

## Review

# The Importance of Aesthetic Ability in Arts Education: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students of Universities in Chengdu City of Sichuan Province China

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**Abstract:** Aesthetic ability is a powerful tool that can enhance student learning outcomes in arts education. This study not only determines the effect of aesthetic ability on student learning but also determines the effects of different factors on improvement in students' aesthetic abilities. The data used to investigate the mentioned relationships have been obtained from randomly selected 322 undergraduate students of arts education at different universities in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. The reliability of the data has been tested through Cronbach's Alpha and regression analysis has been employed to determine the relationships among variables. Study findings revealed that teacher role, clarity of teaching goal, scientific plan, students' guidance, future creation, learning reflection, participation in exhibitions, improvement of art, appreciation of artwork, and innovative teaching methods influence student learning positively and significantly. Further, the effect of improvement in aesthetic ability on student learning has been found to be positive and significant. Based on the findings, some important implications have been discussed at the end of the study.

Keywords: aesthetic ability; arts education; students' learning; teacher role; teaching goals

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, when everyone is a photographer, we can easily take pictures of the scenery, food, and people around us at any time we want. There is an innate quality of aesthetics that is inherent to the human being [27]. Since Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) is credited as the father of aesthetic education in Chinese universities, aesthetic education has been a part of the academic curriculum at Peking University since 1920, when he began to put together the curricula at the university [32]. It is essential to promote aesthetic education in universities. However, how can this be done most efficiently? Academically, aesthetic education did not receive the attention it deserved until the 1980s. Chinese scholar [36] was the first to research this topic, and he described well the functions and importance of aesthetic education at the university level. In 1995, this research was first published as *The Aesthetic Education in Universities* [37]. During the last decade of the 20th century, it was regarded as a notable achievement. It has become increasingly apparent that more and more scholars are paying attention to theory and practice in higher education in China, which has experienced rapid development in the last few decades [32]. The field of aesthetic ability and arts education has been the subject of many studies in the previous twenty years. Some examples of aesthetic education are analyzing the boundaries that separate aesthetic education from traditional education [31]. It is necessary to discuss the proper curriculum system and the ultimate aim of aesthetic education as a whole [24]. How the aesthetic education in Chinese universities has changed over the last century, evolving from a professional art education into a general selective art course [23] is as important to be investigated as to explore possible mediations of aesthetic teaching and learning methods based on the experiences [38]. Aesthetic education in universities is criticized due to its single knowledge-learning process [26]. Since those researches were

conducted, the basic concepts and thoughts on aesthetic education were gradually constructed at Chinese Universities and Colleges, and their application was much broader.

It has been noted that the extension of aesthetic objects in our lives has created a problem. Researchers have already given different recommendations on how it should be done. As Ref. [29] has proposed, art courses are considered a unique approach to education, but that approach fails to develop students' aesthetic abilities in their everyday lives. Therefore, interdisciplinary social education and artistic education could be closely related in science and technology universities. Ref. [34] proposed Design Aesthetic Education as a theory and did a comparative study of Aesthetic Education in China to integrate Design Aesthetics into Aesthetic Education in China. As a result of these studies, it has become apparent that, based on the current curriculum of public arts education for undergraduate students in Chengdu city of Sichuan Province, China. There is a need to focus on the possibility and necessity of developing aesthetic education into it. We will attempt to address the following questions with this research paper:

1. How can we Develop Aesthetic Ability in arts education for undergraduate students of universities in Chengdu city of Sichuan Province, China?
2. Why is it necessary to Develop Aesthetic Ability in arts education for undergraduate students in the universities of Chengdu city in Sichuan Province, China?
3. How should Aesthetic Ability be promoted in arts education?

## 2. Literature Review

Before going further into this research topic, it is necessary to dig out the past literature about research work in China and other countries. It should be noted that the primary target of the art teaching process is to make students' aesthetic skills and creative abilities better as a result of art education and teaching. Moreover, it is also a fundamental foundation and contributes significantly to achieving the purpose of teaching. It is essential to point out that aesthetic education is not defined solely by art skills or the teaching base because aesthetic education complements essential knowledge, skills, and knowledge of art education [15]. The goal of teaching is to effectively cultivate the students' art skills by increasing their aesthetic ability and building up their artistic culture, using it to cultivate their artistic ability, resulting in improving the students' art quality. Unlike most people's conceptions of the quality of creativity, Chinese people view it as an essential virtue [15]. In this study, the cultivation of aesthetics and creativity as the core quality of art education will be suggested to explore and put forward the corresponding strategy for undergraduate students of universities in Chengdu city of Sichuan Province, China.

### 2.1. *The concept of Aesthetic Quality and Creativity*

Various forms of student course evaluation survey exercises are important for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning at the institution level, as well as ensuring that the programs continue to improve [16]. There is substantial research evidence showing students' engagement in learning is a key indicator of their ability to continue to learn, their satisfaction with their learning, and their academic success [16]. Aesthetic literacy refers to the ability of an individual to appreciate and perceive beauty, which is the primary purpose of comprehensive literacy. As the main content and objective of art education currently is to better the aesthetic quality of students, this has become the main target of art education as we know it today [8]. Creativity needs to be realized by boosting the efficiency and stimulating the development of individual innovative thinking, enabling the individuals to utilize multi-angle analytical thinking and solve problems in the solving or analyzing process, reflected in a person's innovation ability. It has been realized that creativity and aesthetic literacy are crucial components of contemporary personnel training in light of the deepening of core literacy. To improve students' ability to innovate and think, it is necessary to adopt scientific and reasonable teaching methods in the classroom, which is also an essential direction for the development of education and teaching today [15].

## 2.2. *Aesthetic Quality*

In order to become a person who has perfect character, people must strive towards objectivity and subjectivity, passivity and freedom, and arrive at the aesthetic state, which they can only accomplish in their journey to the moral state and the rational state; Only in the aesthetic state can people break free from any restriction of mentality and regain their lost human nature [35]. A person's aesthetic quality can be defined by their aesthetic experience, taste, aesthetic ability, aesthetic ideal, and other factors [18]. As a result of aesthetic quality, one is capable of receiving and appreciating beauty, which at the same time, is characterized by the ability to identify and create a specific type of aesthetic culture [18]. Through the aesthetic appreciation process, students can enhance their aesthetic experience by touching and observing works of art and through tasteful gestures to arrive at an accurate and well-founded understanding and appreciation of art on a more fundamental level [35]. The art teaching community needs to spend more time appreciating and observing pieces of art so that our students can focus on their details and so that they can lay a solid foundation for their future studies in the arts. In this way, one might build a precise mode of thought which can lead to the acquisition of knowledge via the acquisition of knowledge and then to a further study and comprehension of the works at their intersections and collision [15].

## 2.3. *Creative Ability*

It is believed that art education is essentially about cultivating creativity in the student. College and university art education in education is primarily focused on cultivating a student's ability to apply aesthetic vision and ability rather than cultivating the student's optimism, self-confidence, flexibility, sensitivity, healthy character, and creative ability [30]. Undoubtedly, in an increasingly tricky international competitive environment, the development of talents has become an essential factor of national development, especially in creating great innovators, an important goal of social and national progress [30]. To cultivate the innovative spirit of this nation, it is essential to promote art education. As a result, artistic activities let students use their opponents' brains to the fullest extent, but they also realize the everyday use of multiple organs. This is of great benefit for students in terms of enhancing their sense of imagination and feeling and promoting the development of their comprehensive abilities [15]. The continuous development of our society and the reform of our educational system is part of the background of the continuous development of our society. Innovative talents are not only necessary for the development of the social sector. In addition to developing education, there is also an essential goal of enhancing the social exploration of innovative education and training innovative talents [15].

## 2.4. *The Importance of Aesthetic Quality and Creativity of Students*

To cultivate the students' aesthetic qualities, we should create an environment that cultivates students' aesthetic qualities, such as aesthetic ideal, taste, ability, and experience. Thus, we can effectively cultivate students' sentiments in improving their aesthetic quality, thus improving the overall quality of the students in the process of education and teaching in art and thus enabling them to achieve better aesthetic quality in the following processes [32]. Beauty is capable of being created, understood, and discovered. To achieve a comprehensive aesthetic quality, a comprehensive aesthetic level, and the enhancement of a student's skills of appreciation, when teaching art education, one should pay special attention to the cultivation of students' knowledge in the field of aesthetics. Additionally, when teaching and educating about fine arts, teachers should also take into consideration the cultivation of artistic creativity of their students and ways to improve students' innovative thinking, whose aim is to produce a better understanding of fine arts as well as stimulate students' creative thinking and promoting student's extensive knowledge and experience [33]. Since the social economy is continuously developing, society has also experienced a more intense need to employ talents. This has led to the change in education

and teaching, which has been progressive in recent years. Our country's education and teaching system has prioritized cultivating innovative talents, which has become an important goal [33]. As a result of the educational process, we should impart scientific and rational teaching methods to enlarge their creativity to create more innovative talent for society. An essential goal of education for the development of art is to cultivate and enhance students' creative and aesthetic abilities within the continuous development of art education. Therefore, it is essential to do what we can to cultivate students' aesthetic qualities and talent and ensure that art education and teaching are developed sustainably [28].

### *2.5. Educating Aesthetic Quality and Novelty by Art Education*

#### *2.5.1. Support the Works of Art Appreciation*

The appreciation of works of art is widely considered one of the essential elements of the art education and teaching process. During the process above, the teacher's role is to thoroughly guide the students to experience the aesthetic feelings reflected in the classic works of art in the appreciative process. Ultimately, the goal is to acquire the overall knowledge of aesthetics and the feeling of aesthetics and communicate the works of art more effectively [17]. As part of the appreciation of classic paintings, students can also learn more about various aesthetic feelings and perceptions, which will enhance their ability to form their unique artistic sense and help students develop their painting style. Students can experience Van Gogh's sunflower, sunrise, impression, and other classical art pieces. Therefore, through experiencing Van Gogh's writing, coloring, and line drawing skills, students can gain a practical understanding of artistic skills and acquire the background culture of great artworks. Using these views, students will gain insight into the work's cultural background and learn about great artworks [17]. The teachers should try to guide the students during the process of the introduction of artworks so that the students can better appreciate those works in the appreciation of the works, that students can improve their appreciation skills and their aesthetic ability and gradually help the students accumulate intuitive, artistic experience when they are taking part in this process, and achieve the practical improvement of student art aesthetics [17].

Similarly, teachers can encourage their students' creative production processes by showing enlightening and illuminating artworks. This helps to improve the ability of the students to visualize the idea and themes behind the creative work, and it also enhances their imaginative ability [28]. Furthermore, in teaching students to engage in divergent thinking and reverse thinking, we need to guide students to develop the capacity for thinking in divergent and reverse directions to be able to expand and broaden their ideas about their artistic creation effectively, to stimulate their creative ideas fully, and to lay a solid foundation for their future artistic creation [17]. Teachers working in art education should pay attention to what students are experiencing in their lives and to the way art aesthetics and artistic abilities are being developed based on the characteristics of students, helping the teaching methods and teaching contents be more relevant to the actual situation of the students so that the quality and achievement of art teaching will also be improved [17].

#### *2.5.2. Extended Teaching Resources*

The teachers should collect students' real-life experiences and feelings in summing up and explaining art knowledge according to the students' art knowledge so that the students can master the art knowledge most effectively from their own life experiences and feelings. For example, students can be exposed to the aesthetics of art through advertising daily; students can encounter the aesthetics of sculpture design combined with relevant buildings in the city; students can encounter the aesthetics of gardens and parks during urban planning [28]. This instruction will allow students to represent the aesthetic experience better than in their everyday lives. Combining lifestyle with education can effectively make students discover beauty and appreciate it more fully. In addition, by implementing teaching-practice activities, it is feasible to guide learners to gain a deeper

understanding of artworks through an in-depth experience of them and facilitate them to participate actively in exhibitions and galleries, thereby achieving a more intuitive understanding of the works of art. Students should constantly reflect on their own creative experience in the daily learning process to realize that they would continuously improve their artistic creativity [17].

### 2.5.3. Clear the Goal of Art Teaching

As a teacher, your main goal is to help students achieve their learning goals. To achieve this goal, we need to be involved in students' creativity and aesthetic development. While educating in art, it is essential to clarify the learning target content to identify the direction towards the evolution of art education. Putting the teaching goal into practice is essential in the future, whether it is a matter of course content, the method of teaching, or the materials used in art education [28]. Let us achieve the practical improvement of students' aesthetic quality and creativity by designing the curriculum system in such a manner that innovates teaching methods and by adopting a scientific and reasonable teaching plan. To continuously improve students' aesthetic quality and creative ability, it is essential to establish realistic teaching objectives to promote art teaching and education [17].

Biological sciences are witnessed as a field that actively plays a role in developing a student's personality, professional attitude, and ability to take on the challenges of the future. A portion of the study is concerned with the formation of training systems for high school teachers, the issue of educational management, and lifelong education for these educators [11]. According to these studies, the modern educational model is guided by philanthropy, which lies in the philanthropic nature of natural and cultural conceptions of life and continually seeks to improve education [20].

The study of the scientific perspective of psychology in addition to the sociological perspective regarding the art of creative expression has become a fundamental aspect of establishing a system of education to promote creative thinking outside of the classroom context [21]. Several studies of the Russian educational tradition have been published in the last few decades, reflecting the critical elements of a creative learning environment without interruption which, in a sense, is what this is exploring as its main focus. Essays documenting creative teaching and learning have become an essential part of the study of inherited concepts since they have helped to determine the direction towards which special education and education, in general, will be improved [4, 6].

It is vital to conduct analytical work for art education to continue developing pedagogically, psychologically, sociologically, methodologically, and educationally. The foundation of this methodology is that when it comes to describing what they mean when they talk about "culture in education," many scientists have devised a variety of definitions for the term "culture in education" [1, 12]. Scholars define art education as a set of related domains that mutually influence each other and cause one another's success. The study of the history of art offers a rich opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of spirituality and human spiritual experiences if it is done within the context of its cultural context. In addition, introducing students to basic skills such as drawing and painting is a crucial point for introducing them to the creative process and allowing them to experience specific emotions [3, 5]. From the discussion, it is evident that it is not sufficient to rely solely on science to understand any subject. There is no doubt that applying imaginative thinking is essential for deep analysis and creating new solutions [14, 22].

A sense of creative practice should prevail in the practical, creative activity, steadily extending in every development area. Specific characteristics of one specific field of art should be given priority in all areas of arts practice. Some things should be taught as part of the learning process, such as a typical art [25]. At the elementary school level, the purpose of the art program is to familiarize children with the forms and characteristics of different visual representations, so they can develop their creative thinking, imagine endless possibilities, and learn on a more fundamental level how to use visual skills [25].

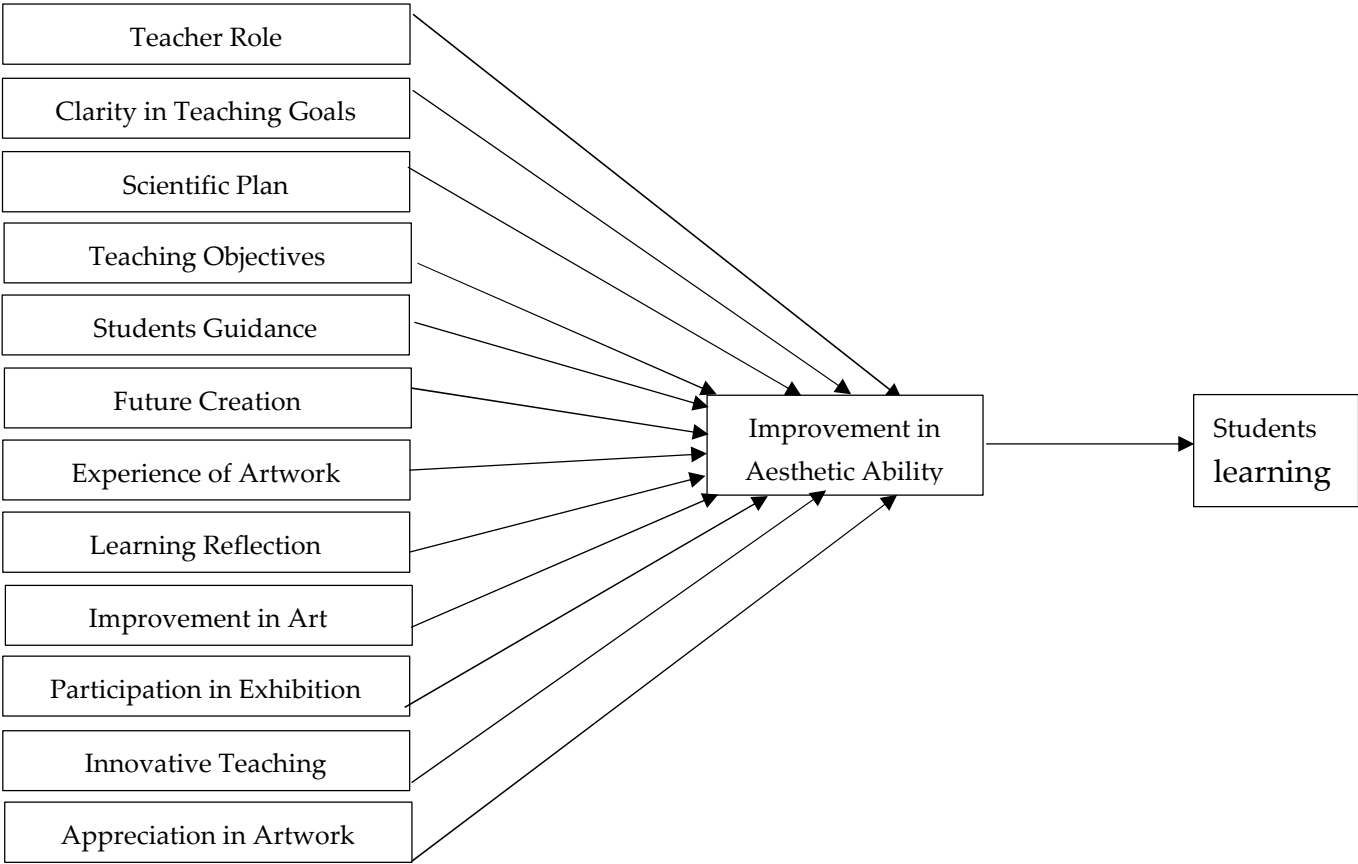


According to the current graphs, the chart on the right shows the need to accomplish these key objectives: education in art, deepening aesthetic deepening. Even though the learning process "art" seeks to achieve a similar goal, the various publicists have not arrived at an equivalent interpretation of its legitimacy shared within the field [19]. According to the present situation, there does not appear to be an option but to pursue school-based art studies as the primary path. It is, however, important to organize a rigorous training program that applies specifically to these conditions, as it represents a severe test for primary school teachers [19]. The development and implementation of several fundamental vectors in art education have been completed so far. Each has its mission, structure, and essence; it also has distinctive programs to carry out its mission [7, 13].

There was one of the first ideas of literacy promotion initiated. On the other hand, there are many examples of the classical concept, which seems to have spread throughout the world. A vector-like this was developed by the Russian Academy of Arts, which presented in an elementary manner the methodologies and principles of teaching qualified artists to the middle level of education. In contrast, quality translation training programs for artists can play a significant role in the general creativity of enlightening the world of translation for general creative enlightenment [21]. An arts education program's primary goal is to encourage students to develop fundamental communication skills by teaching them how to recall memories, represent things, perform regular craft performances, model, and understand visual perception, creative style, and imagination [21]. Moreover, artistic understanding is a prerequisite to teaching the craft. It includes various artistic activities related to reality and art, including aesthetics and related activities. Various approaches to what constitutes what is considered to be beautiful around the world can be divided into several categories: some of these categories include: landscape painting, scenes from nature, paintings made out of natural materials, decorative works, modeling, a dialogue about the definitions of beauty around the world [21].

It is noteworthy that the Academy of Arts introduced a second concept of holistic learning and teaching within its adult education curriculum based on "artistic image" in the late 1960s and the early 1970s [2, 10]. The study of an artistic language also explored the thematic elements within the visual arts: form, proportions, colors, lighting, and volume of space in an artistic composition, the arrangement of materials used in artistic production. There are several theories as to what constitutes artistic meaning and the aesthetic reaction [2, 10].

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**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework.

The conceptual framework for students learning about the Aesthetic ability regarding art education and personal creativity derived from the literature is shown above. Students' learning is an explained variable measured through the indicators, teacher role, clarity in teaching goal, scientific plan, teaching objectives, students' guidance, future creation, learning reflection, improvement in arts, aesthetic ability, and appreciation of the artwork.

2.6. Methodology and Data Analysis

After a detailed review of past literature, this research will use the quantitative survey of undergraduate students of universities in Chengdu city of Sichuan Province, China, where 20 universities are situated. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Ref. [9]. The questionnaire was distributed among randomly selected 425 students of arts education. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 322 useable questionnaires were returned back producing a response rate of 75.76 percent.

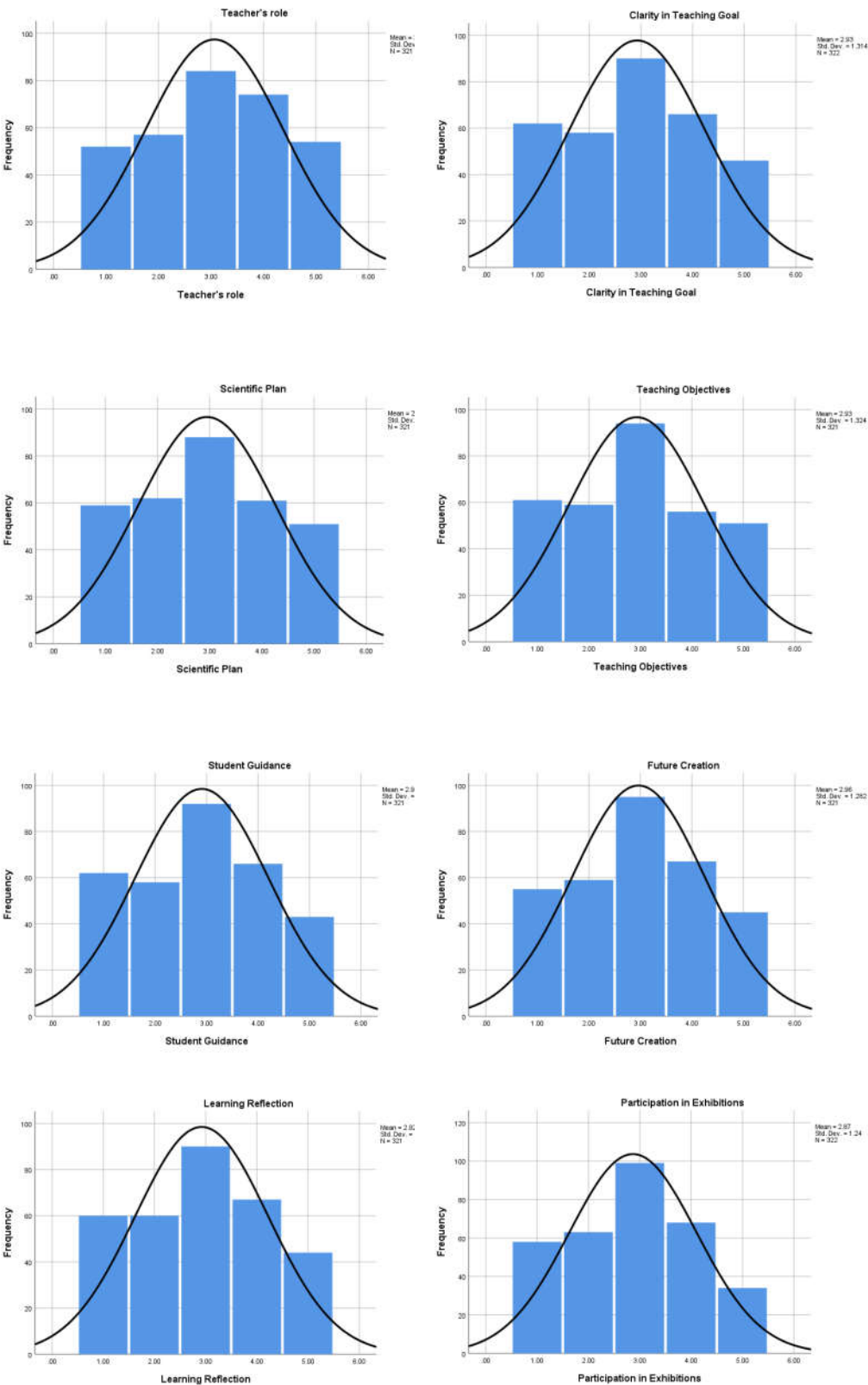
The reliability of the obtained data is measured by the Cronbach alpha, which is 0.942, so the data is reliable for further analysis. The linear Regression analysis has been employed in this study to determine the effects of various variables on Aesthetic Ability and of Aesthetic Ability on Student Learning. Apart from the above, descriptive statistics and histograms with normality curves have been given to ensure the normality of the data and its suitability for regression analysis.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics				
Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher's role	1.00	5.00	3.07	1.32
Clarity in Teaching Goal	1.00	5.00	2.93	1.31
Scientific Plan	1.00	5.00	2.95	1.33
Teaching Objectives	1.00	5.00	2.93	1.32
Student Guidance	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.30
Future Creation	1.00	5.00	2.96	1.28
Learning Reflection	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.30
Participation in Exhibitions	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.24
Improvement in Art	1.00	5.00	3.02	1.28
Experience of Art Work	1.00	5.00	3.05	1.34
Appreciation in Art work	1.00	5.00	2.99	1.35
Student Learning	1.00	5.00	3.00	1.28
Innovative Teaching	1.00	5.00	2.98	1.31
Improvement in Aesthetic Ability	1.00	5.00	2.88	1.23

The average response for each indicator of every construct varies from 2.87 to 3.07 with a minimum value of 1 and maximum value of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.23 to 1.35 in the case of all the variables. This situation shows that the level of agreement with the statements varies around the neutral response. Figure 2 shows the histogram of each variable used in this study with the normal curve plotted on the histogram. All the above-stated descriptive statistics and normality curves represent that the data on each variable is normally distributed and fit for the regression analysis.





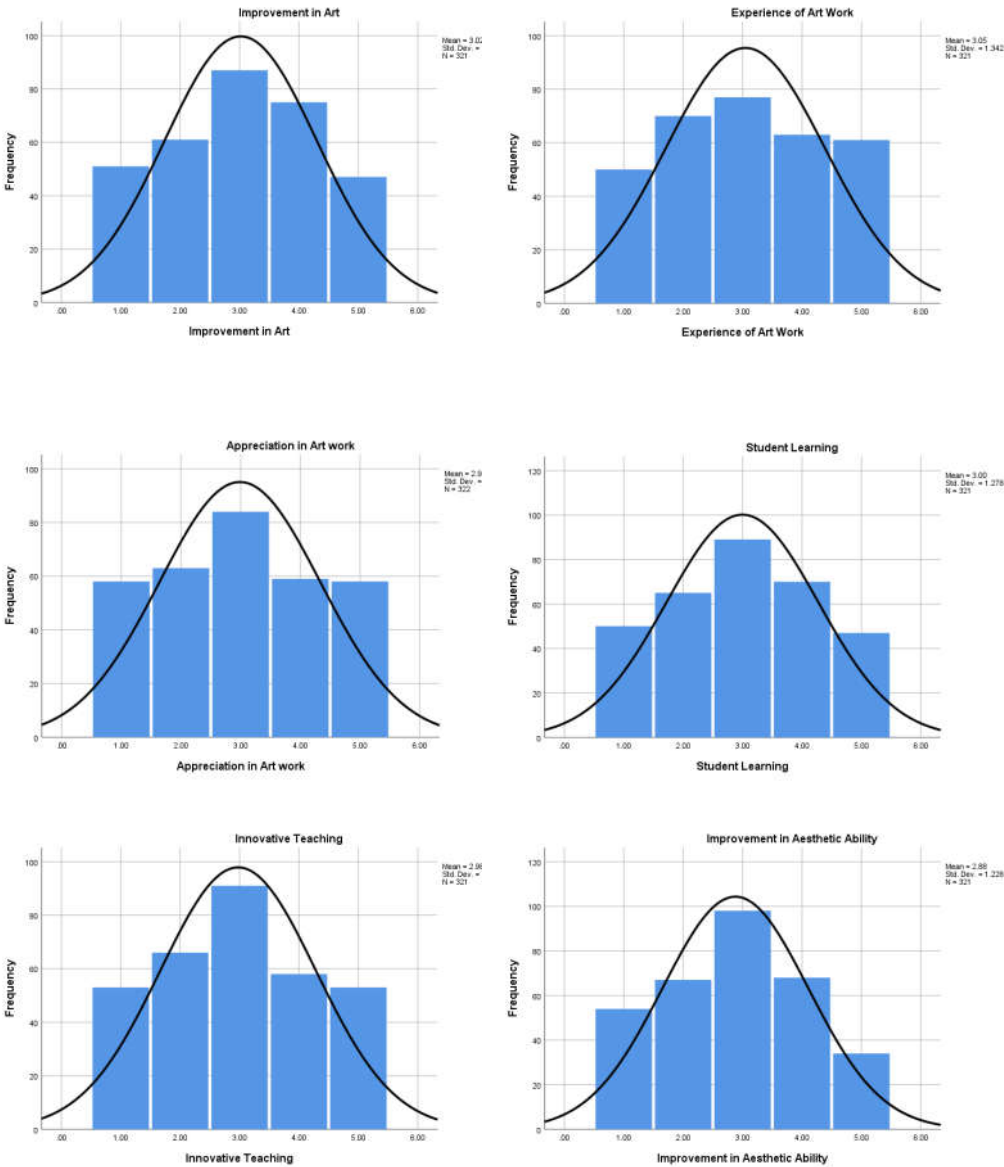


Figure 2.

Regression analysis is employed to determine the relationship between different variables. Table 2 and Table 3 contain the results of regression analysis. In Table 2 improvement in aesthetic ability has been used as the dependent variable and teacher’s role, clarity in teaching goal, scientific plan, teaching objectives, students’ guidance, future creation, learning reflection, participation in exhibitions, improvement in the art, appreciation in artwork, innovative teaching, and experience of artwork have been used as independent variables. The results represent that the effects of all of the independent variables included in the model except teaching objectives, and experience of artwork are positive and statistically significant. Among the significant variables, participation in exhibitions has the strongest effect on the improvement in the aesthetic ability of the students, and the scientific plan has the weakest effect on the improvement in aesthetic ability. In the last column of Table 2 values of variance inflation factor (VIF) have been given. The maximum value of VIF as shown in the table is 2.225 ( $VIF < 10$ ) which shows that there is no issue of multicollinearity in the case of regression analysis given in Table 2. Necessary statistics i.e., adjusted  $R^2$  and value of F-statistic are given in the last row of the table. The value of adjusted  $R^2$  shows that 58% of variations in the improvement in aesthetic ability are explained by the independent variables included in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Regression Analysis.

Dependent Variable: Improvement in Aesthetic Ability					
Variables	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	-0.911	0.389	-2.340	0.020	
Teacher's role	0.113	0.050	2.234	0.026	2.127
The clarity in Teaching Goal	0.124	0.049	2.550	0.011	1.981
Scientific Plan	0.097	0.048	2.001	0.046	2.002
Teaching Objectives	0.065	0.050	1.314	0.190	2.107
Student Guidance	0.120	0.052	2.306	0.022	2.225
Future Creation	0.100	0.050	2.008	0.046	1.960
Learning Reflection	0.126	0.051	2.470	0.014	2.129
Participation in Exhibitions	0.131	0.054	2.409	0.017	2.212
Improvement in Art	0.109	0.053	2.060	0.040	2.219
Appreciation in Artwork	0.119	0.048	2.476	0.014	2.039
Innovative Teaching	0.105	0.052	2.025	0.044	2.209
Experience of ArtWork	0.072	0.046	1.561	0.120	1.880
Necessary Statistics					
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.58	F-Stat	36.00	Sig.(F-Stat)	0.000

Table 3 contains the results of regression analysis in which student learning has been used as a dependent variable and improvement in aesthetic ability has been used as an independent variable. According to the results effect of improvement in aesthetic ability ( $\beta=0.563$ , Sig.<0.001) on student learning is positive and statistically significant. It shows that a unit increase in improvement in aesthetic ability causes an improvement of 0.563 units in student learning. The value of the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (0.29) shows that twenty-nine percent of variations in student learning are the result of changes in improvement in aesthetic ability.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis.

Dependent Variable: Student Learning					
Variables		B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)		1.38	0.154	8.96	0.000
Improvement in Aesthetic Ability		0.563	0.049	11.458	0.000
Necessary Statistics					
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	F-Stat	131.281	Sig.(F-Stat)	0.000

#### 4. Conclusion & Recommendations

Arts education is a diverse field of study, in which aesthetic ability is such a creative tool that can enhance the learning outcome of students. In this study, we have determined the factors that cause the improvement in the aesthetic ability of the students which further determines the students' learning in the case of university students of arts education in Chengdu, Sichuan, China.

The findings of this study reveal that improvement in the aesthetic ability of the students does not depend on previous experience with artwork and teaching objectives. However, improvement in aesthetic ability depends upon the role of a teacher, his/her clarity in teaching goals, scientific study plans, guidance is provided to the students, future creation, activities planned to reflect the learning of the students, opportunities provided to the students to participate in exhibitions, improvement in the art of the students, their appreciation on the artwork, and innovative teaching methodologies. If the universities that offer art education to undergraduate students focus on the above-mentioned

factors, they can significantly improve the aesthetic ability of the students. As shown by the descriptive statistics, the mean value of all of the factors measured in this study varies around 3 on a five-point Likert Scale, it is construed that a significant margin is available that the universities can improve the factors that determine the aesthetic ability of the students.

The findings of this study also offer the answer to the question that why the improvement in aesthetic ability is important. The effect of the improvement in aesthetic ability on student learning is positive and significant. It shows that if the universities want to improve student learning, they must improve the aesthetic ability of the students.

This study draws the attention of the researchers to investigate the effect of the improvement in aesthetic ability on the relationship of different factors with the student learning as moderating variable in future studies. Further, exploratory studies are being invited to be conducted to check the relevance of aesthetic ability with student learning in other disciplines as well as the scope of this study is limited to the art education students.

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