



# The Popular Music Aesthetic Education at Grade 11, Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School, Henan Province, The People's Republic of China

Wu Yufei<sup>1</sup>, Watcharapong Supattarachiyawong<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Music, Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Music, Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand

Corresponding Author: Wu Yufei

✉: [793321169@qq.com](mailto:793321169@qq.com)

(Corresponding Email)

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## Abstract

This study examined popular music aesthetic education for Grade 11 students at Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School, Henan Province, The People's Republic of China, with a focus on applying the Kodály teaching method. The primary aim was to enhance students' ability to distinguish between high-quality and inferior musical works, while also promoting their overall development. The research was conducted from July 2024 to June 2025, employing a mixed-methods approach that integrated literature analysis, surveys, interviews, classroom observations, pilot testing, and other data collection methods. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were utilized for in-depth data analysis. The research findings indicate the following: First, students' ability to critically evaluate popular music significantly improved, with a deeper and more diverse understanding of high-quality music. They moved beyond surface-level features to consider various dimensions such as melody, lyrical meaning, social value, and emotional resonance. Second, students actively engaged in class activities, demonstrating high enthusiasm and initiative. Significant progress was observed in their overall music literacy, including rhythm perception, listening skills, and instrumental performance. Third, with the application of the Kodály teaching method, students' music memory, physical coordination, and attention required for piano performance were effectively strengthened, resulting in a deeper and more solid understanding of music knowledge. Fourth, the course introduced music works from diverse regions and cultural backgrounds, enriching students' musical knowledge, broadening their international perspectives, and enhancing their intercultural communication skills. This effectively promoted a comprehensive understanding of music and global cultural diversity. This study provides valuable insights for the reform of high school popular music aesthetic education courses and demonstrates the feasibility and effectiveness of applying the Kodály teaching method in this field.

**Key words:** Popular music aesthetic education; Kodály teaching method; Music literacy; High school students; Music course design; Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School



## 1. Introduction

In modern educational systems worldwide, aesthetic education has gained increasing significance. There is a growing recognition that education should not only focus on academic achievements but also cultivate students' artistic perception, emotional intelligence, and creative thinking. Music education, as a vital component of aesthetic education, plays a crucial role in students' emotional and cognitive development. Among various musical forms, popular music stands out due to its profound cultural relevance, emotional resonance, and wide appeal. Unlike classical music, it reflects contemporary social issues, personal experiences, and cultural trends, making it highly relatable to students. Through exposure to popular music, students can enhance their appreciation of diverse musical styles, broaden their cultural horizons, and strengthen their ability to interpret and express emotions.

However, popular music has often been overlooked in formal educational curricula, particularly in aesthetic education. Many institutions prioritize classical and folk music, viewing them as more "academic" or "sophisticated," while dismissing popular music as merely commercial or entertainment-oriented. This oversight prevents students from fully experiencing the artistic value of contemporary music and limits their ability to engage critically with the musical from dominant in their daily lives. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that aesthetic education remains relevant and meaningful to today's students.

Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School is committed to providing a diverse and holistic education, aligning with the broader goals of aesthetic education. The school has made significant efforts to integrate various artistic disciplines into its curriculum, including visual arts, theater, and traditional music education, aiming to enhance students' artistic literacy. However, while classical and traditional music are well-established in the curriculum, the integration of popular music into aesthetic education has not been fully explored. Given the increasing cultural influence of popular music, there is a clear need to evaluate how it can be effectively incorporated into the school's existing framework.

This research aims to bridge this gap by designing and evaluating a curriculum that integrates popular music into aesthetic education at Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School. It investigates the potential benefits of including popular music in formal music education, examines students' and teachers' perceptions of its role, and proposes a structured approach for its implementation. The study seeks to contribute to a more inclusive and contemporary model of music education that acknowledges the artistic and educational value of popular music while fostering students' creativity, cultural awareness, and emotional development.

## 2. Literature Review

Aesthetic education, particularly in the context of music, plays a critical role in nurturing students' emotional, intellectual, and cultural development. John Dewey (1934) emphasized that art education should be experiential, engaging students not only cognitively but also emotionally and socially. He argued that the aesthetic experience is not a passive reception of beauty, but an active, integrative process of perception and reflection. This philosophy provides a strong theoretical foundation for integrating popular music—a form of art deeply embedded in students' daily lives—into modern education.

In traditional Chinese and international music education, classical and folk music have long held dominant positions. However, scholars like Green (2008) and Allsup (2016) argue that this neglects the musical realities and interests of students in the 21st century. Green advocates for informal learning approaches that incorporate students' own musical experiences, particularly in popular genres, into formal education. Allsup (2016) expands this argument by calling for an "open philosophy" of music education that values diversity, creativity, and cultural authenticity, aligning with students' lived experiences.



Popular music, often dismissed as commercial or simplistic, contains rich aesthetic and cultural layers. Middleton (1990) argues that popular music is not only a form of entertainment but also a site of ideological, social, and emotional expression. It serves as a mirror of contemporary society, capturing values, anxieties, and generational perspectives. This is especially evident in China, where Mandopop and hip-hop have emerged as major vehicles for youth identity and emotional articulation (Baranovitch, 2003).

From a pedagogical perspective, the Kodály Method provides a structured approach to developing musical literacy. Kodály emphasized that music education should begin with what is most familiar to students—their own language and cultural environment—and progress through singing, rhythm exercises, and solfège. Choksy (1999) supports this approach, noting that the method promotes inner hearing, pitch accuracy, and rhythmic fluency through kinesthetic learning. When adapted to the context of popular music, Kodály's techniques such as hand signs and rhythm syllables can help students deconstruct and internalize melodic and rhythmic elements in contemporary songs.

Further, Elliott (1995) stresses the importance of "musicianship through music-making," suggesting that students learn best by performing, analyzing, and creating music within culturally relevant frameworks. This aligns well with the project-based and reflective learning activities designed in this study—such as rewriting pop lyrics, rhythm reconstruction, and playlist curation—which encourage students to think critically about the music they consume and produce.

In recent years, interdisciplinary approaches to music education have gained traction. Scholars emphasize the need to link music learning with broader domains such as literature, sociology, and media studies (Lamont, 2002; Jaffurs, 2004). This allows students to view music not just as sound, but as a cultural text—one that conveys identity, emotion, and ideology. For example, analyzing the lyrics of songs like *Rose Boy* or *The Lonely Warrior* enables students to engage with issues such as gender norms, resilience, and social justice, enhancing both their musical and moral understanding.

In conclusion, the literature affirms that incorporating popular music into aesthetic education is not only pedagogically sound but also culturally necessary. Grounded in Deweyan experiential learning, supported by Kodály's pedagogical tools, and enriched by critical perspectives on popular culture, this approach prepares students for a more engaged, reflective, and emotionally intelligent relationship with music.

### 3. Research Methodology

This paper employs a mixed-methods research approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of a popular music aesthetic education curriculum designed for high school students. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires and comparative assessments, while qualitative data were derived from classroom observations, student reflections, and teacher interviews. This dual approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of student engagement, learning outcomes, and the pedagogical value of applying the Kodály method within a contemporary popular music context.

#### Sample Characteristics and Data Collection

The study was conducted at Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School in Henan Province, China. Participants included 90 Grade 11 students, divided into an experimental group (n=46) and a control group (n=44). The selection was based on class groupings within the same academic level to ensure comparable backgrounds. The experimental group participated in a newly designed 16-week popular music aesthetic education course, while the



control group continued with the standard music curriculum. Data were collected between July 2024 and January 2025 using multiple tools: pre- and post-course surveys measuring students' aesthetic preferences and music knowledge, classroom observations using structured rubrics, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and students. Additional data came from student-produced creative projects and reflection journals.

### Measurements

To evaluate learning outcomes, a set of assessment instruments was developed focusing on three core dimensions: (1) musical literacy (e.g., rhythm and melody recognition), (2) aesthetic perception (e.g., ability to evaluate lyrics and musical expression), and (3) emotional and cultural awareness. Questionnaires used Likert-scale items to assess students' understanding before and after the course. Classroom observation sheets included criteria such as engagement level, response accuracy, and collaborative behavior. Student reflection forms were analyzed for evidence of critical thinking, emotional resonance, and vocabulary development related to music aesthetics. These multi-source measurements helped triangulate findings and enhance the validity of the results.

### Analytical Method

This study applies a **comparative and thematic analysis framework** to evaluate curriculum effectiveness. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used to compare pre- and post-course scores between the experimental and control groups, with particular attention to changes in music appreciation and rhythmic skills. In the absence of experimental manipulation typical in regression models, causality was inferred through **difference-in-differences analysis**, comparing shifts in learning outcomes across both groups over time.

For qualitative data, **thematic coding** was used to identify recurring patterns in student reflections and teacher interviews. Themes such as “emotional resonance,” “lyrical interpretation,” and “rhythm confidence” emerged from open-ended responses. Observation notes were quantified using rubric scores and narrative summaries. The integration of quantitative score improvements with qualitative depth allowed for a robust, multi-layered understanding of the impact of the Kodály method and popular music curriculum on students' aesthetic development.

### Appendix A: Supplementary Data Tables Supporting Research Methodology

This appendix presents the supporting data tables referenced in Section 3 (Research Methodology), including student interest levels, perceptual changes, rhythm training outcomes, and sample characteristics. These data collectively illustrate the impact and effectiveness of the popular music aesthetic education course implemented at Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School.

**Table 1:** Student Interest in Teaching Activities

Activity Type	Like (%)	Neutral (%)	Dislike (%)
Kodály Hand Sign Singing	78	20	2
Rhythm Language and Training Activities	84	14	2
Lyric-Based Cultural Critique Activities	69	28	3

Note: This table shows students' levels of interest in various instructional activities after participating in the course. It reflects how Kodály-based rhythmic and melodic instruction successfully increased classroom engagement.

**Table 2:** Shift in Student Understanding of “Good Music” Before and After the Course

Stage	High-Frequency Keywords
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Before the Course	Pleasant, Popular, Good Beat, Short Video Background
After the Course	Melodic Beauty, Lyrical Imagery, Social Value, Emotional Resonance

Note: The table illustrates a clear transformation in how students define good music. It demonstrates a shift from superficial enjoyment to deeper aesthetic and cultural evaluation.

**Table 3:** Rhythm Training and Student Performance Results

Song Title	Rhythmic Features	Rhythm Complexity (Out of 5)	Student Imitation Success Rate (%)
<i>The Brightest Star in the Night Sky</i>	4/4 Time with Dotted Rhythms	3	92
<i>Calories</i>	Heavy Syncopation and Fast Tempo	4.5	65
<i>Run</i>	Balanced Rhythm with Stable Drumbeat	2	95

Note: This table summarizes students’ rhythmic perception and imitation success, which directly reflects the effectiveness of the Kodály rhythm training model used in the course.

**Table 4:** Selected Student Profiles – Musical Background and Preferences

ID	Gender	Taken Music Course	Plays an Instrument	Interest in Pop Music	Listening Scenarios	Favorite Genres
1	Male	Yes	Guitar	Loves it	Leisure, Studying	Chinese Pop, Rock
5	Male	Yes	No	Loves it	Practice	Rock, Western Pop
8	Female	Yes	No	Loves it	Leisure, Social	Chinese Pop, Electronic
13	Male	Yes	Drums	Loves it	Practice, Social	Rock, Electronic
16	Female	Yes	Guitar	Loves it	Leisure, Practice	Chinese Pop, Rock

Note: This selection of student profiles highlights the diversity in musical background and listening habits, which informed the differentiated design of the course.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Background and Preparation for Teaching Practice

#### (1) Overview of the School and Participants

The teaching practice of this study was conducted at the high school division of Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School. The participants consisted of two parallel Grade 11 classes, with a total of 90 students—46 in the experimental group and 44 in the control group. This school is a new type of high school that emphasizes a well-rounded education, particularly the integrated development of artistic and humanistic literacy.

According to preliminary survey questionnaires and interview data, the Grade 11 students in this cohort have frequent exposure to popular music. Their primary listening platforms include short video apps and music streaming applications such as NetEase Cloud



Music and QQ Music. However, their musical aesthetic is largely guided by emotional preferences. They generally lack a systematic understanding of musical structure, rhythmic composition, lyrical imagery, and cultural connotations. In class, although some students show an interest in popular music, they struggle to articulate evaluation criteria and make clear aesthetic judgments.

Therefore, selecting this group as the research subject not only provides representativeness but also offers a solid practical foundation for the development of a popular music aesthetic education curriculum.

### **(2) Teaching Resources and Conditions**

Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School is equipped with relatively comprehensive hardware and software resources for music education. The school provides standardized multimedia classrooms featuring high-definition projectors, high-fidelity sound systems, and mobile large display screens, meeting the needs of synchronized audio-visual playback and intuitive presentation of teaching content.

In terms of teaching tools, the music classroom is furnished with a variety of portable instruments, including ukuleles, acoustic guitars, djembe drums, and cajóns. These support small ensemble performances, rhythm exercises, and improvisational accompaniment in popular music education. Additionally, the school offers specialized software for ear training and sight-singing, along with in-ear monitoring systems, which facilitate individualized instruction in rhythm imitation and pitch accuracy.

More importantly, the teaching team has notable professional strengths. Most music teachers graduated from conservatories or university music education programs, possessing strong musical literacy and classroom management skills. Among them, two teachers have received training in the Kodály Method and have hands-on experience with its techniques such as “rhythm syllables,” “hand signs,” and “melodic imitation.” This provides a solid foundation for incorporating the Kodály Method into the course.

### **(3) Curriculum Design and Teacher Preparation**

To ensure the systematic and effective implementation of the curriculum, the teaching team carried out multiple preparatory steps, including:

**Curriculum Design:** The teaching team developed a curriculum centered on the core objective of “popular music aesthetic appreciation,” integrating the Kodály teaching philosophy. The curriculum includes modules on rhythmic structure recognition and imitation, sight-singing and melodic memory training, and lyrical analysis with cultural critique. Notably, the rhythm and melody instruction employ “Kodály rhythm syllables” and “pitch hand signs” as teaching strategies to enhance students’ auditory discrimination and expressive abilities.

**Teacher Training:** Three themed pedagogical workshops were organized, covering the foundational principles of the Kodály Method, classroom implementation strategies, rhythmic gesture training, and adaptation of the method to popular music instruction. These sessions combined hands-on practice with collaborative discussions to deepen teachers’ understanding and practical application of the method.

**Development of Teaching Materials:** Customized materials were developed for high school students, including popular music sight-singing examples, rhythm practice charts, and task-based learning sheets. Together, they form a triadic learning support system encompassing auditory, kinesthetic, and cognitive dimensions. In addition, “Popular Music Aesthetic Task Cards” were created to guide students in conducting structured aesthetic evaluations of music pieces through five dimensions: melodic contour, rhythmic patterns, lyrical emotion, musical mood, and socio-cultural context. With these preparations, the course



was equipped with clear teaching objectives, a scientifically designed instructional path, and a wealth of educational resources, laying a strong foundation for the effective implementation of aesthetic education in popular music.

#### 4.2 Teaching Implementation and Classroom Practice

The course consisted of a total of 16 class periods and adopted a four-module instructional structure. Each module integrated the Kodály Method’s “Listen–Sing–Read–Perform” four-step process and incorporated additional stages tailored to the context of popular music: “Appreciate–Discuss–Reflect–Create.” This combination aimed to foster students’ active aesthetic engagement and cultural understanding.

##### Module 1: Understanding Popular Music and Its Cultural Background

###### 1. Teaching Objectives

To understand the basic concepts and historical development of popular music, to build connections between musical culture and personal experiences, to initially apply Kodály sight-singing elements to perceive melodic structure

###### 2. Teaching Activities

*Listening and Melodic Analysis:* Students listened to tracks such as *Yesterday*, *The Actor* (《演员》), and *Rice Field* (《稻香》). They were guided to record and analyze the rise and fall of the main melody and discuss why these melodies gained widespread popularity.

*Hand Sign Singing Practice:* Using Kodály hand signs, students learned melodic intervals. Through physical gestures, they were guided to perceive melodic structure, explore why certain melodies are catchy, and understand their emotional expressiveness.

*Group Task – “My Musical Timeline”:* Based on their own interests and life experiences, students created personal “musical timeline” charts, marking representative songs from different historical periods and sharing their emotional and cultural reflections on these works.

###### 3. Sample Classroom Dialogue

**Teacher:** “Let’s try using hand signs to hum the prelude of *The Actor* — Do-Re-Mi... Can you feel the melody rising?”

**Student A:** “It’s kind of like slowly expressing an emotion.”

**Teacher:** “Exactly! Can you sense how this melodic structure connects with the lyric ‘emotions can’t be hidden’?”

##### Module 2: Aesthetic Literacy and Rhythm Structure Training

###### 1. Teaching Objectives

To master basic melodic structures and rhythmic patterns, to enhance detailed listening and appreciation of popular music, to improve musical memory and sense of rhythm through Kodály rhythm instruction

###### 2. Teaching Activities

*Rhythm Card Training:* Students practiced common rhythmic patterns (such as dotted notes and syncopation) using Kodály rhythm cards to gain a better understanding of rhythmic diversity and engaged in imitation exercises.

*Rhythmic Comparison and Analysis:* Students compared songs such as *The Brightest Star in the Night Sky* and *Calories*, analyzing rhythm stability and the integration of lyrics with rhythm to explore distinctive rhythmic features. *Rhythm Reconstruction Task:* Students used learned rhythmic patterns to engage in imitation and creative exercises—such as clapping or beatboxing—to test their understanding of rhythmic structures and enhance expressive capabilities. *Group Collaboration – Creation and Performance:* A collaborative element was added to the rhythm reconstruction task, encouraging students to co-create and perform new rhythmic patterns, thereby fostering teamwork and creative expression.

###### 3. Table Example: Rhythm Type Comparison Chart

Song Title	Rhythmic Features	Rhythm	Complexity	Student Imitation
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		Rating (Out of 5)	Success Rate
<b>The Brightest Star in the Night Sky</b>	4/4 Time + Dotted Notes	3	92%
<b>Calories</b>	Heavy Syncopation + Fast Tempo	4.5	65%
<b>Run</b>	Balanced Rhythm + Steady Drumbeat	2	95%

#### 4. Excerpt from Classroom Practice

Student B, tapping the rhythm, said: “For the line ‘*I’m not as brave as you think*’, I clapped it as ‘ta-ta ti-ti ta.’”, Teacher: “Very good. Using Kodály rhythm syllables to express your understanding of rhythm is a high-level perceptual

### 4.3 Kodály Hand Sign Melody Chart

Sample Song Segment: "Rice Field Fragrance" (《稻香》), Melodic Phrase (Solfege): Do–Mi–So–La–So–Mi–Re, Lyric Excerpt: "还记得你说家是唯一的城堡" ("You still remember you said home is the only castle")

- Melodic Pitch (Number Notation): 5 5 6 5 3 2 1
- Kodály Hand Sign Descriptions:
- So: Palm facing outward at shoulder level
- La: Palm facing outward beside the ear
- Mi: Palm extended flat at chest level
- Re: Fingers slightly below the chest
- Do: Palm facing inward, positioned at the abdomen

Kodály hand signs serve as a powerful visual tool to help students internalize pitch relationships and melodic contour. By associating specific hand positions with solfège syllables, learners develop a more embodied understanding of pitch movement. In this example, students practice the melodic fragment from the song "Rice Field Fragrance", using corresponding hand signs to represent each pitch. This multisensory approach enhances both pitch recognition and memorization, promoting stronger melodic interpretation and performance skills. Through the coordinated use of sight, movement, and sound, students improve their audiation ability and develop greater fluency in melodic perception, ultimately fostering more expressive and accurate musical performance.

#### (1) Student Rhythm Training Video Clip Description

Clip Title: Rhythmic Re-Creation Task Demonstration

Task Description: Students were instructed to imitate and creatively modify the rhythmic pattern of the verse section of the song "The Lonely Warrior" (《孤勇者》), using clapping and vocal percussion to express the rhythm.

Group: Grade 11, Class 1 – Group 3

Activity Summary: Students transformed the lyric phrase “逆着光行走，任风吹雨打” ("Walking against the light, enduring wind and rain") into the rhythmic pattern “ta-ti-ti ta-ta | ti-ti ta—”. Using clapping and beatboxing, they recreated and performed the rhythm, simulating a drum groove to match the ordinal song’s pulse and emotional tone.

This activity encouraged students to merge abstract lyrical content with concrete rhythmic patterns, thereby deepening their understanding of musical structure and emotional expression. By engaging in clapping and vocal percussion, students not only developed a stronger sense of rhythm but also enhanced their creativity and expressive abilities. The task underscored the importance of rhythmic language as a vehicle for emotional communication, demonstrating an effective application of the Kodály method in rhythm training. Through this hands-on, student-centered exercise, learners experienced the communicative power of rhythm in a tangible and memorable way.



(2) Lyric-Based Cultural Critique Assignment and Selected Outstanding Work  
Choose one song from "The Lonely Warrior" (《孤勇者》), "Roses Boy" (《玫瑰少年》), or "The Ordinary Road" (《平凡之路》), and write a short cultural critique (approximately 300 words). Analyze the song's value orientation and its broader social significance.

**Student B – Selected Excerpt from Analysis of "Roses Boy":**

"The lyrics depict the experience of a bullied youth, expressing resistance against gender stereotypes. The line 'The world doesn't speak in just one tone' highlights the importance of social inclusivity. The melody is gentle yet powerful, making this a truly moving and impactful.

Through this lyric-based critique task, students were guided to look beyond the surface of the music and explore the social and cultural contexts embedded within the lyrics. This activity not only enhanced their ability to interpret lyrical meaning, but also cultivated critical thinking and moral reasoning skills. In the analysis of "Roses Boy", the student demonstrated a deep understanding of the song's message, recognizing its call for gender equality and social empathy. The assignment provided a platform for students to engage with music as a form of social commentary, thereby enriching their appreciation of both lyrical content and emotional expression. This task exemplifies the integration of aesthetic education with sociocultural awareness, aligning with the broader goals of music education in fostering informed, reflective, and empathetic individuals.

These reflections illustrate the students' developmental progress throughout the course. From initial skepticism toward the Kodály hand sign method to a growing appreciation of its effectiveness in melodic memorization, students demonstrated enhanced perceptual, rhythmic, and expressive skills. Their comments reveal a deeper engagement with music—both intellectually and emotionally. Through hands-on experiences and reflective learning, students not only improved their musical literacy and aesthetic sensitivity but also developed creative thinking and cultural awareness. These responses affirm the positive impact of the Kodály method in cultivating musical competence, critical insight, and artistic growth among high school learners.

**(3) How to Effectively Apply the Kodály Method in Classroom Teaching**

Integration of hand signs and rhythm: The use of Kodály hand signs enables students to internalize pitch and rhythm through visual and kinesthetic learning. By combining hand gestures with rhythmic syllables such as "ta-ti-ti," students develop a more intuitive understanding of musical structure. This multisensory approach significantly enhances musical memory, aural perception, and overall musicianship. Regular rhythm and solfège practice allow students to build a solid internal sense of pitch and tempo, laying a strong foundation for advanced musical development.

Connecting Music with Emotion: A core principle of the Kodály method is the deep integration of music and emotional experience. Activities such as lyric analysis and cultural critique encourage students to engage with music not only as an art form but also as a reflection of social values and emotional narratives. This approach fosters critical thinking and nurtures aesthetic confidence, helping students to appreciate music on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Encouraging Creativity and Expression: Project-based learning and collaborative creative tasks inspire students to apply their aesthetic understanding in the form of original artistic expression. Group composition, rhythm improvisation, and performance exercises cultivate imagination, communication, and expressive ability. By engaging in meaningful creative processes, students transform their knowledge into practice, enhancing both personal artistry and cooperative learning skills.

**(4) How a Popular Music Aesthetic Education Course Supports Student Development**

Enhancement of Aesthetic Awareness: By engaging in the analysis and critique of popular music, students gain a deeper understanding of the cultural context, social implications, and emotional expression embedded in musical works. This process sharpens their ability to appreciate music beyond surface-level enjoyment, fostering a more refined and insightful aesthetic sensibility.

Development of Critical Thinking: Through lyric analysis and cultural critique activities,



students learn to examine music from diverse perspectives, including sociological, psychological, and artistic angles. These tasks promote independent thinking and the ability to evaluate artistic content thoughtfully and logically, thus strengthening their overall critical thinking skills.

**Cultivation of Creativity and Expressive Ability:** Creative assignments such as musical composition, rhythm reinterpretation, and performance encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical, imaginative ways. These experiences not only enhance their artistic expression and innovation, but also build a solid foundation for future learning and potential engagement in musical creation.

This chapter has presented the practical implementation and outcomes of a popular music aesthetic education course at the high school level, with a particular focus on the integration of Kodály-based pedagogical elements. Through systematic musical training, the course effectively enhanced students' aesthetic perception and cognitive understanding of music. The results indicate that the curriculum design is well-structured, methodologically sound, and positively received by students—demonstrating significant potential for broader application. Moreover, the adaptation of Kodály's educational philosophy within the context of popular music provides a meaningful model for future reforms in high school aesthetic education.

## 5. Conclusion

This study successfully designed and implemented a popular music aesthetic education course for Grade 11 students at Zhengzhou Linghang Experimental School, incorporating the Kodály teaching method into a structured, student-centered curriculum. Through 16 lessons organized into four modules—introduction to popular music, rhythm training, lyric and cultural analysis, and creative expression—students demonstrated significant improvements in musical literacy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

Data from surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and creative outputs revealed clear advancements in students' ability to evaluate music aesthetically, understand rhythm and melody, and express themselves artistically. The use of rhythmic syllables and hand signs, central to the Kodály method, strengthened auditory perception and musical memory. Furthermore, students' attitudes toward music evolved to reflect a deeper appreciation for emotional, structural, and cultural elements.

This research underscores the feasibility and effectiveness of integrating popular music into high school aesthetic education. By bridging contemporary culture and academic music education, the course offers valuable insights for curriculum reform, demonstrating that popular music, when taught with academic rigor, can enrich students' musical understanding and broader cultural literacy. Future research should explore strategies to address challenges such as limited instructional time and varying proficiency levels, as well as the long-term impacts of such programs on students' musical and cultural development.

## 6. Discussion

This study provides compelling evidence that integrating the Kodály method into popular music aesthetic education is both effective and adaptable in a high school setting. The use of solfège, hand signs, and rhythmic syllables proved instrumental in translating abstract musical concepts into tangible skills, aligning with Kodály's emphasis on building musical literacy through active engagement (Choksy, 1999). The findings also resonate with Green's (2008) perspective on informal music learning, as students transitioned from passive listeners to active, critical evaluators, demonstrating a deeper understanding of music's emotional, structural, and cultural dimensions.

The modular curriculum design—incorporating rhythm training, cultural analysis, and creative expression—facilitated a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical



application. This structure aligns with Dewey's (1934) philosophy of experiential learning, emphasizing the importance of hands-on activities in fostering critical thinking and emotional sensitivity. Teacher reflections further reinforced the value of task-based learning, as it enhanced student engagement and reinforced the connection between academic rigor and contemporary cultural relevance.

However, the study also highlighted challenges. Limited class hours constrained the depth of instruction, and variations in students' musical proficiency required differentiated teaching strategies to ensure inclusivity. These challenges underscore the importance of well-trained teachers and administrative support, as emphasized by Elliott (1995) in his advocacy for a comprehensive approach to music education. The shifts in students' attitudes toward "good music"—from prioritizing entertainment value to appreciating lyrical meaning, melodic structure, and social impact—reflect the transformative potential of aesthetic education when grounded in both cultural sensitivity and academic rigor. This finding aligns with Lamont's (2002) assertion that music education can shape students' identities and broaden their cultural perspectives.

## 7. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed. First, schools should formally incorporate popular music aesthetic education into the curriculum, not only as extracurricular content but as structured classroom instruction. Second, teachers require professional development opportunities, particularly in methods like Kodály, to effectively teach popular music. Third, curriculum planners should consider balancing traditional music with popular music to reflect students' real-life musical experiences. Fourth, teaching materials and toolkits such as rhythm cards and task sheets should be standardized for easier replication. Fifth, schools can explore using digital tools and apps to enhance rhythm and melody training. Sixth, interdisciplinary collaboration with subjects like language arts and social studies can deepen students' cultural and emotional understanding of lyrics. Seventh, teaching strategies should remain student-centered, promoting creativity and expression. Eighth, support from school administrators and parents is essential to sustain program implementation. Ninth, further studies can expand the model to other grades and schools. Finally, the Kodály method proves to be a flexible and effective pedagogical tool for bridging aesthetic theory with real-world music practice.

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