



RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Aesthetic Education's Effectiveness in the Teaching and Understanding of Ancient Chinese Poetry and Choral Music by Chinese Choral Teachers

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**ABSTRACT**

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The study explores the function of aesthetic education in learning compositions and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works. This was done through semi-structured interviews with 10 Chinese choral music teachers from colleges and universities teaching music. There were three themes: 1) Seeing beyond Music Theory; 2) Mixed Teaching Outcomes; and 3) Recognizing Educators' Challenges. Aesthetic education was recognized to help students see beyond merely the theoretical or technical details of a song and further appreciate the meaning behind its lyrics, the beauty underlying its melody, and the composers' thoughts or ideas that led to the creation of its rhythm and beats. Secondly, while aesthetic education helped teachers improve students' understanding of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works, there were some limitations. Educators lacked an understanding of the strategies for effectively teaching music aesthetic education. Regardless, several teaching methods, such as writing reflective essays, group signing, and creating new music, improved teamwork, cultural literacy, and appreciating the beauty behind ancient Chinese poetry. Lastly, educators shared that they lacked adequate training and knowledge, standardized evaluation criteria, and resources that talk about the political and moral meanings of song. Students' interest towards traditional music was also reported to be low.

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### INTRODUCTION

It is commonly thought that universities or higher educational institutions instill professional skills in students that equip them for the labour market. However, higher educational institutes must also teach students aesthetic, moral, and emotional values. Universities must thus provide activities and subjects that improve the aesthetic attitudes of students towards the world, along with their increased interest in developing values that enhance themselves spiritually and physically (D'olimpio, 2022; Sbitnjova et al., 2020). This is where the concept of aesthetic education comes into the picture. Aesthetic education is a type of curriculum that assists students in finding meaning in their aesthetic experience by putting artwork as the focus of their study. Music and art lessons, discussions, debates, and similar extra-curricular activities bring excitement to the life of a student and attract their attention to self-education and aesthetically independent learning (Bobunova et al., 2020; Qayumov, 2020). For instance, musical aesthetics is a scientific art concept that is interdisciplinary in the sense that it integrates the understanding of various aesthetical aspects of music within a particular art form to analyze the emotion and beauty that it evokes. The concept of aesthetic education in music especially emerged in the United States in the 1950s, with the criticism that contemporary art and music education tend to be taught to foster social skills and knowledge and not to teach students about the aesthetic values of music and art. Indeed, a problem has been observed in ancient Chinese poetry choral works. While this music culture is a part of China's historical heritage, its teaching is often limited since many people consider it obsolete (Kertz-Welzel, 2019; Sparrow, 2023; Tursunbaevna, 2021). Understanding how aesthetic education can improve

the appreciation of the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works can be useful in developing strategies for improving further teaching and student learning.

While aesthetic education, in the form of appreciating art, craft, and music, has been an essential part of the global educational curriculum, its application in China continues to be challenging. Firstly, it has been recognized that teaching and learning about folk music, craft, and art is important so that students can learn about the genesis of ancient cultures and technological processes. This is because studying folk music and art therefore allows students to improve their creative and emotional expressions, expand their spiritual skills and imagination, and subsequently appreciate the aesthetic and informative value of works of cultural and historical importance (Darmenova & Zhunusakyn, 2015; Denac, 2014). However, the appreciation and acknowledgement of ancient Chinese poetry and folk music, such as choral works, as an important part of the educational curriculum continues to show some problems. Firstly, ancient Chinese poetry and choral works continue to be regarded as obsolete by young people. It is only recently it has gained some popularity because of its fashion or visual features after some pop artists have combined pop elements with it to create a form of fusion music. Additionally, teaching Chinese choral works is a relatively young phenomenon with a history of 100 years as compared to developed nations. For this reason, improvements are still needed to improve teaching the ideological, technical, and artistic specificities of the composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works (International Choral Scene, 2020; Sparrow, 2023). However, there has been a recent interest in the use of aesthetic education to improve the teaching of these ancient choral works in Chinese education.

Aesthetic education is not completely new to China. Since prehistoric times, aesthetic education has been an integral part of Chinese culture. Since that time, music and ancient rituals have existed together, along with the synthesis of dance, poetry, and music in ancient Chinese societies. Further, in ancient Chinese education, art education and liberal education were considered essential to the curriculum, such as archery, music, books, mathematics, etiquette, and riding, since the Early Qin Dynasty (Xi et al., 2023; Xue, 2022). Recently, the Chinese government has acknowledged the need to improve aesthetic education in schools and colleges, of which music education is an important component. Additionally, a majority of music educators in China have studied choral works as a part of their music education. The integration of choral education with aesthetic education is currently being regarded as a possible opportunity to effectively teach the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese choral poetry works. This is because choral education encourages collective singing, via a vision of labour and cooperation, to demonstrate aesthetic aspects such as the artist's feelings and the connotation of music works and also trigger deep thinking and emotional resonance in the audience (Linman, 2013; Xi et al., 2020). However, studies examining the role of aesthetic education in studying the composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works have been mainly narrative with little inclusion of primary data, especially the perspectives of Chinese choral educators and choral musicians. Critically exploring the subjective perspectives of Chinese choral educators and choral musicians regarding their perspectives on the role of aesthetic education in prompting the study of composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works is therefore rationalized. Such research will help to overcome current problems, such as the limited popularity, learning, and appreciation of these artistic topics of cultural heritage by students.

### **Aims and objectives**

This study therefore aims to investigate the role of aesthetic education in studying the composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works. It is based on the following objectives:

- To explore the value of aesthetic education in choral music teaching from the perspectives of Chinese choral educators and musicians.
- To examine how aesthetic education can be used to promote the study of the composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works by students, from the perspectives of Chinese choral educators and musicians.

- To investigate how aesthetic education can improve the current status of teaching and learning ancient Chinese poetry choral works in the country, from the perspectives of Chinese choral educators and musicians.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The value of aesthetic education in music teaching

Current literature indicates that the principles of aesthetic education align perfectly and hold significant value in the teaching and appreciation of music among students. Firstly, aesthetic education is a type of teaching philosophy that is associated with music, visual arts, taste, beauty, nature, and taste. Studying and engaging in aesthetics improves the creativity of the brain and assists children in their development by enabling them to acquire knowledge on a subject via entertainment (Shevtsova et al., 2023; Shih, 2020). According to Denac (2014), tasks related to aesthetic education are based on several principles. Firstly, activities should be developed in such a way that children's ability to perceive the aesthetic qualities of music or art is improved. This is essentially the ability of the child to notice and appreciate the shades, pictures, nature, wonder, and beauty of an art or music piece. It is also based on the principle of experiencing these aesthetic qualities, where viewing art or listening to music improves feelings of optimism, joy, and excitement. Another principle is to engage children in activities that improve their creative abilities and skills. Lastly, tasks should improve aesthetic judgment in students, that is, their ability to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of a music or art piece (Denac, 2014; Shih, 2020). This means that including aesthetic education can help teachers empower their students' creative abilities and skills in appreciating the beauty and specific features of art and music. Indeed, according to Tursunbaevna (2021), external music education and extracurricular music activities not only include classroom teaching but are also focused on improving the students' needs and interests in music. Mandatory music lessons that include singing in a group—a key part of choral teaching—improve singing skills, aesthetic sense, artistic abilities, worldview, music comprehension, and vocal improvisation (Tursunbaevna, 2021). While not all of these findings cover choral music, they do show how aesthetic education principles have the power to improve music teaching by enabling students to appreciate the beauty of a song or musical piece and improvise these skills to replicate this quality. Aesthetic education therefore holds significant value in the teaching and appreciation of music among students.

While integrating aesthetic education with music teaching, however, several aspects must be kept in mind. Firstly, while music holds significant aesthetic value because of its influence and sensory features, its perception by people can be contradictory. This is because of the differences in the perceptions, experiences, and values people hold in their daily lives. Therefore, standardizing how a student is supposed to aesthetically perceive or evaluate music is often difficult in aesthetic education. On the contrary, it must also be remembered that the main goal of aesthetic education is to develop an aesthetic and musical culture in the students where they gain the skill to aesthetically appreciate music rather than learning a specific criteria or way of aesthetic appreciation (Denac, 2014; Shevtsova, 2023). This, however, proves the value of aesthetic education in teaching skills of aesthetic evaluation and musical appreciation to students. In criticism, most of these studies are not backed by primary data or the actual experiences of music teachers. For instance, the cross-sectional study by Lee and Chao (2023) studied the perceptions of Taiwanese pre-school music teachers on their experiences of aesthetic education and training. The teachers reported that musical engagement can enhance their aesthetic experiences, which will create a culture of aesthetic appreciation in the classroom. Contrastingly, the teachers found it difficult to integrate aesthetic education into music teaching because of low confidence, a lack of training, and a lack of aesthetic education resources. Aesthetics in student education, particularly in music, is becoming weaker (Lee & Chao, 2023). Therefore, while aesthetic education is valuable for music teaching, further training is needed to support teachers and improve their confidence. This can perhaps begin with enhancing teachers' understanding of how aesthetic education improves the appreciation of the characteristics of traditional and folk music.

### Aesthetic education for understanding traditional and folk music

Another researched music teaching advantage is that aesthetic education can improve students' understanding of the singing and compositional characteristics of traditional folk music. For instance,

according to the review by Irada (2021), the development of an aesthetic and artistic culture can be developed in students in traditional choir classes. This is because choir singing is the main traditional form of music education for children, and it attracts them towards developing artistic creativity and also instills aesthetic pleasure in young artists. Using aesthetic education in teaching choir and vocal skills also educates students about the expression of emotions and feelings in music. This is done by enabling teachers to show students how the content of choral music pieces is highlighted by the lyrics, the text of the poem, and also the intonation and melody of the music. Appreciation of these compositional and singing features in choir music therefore concretizes imagination and the power of thought in music students (Irada, 2021). Hence, this means that aesthetic education can improve students' understanding of the singing and compositional characteristics of traditional music, including choral performances. Historically, according to Priem and Mayer (2017), this was also seen in the music works of Alfred Lichtwark, an art educator who was the pioneer of aesthetic music education in Germany. This was because his ideas of aesthetic music education were mainly aimed at the upper-class people of Germany, who were considered to not have artistic taste or artistic appreciation. This was a characteristic feature of the Wilhelmine era, where there was a culture of insecurity about expressing independent, critical thought towards an art piece. It was through the music efforts of Lichtwark that aesthetic education found a voice in German music education, where students were taught the ability to identify, evaluate, and appreciate the quality of music or artwork (Preim & Mayer, 2017). While this finding does not talk about folk music or focus on China, it still highlights the power of aesthetic education in instilling a culture of artistic appreciation and critical music evaluation in the musical teaching traditions of other countries.

Primary studies supporting the role of aesthetic education in improving teaching and, subsequently, students' understanding of traditional folk music are limited. The study by Cheremisova (2017) studied whether aesthetic education can encourage creativity development in music teaching within a student choir group from a higher education institution. An aesthetic-semiotic approach to music teaching was used. In this approach, music is understood to be a psycho-semantic text that has both personal and universal meanings. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to design educational materials in such a way that music culture contributes to the creative personality development of students. This is because creative development strengthens musical as well as cognitive, emotional, and communication skills in students. As a part of the aesthetic-semiotic activities, students of the choir group were encouraged to write observational essays about the feelings they encountered when listening to a piece of music, engaging in creative tasks such as fine arts, sculpting, drawing, embroidering, and engaging in verbal, instrumentation, or rhythmic tasks such as writing a story, song, poem, or instrumental play. The program was found to significantly improve creativity and musicality in the students (Cheremisova, 2017). The study, however, did not draw upon the subjective experiences of students or music teachers and also did not focus on folk music. Regardless, these limited findings are useful for showing how aesthetic education can improve the creativity skills of traditional music students.

### **Aesthetic education and the ancient Chinese poetry and choral works**

The current status of aesthetic education in teaching, understanding, and learning ancient Chinese poetry and choral works has mixed outcomes. Firstly, while existing educational institutions place great emphasis on teaching and learning ancient Chinese poetry and choral works, there are limitations in the teaching process. Traditional Chinese choral music is regarded as a group activity that brings spiritual enjoyment and encourages moral as well as emotional education in students. Through extensive training, students develop teamwork ability, collective consciousness, aesthetic ability, strong emotional communication and cultural communication. However, in higher educational institutions, it has been criticized that present Chinese choral teaching courses do not teach students about the political, aesthetic, and ideological understanding of traditional folk music. This is because most Chinese choral teachers lack awareness and knowledge of these aspects (Jie, 2024; Li et al., 2023). These limitations indicate the need for aesthetic education which can enlighten both students and teachers on the aesthetic qualities of Chinese folk poetry and choral music. However, this does not mean that aesthetic education is completely new in China. In Chinese, aesthetic education translates to 'beauty education'. This is because in China, beauty is considered the foundation for art, and therefore, all artwork, including music, should be aesthetically attractive.

Even though the concept of aestheticism in art and music existed in China since ancient times, it was included as an educational curriculum from 1911 onwards, when music and art became mandatory in the curriculum. Currently, aesthetic education in Chinese colleges and universities includes music, where students are taught in a free learning environment where they can listen to, share, and create music that they emotionally resonate with. The idea is to improve the aesthetic ability of students, instill a culturally rich campus culture, and provide opportunities for them to create aesthetically beautiful music. In criticism, Chinese aesthetic education does not include diverse elements such as the teaching of the physical, moral, and intellectual meanings of traditional music. Further, aesthetic education appears to have its own separate curriculum and is therefore not integrated with the primary curriculum of schools, colleges, and universities (Bai, 2023; Jie, 2024; Li et al., 2023). Therefore, to fully teach and encourage students to understand the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry, choral music, and folk music, current aesthetic education needs to be looked into and reformed.

### **Research gap**

Aesthetic education, or the appreciation of aesthetics in music, has always existed in China. However, the current integration of aesthetic education within the Chinese music curriculum of traditional choral and ancient folk music appears to be limited or restricted. Additionally, the literature review also reports music teachers not feeling confident or ready to use aesthetic education because of a lack of knowledge or training. Some of these findings were, however, not drawn fully from Chinese samples, nor did they focus specifically on Chinese choral works and ancient poetry. Studies using primary qualitative data from Chinese music teachers regarding their perspectives and experiences of using aesthetic education were also lacking and therefore formed the methodology and rationale for the study.

### **Theoretical framework**

Several theories show resonance with the principles of aesthetic education in music teaching. The most prominent theory is the Aesthetic Theory by John Dewey, who was an educational reformer and philosopher from America. The mention of this theory began to appear in some of Dewey's works from 1925 onwards. According to him, current education often ignores the need to encourage children to simply and directly enjoy a dance, song, art, or story-telling experience. While the play is important for its practical benefits, its aesthetic effect is more important. For this reason, early humans celebrated the direct satisfaction derived from art and music rather than thinking about their utilities. Common examples of this are how simple activities such as fishing, hunting, and even labour were transformed into games or ceremonies showcasing enjoyable art. Being aesthetically intuitive to these celebratory contexts of art and music therefore helps people identify its true potential and meaning (Leddy & Puolakka, 2021; Wilson, 2021). This theory indeed resonates with the concept of integrating aesthetic education in music teaching since it will enable teachers towards encouraging students to not merely study music but also to appreciate the historical, singing, and compositional beauty of traditional Chinese choral poetry.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research, following an interpretivist paradigm, was used for this study. This is because qualitative research includes the systematic and structured acquisition, interpretation, and organization of textual materials that have been taken from conversations or other documents. It follows an interpretive research paradigm since it explores the meanings of social issues based on how they are experienced by people in real-life situations (Grossoehme, 2014; Roller, 2015). Additionally, purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants in this study. This was done by posting an advertisement across professional Chinese choral musician groups on Weibo, WeChat, and other social media groups where details such as the purpose, importance, and methodology of the study were written. Additionally, it has been researched that a sample size ranging from three to 16 participants is appropriate for interpretative qualitative research. This is because such a sample size is predicted to offer ample scope to draw comprehensive conclusions and highlight each participant as having a unique identity, rather than burdening the researcher with excessive unstructured data (Malterud et al., 2016; Robinson, 2014). In studies that include Chinese musicians and music educators as the sample, the years of professional experience range from at least five years to almost

more than 16 years (Yu & Leung, 2019). Therefore, after interested candidates had responded to the advertisement, they were mailed an informed consent form and an information sheet about the research and also inquired about their years of experience. Respondents who did not provide informed consent and also had less than five years of choral teaching or professional experience were excluded from the study to remove any confounders or ethical issues. This led to a final sample size of 10 participants for the interview.

A semi-structured interview was conducted using a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Additionally, interview questions were developed by drawing ideas from qualitative studies that have explored aesthetic education (Appendix 1). For instance, the qualitative study by Sang and Xu (2022) interviewed Chinese music teachers on the existing situation of aesthetic education in Chinese music classrooms. In their interview, the authors asked questions about how they implemented aesthetic education in Chinese classrooms and whether they were facing any problems. Similarly, another qualitative study by Mencke et al. (2023) interviewed music experts on their aesthetic experience of contemporary classical and classical romantic music. The authors asked questions about the criteria needed to judge a musical work aesthetically, the impact of music on emotions, and the strategies that must be used to engage with a work aesthetically. Lastly, another qualitative study by Mihailović (2021), which interviewed students on whether aesthetic education can be taught online, asked questions on how aesthetic education improved the perception or understanding of the compositional and musical characteristics of a piece. The interview was conducted virtually on WeChat so that participants had flexibility and convenience. The interview transcripts were analyzed thematically by following the framework given by Braun and Clarke (2021), where the researcher first familiarizes themselves with the data, identifies relevant codes or themes, names the themes, and reviews them with existing literature, followed by finally adding them to the research paper.

## FINDINGS

The interview responses from the participants were recorded verbatim, and the transcripts were analyzed thematically. A total of three themes were obtained. The themes and their corresponding codes have been presented below.

**Table 1: Thematic analysis of interview findings**

Themes	Codes	Supporting Interview Statements
Seeing beyond music theory	Helps students appreciate the beauty or 'aesthetic value of music'.	"In music, aesthetic education is very valuable. It helps students to understand and appreciate the beautiful qualities of a song and the meaning or feelings it carries"
	Helps students see beyond the technical or theoretical details of a song	"a major benefit of aesthetic education is that it helps students to appreciate the broader qualities of a musical piece rather than simply knowing who composed it and from where."
	Helps students appreciate extra-curricular activities	"My idea is that aesthetic education encourages students to appreciate art, music and dance. It is the reason why we have extracurricular activities."
Mixed teaching outcomes	Helps students appreciate the cultural heritage of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works.	"Ancient Chinese choral works are not just music – they incorporate poems about stories, legends, mythical characters and cultures presented in a beautiful, artistic format. Understanding its aesthetic value will help students to better appreciate our culture and heritage, and also gain moral values from it."
	Encourages students to appreciate the true meaning and beauty of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works.	"Aesthetic education helps us to teach students about the composition by encouraging them to listen to ancient works, identify how it makes them feel and critically find out why or what rhythmic, melody or lyrical feature makes them feel this way."
	A combination of reflective, group and compositional strategies are used.	"I generally tell students to listen to and write or share how a traditional musical piece has made them feel. I also often give them projects where they identify similar pieces of ancient music or create their music that represents ancient Chinese poetry and choral works."

	Students also acquire group singing skills	"Further, choral works need group music – aesthetic education, therefore, helps students to understand how to work in a group seamlessly so that they can do justice to the ancient music works and reflect the same emotion as they felt when they first listened to it."
	Teachers not aware of specific strategies	"I am not sure how to answer this since I am not very aware of whether I gave the correct information."
Recognising educators' challenges	Many music teachers are not trained or aware	"I think the one challenge is that some of us music teachers don't know much about aesthetic education. This is because we haven't been trained in it."
	Absence of standard guideline	"There is no standard awareness or guideline to tell us what is it that constitutes Aesthetic Education. So, some form of policy will kickstart improvement."
	Lack of evaluation criteria because of its subjectivity	"There isn't a rule or standard to it, so sometimes our discussions can be heated. Not every student perceives music the same way."
	Absence of including other topics in musical aesthetics, such as politics or moral discourse	"But it is more than that – aesthetics can also mean the moral and political values conveyed by an ancient song – usually these are not covered in Aesthetic Education because of a lack of awareness and understanding."
	Ancient Chinese poetry and choral works are often regarded as obsolete	"Ancient Chinese poetry and choral works are a dying art and not very appreciated by students. Aesthetic education must be increased to restore our appreciation towards these cultural masterpieces"

### Theme 1: Seeing beyond music theory

Almost all the participating teachers agreed that aesthetic education is highly valuable for teaching choral music, mainly because of its ability to help students see beyond merely the theoretical information behind a music piece. Three codes were identified in this regard. Firstly, participants shared that aesthetic education is valuable for choral music teaching because it helps students understand the beauty or aesthetic value of a song. Additionally, another valuable insight is that aesthetic education encourages students to appreciate every feature of a song and enjoy it, rather than only learning about its history or theoretical aspects. Lastly, the value of aesthetic education lies in its ability to encourage extra-curricular activity participation so that students do not limit themselves to only technical subjects.

### Theme 2: Mixed teaching outcomes

Mixed responses were acquired from Chinese music teachers for this theme. While participants shared several ways in which aesthetic education helped them teach ancient Chinese poetry and choral works to their students, there were negative responses as well. For instance, several teachers shared that they weren't aware of aesthetic education and also weren't sure whether they were using it for teaching ancient Chinese poetry and choral works. Nevertheless, many teachers agreed that aesthetic education promotes an understanding of the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works by helping students understand its history, the range of instruments involved, the story behind it, and the type of rhythm or lyrics used. In this way, teachers empower students to appreciate Chinese culture and heritage. Further, since choral singing is done in groups, music teachers shared that aesthetic education encourages students to learn how they can sing appropriately in groups and modify their vocal skills accordingly. Further, teachers used several ways to instill aesthetic skills and an understanding of the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works in students. These mainly included reflective work where students shared their experiences of listening to traditional music, followed by group projects on researching folk songs, Chinese poetry, or developing their own music.

### Theme 3: Recognizing educators' challenges

Almost all participants gave negative views on the challenging status of aesthetic education in teaching ancient Chinese poetry and choral music to students. Firstly, most teachers were unaware or not trained in how to use aesthetic education. Teachers also felt that it was confusing because

aesthetic education does not have a specific standard or criteria for evaluation since music can be perceived subjectively. Some teachers did not criticize aesthetic education but rather felt that the government does not do enough to promote ancient poetry or choral works, which is why the younger generation finds it obsolete. Lastly, teachers felt that current aesthetic music education in China only focuses on beauty and not the moral or political meanings behind traditional folk songs.

## **DISCUSSION**

The above thematic analysis and interview findings show the diverse role of aesthetic education in teaching music and helping students understand the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music. Firstly, the teachers shared that aesthetic education is substantially valuable in teaching choral music by making students engage in extracurricular activities and appreciate the beauty of music and every feature of a song that induces emotions and feelings. Indeed, this was also supported by Tursunbaevna (2021), who postulated that extracurricular music activities comprise theoretical teaching in the classroom and also activities that develop the interests of students towards music. Choral music teaching especially involves singing in a group that improves singing skills, aesthetic sense, artistic abilities, worldview, music comprehension, and vocal improvisation (Tursunbaevna, 2021). Similarly, Jiang and Sun (2023) found that music aesthetic education improves the capability of students to appreciate art, cultivates their creative skills, their ability to express emotions, their teamwork skills, and also strengthens their ethical and moral education. Additionally, the teachers agreed that aesthetic education helps students understand the singing and compositional characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music. This is mainly through activities such as reflective essays, group work, and self-composition strategies that encourage students to deeply listen to the music, identify the emotions it induces, critically evaluate its features, and work in groups while singing or creating their music. This was also seen in a study by Cheremisova (2017), who found that an aesthetic-semiotic music program improved musicality and creativity in a student choir group. In that program, the students had to write observational essays about how they felt when they listened to a particular song while also participating in fine arts, sculpting, drawing, embroidering, and developing music skills through verbal, instrumental, or rhythmic tasks such as writing a story, song, poem, or instrumental play. In criticism, many participants in this study did not provide very comprehensive answers because they were unaware of aesthetic education and lacked any training or appropriate resources to use it. This was also seen in the cross-sectional study by Lee and Chao (2023), who found that music teachers appreciated the value of aesthetic education but were not confident in implementing it because of the absence of training, knowledge, and resources. Similar insights were also seen in the codes of the third theme, where participants shared about the current status of aesthetic education in China and its value in teaching ancient Chinese poetry and choral works. Several challenges were reported, such as a lack of interest among students towards traditional music, a lack of training and expertise in music teachers, and the absence of a specific guideline, standard, or policy on aesthetic education by the government. Indeed, many young pop artists are combining ancient Chinese choral music with modern pop and electronic music to increase its popularity. Additionally, in Chinese educational institutions, aesthetic education is not integrated into the primary school curriculum. The current aesthetic courses also mostly focus on teaching the technical aspect of traditional folk music without teaching the political or moral meaning behind these songs (Bai, 2023; Jie, 2024; Li et al., 2023; Sparrow, 2023). Therefore, the interview findings have aligned well with the existing literature, which means that aesthetic education is useful for improving the understanding of the compositional and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music. This also means that music teachers specializing in culturally rich music need to be supported through training, a standard curriculum, and governmental efforts to promote traditional Chinese music.

## **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE**

This study aimed to examine the role of aesthetic education in studying the composition and singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry choral works from the perspectives of Chinese choral educators and musicians. The qualitative results of this study showed that aesthetic education is valuable for the teaching of music in general and also choral music specifically since it helps students appreciate the beauty and meaning behind music instead of only limiting themselves to gaining theoretical knowledge. Therefore, the future scope of this study lies in its ability to inform music



teachers and students in China regarding the importance of aesthetic education and how they can use it in the music classroom for a better appreciation of national music. Indeed, these findings were further highlighted when Chinese choral educators shared how aesthetic education improved their students' understanding of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music by encouraging them to deeply listen to and reflect on the story, various instruments, tunes, rhythms, and melodies, as well as their hidden meanings that are communicated by such culturally rich music. These findings therefore showcase the importance of aesthetic education in restoring the cultural and historical heritage of traditional Chinese music in young students, who tend to misinterpret it as being too old and obsolete. As a part of the future scope, music educators, and policymakers, or administrators of universities and colleges can consider the strategies used by the participants of the study to improve students' understanding and appreciation of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music using aesthetic education. Future studies must move forward by interviewing Chinese students to understand their ideas of how to learn ancient Chinese poetry and choral works through aesthetic education. However, many educators shared that they lack knowledge and understanding of aesthetic education, possibly because of low training or the lack of a standard policy. Therefore, another future scope of this paper is its ability to inform policymakers and college or university administrators on the importance of training and equipping music teachers with the resources needed to practice aesthetic education in the future classroom. Future studies can, therefore, also move forward by studying why aesthetic education and the learning of ancient choral works continue to be low in China. Additionally, comparative studies can also be conducted across different genres of music or between educators of different professional experiences to tease out the differential impacts of aesthetic education in teaching and learning Chinese music. Overall, this paper shows that aesthetic education is extremely valuable and has the potential to revive an appreciation for ancient Chinese musical cultures and traditional choral poetry works in the population. The future scope of this paper can include further studying how aesthetic education can be used to improve the understanding, appreciation, and singing of music genres other than ancient poetry and choral works in Chinese students and teachers.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Firstly, aesthetic education should be mandatorily included in all music curricula in Chinese educational institutions. This is because this form of education has been reported to increase the artistic and creative abilities of students while also encouraging them to appreciate the local cultures, heritage, and meaning behind Chinese traditional music. Further, Chinese moral music teachers shared that several strategies, ranging from reflective essays, group singing activities, group projects, and opportunities to research traditional music or create music resonating with its tunes, helped them to promote the understanding of compositional and singing characteristics in their students. Therefore, to increase the practice of aesthetic education in Chinese educational institutions, colleges and universities must update their curricula to include creative activities that help teachers engage students in ways that improve their teamwork, music creation, and music or aesthetic appreciation skills. However, an alarming finding was the frequency with which several teachers shared that they were not aware of aesthetic education being used in their classroom because of a lack of training, resources, or a standard guideline and policy that could direct them. Therefore, it is recommended that the Chinese government assist music institutions, colleges, and universities in the country with a specific curriculum, policy, or standard that can help music teachers understand how they can effectively harness aesthetic education to promote an understanding of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music in their students. This curriculum change must also be accompanied by training courses, workshops, and resources that can educate teachers on the importance of aesthetic education in music and how they can practice it in the classroom. A particular focus must be placed on promoting the national importance of ancient Chinese poetry and choral music as a representative of historical pride and cultural heritage to the larger student population. This is needed to prevent the misconception that traditional Chinese music is obsolete and is also needed to encourage more and more students to take up courses on this music form to better appreciate the cultural and emotional features of ancient Chinese poetry and choral works.

## LIMITATIONS

This study adds to existing literature by talking about ancient Chinese music and the views of music teachers that have rarely been researched. However, several factors can restrict its generalisability and applicability. For instance, because of its highly specific sample, the findings may not apply to the traditional musical forms of other countries. The views and experiences of choral music Chinese students are also not included, which limits the comprehensiveness of the findings. Further, the data collected is mainly self-reported, which can cause social desirability bias. Future studies must first be replicated by including teachers or students studying traditional music from other countries. Alternatively, China itself has many local cultures, so future studies can be replicated to compare how aesthetic education impacts the understanding of different musical cultures from different provinces. Future studies can also adopt a quantitative research design, where an aesthetic curriculum or music education program can be tested against a student population to find out causal relationships between aesthetic education and students' understanding of signing and compositional characteristics.

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