

RESEARCH ABOUT ORFF TEACHING METHOD IN CHINA

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Abstract

This article explores the development and application of the Orff teaching method in China, tracing its journey from introduction in the 1980s to its current stage of deep integration and localization. Originating from Germany, the Orff method emphasizes the holistic and creative development of children through music, movement, and improvisation. In China, educators have adapted the method by incorporating traditional musical elements, cultural practices, and pedagogical innovations to align with the nation's unique cultural beliefs and educational goals. Notably, the method has been effective in fostering children's creativity, emotional expression, and overall growth in diverse contexts, including urban and rural settings, preschool education, and special needs interventions. The integration of Orff's principles into Chinese culture reflects a resonance with Confucian ideals of holistic education and collectivism, as well as Daoist principles emphasizing harmony and natural development. Moreover, its application often aligns with the spiritual and cultural role of music in traditional Chinese society, where music is viewed as a medium to cultivate morality and social harmony. In addition to its alignment with cultural beliefs, the Orff method has been utilized in religious and spiritual practices, leveraging music's universal appeal to foster emotional well-being and interpersonal connection. **This paper highlights** the potential of the Orff method to bridge modern pedagogical techniques with deeply rooted cultural and spiritual traditions in China, while addressing challenges such as resource limitations and teacher training. **The findings** underscore the significance of cultural adaptation

in advancing global educational methodologies. This article presented (1) Orff's teaching method in China, and (2) related research about Orff teaching method in China

Keywords: Research; Orff Teaching Method

Introduction

"Orff Music Pedagogy" for the outstanding German musician Carl Orff (1895-1982). Orff's concept of music education advocates "originality", advocates that child participate in music experience as subjects, rather than as listeners, and advocates the integration of music, dance, and language in music experience to form a comprehensive art, so as to improve children's musical sensibility and interest, so as to actively participate in music practice. Improvisation is at the heart of the Orff system. Orff believes that improvisation is the most straightforward and pure form of musical expression, which can be learned and experienced by everyone, and is very suitable for children. Orff's teaching activities emphasize that "everything starts with children", encouraging children to express themselves freely in musical activities, and stimulating children's creativity and resilience in the form of improvisational activities. At the same time, he advocates the development of improvised, participatory, natural and artistic musical activities during the most energetic period of children between the ages of 3 and 10, so as to promote the all-round development of children's musical ability.

The Orff's teaching method has been developed in China for more than 40 years, the teaching method was officially introduced into China in the eighties of the last century by Professor Naixiong Liao of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, its rich and diverse musical expressions and novel educational concepts, so that everyone has the opportunity to experience music, set off a short-lived craze at that time, but in China for many years inherent in the examination education has not received enough attention. Later, in the wave of reform and opening up, with the strong support of Dean Luting He, Dean Mingdun Jiang and others, with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music as the important town, Orff teachers from Germany, Australia and the United States were invited to hold workshops in various parts of China, and the Orff teaching

method was gradually promoted throughout the country and actively applied to the early childhood music enlightenment education.

The Orff's teaching method, together with the Dalcroze method and the Kodály method, are known as the three major music teaching methods. Compared with the other two teaching methods, the Orff's teaching method is more widely used and disseminated in China. (Gong, 2019). The reasons are as follows: 1. The "original" music concept of the Orff's teaching method is combined with traditional Chinese culture, and music teaching methods with Chinese characteristics can be explored. 2. The introduction of the Orff's teaching method has promoted the reform of the concept of Chinese music, from the traditional emphasis on skill training to the emphasis on creativity and feeling. 3. The Orff's teaching method is suitable for children with different economic and cultural backgrounds, which is conducive to the popularization and equality of music education in China. 4. The international background of Orff's teaching method can help Chinese music education to be in line with international standards and improve the level of internationalization of education. 5. China's current education reform advocates quality education, and the Orff's teaching method emphasizes all-round development, which is in line with the direction of this reform (Chen, 2020).

With the introduction and promotion of international advanced teaching methods of Orff, it is hoped that by fully exploring and analyzing the practical application of Orff's teaching method in China, it will provide theoretical support and practical guidance for improving the level of early childhood music education in China and promoting educational innovation (Peng et al., 2021).

Children aged 3-6 belong to preschool children and are in an important stage of physical and mental development, and the study of the current situation and development of music enlightenment education at this age group is to lay a good quality foundation for children's subsequent learning and lifelong development, so as to promote the coordinated development of children in all aspects.

Orff's Teaching Method in China

Early introduction (early 80s of the 20th century)

Background and introduction: After the reform and opening up, with the increase of international exchanges, the field of music education began to introduce advanced concepts and methods from abroad. The Orff method has attracted the attention of Chinese music educators with its unique "original" music education concept and comprehensive art education characteristics.

In 1980, music educator Liao Naixiong visited Germany and visited Karl · Orff in Munich at the end of the year. In 1981, after returning to China, he began to introduce "Orff Education" in China, and was the first person to introduce Orff Education to China.

Initial attempts: In the early days, the application of the Orff method in China was mainly concentrated in a small number of music education institutions and universities, and it was promoted and experimented through lectures and training courses.

Gradually, Chinese music educators began to try to combine the Orff method with the practice of Chinese music education, and explore its feasibility and effectiveness in Chinese music education.

Development period (80s of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century)

Widely disseminated: Over time, the spread of the Orff method in China has gradually expanded, and more and more music education institutions and schools have begun to introduce and practice this method.

Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and other cities continue to invite Orff to China to carry out teacher training, and various normal colleges and universities also actively offer Orff teaching courses, which greatly promotes the application and research of this method in China.

Localization Exploration: During this period, Chinese Orff educators began to explore the localization path of the Orff method, trying to integrate Chinese musical elements and cultural characteristics into the Orff method.

For example, Chinese Orff educators such as Li Dana have used Chinese elements to create Orff classics, such as "The Little Mouse on the Lampstand" and "The Duck Mixes Their Mouths", so that the Orff method is closer to the actual life and cultural background of Chinese students. The Orff method has been gradually adopted by many kindergartens and primary schools, especially in early childhood music education, and has gradually penetrated into music education in primary and secondary schools and even higher education (Wang, 2013).

In-depth period (early 21st century to present)

Deep Integration and Innovation: After entering the 21st century, the application of Orff's teaching method in China has entered a stage of deep integration and innovation. More and more music educators have begun to combine the Orff method with other music education systems to form a music education model with Chinese characteristics.

At the same time, with the advancement of science and technology and the diversification of teaching methods, the Orff method is constantly innovating and developing. For example, modern technology such as digital music tools and online teaching platforms has been introduced into Orff's teaching, providing a more convenient and efficient learning experience for children.

Specific application status : Preschool Music Education: In preschool music education, the Orff method allows children to feel the charm of music in a relaxed and happy atmosphere through various forms such as games, singing, dancing, and percussion instruments, and cultivates their musical perception, expression and creativity. Many kindergartens have introduced Orff music materials and teaching aids to provide a rich and colorful musical experience for young children.

Music education in primary and secondary schools: In primary and secondary music education, the Orff method is also widely used in various forms of teaching such as singing, instrumental performance, and ensemble. Through practice, teachers and students are able to better understand and grasp the elemental, improvisational, and comprehensive characteristics of music.

Higher Education: In higher education, some music majors have begun to incorporate the Orff Music Pedagogy into their curricula and apply it to their professional teaching and practice. For example, some music education programs in colleges and universities have begun to introduce the concepts and methods of the Orff method of music pedagogy and apply them to train future music teachers (Qin & Wu, 2024).

There are problems and challenges: Insufficient teacher training: Some teachers' understanding and practical ability of Orff's music pedagogy need to be improved, and professional training and communication need to be strengthened. Lack of teaching resources: In some regions and schools, the implementation of the Orff music pedagogy is limited by teaching resources and facilities.

Cognitive bias: Some teachers and parents have cognitive biases about the concept and method of Orff pedagogy, which makes it difficult to change the traditional concept of education and affects its implementation effect.

To sum up, the development of Orff's teaching method in China has gone through three stages: the initial stage of introduction, the development period and the in-depth period, and has been widely popularized and applied in China, and has achieved remarkable results. However, there are still some issues and challenges that need to be addressed. In the future, we should continue to strengthen local research, promote interdisciplinary integration, and strengthen international exchanges and cooperation, so as to further promote the development and application of the Orff method in China (Yang, 2024).

Related Research About Orff Teaching Method in China

Zou Ying (2021) studied the application of "three major music teaching methods" in kindergarten music teaching. The aim of the researcher was to explore the application and effect of the "Three Music Teaching Methods" in kindergarten music teaching. Through an in-depth study of the practical application of Orff's music pedagogy, Dalcroze's posture rhythm pedagogy and Kodály's music pedagogy in kindergarten music education, 1) the specific implementation strategies and methods of the "three major music pedagogy" in kindergarten music teaching were analyzed; 2) to evaluate the effectiveness of the "Three Music Teaching Methods" in kindergarten music teaching. Pointed out that the Orff music teaching method, together with the Dalcroze posture rhythm teaching method and the Kodály music teaching method, is known as the "three major music teaching methods", which has significant advantages in kindergarten music education. These teaching methods emphasize the inner world of children, pay attention to children's experience and expression of music, and stimulate children's interest and potential in music through diversified teaching activities, such as language expression, body movements, singing and musical instrument performance. In kindergarten, children are curious, imitative, and active, which makes Orff's music pedagogy particularly suitable for preschool children's musical initiation. Through the "play-by-learn" approach, children are able to learn music in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, which promotes all-round physical and mental development. In summary, the Orff method is not only of great significance for children's musical initiation, but also plays a key role in promoting children's all-round development. Although there are some challenges to the development of the Orff method in China, with the renewal of educational concepts and the development of technology, the future of the Orff method in China is promising. Continuous research and practice will further optimize this teaching method to better serve children's music education and holistic development.

Tao Pei (2021) studied on the psychological intervention of Orff teaching method for rural left-behind children. Study focused on the application of Orff's music pedagogy in psychological intervention for left-behind children in rural areas. Due to the particularity of their family environment, left-behind children in rural areas often face psychological problems such as uncoordinated

interpersonal communication and lack of self-confidence. With its rich and interesting teaching content, Orff's music teaching method provides a platform for left-behind children to express themselves and release their emotions. Through music teaching activities, left-behind children can gradually break through psychological barriers, enhance self-confidence, and establish good interpersonal relationships. The results of the study show that the Orff music teaching method has a positive impact on the mental health of rural left-behind children, and helps to promote their all-round physical and mental development.

Chen Xiaoxia (2020) did a case study of the application of the Orff Music Pedagogy to the rehabilitation of preschool hearing-impaired children. This research focuses on a case study of Orff's music pedagogy in the rehabilitation of preschool hearing-impaired children. She pointed out that in view of the particularity of hearing-impaired children traditional music teaching methods are often difficult to achieve the desired rehabilitation effect. The Orff music teaching method provides a new idea for the musical rehabilitation of hearing-impaired children with its rich and interesting relaxed and free environment that does not require musical skills. Through the music rehabilitation teaching program of "individual-group-collective" training, the researchers found that the Orff music teaching method not only improved the musical ability and auditory language ability of hearing-impaired children, but also made significant progress in auditory recognition (such as natural environmental sounds, numbers, short sentences), language comprehension and expression ability. In addition, the study also highlights the important influence of teachers' mastery of pedagogical concepts, the choice of teaching content, the degree of parental involvement, and the use of games in the teaching process on the rehabilitation effect. These findings provide valuable practical experience and theoretical guidance for the teaching of music rehabilitation for preschool hearing-impaired children.

Han Yu (2017) research on the application of Orff music teaching method in the teaching of elementary Chinese to children in Thailand. Introduced the Orff music teaching method into the teaching of primary Chinese for children in Thailand to explore its application potential in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. She pointed out that with the rise of the "Chinese fever", the study of teaching Chinese as a foreign language has become increasingly important. However, the existing application of music in teaching Chinese as a

foreign language is mostly limited to the song itself, and the form is relatively simple. The Orff music teaching method provides a new perspective for teaching Chinese as a foreign language with its various musical elements and the teaching principle of "combining music, language and movement with rhythm". Through an empirical study of children aged 3 to 8 years old in public health schools in Thailand, Han Yu found that integrating the rhythm, rhythm, and rhythm of Orff's music teaching method into Chinese teaching can significantly improve children's learning interest and learning effect. At the same time, she also emphasized the importance of original teaching, that is, the personality characteristics and cultural background of learners should be fully considered in the teaching process, so that the teaching is more in line with the originality and localization of nature and humanities. These findings provide new ideas and methods for teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

Zhao Shuang (2014) studied of Orff's Music Pedagogy on the Development of Preschool Children's Thinking. research provides an in-depth analysis of the potential and value of Orff's music pedagogy in the development of preschool children's thinking. She pointed out that the development of early childhood thinking is crucial to the whole thinking formation process, which has the characteristics of instability, relative concreteness, plasticity and development potential. Music education, especially the Orff music pedagogy, provides strong support for children's thinking development with its unique teaching concepts and methods, such as active participation, rhythm training with the help of musical instruments, rhythm training with the help of movement and language, and emphasis on improvisation.

Through lesson design and practical teaching, Zhao Shuang found that the Orff music pedagogy can effectively promote the all-round development of preschool children's motor thinking, visual thinking, abstract thinking and creative thinking. This pedagogy not only makes children's thinking more agile, but also lays a solid foundation for their subsequent learning and growth. This study provides a new perspective and theoretical basis for the application of Orff's music pedagogy in the field of children's thinking development.

Through the practical research of Orff's music pedagogy, Wang Lei found that this teaching method can effectively overcome many problems in the music education of rural preschool children. Orff's music teaching method

emphasizes the comprehensiveness of art education, and stimulates children's interest in learning and improves their musical literacy and comprehensive ability through diversified teaching methods and rich teaching content. At the same time, the pedagogy also focuses on children's active participation and improvisation, which helps to cultivate children's creativity and imagination.

The application of Orff's music pedagogy in the music education of rural preschool children not only helps to improve the quality and effectiveness of music education, but also promotes the coordinated development of children's cognition, emotion, personality and sociality. This study provides new ideas and methods for the music education of rural preschool children, and is of great significance for promoting the balanced development of urban and rural preschool education.

New Knowledges



Figure 1: The Orff Schulwerk in China: Bridging Modern Pedagogy with Cultural Heritage.

Conclusions

The Orff teaching method was introduced to China in the early 1980s by music educator Liao Naixiong and has since evolved through stages of initial application, development, and deep integration. Initially confined to a few institutions, the method gained widespread adoption in schools, kindergartens, and higher education, becoming a key component of music education. Efforts have been made to localize it by integrating Chinese musical and cultural elements, and it is now used to enhance creativity, expression, and holistic development in children. Recent studies highlight its effectiveness in diverse contexts, such as psychological intervention for rural left-behind children, rehabilitation for hearing-impaired children, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and improving preschool thinking skills. Despite its successes, challenges such as teacher training gaps, resource limitations, and cognitive biases remain. Continuous innovation and research aim to optimize its application, making it an increasingly vital tool in China's educational landscape.

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