine the positive effects of music education on emotional regulation, social participation, and life well-being among the elderly. They also validate the physical and mental rehabilitation value of music aesthetic education through long-term practice and quantitative research, accumulating substantial experience in community teaching and personalized educational practices. However, these studies are based on Western social elderly care contexts and cannot be directly applied to China's lifelong education policies, local music culture, and grassroots elderly education systems, resulting in limited adaptability to localized needs [2].

Domestic academic research has established three primary directions in elderly music education: value interpretation, current situation investigation, and path innovation, which have significantly advanced the popularization of elderly aesthetic education. Nonetheless, existing research exhibits clear limitations [3]. Most studies focus on superficial phenomenon analysis and broad countermeasure discussions, lacking systematic exploration of the internal educational mechanisms of elderly music aesthetic education. They fail to analyze the deeper educational logic from a whole-cycle perspective of lifelong education, leading to insufficient theoretical depth and systematic coherence. This study aims to address these gaps by analyzing educational mechanisms and constructing long-term strategies to enhance the theoretical framework of elderly aesthetic education.

1.3. Research Significance and Innovation Points

Theoretically, this study takes lifelong education as the core framework and integrates active aging and aesthetic education infiltration theories to systematically analyze the multi-layered educational logic of music aesthetic education for the elderly. It clarifies the internal correlations between such education and the physical and mental development, literacy improvement, social integration, and cultural inheritance of the elderly, addressing the research deficiency of valuing practice over mechanism [4]. It further optimizes the theoretical system of elderly aesthetic education from the perspective of lifelong education.

Practically, in accordance with the practical dilemmas of current elderly music education and the learning characteristics of the elderly group, this study constructs targeted and promotable optimization strategies [5]. It provides practical references for grassroots educational institutions such as communities and senior universities to carry out regular teaching activities, facilitating the transformation of elderly music education from fragmented recreational activities to systematic literacy-oriented education, and promoting the implementation of cultural elderly care and lifelong education.

This study has two core innovations. First, it breaks through the traditional single-dimensional value discussion model and constructs a four-dimensional integrated educational mechanism to deeply interpret the in-depth educational logic of elderly music aesthetic education, conforming to the academic paradigm of mechanism analysis. Second, it adheres to the normalized and gradient characteristics of lifelong education, builds a curriculum, scenario, and guarantee system adapted to the lifelong learning of the elderly,

and forms a complete logical closed loop of "mechanism analysis --- problem identification --- strategy optimization," which avoids the drawbacks of empty countermeasures and disjointed logic in traditional studies.

1.4. Research Methods and Framework

This study adopts three core research methods. Firstly, the literature research method is applied to systematically organize relevant literature and policies on lifelong education, elderly aesthetic education, and active aging, thereby consolidating the theoretical foundation and identifying research gaps. Secondly, the logical analysis method is employed to interpret the educational mechanism of aesthetic education based on core theories and to analyze the causes of practical dilemmas. Thirdly, the inductive and deductive method is utilized to summarize development rules from existing practical achievements and refine optimization paths adapted to the lifelong education system [6].

This research follows a standardized academic logic of "theoretical foundation --- mechanism interpretation --- dilemma analysis --- strategy optimization --- conclusion and prospect," conducting progressive research to form a rigorous and complete research closed loop [7].

2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

Lifelong education refers to a comprehensive educational approach that transcends the limitations of traditional stage-based education. It is characterized by full-cycle coverage, inclusiveness, and personalization, aiming at continuous literacy development and value cultivation for individuals [8]. Compared to adolescent stage-based education, lifelong education emphasizes adaptability and sustainability, addressing the core needs of the elderly for secondary learning, self-improvement, and spiritual enrichment. This provides essential theoretical guidance for the systematic development of elderly aesthetic education.

Music aesthetic education for the elderly represents an inclusive form of aesthetic education tailored to the elderly population. Unlike professional music skill training, it focuses on aesthetic experience, emotional engagement, and literacy enhancement, encompassing areas such as music appreciation, aesthetic perception, and cultural interpretation [1]. Designed to align with the physiological, psychological, and cognitive characteristics of the elderly, it simplifies technical complexities and prioritizes experiential value. With educational, rehabilitative, and cultural dimensions, it serves as a crucial practical medium for lifelong education and cultural elderly care.

The educational mechanism refers to the internal operational framework through which music aesthetic education for the elderly influences their physical and mental state, cognition, socialization, and cultural identity via curricula, scenarios, and practical activities. Characterized by hierarchy, systematic organization, and sustainability, it forms the foundational basis for problem analysis and strategy development in this study [3].

2.2. Theoretical Support

Proposed by Paul Lengrand, the theory of lifelong education emphasizes that education spans the entirety of an individual's life, and society should provide adaptive learning resources and educational scenarios for people of all age groups [9]. This theory underscores the rationality and necessity of elderly education and serves as a foundational framework for the lifelong and normalized development of music aesthetic education for the elderly.

The theory of active aging advocates supporting the elderly in overcoming social alienation and achieving physical and mental well-being, as well as self-value reconstruction, through educational participation, cultural engagement, and social interaction. It establishes the educational goals of music aesthetic education for the elderly, which include "learning for life, enjoying life through learning, and realizing self-value through learning."

The theory of aesthetic education infiltration focuses on enhancing individuals' emotional literacy and aesthetic abilities through immersive aesthetic experiences [4]. It aligns with the slow-paced, experience-oriented, and non-utilitarian learning characteristics of the elderly, offering essential guidance for the design of teaching methods and the construction of scenarios in elderly music aesthetic education.

The self-determination theory identifies three core drivers of continuous learning: autonomy, competence, and belonging [4]. It effectively explains the factors influencing the learning motivation and satisfaction of the elderly in music education and provides critical theoretical support for optimizing personalized aesthetic education strategies.

3. Multi-Layered Educational Mechanisms of Music Aesthetic Education for the Elderly from the Perspective of Lifelong Education

From the perspective of lifelong education, music aesthetic education for the elderly is not merely a recreational activity or knowledge dissemination [6]. Instead, it constitutes a systematic educational framework that encompasses the physical, mental, cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions of individuals, forming a progressive and sustainable logic for whole-life education.

3.1. Physical and Mental Empowerment Mechanism: Emotional Regulation and Psychological Rehabilitation

The elderly often face role transformations and shrinking social circles in old age, which can lead to negative emotions such as loneliness and anxiety. Spiritual emptiness has become a significant factor affecting their quality of life. Music possesses inherent attributes for emotional regulation and psychological rehabilitation, aligning with the psychological characteristics of the elderly. Through regular music aesthetic education activities, they can alleviate negative emotions and reduce psychological pressure by engaging in work appreciation, melody perception, and singing practice.

Additionally, continuous music learning offers stable spiritual sustenance for the elderly, breaking the monotony of retired life and fostering dynamic physical and mental balance. Unlike short-term recreational experiences, lifelong aesthetic education consistently enriches the spiritual world, enhances psychological resilience, and strengthens the physical and mental foundation necessary for active aging.

3.2. Cognitive Literacy Improvement Mechanism: Aesthetic Construction and Lifelong Learning

The core concept of lifelong education is to cultivate an awareness of lifelong learning and achieve continuous literacy improvement throughout life. Elderly individuals often experience cognitive rigidity and delayed cognition. However, music aesthetic education, with its engaging and lightweight forms, can effectively revitalize the learning enthusiasm of the elderly and overcome cognitive stagnation. Through systematic learning, they gradually acquire knowledge of music theory, appreciation techniques, and aesthetic reasoning, enabling them to continuously refine their personal aesthetic frameworks.

Regular learning practices help the elderly establish lifelong learning habits and challenge the stereotype that they are unsuitable for education [10]. This process stimulates cognitive activity, delays cognitive decline, and ensures steady literacy enhancement over the life course, aligning with the fundamental goals of constructing a learning-oriented society.

3.3. Social Integration Mechanism: Social Connection and Role Remodeling

The withdrawal from professional roles after retirement can lead to social alienation and a diminished sense of self-worth among the elderly. Limited social participation further restricts the positive development of this demographic [11]. Music aesthetic education for the elderly, often conducted through collective classes, chorus rehearsals, and artistic performances, inherently fosters social connections and provides stable, regular social platforms for this group.

Through collective learning and artistic practice, the elderly can expand their social networks via mutual cooperation and communication, breaking the isolation of a closed

personal life. Additionally, consistent class participation and the opportunity to showcase achievements help the elderly rebuild a sense of belonging and self-worth, encouraging active social integration and supporting the comprehensive educational objectives of lifelong learning [12].

3.4. Cultural Inheritance Mechanism: Cultural Infiltration and Value Continuity

Lifelong education fulfills the dual roles of cultivating individual literacy and preserving social cultural heritage. Music aesthetic education for the elderly encompasses high-quality elements such as traditional folk songs, national instrumental music, and red music, acting as a crucial medium for the living transmission of traditional music culture [5]. With extensive life experience and a deep sense of cultural identity, the elderly play a central role in the inheritance of traditional culture.

Through continuous aesthetic education, the elderly gain a profound understanding of the aesthetic qualities and cultural significance of traditional music, thereby reinforcing their national cultural identity. Simultaneously, they contribute to the sustainable development of traditional music culture through practical interpretation and intergenerational communication, achieving mutual enhancement of individual literacy and social cultural preservation.

4. Practical Dilemmas of Music Aesthetic Education for the Elderly from the Perspective of Lifelong Education

In contrast to the aforementioned four-dimensional educational mechanisms, the overall development of current music aesthetic education for the elderly remains extensive and unrefined [4]. Significant deficiencies are evident in educational cognition, curriculum supply, teaching scenarios, and guarantee systems, which fail to meet the systematic and long-term educational requirements of lifelong education. These shortcomings restrict the full realization of multiple educational values.

4.1. Deviated Educational Cognition and Insufficient Long-Term Educational Concepts

Social groups and grassroots educational institutions often possess a superficial and one-sided understanding of elderly music aesthetic education. Many stakeholders mistakenly equate it with leisure entertainment or basic singing training, placing excessive emphasis on its recreational aspects while overlooking its broader educational values, such as psychological rehabilitation, cognitive enhancement, social integration, and cultural preservation.

Additionally, most teaching activities lack a long-term educational perspective [10]. They prioritize short-term classroom experiences and one-time activity outcomes, neglecting the lifelong learning needs of the elderly, including continuous growth and literacy development. This results in fragmented and superficial educational outcomes, hindering the integration of elderly music aesthetic education into the national lifelong education framework.

4.2. Inadaptable Teaching Supply and Absence of Gradient Curriculum System

The curriculum system serves as the core medium for implementing lifelong aesthetic education. At present, music aesthetic education for the elderly faces challenges such as uniform content, inflexible formats, and limited adaptability. Most courses focus solely on singing old songs and performing simple exercises, while lacking more in-depth components such as music theory education, aesthetic appreciation, and cultural interpretation. Additionally, there is no gradient teaching content designed to align with the cognitive patterns of the elderly, leading to mismatched levels of difficulty [3].

Current curricula fail to incorporate the progressive hierarchical design necessary for lifelong education, making it difficult to address the continuous learning needs of the elderly, from introductory stages and skill enhancement to advanced exploration. Some teaching methods are directly adapted from adolescent education, disregarding the unique learning characteristics of the elderly, such as slower learning pace, diminished

memory, and a preference for experience-based learning [10]. This lack of adaptability reduces the effectiveness of teaching and limits the overall educational impact.

4.3. Single Implementation Carrier and Scarcity of Regular Educational Scenarios

Lifelong education requires the support of consistent and accessible educational scenarios. However, the current platforms for elderly music aesthetic education are relatively limited, primarily relying on fixed classrooms in senior universities and temporary community cultural activities. The irregular class schedules and discontinuous practical scenarios, combined with festival-oriented community exhibitions, fail to establish a standardized and sustainable learning mechanism.

Furthermore, the development of digital aesthetic education scenarios remains insufficient. There is a notable lack of elderly-friendly online learning platforms, resource databases, and interactive tools, which limits the ability to overcome temporal and spatial constraints through digital technology. The fragmented teaching approach hinders the accumulation of long-term educational outcomes and obstructs the establishment of a comprehensive lifelong aesthetic education framework.

4.4. Weak Support Guarantee System and Unstable Foundation for Long-Term Development

Imperfect guarantee systems represent a significant bottleneck restricting the lifelong development of elderly aesthetic education [11, 12]. Regarding teachers, there is a shortage of professionals specializing in elderly aesthetic education. Most current educators are part-time workers, retired teachers, or volunteers who lack adequate training in geriatric pedagogy and age-adapted teaching methods, making it challenging to implement targeted lifelong aesthetic education programs.

In terms of mechanisms, unified curriculum standards and teaching specifications for elderly music aesthetic education have yet to be established in China. Excessive educational autonomy and insufficient standardization hinder the development of long-term operational frameworks and multi-dimensional evaluation and incentive systems [9]. Regarding resources, the limited integration of university aesthetic education resources and public cultural resources fails to support the sustainable and high-quality development of grassroots elderly aesthetic education.

5. Optimization Strategies of Music Aesthetic Education for the Elderly from the Perspective of Lifelong Education

In addressing the practical challenges of current elderly music aesthetic education, this study establishes a comprehensive optimization framework based on four dimensions: cognitive reshaping, curriculum optimization, scenario expansion, and guarantee improvement. Guided by the principles of lifelong education and the core requirements of a four-dimensional educational mechanism, the framework seeks to transition elderly music aesthetic education from fragmented recreational activities to a more systematic educational approach. This transformation aims to fully harness the long-term educational potential of lifelong aesthetic education.

5.1. Reshape Aesthetic Education Cognition and Anchor the Core Orientation of Lifelong Education

To advance the high-quality development of elderly music aesthetic education, it is essential to eliminate superficial perceptions of its recreational orientation and establish a long-term, literacy-focused aesthetic education framework. Society should enhance publicity and guidance to emphasize the multifaceted benefits of elderly music aesthetic education, including its contributions to physical and mental rehabilitation, literacy enhancement, social integration, and cultural preservation. This approach underscores its significant role within the lifelong education system and the broader framework of cultural elderly care.

Educational and teaching institutions should move away from short-term educational strategies and prioritize the lifelong growth and value transformation needs of the elderly. A balanced approach to classroom teaching is required, integrating

experiential and educational aspects alongside recreational and cultural dimensions [10]. This strategy maximizes the potential of multi-layered educational mechanisms and facilitates the seamless integration of elderly music aesthetic education into lifelong education and active aging initiatives.

5.2. Optimize Curriculum Supply and Construct a Gradient Lifelong Teaching System

In alignment with the principles of lifelong education, this study develops a three-tier progressive curriculum system consisting of "basic popularization --- literacy improvement --- cultural deepening." The basic level provides courses such as introductory music theory, fundamental singing techniques, and work appreciation designed for learners with no prior experience, thereby lowering the entry barrier. The improvement level caters to learners with foundational knowledge, focusing on enhancing work interpretation, choral arts, and aesthetic training. The deepening level emphasizes the exploration of traditional music culture to foster cultural enrichment and deeper understanding [5].

The teaching process adheres to age-appropriate principles, including slowing the teaching pace, simplifying complex professional concepts, and enhancing interactive experiences to accommodate the cognitive characteristics of elderly learners. It is crucial to integrate professional music resources from universities, introduce specialized curriculum content, and establish a dynamic curriculum updating mechanism to continuously improve adaptability and address the evolving lifelong learning needs of the elderly.

5.3. Expand Educational Scenarios and Build an Integrated Online and Offline Aesthetic Education Ecosystem

Digital technology can be leveraged to construct an integrated online and offline lifelong aesthetic education ecosystem, effectively overcoming the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional teaching methods. Offline, regular classrooms in senior universities and community centers should be strengthened, with activities such as chorus rehearsals, music salons, and artistic performances held consistently to establish stable offline learning and social environments.

Online, it is essential to develop elderly-friendly digital aesthetic education platforms with simplified operation interfaces. These platforms should provide targeted learning resources, including teaching short videos, work appreciation, and cultural popularization content, enabling flexible digital learning scenarios accessible anytime and anywhere. The hybrid teaching model facilitates two-way interaction between online consolidation and offline practice, enhancing the long-term effectiveness of aesthetic education.

5.4. Improve Guarantee Mechanisms and Consolidate the Foundation of Lifelong Aesthetic Education

A comprehensive long-term guarantee system should be constructed to underpin the sustainable development of lifelong aesthetic education [5]. Regarding teachers, a collaborative training mechanism integrating universities, literary and art institutions, and front-line educators should be established. Specialized training in geriatric pedagogy and age-adapted teaching should be implemented to cultivate professional educators for elderly aesthetic education, while university volunteers should be engaged to enrich grassroots teaching teams.

In terms of mechanisms, standardized curriculum specifications and teaching guidelines for elderly music aesthetic education need to be developed, and a multi-dimensional evaluation system covering the learning process, literacy improvement, and practical achievements should be established. Regarding resources, public cultural resources, university aesthetic education resources, and social public welfare resources should be directed to grassroots units, forming a collaborative long-term development framework to support the high-quality and sustainable development of elderly aesthetic education [9].

6. Conclusion and Prospect

In the context of an aging population and the comprehensive development of a lifelong education system, music aesthetic education for the elderly serves as a crucial medium to enhance physical and mental well-being, improve aesthetic literacy, foster social integration, and preserve traditional musical culture. It holds significant value in promoting active aging, cultural care for the elderly, and the construction of a learning-oriented society. From the perspective of lifelong education, this study systematically establishes a four-dimensional educational framework encompassing "physical and mental empowerment, literacy improvement, social integration, and cultural inheritance," while elucidating the deeper educational rationale behind music aesthetic education for the elderly.

This study identifies several challenges currently faced by music aesthetic education for the elderly, including cognitive biases, uneven curriculum offerings, limited educational scenarios, and inadequate support systems, which impede the realization of its multifaceted educational benefits. To address these issues, the study proposes an optimization framework based on four dimensions: cognitive reshaping, gradient curriculum enhancement, integration of online and offline educational scenarios, and long-term system improvement. These strategies provide practical and scalable pathways for implementation.

The study primarily employs theoretical analysis and logical deduction, lacking quantitative insights derived from regional empirical investigations, which constitutes its main limitation. Future research could focus on refining the aesthetic education needs of diverse elderly groups and developing targeted teaching strategies based on field investigation data. With the ongoing advancement of digital technology and the progressive enhancement of the lifelong education system, music aesthetic education for the elderly is expected to evolve towards greater digitization, precision, and systematization, thereby unlocking sustained educational value and contributing to the improvement of active aging initiatives and the broader lifelong education framework.

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