

The Students' Satisfaction in higher education music course in China

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Abstracts

Understanding student satisfaction with the course will help the researcher to have a clearer understanding of how the course is being delivered, whether it is meeting the developmental needs of the students, and what improvements can be made in the future. Music courses have a crucial impact on students' development and investigating students' course satisfaction is not only to understand students' interest in learning and their level but also to respond to the market's needs. Although there has been much research on student satisfaction, the one on music courses is a relatively new field. In this section, this article will explore the aspects of student satisfaction with the music program.

Keywords: The Students' Satisfaction; Higher Education Music Course; China

Introduction

With the renewal of the curriculum concept and the concept of quality education gradually taking root, music education is an important subject in contemporary school art education. Music education refers to changing the aesthetics of the educated, improving the thinking and innovation ability of the educated through teaching music theory and skills, and cultivating them into the successors of comprehensive socialist development (Gong, 2002 : 184). Music education is an important part of aesthetic education that not only leads to the positive development of personality but also promotes the healthy growth of the human mind and is important for the enlightenment and development of students' wisdom. Music education plays a vital role in developing students' aesthetic education and cultivation, so how satisfied are the students of our universities with music education courses in terms of the current situation? How can music education be better developed? It is crucial for music educators in Chinese universities.

The development of aesthetic education is a very important part of China's educational work. In the current situation, "aesthetic education is still the weak link in the whole education stage now." In 2019, at the national education conference, it was proposed that "aesthetic education in schools should be comprehensively strengthened" (Li, 2019 : 23). Music education is an important part of developing aesthetic education and the main way to implement it, so it is necessary to investigate and study college students' satisfaction with music education.

The music profession in China has flourished and diversified, and as far as the music education system is concerned, it can be broadly divided into three categories.

(1) The first category is the conservatory of music in art professional colleges and universities, mainly to train professional music education related to music performance and composition, music history research and management, which is characterized by focusing on

the learning of music professional knowledge and skills, and will be more professional.

(2) The second category is based on the music departments of teacher training colleges and universities, which focus on training music teachers of different levels. Not only are students required to learn professional music knowledge and skills, but they are also required to be proficient in teacher teaching skills, and they are required to strive for all-round development as they should be able to sing, dance, play, speak, write, perform, and many other abilities. This type of education system is more fixed, and the model is uniform.

(3) The third category is that as the number of art candidates increases yearly, some higher education institutions have merged their previous secondary teacher training schools or adult education institutions to form art or music departments. These institutions are mainly designed to train music talents at the specialist level. However, compared to the first two categories, their schooling philosophy, faculty conditions, hardware facilities, and other aspects have different levels of differences. The students trained are mostly for competition performance, with less consideration for students' post-graduation planning and development (Zhao, 2013: 99-99).

The curriculum of music courses in colleges and universities is mainly a combination of theory courses and skills courses, and the theory courses mainly include basic music theory, acoustics, polyphony, orchestration, composition and work analysis, music appreciation, Chinese and foreign music history, ethnomusicology, and music pedagogy (Yang, 2009: 113-116). Among these, basic music theory is learned by every music major before enrollment. The three main areas of music skills courses are vocal practice, instrumental music, and choral music. With the rapid development of music education in China, the music education curriculum in colleges and universities is also improving and innovating with the times.

The Current Situation of Music Education in Chinese Universities

At the beginning of the 21st century, music education attracted increasing attention in higher education in China. Music education is pivotal in cultivating high-quality talents and developing quality education. Music education is an effective way to implement music teaching in China's colleges and universities. Music education has aesthetic and entertainment values, profound cultural connotations, and special educational significance. Generally speaking, music teaching can be divided into general music education and professional music education.

After the founding of New China, music education in China's institutions of higher learning has also developed rapidly, with a process of more than 70 years so far, during which the country has trained several music educators. With the joint efforts of them and the state, the music education career has made a qualitative leap. With a great change in contemporary society, major universities have expanded their enrollment, and higher professional music education has vigorously developed and flourished (Nie, 2017 : 11-17).

However, with the development of music education majors, there are many problems with music education majors in China's colleges and universities. Such as low entrance threshold for music education cultural courses, uneven school conditions, inadequate teaching facilities, unclear music education learning content and curriculum arrangement, low quality of college music teachers, and severe employment of music education graduates.

(1) Low entry threshold for cultural courses in music education

With the rapid development of society and the gradual popularization of higher education by the state, music majors today score more than 200 points lower than the average high school student in cultural courses, which has left a group of students after students trying to take shortcuts to college and choosing music, not out of love, but as a second-best choice. This has resulted in a vicious cycle of low overall quality and cognitive level of music teachers trained by some teacher training colleges.

(2) Inadequate teaching facilities

As a special profession of music education with theory and practice, complete music teaching facilities and teaching equipment are extremely important. However, according to the survey, most domestic colleges and universities hardware facilities cannot meet the actual needs of teaching. Many colleges and universities have limited funds. Music education majors must take up much space, such as piano rooms, rehearsal rooms, and concert halls. In addition, various musical instruments and equipment, which are needed for learning, must be updated and maintained all year round. The shortage of these teaching facilities will affect the quality of students' listening and their practical exercise and operation ability, turning them into graduates who only know the professional theory but not practice (Liu, 2014: 17-18).

(3) Unclear music education learning content and curriculum

Some specialized music colleges in Chinese universities, such as the Central Conservatory of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, all of which have music education programs. This has led some other comprehensive universities to follow suit and set up their music education majors blindly. However, while imitating, there needs to be a clear understanding and planning of music education's learning content and curriculum. Not only do students finish the four-year university course and still need to understand what they have learned, but teachers need to be more specific about music education. They need to learn how to teach it. Moreover, many students are transferred to the music education program due to their low musical ability or low-performance level and need more knowledge of the program's content. This becomes a significant obstacle to developing students' professional competence (Wu, 2015: 209).

(4) The quality and ability of music education teachers in colleges and universities are not high

Any good education is inseparable from the cultivation of an excellent teacher. The quality and ability of teachers are directly related to the quality of the entire school's education profession. Teachers should assume the responsibility of cultivating basic music education. In actual music teaching, teachers should teach students by their aptitude, constantly update their teaching content with the development of the times, and constantly improve their cultural ability and professional quality. At this stage, the quality and ability of music teachers in colleges and universities in China are generally low, and the teaching level is quite different. Many teachers have single teaching and have yet to adapt to student's individual development. Some teachers also appear to attend classes without preparing lessons and need clarification about the primary and secondary content of the course content. As a result, students trained by colleges and universities cannot achieve the expected results (Zhu, 2022 : 104-107).

(5) The employment situation of music education graduates is difficult

Music education is designed to cultivate highly qualified talents with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in music. Currently, the development direction of Chinese music education students after graduation is mainly to engage in music teaching work in primary and secondary schools and kindergartens or some literary performance work and music-related research. Although the overall graduation direction is relatively clear, a significant proportion of music education students lack learning ability because of their poor cultural background. In addition, when they apply for the exam, these students still use the music performance major, thinking that they only need to be able to sing and play musical instruments. These students are all to go to college, so they cannot study steadily during college, and they feel that they have achieved nothing after graduation, and finally, they barely get a diploma. Such students are disadvantaged in social competition and will inevitably face great employment difficulties. Moreover, such students are still common (Tian, 2020 : 241-242), which has led to the derailment of education and employment among graduates majoring in music education.

Content of Music Education in Chinese Universities

After years of development, music education in China's colleges and universities has continued the teaching mode of the early years of the founding of New China. Although this teaching mode has been reformed in many aspects with the progress of the times, it has mostly stayed the same. At present, the content of music education in colleges and universities mainly consists of a combination of professional theory courses and professional skills courses.

Among the music theory courses in colleges and universities are basic music theory, acoustics, polyphony, orchestration, composition and work analysis, music appreciation, Chinese and foreign music history, ethnomusicology, and music pedagogy (Yang, 2009 : 113-116). Among them, basic music theory is started before enrollment, a basic music theory specially prepared for beginners. Usually, universities will offer two semesters of courses for students to study. Vocal music is a comprehensive subject closely related to other music disciplines, such as sight-singing, ear training, and Chinese and foreign music history. Through music instruction, students develop thinking, aesthetic appreciation, and problem-solving skills (Shi, 2007 : 35).

Music skills courses mainly focus on teaching vocal, instrumental, choral, and conducting finger (Yang, 2009 : 113-116). For a long time, vocal education in China has focused on developing students' voices and breath, singing art songs, and opera selections. Instrumental music education includes string, woodwind, brass, keyboard, and percussion instruments. Students can choose their major instrumental music from the many instrumental music options. The practical courses in choral and conducting focus on developing musical qualities, cooperative teamwork, and students' organizational and coordination skills (Li, 2011 : 30).

Currently, most music majors in colleges and universities have adopted a major system in which the first and second years are devoted to vocal (American singing and folk singing), instrumental (piano elective and instrumental elective), and theory (basic theory, historical theory, and technical theory). Such a curriculum is designed to reflect the teaching characteristics of multi-disciplinarity, where students learn and become proficient in various skills in the first and second years and then specialize in a particular subject to achieve

outstanding expertise. However, too much focus on one's specialization can, on the contrary, hinder the development of highly qualified and versatile musicians.

In addition, the development of the music education curriculum has been accompanied by the fragmentation problem between disciplines. The music disciplines are set up relatively independently, and there need to be more necessary connections between the disciplines. The curriculum of harmony, composition, music history, appreciation, choral, vocal, and instrumental music is loosely set up. Universities currently pay too much attention to the vertical development of each discipline but neglect its horizontal development. The proportional distribution of the curriculum is unreasonable. After completing their college courses, many students have their theories, technical theories, and performance techniques cut apart, which leads to low professional knowledge and professional skills, making it difficult to meet the realistic needs of social talents (Zhang, 2015 : 64).

Currently, the curricula of music disciplines in higher education are relatively independent. There is an obvious fragmentation of knowledge between disciplines, such as harmony, composition, music history, composition, appreciation, chorus, conducting, vocal music, instrumental music, and dance, which make it difficult for students to integrate this knowledge and performance, appreciation, and composition courses.

Students' Satisfaction in Music Courses

Student satisfaction originated in the West in the 1960s. In the early studies on student satisfaction, most scholars have used the customer satisfaction variable in business administration as a reference for student course satisfaction. Student satisfaction with the music program refers to students belonging to a high-level service and comparing students' expectations before completing the music program with the actual situation after completion. When the actual situation is higher than expected, the satisfaction is high. However, on the contrary, when the actual situation is lower than expected, satisfaction is low (Fan, 2022: 104-112).

Satisfaction in course contents

Student satisfaction with course content has long been valued by academics and has been studied extensively in various fields of study in universities. The purpose of investigating students' satisfaction with course content is better to understand students' real thoughts and intrinsic needs, to improve course content, and better serve students continuously. This study will start from the literature related to musicology majors and other disciplines to understand the general situation of students' satisfaction with course content at this stage and provide reference opinions for the successful development of this study.

At present, the course content of musicology majors is mainly combining theory and practice. However, at this stage of literature, there are few studies on students' course satisfaction, mainly with musicology majors as the research object. Therefore, this study collates the relevant literature from musicology and other majors to understand the current status of research on students' satisfaction with course content.

Fan (2022 : 104-112) used a case study approach to examine the current satisfaction with the quality of piano courses among music students in contemporary Chinese higher education teacher training colleges. He conducted a questionnaire survey with all the students from freshman to junior year of musicology in Hunan First Normal College as the respondents. Specific research was conducted on five variables: the training objectives of the school's piano program, the curriculum, the level of teachers, the level of practical teaching, and the

evaluation criteria for assessment. The results of the study showed that students' expectations have a direct positive influence on quality perception and value perception; students' expectations have a direct positive influence on students' satisfaction through value perception and quality perception; students' expectations have a direct influence on students' satisfaction mediated by quality perception and value perception, and value perception has a positive influence on students' satisfaction.

Liang (2014 : 28-30) conducted a questionnaire survey on the Department of Music in the School of Information and Business of North Central University undergraduate students in grades 09 and 10. The questionnaire's content was divided into two main areas: the degree to which students liked the professional courses they were taking and the other was to find out whether the school offered met the students' practical needs for work. The study results show that students are more concerned about the practicality of the course. Therefore, we can draw some insights from Liang's (2014 : 28-30) study. Colleges should pay more attention to students' potential development, pay attention to students' interests and needs, and keep up with the times to make the curriculum more scientific and practical. For example, it is suggested that colleges carry out more practical courses such as form classes, dance classes, training classes for teacher qualification, multimedia courses, and music production. The setting of these courses can improve students' interest in learning on the one hand and increase students' competitiveness after graduation on the other hand, which can help students adapt to society more quickly with greater help.

In addition to the field of music education, there is a large body of literature in other disciplines related to investigating student satisfaction with course content. Zhang (2018 : 53) investigated the satisfaction of MOOC learners with MOOC courses in the context of the rapid development of modern distance education, using MOOC learners across the country as the research object. He collected questionnaires in the form of an online platform to investigate learners' satisfaction with MOOC courses. This aspect of course satisfaction was investigated in detail in four main areas: an overview of the course, instructional design of the course, instructional content in the course, and communication of learning outcomes in the learning course. According to the results of Zhang (2018 : 53), learners' satisfaction with the course content is a factor that must not be ignored in the course reform. The quality of the course should be strictly audited in the MOOC course. The difficulty of the course should be set in a graded manner to meet the learning needs of different learners, followed by keeping track of students' course feedback in the courses that have been made public and for the courses with low play to improve continuously. Finally, the MOOC platform should also promote the diversification of courses.

An (2019 : 43) investigates the satisfaction of foreign masters in Chinese international education with their courses from the perspective of students in the context of the global "Chinese language fever." In her survey, she focuses on five aspects: the purpose of the program, the structure of the program, the content of the program, the implementation of the program, and the management of the program. The study results show that students' satisfaction with the curriculum of Chinese International Education is in the middle to the upper level. Meanwhile, An (2019 : 43) put forward relevant suggestions for improving course content, in which the ratio of theory and practice should be coordinated to avoid the repetition of course content. In addition, the difficulty of theory classes should be increased to adapt to the needs of master students. In terms of teaching methods, more statistical software should be used because it is a must for students when they are writing their papers. The college could

also add more practical lectures, which students say are too difficult for international students to understand.

Li (2016 : 6) investigated the satisfaction of the elementary spoken Chinese course for international students at the International College of Yunnan University, taking about 100 international students in the International College of Yunnan University as the research subjects, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis through questionnaires and interviews to analyze the satisfaction situation of the elementary spoken course, and finally providing reference opinions from three aspects: international students, Chinese teachers, and teaching sessions.

Shao (2017 : 2) surveyed the satisfaction of the curriculum with undergraduate tourism management students in four universities, namely, Sun Yat-sen University, Shaanxi Normal University, Northeast University of Finance and Economics, and Guilin University of Technology. The survey results showed that the survey sample's satisfaction with the tourism management program was moderately low. The data analysis showed that the situation that led to students' dissatisfaction was mainly due to the lack of characteristics of the course's objectives, the boring content of the course, the unreasonable structure of the course, and the lack of resources.

Zhang (2022 : 177-178.) interviewed 11 M.Ed. students from five universities to understand the interviewees' satisfaction with the quality of college courses through a qualitative study. The study results showed that students' satisfaction with the quality of college courses was moderate to high, and the experience of the courses was high. However, there are still areas for improvement in curriculum concepts, curriculum management, curriculum implementation, and teaching evaluation. He argued that curriculum reform should be increased, students' independent motivation should be stimulated continuously, curriculum teaching should be improved, and the learning ability of the curriculum should be broadened to meet students' learning needs according to their interests.

Therefore, through the above study, we found that domestic scholars greatly importance studying students' course satisfaction. There is still much room for improvement in the course content, mainly focusing on the setting, classroom sessions, the objectives of the course, and the use of teaching equipment. Scholars have reformed the course content in the study according to the actual situation of students' feedback. However, the survey on course satisfaction of music majors is still in a newly developed field, and it is only at the survey stage, which has yet to form a complete and scientific system. Therefore, in this study, we will focus on the course content of music majors and put forward relevant insights for promoting the development of music courses.

Satisfaction in teaching staffs

Students' satisfaction with teachers' teaching is essentially students' rating of teachers according to their own "internal criteria" (Liu, 1995 : 43). Although there are no standardized and scientific evaluation criteria for such internal criteria, students are the most intuitive about "teacher teaching." However, students are the most intuitive experience of "teachers' teaching," so students' satisfaction with teachers' teaching cannot be ignored. It is an important indicator for universities to understand and evaluate the quality of teaching in schools. Many studies have noted the importance of students' satisfaction with teachers, and many scholars have investigated and studied students' satisfaction with teachers in universities in the educational literature.

Zhao and Pan (2001 : 119-124) used a mixed research approach to investigate students' satisfaction with teaching content in colleges and universities. Firstly, they conducted a quantitative study on 3,266 college students in 24 colleges and universities in Chongqing. 4,000 questionnaires were distributed, and three pre-selected options were set for students' overall perceptions or satisfaction of college teaching, namely, satisfied, average, and dissatisfied, so that students could choose according to their thoughts. The study's results showed that the overall evaluation of college students on college teaching was "average," accounting for 75.5%. Then they interviewed individual students according to the questionnaire results to understand the reasons behind this result. According to the results of the interviews, the students thought that the quality of teaching was "average" because the teaching situation in the university was different from what they expected. The teachers felt that they did not gain anything after the classes.

Through the study of Zhao and Pan (2001: 119-124), we can find that the current situation of college teachers' teaching is more serious because the teaching content is too empty and detached from the actual situation, and the teaching in college is urgent. Therefore, college teachers should keep abreast of the times in classroom teaching, actively absorb some fresh teaching contents and inject more vitality into the classroom. Teachers should improve their teaching ability and quality, communicate with students more and improve their teaching methods. In addition, schools should pay attention to the relationship between the implementation of teaching, teachers' quality, and the curriculum and keep the coordinated development of the three.

Fu (2004 : 12-18) surveyed to analyze students' satisfaction with teachers' teaching at four universities in Guangxi. He launched the survey from five variables: teaching attitude, teaching method, teaching means, teaching content and materials, and satisfaction was measured by a total of four levels, very satisfied, satisfied, average, and unsatisfied. The results of Fu's (2004 : 12-18) study show that the overall situation of higher education teachers is less than ideal, with "average" being the majority. According to Fu (2004 : 12-18), there are three main reasons for this: teachers' teaching methods are too single, and although innovation is advocated, the effect is not obvious and not achieved; the teaching methods of most universities are backward and fail to provide teachers with a multimedia teacher, which also makes students' interest gradually diminish; teachers' quality needs to be improved, and many teachers show slack work and no enthusiasm for teaching, which also directly affects students' learning status.

Ren (2010 : 5) designed a questionnaire on "the current status of teaching methods used by university teachers" in five dimensions, including satisfaction with the teaching methods of university teachers. His study was conducted in five schools in northeastern and southwestern China with different levels of staff and students. According to Ren's (2010) survey results, the majority of students were "generally satisfied" with the teaching methods of teachers in the dimension of "whether you are satisfied with the teaching of college teachers," which indicates that teachers think that teaching methods are just a tool to accomplish the teaching tasks. This indicates that teachers think that teaching methods are just a tool to accomplish teaching tasks, but students think more that teaching methods should meet students' needs and characteristics. This also makes the teachers' and students' views deviate, and students' satisfaction with teachers' teaching methods is lower than teachers' self-perceived satisfaction.

Kuo et al. (2014 : 35-50) surveyed 221 graduate and undergraduate students on an online platform to examine what factors influence student satisfaction. A detailed survey was also conducted on the interaction between teachers and students, including how teachers interact with students in class, the frequency of interaction, whether teachers can provide students with questions to think about, and how often teachers respond to students' messages. According to their study, the more interaction between teachers and students, the higher the students' satisfaction with that teacher, which also indicates that promoting interaction between learners and teachers has a very important impact on increasing students' satisfaction.

Conclusion

From the literature mentioned above, studying students' satisfaction with teachers' classroom content is crucial. Teachers are the transmitters of knowledge, and teachers' teaching methods, teaching content, equipment used for teaching, classroom activities designed by teachers in the classroom, and the interaction between teachers and students all affect students' satisfaction with teachers. According to the research of previous scholars, it can also be seen that teachers' satisfaction in This study will investigate the satisfaction of music students with the teachers of their major courses and provide a reference for adjusting the content and methods of teachers' teaching.

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