

# Using Carl Orff's Teaching Method for Developing Music Teaching in China

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## Abstract

Orff's teaching methods have been developed for more than 50 years from creation to perfection. The founder of the Orff music education system was the famous German composer and educator Carl Orff (1895-1982). It gives music education a new, unconventional concept and approach. Orff's teaching method starts from the essence and origin of music. This is the basic philosophy of Orff's music education. After continuously absorbing advanced teaching concepts, this teaching method has been translated into more than 30 languages and disseminated around the world. Orff's music education methods were introduced to China in the 1980s by Liao Naixiong, a famous professor of musicology in China. After the initial development in the 1990s, the research on Orff's music teaching methods at home and abroad is now very perfect. There are 265 articles on the application of Orff's teaching methods in music classrooms and 43 application studies in primary school classrooms. This chapter summarizes domestic and foreign research on the development of primary school music teaching in Orff's teaching methods.

**Keyword:** Using; Carl Orff; Teaching Method; Developing; Music Teaching; China

## Introduction

The Orff teaching method was born in the early 1920s by Karl Orff of Germany. Orff's approach to music teaching is not directed to a specific approach, but an idea, an attitude towards music education (Zhang, 2020). The open and unique teaching concept of Orff's teaching method can allow children to enter a variety of music fields in a state of natural relaxation, and personally integrate into music and feel the music in it.

Orff's music teaching method shifted attention to comprehensive music and gradually formed a "holistic art" music education concept that integrates language, verse, music, and action. Wang, Y (2019) pointed out that in this pedagogy, music does not only include rhythm and melody; it includes too many things, it is a rich art world, with children's songs, recitations, dialogues, dramas, rhythms, dances, paintings, and other art forms; children may pay attention to, listen to, and imitate sounds from nature and life under the guidance of teachers.

Yue, J. et al. (2017) argue that Orff's original ideas on music education were based on humanism. Its core educational philosophy is originality. In principle, it is necessary to start from the essence, which is a form that people continue to create and accumulate in daily life and labor. Music education is not just the imparting of knowledge and skills, music education is first of all the education of people. Starting from human nature, starting from the education at the beginning of man; from the origin of music. Music is the means and tool for human emotional expression and emotional communication, everyone has musical talent, and there is an instinct to use music for emotional expression and emotional communication. Orff's music

teaching method is a comprehensive form of language, dance, etc., and people of all ages and levels can experience and learn a form of music closest to nature; This form of music emphasizes the participation of the person himself in the creation, which means that the participants in this musical mode must actively participate in the musical performance (Kyunghoon, 2016).

### **Philosophy and characteristics of Orff's teaching methods**

Many scholars believe that the concepts of Orff's teaching methods mainly include originality, creativity, synthesis, and practice.

First, originality. Orff's approach to music teaching advocates "original" music education. This kind of open education has no fixed curriculum standards, syllabus, or unified teaching content, and does not necessarily have to be taught according to the textbook section by section, and most of it is taught improvised. Choose the teaching content that suits the characteristics of students' physical and mental development, combine them with their favorite learning activities, avoid single teaching and singing, and pay attention to the learning characteristics of students (Wu, 2019). In fact, this seemingly simple teaching model has higher requirements for teachers, who must not only carry out improvisational teaching but also have excellent classroom organization, coordination, and grasping ability.

Second, creativity. Improvisation is a human instinct, a reaction from the heart of people. In classroom teaching, with respect for the child's true reflection, all learning is transformed into the child's own real experience. Teachers need to affirm the individual differences of children, let them compose music by themselves, choose their instruments, and improvise their movements, without the teacher to unify the rules, arrange, and ensure that children's inner thoughts are fully expressed. Therefore, Orff's teaching results are all from the children's inner musical instincts, usually improvised, created, and arranged by the students themselves, without careful rehearsals, fixed arrangements, it looks a little chaotic, but it is very real.

Third, synthesis. Orff's education has always emphasized the integration of music. In Orff's classroom, music is an art that integrates language, movement, and dance; music teaching often starts with language, based on rhythm teaching, combined with physical reactions, and explores the musical talent that exists in human nature.

Fourth, practice. Traditional music classrooms pay too much attention to knowledge and skills, teachers are the center of the classroom, and students continue to repeat exercises under the instructions of teachers to achieve the purpose of consolidating knowledge and improving skills. Orff's education attaches great importance to the process and method of teaching, emphasizing the practicality of the music classroom; the classroom must be a place where teachers and students can both participate so that students can truly feel themselves.

### **Content of Orff's teaching methods**

Orff's teaching method includes four basic contents, namely language combined teaching, movement combined teaching, Orff instrumentation, and listening training.

First, language combined with teaching. Ding, N. (2019) pointed out that teachers can start with familiar words, names, idioms, ancient poems, and children's songs, or they can improvise sentences with children, perform some simple rhythm exercises, cultivate students' sense of rhythm, exercise language expression ability and enhance creativity while feeling music.

Second, movement combined with teaching. Momentum teaching is a major feature of Orff's teaching. In the teaching process, it is possible to combine local art performance forms and dances with movement exercises, such as Yangge, duo, and other performance forms that students are familiar with; students can truly feel the music through their bodies, release their inner emotions, and enhance their physical coordination and response-ability.

Third, is the combination of musical instruments and teaching. Wang, X. (2017) argues that Orff's instruments are often simple percussion instruments that children can easily master, like a small toy, intending to allow children to participate in musical activities and feel the joy of music. Orff's instruments are easy to make, and teachers can also work with children to make instruments from the materials around them. In the process of self-creation and self-playing, children will get a different sense of music.

Fourth, listening training in Orff's music education refers to cultivating children's discriminating ability and perception under the guidance of scientific methods, which is of great help to children in learning to play and sing in the future.

### **The Influence of Orff's Teaching Methods on The Music Classroom in Primary Schools**

Under the guidance of the concept, Orff's education has formed a complete education system in terms of guiding ideology, teaching materials, and teaching process. The concept of Orff's teaching method is to focus on all children so that every child can actively participate in the music class, discover themselves in musical activities, and express themselves. In the process of play and learning, children help and care for each other, forming a good communication and cooperative classroom atmosphere. In teaching practice, many scholars believe that the influence of Orff's teaching methods on primary school classrooms is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

First, Orff's music teaching method has enabled the transformation of regular teaching into student-centered teaching. Orff's music teaching method bids farewell to the boring textbook knowledge explanation and realizes that the combination of teaching and daily life can play a multiplier effect with half the effort. In essence, Orff's teaching is a process of music learning, divided into four stages: exploration, imitation, improvisation, and creation; the purpose of music education is to educate music and music education. Educational music allows children to open the door to music through language, singing, dancing, and recitation, feel the charm of music, learn music knowledge, and embark on the path of professional development of music. Music education refers to the education carried out through music, the harvest of non-musical essential qualities in the process of learning music, the cultivation of children's communication and cooperation ability in choral ensembles, the cultivation of children's associative imagination ability in performance creation, and the cultivation of aesthetic qualities in feeling appreciation (Cai, 2018).

Second, Orff's approach to music teaching has led to a developmental shift in curriculum. In the previous curriculum paradigm we paid more attention to the realization of curriculum objectives and neglected human development in the learning process; Orff's music teaching emphasized the subject status of people in the curriculum development process. Orff's Curriculum Concept is an understanding curriculum concept that integrates courses and real-life with students as the main body of the curriculum, taking students' real-life experience as the optional teaching content of music courses, and obtaining experience through students'

self-experience, practice, reflection, innovation, inquiry, communication, and exchange. This understanding of the music curriculum is more than just a separate, isolated course. Orff's teaching methods integrate the background of the times, the content of different ethnic and regional cultures.

Third, Orff's music teaching method realizes the comprehensive and diversified content selection. The traditional music curriculum is meticulously divided into subjects, and the various fields of knowledge are separated and independent; this also leads to the lack of the overall effect of music, which is monotonous and boring. Orff's music teaching method solved this problem by advocating for the mutual integration and mutual promotion between various fields of music, using instrumental performance to verify the effect when creating, and using music appreciation to deepen students' understanding of music and emotional resonance.

## **Using Carl Orff's teaching method for developing music teaching in China**

### **Teacher level**

First, teachers lack correct teaching guidance. Hong-Yao, J. I. (2018) believes that primary school students are in the stage of music enlightenment, music classrooms can not only cultivate primary school students' artistic accomplishment and interest in music but also enliven the classroom atmosphere, Orff's music teaching method advocates for primary school students to be the main body of the music classroom; it asserts that every child in the classroom should actively participate, primary school students can express their feelings about music through body language; teachers should pay attention to stimulating students' initiative in the classroom and cultivating their enthusiasm for learning. In the process of music class teaching, music teachers should pay more attention to the guidance of students' active exploration, constantly cultivate students' creativity, so that students can actively integrate into music teaching, and constantly explore the charm of music. In music lessons, teachers lack sufficient understanding of the Orff music teaching system; teachers still teach as regular teachers, and students passively accept the teaching methods, there is not enough guidance to students so that children can actively explore and integrate into music teaching, and find the rich connotation of music; in addition, teachers do not have the right way to guide students and to help students understand the use of Orff's instruments. Enabling students to correctly use Orff's instruments increases their interest in music and cultivates students' interest in learning. Otherwise, students have fewer opportunities to perform in music classes, the desire to perform is generally weaker, while the lack of interesting teaching content is very unfavorable for cultivating primary school students' enthusiasm for music and enhancing their desire to perform and self-confidence.

Second, dogmatic music teaching. The music curriculum at the primary school level is mainly to appreciate and express music-related culture as the dominant form; the teaching method of primary school music teachers is still based on simply imparting music knowledge or teaching students to sing in these two methods. Even when following the introduction to Orff's music teaching methods, games, and teaching content in the classroom are designed in advance by teachers, completely in accordance with the set of links to carry out, teaching methods are more dogmatic and rigid. This doesn't do much to foster creativity in elementary school students. In addition, in rural areas, due to economic conditions, education funds, teaching resources, and other conditions, schools cannot provide good basic teaching conditions for primary school students, which makes it more difficult for rural primary school music classrooms to form a sound curriculum system for basic music education.

Third, teachers do not know enough about Orff's music teaching methods. Although music teachers have little of Orff's music teaching methods, they also recognize the improvement of students' musical ability by using Orff's music teaching methods; but most teachers are in the learning curriculum of teachers' colleges, both in terms of learning style and professional level, they are at a more basic level, such as music aesthetics, music pedagogy, music psychology, and other disciplines; most teachers have not participated in teacher training courses in Orff-related majors. Therefore, the implementation of Orff's music teaching activities is a difficult task in itself. In addition, the information in some areas is relatively scarce, and the majority of educators cannot grasp the current mainstream methods of teaching in time, and the update of knowledge structure is often lagging behind. Li, L. (2017) believes that the low comprehensive quality of teachers is mainly reflected in two aspects: on the one hand, there is a large cognitive bias in teaching; most teachers who graduated from teacher training colleges have insufficient understanding of the relationship between practice and theory, and there is often a large deviation between concepts, and the exploration and practical application of Orff's music teaching methods are still stuck at the theoretical level and do not go deep into practice; therefore, in the teaching process, Orff's music teaching methods have not been fully verified in practice; on the other hand, the choice of teaching activities is not reasonable enough; in the primary school music teaching, there is a lack of professional Orff teaching-related teaching materials, teachers often obtain relevant knowledge or skills from training courses organized by training institutions, and Orff's teaching knowledge is obtained in a single way.

### **School level**

First, the musical instrument investment is insufficient. The basic conditions of the classroom when starting Orff's music teaching in primary schools are simple and incomplete, and the teachers as a whole do not pay enough attention to the development of Orff's music teaching methods; when it comes to local primary schools, few schools that use Orff's music teaching equipment. In primary music teaching, when teachers play Orff's percussion for students in class, they will consciously imitate the movements played by the teacher's instruments, which can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning music, enhance their imagination, and help to enhance their creativity through the cultivation of students' improvisation ability in the classroom. Therefore, teachers should give students appropriate encouragement, enhance their self-confidence, starting from simple percussion learning, not create greater learning pressure for students, which can help students feel like they are in a relaxed learning atmosphere when initially mastering the use of musical instruments, enhance their learning interest, which is conducive to cultivating students' comprehensive ability. In preparation for each music lesson, the corresponding Orff instruments can be set according to the content of the lesson, and the instruments suitable for the atmosphere of the class in this section can be selected purposefully. But many teachers in elementary school music teaching are not aware of this. Most of the time, Orff instruments are distributed at random, and there is no plan for students to play together according to the rhythm, resulting in a chaotic performance scene (Shen, 2016). Some teachers only focus on the active students in the classroom and distribute Orff instruments to active students, and students without musical instruments can only sit quietly as spectators; students without Orff instruments may turn their heads and ears because they do not have learning tasks, affecting students with Orff instruments who cannot concentrate on playing, which reduces students' experience of musical content.

Second, schools neglect the training of teachers. Many schools have not arranged for music teachers to go out to participate in learning and observation activities related to the Orff music teaching system, nor have they organized activities such as Orff music teaching method competitions, which has led to insufficient teachers' ability.

## Conclusion

Through the comprehensive research on Orff's music education-related books and published academic papers, it is found that most of the research is the theoretical study of Orff education and the introduction of Orff's music teaching system, starting from a single aspect, studying certain elements in Orff's music teaching method. Orff's music teaching is more content, but mostly theoretical. Most of the Orff music pedagogy is studied in terms of literature research and teaching comparison, and less research is done on practical and effective applications. Few scholars conduct relevant research from the perspective of practical application in the classroom. The lack of a concrete analysis of the effectiveness of Orff's music pedagogy in the classroom also provides room for the development of this research. The author personally went deep into the primary school classroom to conduct practical exploration and conducted research and conclusions through practice.

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