

Current Status and Countermeasures of Orff Pedagogy Practice in Elementary School Music Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The Orff teaching method emphasizes the integration of music, rhythm and language, and advocates students' active participation. In this paper, 50 elementary school music teachers were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews to explore the current situation and problems of the application of this method in the classroom. It was found that although most teachers recognized the value of the pedagogy, the actual application rate was low due to insufficient training, lack of resources and tight classroom time. Teachers generally suggested that training and localized resources should be strengthened. The study analyzes the data and proposes improvement strategies to promote the effective implementation of the Orff method in elementary school music education and to improve classroom quality and students' musical literacy.

KEYWORDS

Orff pedagogy; Elementary music education; Classroom practice; Pedagogical innovation

1 Introductory

Orff Schulwerk was founded by the German composer Carl Orff, with the core concept of "musical originality", emphasizing the natural participation of children in music learning through rhythm, movement and play ^[1]. The method advocates the students' subjective status and creativity, and emphasizes the educational concepts of "letting students take the initiative to develop", "facing all students" and "comprehensive development". Since the 1980s, when the Orff method was introduced into China, it has played an important role in promoting quality education and enlivening the classroom atmosphere ^[2]. At the same time, the music curriculum reform has constantly put forward the goal of "centering on students' development", which makes the concept of Orff teaching method highly compatible with the goal of elementary school music teaching in China. Under the background of globalization, China's education department also emphasizes drawing on advanced teaching concepts from abroad to promote innovation in music education ^[3]. According to the survey, in recent years, more and more primary and secondary schools have begun to try to apply Orff pedagogy to classroom practice in order to improve music literacy and innovation ^[4].

However, there are some challenges in the promotion of the Orff Method in China. Studies have shown that elementary school teachers in some areas know more about the Orff method than at the theoretical level, and there are difficulties in practical application. For example, the lack of systematic training and teaching resources has led to the phenomenon of teachers "claiming to know Orff but not being able to operate it" ^[5]. In addition, the localization of Orff teaching activities and the development of resources also need to be further explored. Based on this, this study investigates Chinese elementary school music teachers' knowledge and use of Orff teaching method through questionnaires and interviews, analyzes the current situation of application and problems, and proposes practical improvement strategies on this basis to provide reference for the promotion of Orff teaching method in elementary school education.

2 Research methodology

This study adopts a methodological framework combining qualitative and quantitative. First, the theoretical basis of Orff pedagogy and the current status of research at home and abroad were understood through literature analysis. Then the questionnaire and interview outline were designed to conduct field research on elementary school music teachers. The questionnaire mainly contains multiple-choice questions and Likert scale questions, including teachers' knowledge of Orff pedagogy, frequency of classroom application, training needs, and evaluation of teaching effects. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on teachers' experiences, feelings, confusion and suggestions about the Orff method. The subjects of the study were music teachers in five randomly selected elementary school in a certain region, 50 questionnaires were distributed and 47 were validly recovered, while 10 of them were interviewed.

In terms of data analysis, the results of the questionnaire were statistically analyzed using SPSS software in order to calculate the frequency of each option, the mean value, etc.; the interviews were qualitatively organized and coded to summarize the main themes and common viewpoints. The survey and interview process followed the principle of anonymity to ensure information authenticity and ethical compliance.

3 An integrated analysis of three perspectives

3.1 Literature research and questionnaire design

At the early stage of the study, the core concepts and implementation strategies of Orff pedagogy were clarified by reviewing domestic and international literature, and the framework of questionnaires and interview questions were designed according to the research purpose.

3.2 Questionnaire distribution and data collection

After contacting the relevant departments of the schools, the five elementary school were contacted and the questionnaires were distributed to the participating teachers through the online platform (WeChat Questionnaire). It took about 5 minutes for teachers to fill out the questionnaires, and 47 valid questionnaires were returned (94% recovery rate) with a high rate of data completeness.

3.3 Interview implementation

A representative group of 10 teachers (including different teaching grades and experience levels) were selected from the questionnaire fillers and interviewed face-to-face or by telephone to ask in-depth questions around issues that the questionnaire failed to reveal in depth. The interviews were audio-recorded and organized, and then coded and summarized.

Through the above process, the study comprehensively collected quantitative data and feedback on frontline teachers' experiences of the application of Orff pedagogy, laying the foundation for subsequent analysis.

4 Analysis of data

The data collected from the questionnaires were statistically and descriptively analyzed in this study. Table 1 demonstrates the results of the survey on teachers' knowledge and application of Orff pedagogy.

Table 1 Results of questionnaire survey of elementary school music teachers (n=47)

Question	Option	Number of people (cases)	Proportion
Have you heard of the Orff Method?	Yes	38	81%
	No	9	19%
Self-assessed level of knowledge	Familiar	7	14.9%
	General	24	51.1%
	Slightly familiar	11	23.4%
	Not at all	5	10.6%
Have you ever used this method in your classroom	Yes	29	61.7%
	No	18	38.3%
Frequency of using the Orff method in the classroom	Frequently	6	12.8%
	Occasionally	13	27.7%
	Rarely	18	38.3%
	Never	10	21.2%

Table 2 Evaluation of teaching effectiveness (multiple choice)

Teaching Effectiveness	Number of people (cases)	Proportion
Enhancement of interest in learning	38	80.9%
Enhancing the sense of rhythm and movement	35	74.5%
Cultivate students' creativity and expressiveness	31	66.0%
Increase participation and classroom activities	28	59.6%
No obvious effect	4	8.5%

Table 3 Barriers to implementation (multiple choice)

Type of difficulty	Number of people (cases)	Proportion
Lack of systematic training	36	76.6%
Lack of equipment and teaching aids	30	63.8%
Tight schedule of music lessons	28	59.6%
Lack of localized teaching materials and examples	21	44.7%
Difficulty in teaching organization	15	31.9%

According to the results of the survey, a total of 47 valid questionnaires were collected in this study, which were statistically analyzed in four aspects, namely, teachers' cognition, practice, effect and difficulties in the implementation of the Orff Method. First of all, in terms of cognition, 89.4% of teachers said they had heard of Orff Method, but only 14.9% said they were "very familiar with it", and 51.1% said they knew it "in general", which showed that the depth of cognition was insufficient. In terms of practice, 61.7% of the teachers had used the method in the classroom, but only 12.8% of them used it consistently on a weekly basis. 38.3% of the teachers had never used it, indicating that the actual promotion of the method was still limited. In terms of teaching effectiveness, 80.9% of teachers believed that the method could enhance learning interest, 74.5% pointed out that it promoted rhythm and sense of rhythm, 66.0% recognized its stimulation of creativity, and only 8.5% thought the effect was not obvious. In terms of application difficulties, teachers' feedback showed that 76.6% lacked systematic training, 63.8% lacked teaching equipment, 59.6% had tight class time, and 44.7% reflected the lack of local teaching materials.

According to the interviews, teachers generally have a positive attitude towards the Orff method, believing that its innovative rhythm and rhythmic activities can increase students' interest, but they encountered practical difficulties in its application, such as "tight schedule, insufficient teaching resources, and lack of professional training" (see Table 4 in the summary of the interviews).

The interviews were organized through a thematic coding method to summarize the following key ideas (see Table 4).

Table 4 Summary of teacher interviews

Interview questions	Summary of main content
Understanding and views on Orff pedagogy	Teacher A: Low level of understanding, but affirms its role in promoting students' interest and creativity. Teacher B: Believes that Orff's concept is advanced and should be integrated with local teaching. Teacher C: Concerned about the significance of movement and rhythmic activities for young children's development.
Major Difficulties Encountered in Application	Most teachers mentioned the lack of professional training and insufficient teaching resources. Some teachers thought that the limited time of the course made it difficult to be compatible with the current teaching materials. And some pointed out the lack of peer exchanges and opportunities for observation.
Suggestions for Improvement	It is suggested that education administrative departments and universities should strengthen teacher training and conduct regular seminars on Orff teaching; school-level cases and multimedia resources on Orff teaching that are suitable for the local context can be developed; and learning communities can be formed among teachers for mutual observation and exchange.

As seen in Table 4, teachers generally believe that Orff pedagogy has innovative value, but there are shortcomings in the application process, such as teachers' qualifications and resources. The survey and interview results provide empirical support for the subsequent discussion.

5 Key findings

5.1 Teachers' cognition and attitudes

As shown in Table 1, most teachers have heard of the Orff method, which is consistent with some studies that point out that "more and more primary and secondary schools have begun to apply the Orff method to music education". However, the actual utilization rate is still low, with only 17% of the teachers indicating that they use it frequently. Interviews showed that teachers were positive about the method as a whole, believing that it meets the physical and psychological characteristics of elementary school children and their teaching needs, which is similar to the findings of existing studies.

5.2 Teaching effectiveness

The survey showed that nearly 80% of teachers believed that Orff teaching could enhance students' interest in learning and classroom participation. This is in line with the literature, which shows that through interactive and personalized teaching methods, Orff teaching can "enhance students' interest and participation, which is conducive to improving teaching effectiveness". Teacher interviews also mentioned that students' attention and sense of cooperation increased significantly when methods such as body rhythm and percussion instruments were used in the classroom.

5.3 Barriers to application

The study found that the main constraints to teachers' application of Orff pedagogy include lack of training, time pressure, and insufficient resources. In particular, the lack of systematic teacher training and standardized instruction is the core problem affecting the promotion. Some teachers reflected in the interviews that although they were willing to try out new teaching methods, they could only sporadically imitate fragments on the Internet or in classroom examples

due to the lack of professional training, making it difficult to form a coherent curriculum system. In addition, the current curriculum standards and textbook design do not fully cover the content of Orff teaching, which also creates problems for practical operation.

5.4 Localization needs

Teachers generally suggest combining Orff teaching with traditional Chinese cultural elements to enhance students' affinity and cultural identity [3]. For example, adapting materials such as local folk songs and opera rhythms is considered to be in line with the concept of Orff's originality and at the same time relevant to local students' life experiences. This view is in line with the scholars' idea of "taking traditional Chinese culture as the root and developing music education resources with national characteristics".

In summary, this study verifies the positive impact of Orff pedagogy in the elementary classroom and reveals practical problems in the current promotion process. These results provide an important basis for the discussion and conclusion section below.

6 Discussion

The results of the study suggest that although the Orff method is novel in concept and meets the requirements of quality education, its promotion in Chinese elementary school needs more support. First, from the teachers' point of view, the level of awareness of the method varies. Some studies have pointed out that Chinese elementary school music teachers' knowledge of the Orff method is mostly superficial. This study also found that only about half of the teachers had some knowledge of Orff and used it less frequently. It can be seen that improving teachers' professionalism is the key. The current imbalance of Orff teachers has resulted in many teachers not having an in-depth understanding of the core of Orff teaching. Therefore, it is necessary for the education authorities to cooperate with higher education institutions to offer standardized training courses and to improve the standard of teachers through teacher certification and other means.

Secondly, the existing curriculum resources and time schedules have a certain impact on Orff teaching. On the one hand, Orff emphasizes the perception of rhythm and improvisation, while the time and content of the current elementary school music class is compact, making it difficult for teachers to design innovative activities. Many teachers report that it is difficult to arrange additional activities outside of the regular curriculum, making Orff teaching a "difficult to implement" problem. In contrast, domestic case studies also point out that traditional music education focuses on technical skills and neglects process learning, which is not entirely compatible with the Orff philosophy. To solve this problem, we need to pay attention to the level of curriculum standards: we can explicitly support contextual teaching and game teaching in the syllabus, and incorporate Orff activities into the classroom organization.

Thirdly, the lack of teaching resources and insufficient localization are among the constraints. Existing textbooks and teaching aids rarely covered Orff content, and teachers tended to collect instruments and write lesson plans on their own. Teachers suggested writing Chinese culture-compatible Orff lesson plans and supporting multimedia resources to reduce the cost of trial and error. Researchers such as He Lu suggested that innovation should be "based on traditional Chinese culture and philosophy" and that folk music teaching materials should be explored ^[6]. This view was verified by teachers in this study, who believed that combining folk songs, nursery rhymes, and operas with Orff activities not only enhances fun, but also promotes cultural heritage. In the future, educational research institutes can be encouraged to cooperate with local schools to develop more Orff teaching casebooks with ethnic characteristics.

Finally, the findings were generally consistent with the literature study, confirming the value of Orff pedagogy in stimulating children's musical creativity and cooperative spirit. Teachers and researchers generally agreed that the method can help build "quality classrooms" and develop core literacy. Therefore, the advantages of the Orff method should be utilized as one of the most important ways to promote the reform of elementary school music education.

7 Conclusion

Based on the investigation, this study explored the current status of the application of Orff pedagogy in Chinese elementary school classrooms, and came to the following conclusions: firstly, Orff pedagogy can enhance primary school students' interest and participation in music, which is in line with the innovative teaching goals put forward by the current education reform; however, in the reality of the application, the problems of insufficient training of teachers, rigid curriculum, and a lack of resources have limited the effectiveness of its promotion. Second, the localization strategy is crucial, and integrating Chinese elements into the Orff curriculum can enhance students' cultural identity and learning interest. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following suggestions for improvement: first, strengthen teacher training and qualification, and establish a sound teacher system for teaching Orff; second, adjust the curriculum design, incorporate Orff activities into the syllabus, and give teachers the space to be flexible and innovative; third, develop localized teaching resources, such as case studies, teaching materials, and multimedia tools, to enrich the classroom

content; and fourth, encourage teachers to have professional exchanges and reflection, and promote sharing of experiences through demonstration lessons, teaching and research activities to promote experience sharing.

This study combines the theoretical and practical issues of Orff pedagogy to provide music educators with referable data and experiences; it also enriches the research on teaching strategies in the context of quality education. The shortcomings of the study are that the sample size and scope are limited, and the data may have some bias; the interviews only represent the views of some teachers and cannot fully summarize the national situation. Future research can expand the sample to cover more regions, and adopt methods such as empirical observation and long-term follow-up to analyze the effects and mechanisms of Orff pedagogy in depth. In addition, the application of information technology in Orff teaching should be further explored, such as the use of smart terminals and online platform resources to enhance the interactivity and generalizability of teaching. Through continuous practice and research, the Orff pedagogy will surely blossom into greater vitality in Chinese elementary school music education.

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