

A Survey Study on the "Present Trouble" and "Self-trouble" of Music Majors —— Take the Graduates of Zhaoqing University in Guangdong Province from 2018 to 2020 as an Example

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ABSTRACT

This paper employs literature review and survey methods to investigate the employment status of musicology graduates from Guangdong Zhaoqing University's School of Music over the past three years. It focuses on exploring the learning situation during their undergraduate studies, the actual working conditions upon entering the workforce, the application and effectiveness of knowledge and skills in practical work, as well as the knowledge framework and needs they possess after 3-5 years of work. The research findings indicate that society and employers have new requirements and directions for talent every year. Coupled with the uneven distribution of faculty resources and examination systems across regions, these demands compel graduates to continuously acquire new knowledge and restructure their knowledge frameworks. Most graduates feel a gap between their knowledge and skills and classroom instruction, manifested in weak foundational knowledge, relatively weak professional skills, narrow disciplinary scope, and insufficient knowledge reserves. Therefore, this paper examines whether the training model, objectives, standards, curriculum design, and discipline construction of the musicology program at Zhaoqing University's School of Music are reasonable and comprehensive. This will directly promote the reform and development of the musicology program at the school. Additionally, it has significant practical reference value, academic value, and social value in supporting the teaching reform of "new normal" education.

KEYWORDS

Musicology; Graduates; Current difficulties; Self-difficulties

Students of music at teacher education institutions bear the dual mission of inheriting and innovating musical culture. From the perspective of inheritance, they are guardians of the nation's musical treasures, required to delve into the study of traditional folk music from various regions; in terms of innovation, they need to integrate diverse musical elements, utilizing modern music production techniques to infuse new vitality into traditional music, creating works that are both culturally distinctive and aesthetically appealing for contemporary audiences. Therefore, this article focuses on a survey and research of the employment status of graduates from the School of Music at Zhaoqing University over the past three years, addressing four aspects: the learning situation during their undergraduate years, the actual work conditions after entering their units, the application and effectiveness of knowledge and skills in actual work, and the knowledge framework and needs after 3-5 years of work. The specific investigation, analysis, and comparison of the employment status of music graduates over the past three years across various levels and types of schools will be conducted, ensuring a thorough summary and categorization of data, which will be fed back to the School of Music to provide valuable references for the educational philosophy, teaching model, curriculum content, course settings, resource integration, discipline construction, and quality assurance of music education at the School of Music.

1 Research Objects and Methods

1.1 Research Objects

This study takes the "present trouble" and "self-trouble" of music graduates as the research object, and takes the 2018-2020 graduates of Zhaoqing University in Guangdong province as the survey object.

1.2 Research Methods

(1) Literature Method

By searching for research articles in China National Knowledge Infrastructure since 2012 that include titles such as "Graduates of Music Education from Higher Normal Universities," "Employment Situation Strategies," "Career Planning," and "Employment Guidance," a total of 321 articles were found. These articles appeared in important music journals, major educational journals, Peking University core journals, and the journals of higher normal universities. After removing duplicate entries, 101 valid articles remained. A comprehensive analysis of these 101 articles reveals three main areas of study: first, career planning and development for graduates of higher normal universities; second, employment analysis

and strategies for graduates of higher normal universities; third, specific professional employment situations for graduates of higher normal universities. Overall, these three aspects focus on the career planning, employment destinations, employment situation strategies, and specific professional employment analyses of music education graduates.

(2) Questionnaire Survey Method

a: Survey of employers: Questionnaires were distributed to employers for investigation. 27 questionnaires were distributed and 27 questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 100%. The effective questionnaire rate was 100% of the questionnaire recovery rate.

b: Graduate Survey: A total of 115 questionnaires were collected regarding the "Undergraduate Learning Situation and Practical Application of Knowledge and Skills for Musicology Graduates from Zhaoqing University's School of Music," with an effective response rate of 100%. Among these, the 2002 graduates had the highest proportion at 40.87%, followed by the 2019 graduates at 34.78%, and then the 2018 graduates at 24.35%. For the questionnaire on "Graduates' Actual Work in Primary and Secondary Schools," only 23 questionnaires were collected, with an effective response rate of 82.61%, which is 16.5% of the overall response rate (referring to those working in primary and secondary education).

c: Survey Content: Due to the wide distribution of graduates and significant changes in retained information, coupled with the ongoing "mask incident" over the past two years, field surveys have been somewhat restricted. To ensure the authenticity, reliability, accuracy, and validity of the survey data, only graduates who can be contacted in Guangdong Province will be surveyed using questionnaires. The questionnaire content mainly includes: academic performance during undergraduate studies, actual work status after joining an organization, implementation and effectiveness of knowledge and skills in practical work, and the knowledge structure and needs after 3-5 years of work; Interview Methods: WeChat, phone calls, group discussions.

(3) Interview Method

Some graduates were interviewed, and the main contents of the interview included employment status, job satisfaction and demands for improving their studies.

(4) Mathematical Statistics Method

From the whole of the survey object, a certain sampling method is used to extract some samples and obtain relevant data. For example, data are collected through questionnaires and interviews. The collected disorganized data are summarized and processed to make them organized and systematic. Mean and mode are used for statistics to describe the characteristics of concentration trend and dispersion degree of the data.

2 Research Results and Analysis

2.1 The Current Situation of Employment of Music Graduates from Zhaoqing University in the Past Three Years

In 2018, the number of graduates in Musicology reached 250. According to the collected data, the main employment regions for Musicology students are Guangdong, Beijing, Anhui, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hebei, Hunan, Ningxia, Yunnan, Shaanxi, and Tibet. The primary employers chosen by these graduates include enterprises, schools, and freelancers. Among them, 58 people, or 23.2% of the total, work in education-related fields: 2 in kindergartens, 38 in primary schools, 15 in secondary schools, and 3 in vocational high schools; 140 people, or 56% of the total, work in non-education sectors: 80 in private enterprises and 60 in limited liability companies; 17 people, or 6.8% of the total, are freelancers. In 2019, the number of graduates in Musicology reached 246. According to the collected data, the main employment regions for Musicology students are Guangdong, Beijing, Anhui, Hebei, Henan, Guizhou, Shanghai, Shaanxi, Xinjiang, Yunnan, and Zhejiang, with 2 going abroad to Republic of Korea and the UK. The primary employers for graduates are enterprises and schools. Among them, 39 people are engaged in education-related work (1 in early childhood education, 29 in primary school, 5 in secondary school, 2 in private institutions, and 2 in general education institutions), accounting for about 15.85% of the total; 170 people are involved in non-education-related work (70 in private enterprises and 100 in limited liability companies), making up approximately 69.11% of the total.

In 2020, the number of graduates in Musicology reached 276. According to the collected data, the main employment regions for Musicology students are Guangzhou, Foshan, Zhaoqing, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhanjiang, Yunfu, and Sihui in Guangdong Province. The primary employers of these graduates are enterprises and schools. Specifically, 76 graduates work in education, with 17 working in primary schools, 59 in social music education (39 piano teachers, 10 vocal instructors, 5 guzheng players, and 5 others), accounting for about 27.54% of the total; 64 graduates work in non-teaching positions, mainly concentrated in limited liability companies, making up approximately 23.20% of the total.

The above data generally shows: in the past three years, a total of 772 musicology graduates have entered the workforce, with 173 working in education-related positions, accounting for about 22.4% of the total. Among them, 3 work

in kindergartens (0.3%), 84 in primary schools (10.88%), 20 in secondary schools (2.59%), and 7 in vocational colleges (0.91%). Additionally, 59 are engaged in social music education (7.64%) and 374 are employed outside the education sector, making up approximately 48.45% of the total. The data shows: 1 The employment situation of musicology graduates is becoming more diversified and specialized. Employment areas are gradually expanding, but they are mainly concentrated in economically developed and culturally prosperous regions; in 2019, two graduates went abroad (to Republic of Korea and the UK) for work, indicating the international trend of musicology and the graduates' desire to be on the global stage. 2 Employment units are primarily companies and schools, with an increasing demand for musical talent from businesses; 3 In terms of specific job types, educational roles remain important, while emerging fields such as social music education also show strong development momentum. Additionally, freelance work, as a flexible employment option, is increasingly favored by graduates.

Analyzing the above reasons: Firstly, the severe job market, employment situation, and current social demands have led most musicology graduates to enter the social education market rather than becoming teachers in primary and secondary schools. Instead, they become teachers at music stores, cultural palaces, music training centers, or private music instructors, with some failing to engage in music-related work. Secondly, individual employment choices of graduates (such as the relevance of their chosen jobs to their majors, factors like employment location, organization, and salary). Thirdly, according to the 2018 version of the talent cultivation plan and objectives: this program aims to cultivate applied professionals who possess basic knowledge in musicology and can conduct preliminary theoretical analysis and research on music. Graduates will be capable of working in teaching, performance/playing, organizing and planning, and reviewing music-related activities in primary and secondary schools, cultural centers, social music groups, and broadcasting and film departments. This cultivation goal has a certain degree of flexibility, representing a breakthrough from traditional single-objective training goals. The proportion of graduates in musicology who have engaged in primary and secondary education over the past three years, as well as their tendency to work in social music education institutions, inevitably prompts us to reflect on: repositioning musicology? Its professional affiliation? How to implement it? What exactly should be taught? How should it be taught? These are a series of questions that need to be addressed. The college should set rigorous training objectives and precise talent indicators based on the specifications and needs of teachers required by society. It is essential to timely and accurately position and rectify the training programs, ensuring that each major has distinct levels with clear priorities. The college must balance and coordinate the implementation of training goals and specific plans, keeping up with the times and grasping the pulse of the era, thus promoting the innovation and development of music education in a timely manner.

2.2 The Generation of "Self-trapped" and the Investigation of Graduates' Application of Academic Knowledge

During the study period of the graduates from 2018 to 2020, there are a total of 42 courses (2018 version training program), including 17 courses for music majors (professional theory courses and professional skills courses) and 25 courses for non-music majors (public required courses, public basic courses, public elective courses, general education courses, innovation and entrepreneurship courses).

(1) Learning Situation of Non-music Major Courses

According to a series of survey data, the average excellence rate for such courses is 16.81%, good rate is 58.84%, average rate is 22.32%, and pass rate is 2.03%. Additionally, when investigating the offering of general education courses, there are differing opinions: 34.78% of graduates believe that too many general education courses are offered, while 65.22% think they are "average." The reasons for this may include: varying individual learning abilities, methods, and cognitive levels; differences in attitudes towards subject studies; variations in time management and course importance; and a lack of comprehensive understanding of the relationship between specialized knowledge and general education courses.

(2) Study of Music Major Courses

Students demonstrate a certain level of stability and enthusiasm in their studies of professional education courses and theoretical courses during their time at school. The excellent and good rates both stand at 73.04%, while the average rate is 24.84%. For professional skills, except for "vocal performance and sight-singing," which has an excellent rate as high as 93.23%, the other five skills remain within a controllable range of 63.75% to 80%. This indicates that students possess strong learning capabilities. However, when investigating the application of professional skills, the data shows a downward trend: the distribution of graduates' skill levels and actual teaching usage is relatively even, with 26.09% having both high-level and frequently used skills; piano improvisation ability is average, with 56.52% using it generally, while those with higher abilities and frequent use account for 21.74%; most graduates (52.17%) have average self-accompanied singing skills.

(3) Feedback from Graduates & Working Units

Most graduates have between 3 to 4 years of teaching experience, which is relatively short and still in the early stages of their career development. Their teaching skills, personal professional knowledge and skills, as well as organizational teaching and management abilities, all require further improvement. Survey data on the difficulty of controlling teaching processes and teaching management capabilities show that teaching methods (43.48%) and classroom feedback and reflection (39.13%) are considered challenging aspects. Most graduates (43.48%) rate their teaching management skills as average. Data on understanding educational psychology indicates that 43.48% of graduates say they understand it and can prepare lessons with students at the center, paying attention to individual differences, while 47.83% report having a basic understanding but often overlooks it. Regarding the integration of traditional culture into teaching, only 13.04% of graduates indicate that they have incorporated Chinese traditional culture and local operas and folk arts into music education. In terms of digital information technology application capabilities, most graduates possess skills such as music editing and production (60.87%), creating teaching designs, content, and student self-evaluation systems (52.17%). In the interviews, it was found that only a few graduates serve as class advisors, and they have relatively less experience in managing students and organizing teaching activities. Although most graduates place significant importance on self-study and professional development outside of their teaching duties, those with strong career aspirations and learning needs also have high plans for further education, showing clear goals and strategies for their career development. However, from the data and survey results, we can still see that due to insufficient professional competence during their undergraduate years and the severe job market conditions, graduates remain largely disconnected from practical teaching requirements.

3 Conclusion

In the vast realm of musical arts, this survey on the "current predicaments" and "self-imposed constraints" of music graduates is like a ray of light shining into their professional and personal lives. It is evident that from the fierce competition in the job market, the mismatch between majors and positions, to biases in self-awareness and decision-making under psychological pressure, music graduates face numerous challenges. These challenges are not insurmountable but do indeed impact their progress on the path of music. However, these challenges are also opportunities for growth. This study not only reveals problems but also aims to become a force for change. On one hand, universities and society should work together to improve employment guidance systems and expand job opportunities, helping graduates overcome their "current predicaments." On the other hand, graduates themselves need to break free from the "self-imposed constraints," reshape their self-perception with a positive attitude, and draw strength from setbacks. With the joint efforts of all parties, it is believed that music graduates can break through these obstacles in the future, use their talents to compose their own magnificent symphonies, find their own broad stages in the world of music, and realize their artistic ideals and life values.

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