

Investigation on the application status of professional knowledge in the workplace of music graduates and research on improvement strategies——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 music graduates from the Guangdong Zhaoqing University School of Music over the past three years. It focuses on exploring the actual working conditions of graduates upon entering their units, the application and effectiveness of their knowledge and skills in practice, as well as the knowledge framework and needs they possess after 3-5 years of work. The study reveals that society and employers have new requirements and directions for talent each 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. In contrast, the curriculum design, teaching models, and implementation of teaching content during university years highlight a disconnect between higher education institutions' training and local practical needs. Most graduates also feel a gap between their knowledge and skills and classroom instruction. Through comparative analysis of the survey data, effective data are genuinely summarized and integrated. This analysis reflects on whether the training model, objectives, standards, curriculum design, and discipline construction of the musicology program at Zhaoqing University School of Music are reasonable and well-established. 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; workplace knowledge; promotion strategies

Music students at teacher education institutions bear the dual mission of inheriting and innovating musical culture. From the perspective of inheritance, they are guardians of national 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. This article focuses on the current status of graduates from the School of Music at Zhaoqing University over the past three years, examining their academic performance during undergraduate studies, actual work conditions upon entering their respective organizations, the application and effectiveness of their knowledge and skills in practice, as well as the knowledge framework and needs they possess after 3-5 years of work. After analysis and comparison, these findings will be fed back to the School of Music, providing valuable references for educational philosophy, teaching models, curriculum content, course design, resource integration, discipline construction, and quality assurance in music education.

1 Current status of professional ability development of music graduates after 3-5 years of work

The standard that graduates of national teacher education programs should meet five years after graduation is a systematic and comprehensive system aimed at enhancing the quality and level of teacher education, laying a solid foundation for cultivating outstanding educational talents. To achieve this goal, efforts must be made in curriculum design, faculty strength, practical teaching, application of educational technology, monitoring of educational quality, as well as teacher ethics and competence, continuously reforming and improving the teacher education system. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries and regions, drawing on advanced educational concepts and practical experiences to continuously enrich and improve the standards and systems of teacher education. This article, through a survey of the employment status of musicology graduates from the Music College of Zhaoqing University in Guangdong over the past three years, evaluates the standards that graduates can meet three years after graduation from four dimensions, as follows:

(1) In teaching practice, they can adhere to the correct political direction and values, have good professional ethics and cultural literacy, love music education, and be the guide of students' growth process. 47.83% of graduates hope to achieve this.

(2) On the basis of a solid grasp of the knowledge system, ideas and methods of music discipline, follow the laws and

characteristics of students; development and music education, and creatively carry out music classroom teaching in primary and secondary schools according to the standards of music curriculum. 56.52% of graduates hope to achieve this.

(3) Class management and class collective construction are carried out according to the basic principles and methods of moral education in primary and secondary schools; extracurricular music activities are organized, campus culture construction is carried out, and the comprehensive educational function of music education activities is implemented. 43.48% of graduates hope to achieve this.

(4) Have a lifelong learning and independent development consciousness, be able to track the development trend of international music education, carry out music education and teaching research, grow into school and regional backbone, and become qualified primary and secondary school music teachers with creativity. 43.48% of graduates hope to achieve this.

According to the data, graduates hope to enhance or maintain their abilities in areas such as educational practice, music subject knowledge systems and creative teaching, class management and campus culture construction, as well as lifelong learning and self-development over the next 3-5 years. Enhancing these skills will help them achieve better results in their careers in music education and better serve students' growth and development. In terms of future planning, most graduates place significant or very high importance on professional learning and improvement outside of teaching. A total of 66.67% of graduates have plans for further studies

2 Investigation and analysis

2.1 Comparison of achievements

(1) There is a noticeable gap between the professional knowledge scores that graduates acquire in school and their actual teaching practice abilities. That is, there is an imbalance between knowledge input and output; theory and practice do not align effectively, making it difficult for teaching to achieve the integration of knowledge and action, resulting in merely "learning" without knowing how to apply it; (2) Graduates from different regions and schools have significant differences in foundational disciplinary knowledge, core professional knowledge, and skill requirements and applications; (3) The differences in the mastery and application of disciplinary knowledge among students vary, with urban graduates showing significantly higher levels than rural graduates, differing in personal knowledge breadth, psychological cognition, understanding of disciplines, and practical skills; (4) From the perspective of faculty members at our institute, practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. Education should connect theory with practice, and teachers need to shift from being instructors to learners, focusing on "effect-oriented teaching and learning." It is essential to accurately grasp the professional requirements of basic education, helping students correctly understand the position and characteristics of music in culture, learn and master musical discipline knowledge and performance skills as well as educational theories, and strengthen the practical aspects of teaching to prepare students comprehensively before they enter the workforce. At the same time, educators must also consider the "sustainability of education and the development of individuality in education."

2.2 Comprehensive analysis of the opening of professional courses and the actual use rate in work

(1) Most graduates focus excessively on professional skills and their practicality, overlooking the wisdom of "a nine-story terrace starts with a pile of earth." They lack the most basic principles of musical literacy and the awareness to cultivate a mindset of interdisciplinary collaboration and long-term artistic cultivation.

(2) In the 2018 version of the curriculum plan, the configuration of musicology courses is divided into three categories: "Foundation Courses," "Core Professional Courses," and "Elective Courses." These three types of courses complement each other, forming a comprehensive framework that develops students' musical literacy and professional abilities in musicology. However, the content of "Foundation Courses," "Core Courses," and "Elective Courses" in this curriculum plan lacks rigor and completeness when considering the five essential skills required for primary and secondary school music teachers and the knowledge structure needed by graduates. According to the characteristics and development patterns of the discipline: "Professional Foundation Courses" serve as the foundation, aiming to provide students with a solid theoretical base and fundamental skills; "Core Professional Courses" are the most important and distinctive courses in musicology, delving deeply into various aspects of the field, which are crucial for the formation of students' professional competence; "Elective Courses" offer students the opportunity to freely choose based on personal interests and career development plans, aiming to meet their individual learning needs, and these courses are diverse and flexible. According to the above situation, make the following adjustments for reference: "Foundation Courses" include music theory basics, sight-singing and ear training, an introduction to music history, music aesthetics, fundamentals of music technology (MIDI technology), and an overview of art; "Core Courses" include music analysis, composition techniques, specialized topics in musicology (such as Eastern and Western ethnic music, music psychology, music sociology), performance

practice (vocal, piano, instrumental, choral, and conducting); "Elective Courses" include research on specific styles or periods of music (such as Baroque music studies, jazz theory and performance, contemporary popular music creation, etc., exploring the characteristics and development of a particular musical style or period), interdisciplinary music courses (such as music and film, music and literature, music and philosophy, combining music with other art forms or disciplines to foster students' comprehensive thinking skills), vocal arts and instrumental performance (providing broader training in performance and singing skills, especially for students not majoring in instruments or vocal music), and methods and techniques of music education (for students who intend to pursue careers in music education, offering training in teaching methods, curriculum design, educational technology, etc.).

(3) In comparison with the course settings and teaching models of our college's 2018 version of the training program, while the overall curriculum does reflect the focus of national teacher education programs in this discipline, it overlooks "local characteristics," "professional sustainability," and "individual development in education." This results in many courses failing to achieve their ultimate educational goals within a limited time frame. The survey also reveals that graduates exhibit a phenomenon of "high scores but low abilities," with a significant gap between their knowledge and skills and practical work applications. Upon closer examination, there are issues with the teaching model. For instance, students majoring in vocal music, piano, and instrumental music spend two years learning under a one-to-three teaching model, with only 10% of them continuing for another year in their third year, while 90% of them are at a cliff point during their third or fourth year. From the perspective of the characteristics and patterns of professional skill learning, such learning is a process of "time-based learning" and a transformation from "quantity to quality." This teaching model can hinder the continuous development of professional skills, weaken the foundation of basic professional knowledge and skills, and fail to provide a solid theoretical base for students' future employment or reliable support for their practical work. As a result, it fails to meet the expected educational outcomes and levels, leading to an imbalance between initial teaching plans and final teaching results, thereby affecting the quality of education.

(4) The setting of "elective courses" should consider the continuity of foundational professional knowledge in the discipline, as well as the needs of contemporary developments (such as AI music education technology) and the demands placed on music teacher qualifications by local communities. The curriculum design and implementation plan for university courses should better align with the educational goals of primary and secondary schools, ensuring comprehensive "teaching and learning" as well as "applying knowledge in practice," and providing solid support for pre-employment education.

(5) It is essential to balance non-specialized courses with specialized courses, guiding students from a narrow focus on professional skills to a broader knowledge base. This approach encourages them to explore various humanities and scientific fields, enhancing their overall humanistic qualities. By integrating professional knowledge with different disciplines, we aim to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are knowledgeable across multiple domains and possess a broad range of values.

(6) Currently, non-specialized course instruction is almost entirely concentrated in the first and second years, leading to insufficient practice time for foundational professional courses and significantly impacting the mastery and improvement of professional skills. A review of the college's curriculum reveals that tasks in the first and second years are heavy while time is limited, whereas there is more time but fewer tasks in the third and fourth years. It is recommended to optimize course scheduling to achieve balanced development. For instance, core professional courses should be comprehensively and intensively taught in the first, second, and third years, with general education courses integrated throughout. In the second and third years, major courses, elective courses, and general education courses should be reasonably arranged. In the fourth year, relevant internships, practical work, and thesis writing should be systematically conducted.

In summary, based on a comprehensive analysis of national policies and the needs of society and people, we aim to establish curriculum settings, teaching models, and teaching content that align with our college's development. We are bold in implementing "subtraction" reforms by reducing ineffective elective courses and adding high-quality core professional courses. We will also break away from the old credit system management and establish a new credit system reform. On the foundation of enhancing high-quality discipline teaching, we will optimize resource integration and discipline construction to promote the development of musicology at our college towards higher, better, more comprehensive, and precise goals.

3 Suggestions and measures

3.1 Strengthen professional skills training

To address the shortcomings in professional skills among graduates, universities should strengthen the study of relevant professional courses and practical training during their college years to improve students' comprehensive professional skills. It is recommended that specialized skill courses (such as vocal music, piano, and instrumental music) be

offered for three years. In the first year, teaching should be conducted in a group format (1:6), while in the second and third years, these courses should become the main focus of specialization. The selection rate for these courses accounts for 60-70% of all musicology students. The curriculum should integrate skill training with pedagogy (in stages), focusing not on "depth and precision" but on correct methods and approaches. Emphasis should be placed on teaching students how to learn and teach, fostering a lifelong commitment to learning music. This not only lays a foundation for their future career development and transition but also enables them to use scientific methods to guide student learning in the future.

3.2 Increase practical teaching experience

In order to improve the career development ability of graduates, the practical teaching links should be adjusted accordingly, such as organizing more teaching practice, observation and other activities, so that graduates can accumulate experience and improve their ability in practice.

3.3 Strengthen career planning guidance

Strengthen the career planning guidance for graduates, help them to clarify their career goals and development direction, and make a reasonable learning plan and career development path.

3.4 Suggestions for teaching practice

Activate the teaching philosophy of "going out and bringing in," establish a win-win cooperation mechanism with local primary and secondary schools, set up music research rooms for primary and secondary schools, regularly conduct teaching research activities, invite high-quality teachers from primary and secondary schools to give lessons, allowing students to enter the classrooms of primary and secondary school music classes. In this subtle process, guide students to understand, recognize, and practice, ensuring a seamless transition into their future careers after graduation. Allocate the entire semester's internship duration effectively across all stages of university teaching, such as aligning professional pedagogy and skills instruction, combining theoretical and practical teaching, and regularly implementing the "bringing in and going out" teaching model.

4 Implications

4.1 The accurate positioning and professional affiliation of musicology need to be deeply considered

To foster an innovative mindset rooted in a local perspective, the college's curriculum design and implementation should adhere to the unified teaching syllabus for higher normal music education while further innovating based on local conditions, student needs, and societal demands. A course system that aligns with the characteristics and principles of our college's musicology teaching, focusing on enhancing humanistic qualities and centering on humanities disciplines, should be designed.

4.2 The opening of professional and non-professional courses in the college

First, the characteristics of the discipline and the "teacher education" nature must be considered; it is essential to balance these two aspects. Required courses should have high support indicators (high, medium, low) for classification, with general education and key development intertwined and advanced in an orderly manner. Efforts should focus on local music education (fully aligning with primary and secondary school music education to guide talent cultivation), aiming to build effective subject construction and curriculum design. This will enhance the quality of teaching at our college, highlight its distinctive features, promote high-quality development in music education, and provide specialized talents for the country, society, and local areas.

4.3 Students' resource status

Adhering to the principles of "people-oriented" and "student-centered," we should reasonably and effectively design courses and manage teaching, giving equal weight to overall development and individual growth. In line with the contemporary demand for music teachers, we must rigorously follow the teaching laws and characteristics of each music discipline, scheduling time appropriately to ensure orderly and effective implementation. This truly reflects the distinctive features of music education at local teacher training institutions.

4.4 Teachers should have a good understanding of the training direction and goal of music

Accurate understanding, clear teaching ideas, and flexible diverse teaching methods should be built on the foundation of knowledge updates and innovative teaching models, to teach students how to learn effectively and apply what they have learned; establish a joint training mechanism for relevant professional teachers, form "excellence cultivation" teams (with student selection ratios between 10-15%), and comprehensively advance high-quality educational reform.

4.5 The college shall conduct a graduate work reflux survey every three years

From the perspectives of society, culture, and schools, analyze, study, compare, and reflect on the development of music teacher education: what to teach? How to teach it? As Dr. Dai Baisheng said, "Clarify when, where, and by whom music education is implemented, and define its goals—why we teach." Only by clearly identifying the professional orientation of the college and accurately positioning the training objectives can holistic education be effectively implemented, cultivating versatile, specialized, and foundational talents.

4.6 There are deficiencies in the research

In the context of the normalization of the "mask incident," offline seminars and questionnaire surveys have been restricted. To improve response efficiency, the research team conducted screening, comparison, and simplification of the questionnaires, which may result in key information not being included in the analysis. When answering questions related to critical issues, there is inconsistency between the results from on-site visits and online questionnaires. In this regard, the team primarily relies on the results from on-site visits, using online questionnaire data as supplementary reference for comparison and analysis. This approach can lead to some bias in the data due to insufficient depth in the research.

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