

## Research on Problems in Music Education Curriculum Design of Normal Universities and Countermeasures

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### Abstract

Presently, most students of normal universities know nothing about music knowledge such as music score at all, and have no musical knowledge and culture. This is a common problem existing in many Chinese normal universities. Surveys, however, show the students are fond of and thirst for learning music knowledge. Thus, universities and related institutions have been laying stress on how to cultivate and improve the music knowledge and culture of students of normal universities. In view of this, this paper aims to research the problems in music curriculum design of normal universities, and put forward corresponding countermeasures, with a hope to give assistance to related universities in music teaching.

The theory knowledge of music and vocalinity accomplishments is one of the basic knowledge and accomplishments that modern talents should have. Besides music majors, education majors also should be offered music education, so as to make up the deficiency of musical knowledge and culture of Chinese musical talents, and comprehensively improve students' musical skills (Kong & Jin, 2014). There are many problems in music education curriculum design of normal universities. About this, this paper aims to analyze the problems, and put forward suggestions on related curriculum design.

**Key words:** Higher education; Music education curriculum; Problems; Solutions

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### 1. ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING MUSIC CURRICULUM DESIGN IN NORMAL UNIVERSITIES

In recent years, with rapid social and economic development, the structure of the demand for talents has been dramatically changed, from demand for traditional talents into demand for versatile talents. Talents having both practical skills and comprehensive qualities are demanded. Thus, art teaching that had been being ignored started receiving much concern, and vocalinity teaching also started being emphasized. Music teaching has not only become a key curriculum for music majors, but also become a focus in learning of non-music majors of universities such as normal universities. Furthermore, only by comprehensive training can Chinese talents' comprehensive quality and abilities be improved. A famous Hungarian music educator Kodaly Zoltan said<sup>[2]</sup>, to greatly improve the music knowledge and culture of talents, a country must make concerted efforts to develop comprehensive education and cultivation. As to the dream of developing vocalinity of non-music majors, he proposed that stress should be laid on skill and quality training of non-music majors, to help them inherit music together with music professionals. This idea and opinion are worth learning. There are also many Chinese students who are fond of music but seldom receive professional vocal instructions. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of music knowledge and culture, in particular of musical knowledge reserve and culture of non-music majors, has become a burning problem in the talent cultivation program of Chinese universities, and a necessary development strategy for social development. To this end, universities should take related measures. In particular, normal universities should constantly improve the music curriculum design mode, increase the proportion of the music curriculum, and properly hold music competition, etc.. As for the music curriculum

design of normal universities, there are many problems, as below.

## **2. RESEARCH ON PROBLEMS IN MUSIC CURRICULUM DESIGN OF NORMAL UNIVERSITIES**

### **2.1 Irrelevant Music Curricula Are Offered**

Presently, most normal universities tend to follow their teaching objectives in offering music curriculum, setting different curricula for students in different grades. On the whole, theoretical knowledge and practical operation are covered. Theoretical knowledge mainly includes basic music theory, Chinese and foreign music histories, Chinese folk music, appreciation of masterpieces of music, musical aesthetics, etc., and practical operation includes chorsing, conducting fundamental, impromptu accompany, musicology thesis writing, etc.. To sum up, the main curriculum contents are music appreciation, music composition theory, and music history, curricula are mainly offered in the form of large-class lecture, the practical operation skills mainly include sightsinging and ear training, and teaching is performed from the aspects of vocal music and instrumental music. Although the curriculum system is relatively well-established, and curricula are diversified, teaching and education are not based on students' actual needs. The strong points of students majoring in instrumental music and vocal music also are not thoroughly grasped. As to music history learning, Chinese excellent music works appreciation is independent from foreign excellent music works appreciation, but the two parts tend to largely overlap each other in respect of content, which is likely to reduce students learning enthusiasm, and wastes teacher resources to a certain extent. Besides, education majors will start learning musical form, works analysis, basic knowledge for vocal music writing, and orchestration for small band in the sophomore year. These contents usually are irrelevant to the basic theoretical knowledge they learned in the freshman year, so most students are unable to effectively learn and absorb these contents, let alone correctly applying. In addition, not all senior high schools around the country lay the same stress on music teaching and cultivation. Thus, students in Guangxi, Yunnan, and other inland cities are inferior in respect of musical knowledge, culture and theory. These students will receive the same music teaching as others do. Therefore, it is more difficult for them to absorb the teaching contents in universities. In addition, the large-class lecture mode of music curriculum teaching is also not good for these students to catch up with other students. Thus, students cannot achieve the same outcome.

### **2.2 Teaching Mode Is Undiversified, and Students' Learning Enthusiasm Is Low**

Comparing with music teachers of professional conservatories of music, the music teachers of normal universities prefer to focus on theoretical knowledge teaching rather than give lectures based on the actual needs of students, which greatly lower students' learning enthusiasm. Besides, the curricula of normal universities are dull, and the teaching mode is also undiversified, which complicates that students' learning enthusiasm is low. Some students who don't have a solid foundation even will give up music learning. As a consequence, the students of normal universities seldom have an overall plan of music learning, lack a comprehensive learning plan, and cannot achieve ideal outcomes.

### **2.3 The Proportion of Skill Training Curriculum Such as Vocal Music Is Low**

Skill training such as vocal music is one of the main contents of music learning, but the proportion of musical skill training curriculum in normal universities is relatively low, and the available training and learning methods are few. Vocal music training refers to that music teachers take related teaching measures purposefully based on curriculum objectives to train students' basic singing ability and improve students' singing skills. Most students of normal universities are inferior to and even lag far behind students of professional conservatories of music in respect of vocal musical skill. Therefore, normal universities should focus on increasing the proportion of vocal musical training curriculum to greatly improve the students' musical skill.

### **2.4 The Evaluation Mode of Music Knowledge and Skill Is Undiversified**

Presently, the practice of most normal universities of evaluating students' musical knowledge reserve and culture is to mainly check the attendance rate, and hold term and final exams. Few normal universities will stress in-progress comprehensive evaluation of students' learning, or thoroughly grasp the effect of students' learning either. They hardly study students' enthusiasm and needs. This has greatly affected the research and exploration of diversified teaching and educational methods of Chinese normal universities.

### **2.5 Few Music Activities Are Held**

Normal universities tend to regard the fulfillment of classroom teaching tasks as the mark of the end of curriculum. They seldom hold large-scale music competition, or emphasize the arrangement and setting of music competition or other activities. Thus, they lack an effective way to know the real learning effect of students, and cannot effectively improve their classroom education and teaching mode.

### **3. DISCUSSIONS ON METHODS AND CONTENTS OF MUSIC CURRICULUM DESIGN OF NORMAL UNIVERSITIES**

#### **3.1 The Relevance of Music Curriculum Design Should Be Enhanced**

Normal universities should design music curricula based on students' needs and the assigned teaching tasks. The specific measures are as follows. (a) Chinese and foreign excellent masterpieces of music should be integrated, the appreciation of masterpieces of music of different countries should go in combination with the histories of two or more countries, related contents and teaching methods should be integrated or compared, and the correlation therebetween should be researched, so as to effectively integrate resources and improve teaching effect. (b) As to basic knowledge for instruments, the instrumental accompaniment and harmony basic knowledge should be integrated. Although the contents of these curricula are different, these contents must be learned by students. Therefore, these curricula should be properly combined in curriculum design, and impromptu accompany and instrument basic knowledge can be alternated as and when necessary, so as to raise students' enthusiasm, and normalize the curriculum of impromptu accompany. Besides, since harmony basic knowledge curriculum can help students learn the harmony effect and law of instrumental accompaniment scientifically and rapidly, the integration of instrumental accompaniment and harmony basic knowledge is good for improving students' learning result of instrumental accompaniment and harmony knowledge. (c) The internal relations of curricula should be stressed, and comprehensive teaching methods should be adopted. This requires the education sector to effectively integrate theoretical knowledge curriculum and practical skill training curriculum while grasping the internal relations, say, actively arrange orchestration of small band with music form, works appreciation, and polyphonic theory together. Alternatively, the writing curriculum and the works appreciation curriculum can be arranged together, to combine theory with practice, and ensure students of education major receive comprehensive music education to the largest extent.

#### **3.2 The Curriculum Contents Should Be Diversified, and Intuitional Instructions Should Be Rationally Applied**

Double teaching training method and intuitional teaching method should be applied. The former refers to combining centralized training and personalized training. Since the students of normal universities are relatively inferior in respect of music quality, and largely depend on music teachers, teachers must focus on music knowledge and skill teaching first, and then enhance personalized

training specific to the shortcomings of students' learning ability and knowledge. In this way, it is good for distinguishing students' strong points, and making up the deficiency of centralized teaching. This measure is called "teaching students in accordance of their aptitude". It is mainly refers to a mode of distinguishing students' personal aptitude and training students on this basis. For example, in teaching the Natural Vocal Register Training UAO and the Middle Vocal Register Training E Song Practice, teachers should pay attention to students' pronunciation characteristics, skills, tone quality and timbre, and adopt different vocal music training modes according to students' actual situation to tap the potential of students, and integrate multiple teaching modes on this basis to comprehensively improve students' music knowledge and quality. Intuitional teaching method is also an effective music teaching and training method. Since the students of normal universities are inferior in respect of music learning ability, and they are unable to accurately grasp the tone quality, intonation and pitch of singing and unprofessional, teachers should adopt intuitional teaching method. That's to say, teachers can do demonstrative actions of mouth and breath in person, so that students can learn the sound production process intuitively. Alternatively, teachers can show pictures of singing mouth of musicians to students. For the students who don't have a solid foundation, it is proper to apply the intuitional teaching method for a long time to help students make progress little by little. Only by integrating multiple teaching methods can be the music teaching effect of normal universities be largely improved.

#### **3.3 The Proportion of Skill Training Curriculum Such as Vocal Music Should Be Increased**

Firstly, the proportion of skill training curriculum such as vocal music should be increased, and skill teaching and training activities should be actively carried out. Secondly, vocal music training process should be normalized. Firstly, a training plan and goal should be set, and preliminary preparations for related skill training should be made. Students should be trained according to the teaching task and teaching plan, including basic knowledge and basic singing skills. Since the students of normal universities are inferior in respect of comprehensive music quality, the students must be offered classification-based training curriculum, then specific training plan should be made according to students' music knowledge and learning ability, and the whole vocal music training process should be planned and instructed, so as to guarantee the following teaching process. Secondly, performance and practice training should be enhanced. Skill training is the foundation, on which performance and practice must be carried out. This is one of the teaching means, and also one of the measures for improving students' music skills. Multiple

training modes are helpful for students of normal universities to completely show their musical quality and accomplishments, as follows: training students' performance skills. Performance requires students to have certain musical ability. Hence, teachers must carry out intensive training, to help students in music learning and to make a breakthrough. Intensive training mainly refers to intensive expression, portrayal and psychological training. Expression training is mainly carried out to help students make progress in expression. For example, in vocal music teaching of Nanniwan, students should be trained to wear a smiling and appreciative expression when singing the section about the beautiful scenery of Nanniwan, and an admiring expression when singing the section of the state policy. Students should be trained to wear an expression according to the sound and content. Portrayal training is carried out to help students learn to express musical emotion via body language. For example, in teaching the Ballad of Yellow Water, teachers should instruct students to express admiration to the mountains and rivers of the motherland and anger to wars via body language. For performance, teachers should give instructions to students in respect of stage manners and physical appearance. Psychological training refers to helping students improve their psychological quality in vocal music performance. Only having mature stage performance psychology can students reduce the possibility of error due to tension, and achieve the optimal performance outcome.

### **3.4 The Evaluation Mechanism Should Be Improved**

The examination system and mode in which excessive stress is laid on written examination should be adjusted by increasing the proportion of evaluating questions asking in classroom, attainment experience summarizing in classroom, routine writing practice and practical activities, and reducing the proportion of term and final examinations. A comprehensive evaluation mechanism should be established, and the stage performance ability and the actively level in the classroom should be covered in the evaluation. Besides, student self-evaluation mechanism, teacher evaluation mechanism and school evaluation mechanism should be established. All these measures above are proposed to comprehensively increase the proportion of practice and performance in evaluation.

### **3.5 Auxiliary Teaching Activities Such as Competition Should Be Actively Held**

Firstly, a good performance atmosphere should be created. Teachers and universities should create music performance opportunities for students, to help students accumulate stage experience and create more stage art works. For example, students can be encouraged to do vocal music performance at the welcome party for the freshman, New Year Party, and campus arts festival, etc., or special performance as an expression of appreciation

in the community, or nursing home. In this way, students' enthusiasm for music learning can be raised, and students also have a channel for communication and practice of music learning. Secondly, universities should actively organize related competitions to help students temper their vocal music ability. The mode of competition is good for stimulating students' enthusiasm and initiative, and promoting students to actively participate, which is helpful to improve students' vocal music ability, raise their sense of honor, and comprehensively enhance students' musical knowledge and culture. Since the students of normal universities are relatively inferior in respect of musical quality and learning initiative, normal universities must actively organize related competitions to help stimulate students' learning initiative. For example, universities can organize "campus singer contest", or "singer contest" on festivals, etc., to encourage students to sing and perform songs of different genres and styles, and guide students to learn the strong points of others, make up their deficiency, and comprehensively improve their grasp of music works through competition.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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to the normal university students should focus on strengthening the education of music teaching, enhance their knowledge, skills and vocal performance ability, which is a systematic teaching process, is a process of vocal music knowledge and literacy training, only a reasonable set of music education curriculum, curriculum standards in strict accordance with the education teaching can effectively the promotion of teachers college students knowledge of music, musical quality and related skills, it will enhance our knowledge and skills talent structure is of great significance.

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