

Reform of the Method of Teaching Music in Elementary Schools: Taking the Central and Eastern Regions of Inner Mongolia as an Example

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Abstract: Music education plays a crucial role in the holistic development of students by fostering creativity, cultural appreciation, and cognitive abilities. In the central and eastern regions of Inner Mongolia, music education has traditionally been rooted in both Chinese and Mongolia musical heritage. However, the existing teaching methodologies face challenges in effectively integrating traditional and modern approaches. This study investigates the current state of music education and instruction in primary schools through surveys, interviews, and other research methods, gathering first-hand data. It aims to understand the present condition of primary school music education, classify existing issues, and conduct an analysis. Additionally, it examines the challenges and obstacles in primary school music instruction and provides arguments and informational support for overcoming these difficulties.

Keywords: Music education, elementary school, teaching methods, reform.

I. INTRODUCTION

Music education is an essential component of the elementary school curriculum, contributing to students' emotional, intellectual, and cultural development. In Inner Mongolia, where a rich musical heritage exists, music education serves not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a medium for cultural preservation. However, the traditional methods of teaching music often rely on rote memorization and lack interactive, student-centered approaches. This paper examines the need for reform in music education methods in elementary schools in the central and eastern regions of Inner Mongolia. Music education has long been recognized as a fundamental component of a well-rounded education, playing a vital role in the intellectual, emotional, and social development of students. Beyond enhancing cognitive skills such as memory, concentration, and problem-solving, music education fosters creativity, cultural awareness, and emotional expression (Hallam, 2010). In primary schools, music not only introduces students to the rich world of sound but also shapes their broader understanding of cultural heritage and artistic expression. In regions like Inner Mongolia, where traditional Chinese and Mongolia musical heritages are deeply intertwined, music education serves as a bridge between the past and the future, combining age-old musical practices with modern educational approaches (Zhang, 2015).

Despite the acknowledged significance of music education, there are challenges in implementing effective teaching methodologies in primary schools, especially in areas where the fusion of traditional and contemporary teaching practices has not been thoroughly explored. In the central and eastern regions of Inner Mongolia, the traditional music heritage—comprising both Chinese and Mongolia influences—poses unique opportunities and difficulties for educators. While these regions have a rich tradition of music, the integration of these traditional forms with contemporary music education curricula has proven to be a complex task (Li, 2012). Furthermore, there is a need for an examination of the existing teaching methodologies, which often struggle to strike a balance between preserving traditional music while also aligning with modern educational frameworks and students' evolving needs (Liu, 2017).

This study aims to investigate the current state of music education in primary schools in the central and eastern regions of Inner Mongolia, focusing on the integration of traditional and modern methodologies in music teaching. By conducting surveys and interviews with both teachers and students, this research gathers firsthand data to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current educational environment. The study will also identify

specific challenges faced by educators in this region and will provide recommendations on how to overcome these obstacles, contributing to the broader field of music education in culturally rich regions.

The Current State of Music Education in Inner Mongolia

Traditional Teaching Methods The traditional approach to music education in the region primarily emphasizes textbook-based instruction, teacher-led demonstrations, and passive learning. Mongolian folk music and Chinese classical music are incorporated, but they are often presented in a rigid format that limits creative expression.

Challenges in Music Education

- **Lack of Interactive Learning:** Music classes often focus on theoretical knowledge rather than active engagement.
- **Limited Use of Technology:** Digital tools and multimedia resources are underutilized.
- **Insufficient Teacher Training:** Many educators lack specialized training in music pedagogy.
- **Curriculum Standardization:** National curriculum guidelines do not always accommodate the unique cultural aspects of Inner Mongolia.

The Need for Reform To address these challenges, music education in elementary schools must evolve to incorporate more engaging and effective teaching strategies. Key areas for reform include:

- **Integrating Traditional and Modern Music Pedagogies:** Combining folk music traditions with contemporary music education methods.
- **Implementing Student-Centered Learning:** Encouraging interactive activities such as group performances, improvisation, and music composition.
- **Utilizing Technology:** Incorporating digital resources, smart classrooms, and online learning platforms to enhance music education.
- **Enhancing Teacher Training Programs:** Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to adopt new teaching methodologies.

Proposed Reforms in Music Teaching Methods

Project-Based and Experiential Learning Engaging students in hands-on music activities such as composing songs, playing traditional Mongolia's instruments, and participating in school performances can foster a deeper connection with music.

Bilingual and Multicultural Music Education Given the bilingual environment in Inner Mongolia, integrating Mongolia and Chinese music education can promote cross-cultural understanding while preserving ethnic musical traditions.

Incorporation of Technology in Music Education The use of digital tools, music software, and virtual instruments can modernize teaching methodologies and make music lessons more engaging for students.

Collaboration with Local Musicians and Cultural Institutions Partnering with professional musicians, cultural organizations, and music academies can provide students with exposure to high-quality musical experiences and mentorship.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the experiences, perceptions, and pedagogical practices of music teachers and students. A phenomenological approach is adopted to gain deeper insights into their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). This approach allows the researcher to understand the subjective meanings that participants ascribe to their musical learning and teaching experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling is used to select participants who have rich experiences in music education (Patton, 2015). The study includes music teachers from different educational settings (e.g., primary, secondary, and higher education) and students at varying levels of musical proficiency. The sample size is determined by data saturation, ensuring comprehensive insights without unnecessary redundancy (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data Collection Methods

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with music teachers and students to explore their perspectives on teaching methods, learning experiences, and challenges in music education. Each interview lasts approximately 45–60 minutes and follows an interview guide with open-ended questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Focus Groups: Group discussions with students and teachers allow for collective reflections on shared experiences, challenges, and best practices in music education (Morgan, 1997).

Development and Implementation of the Teacher Questionnaire

Primary school music teachers play a fundamental role in implementing the music education curriculum, assessing the effectiveness of classroom instruction, and executing reforms in the core music curriculum. They understand the current teaching status of primary school music educators from various perspectives, including teaching philosophy, instructional approaches, and lesson quality. This understanding helps identify real and specific issues in music education and lays the foundation for further research. The teacher's survey includes five dimensions: curriculum standards, teaching content, core musical competencies, teaching methods, and curriculum reform, comprising 43 questions and a total of 96 survey items, all of which were valid responses. The content and questions of the survey are presented in Table 1.

Table.1 Survey Framework and Questions

Survey Dimension	Question Numbers
Curriculum Standards	Questions 1-5
Teaching Content	Questions 6-13
Core Musical Competencies	Questions 14-28
Teaching Methods	Questions 24-29
Curriculum Reform	Questions 30-43

Development and Implementation of the Student Questionnaire

Students are a key part of the learning process. Their attitude toward music lessons, level of musical knowledge, and skill development reflect the effectiveness of music education. Do students find music classes engaging? Can classroom music lessons enhance their aesthetic perception and experience? Does music education truly fulfill its educational role? These practical questions are directly reflected in students' evaluations. The student questionnaire includes four dimensions: teaching content, knowledge of core musical competencies, teacher's instructional approach, and learning environment, with a total of 20 questions. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed, of which 592 were valid responses. The content and questions of the survey are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Content of the Primary School Student Questionnaire

Survey Dimension	Question Numbers
Teaching Content	Questions 5-8
Musical Knowledge	Questions 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 17
Teacher's Instructional Approach	Questions 14-16
Learning Environment (both within and outside the classroom)	Questions 2, 9, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20

Interview Design and Implementation

The interview outline consists of two levels: teacher and student. The teacher interview mainly focuses on dimensions such as teaching content, curriculum standards, teaching methods, and assessment methods. The student interview mainly explores areas such as musical experiences and course content. Interviews are conducted in different formats, including in-person interviews, phone interviews, and online communication platforms (e.g., WeChat, email).

A total of 96 teacher questionnaires were distributed, and all 96 responses were valid. Additionally, 600 student questionnaires were distributed, with 592 valid responses received. (See Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Statistical Overview of Teacher Questionnaire Responses

Region	Eastern Region	Central Region	Outside the Province
Actual Distributed Quantity	52	40	4
Actual Returned Quantity	52	40	4
Valid Responses	52	40	4
Valid Response Rate	100%	100%	100%

Table 4. Statistical Overview of Student Questionnaire Responses

Region	Eastern Region	Central Region	Outside the Province
Actual Distributed Quantity	335	207	50
Actual Returned Quantity	335	207	50
Valid Responses	335	207	50
Valid Response Rate	100%	100%	100%

Interview and Investigation Status

Primary school music teachers are the direct implementers of the curriculum and the most credible evaluators of the quality of music education. Therefore, teachers' assessments of the curriculum are practical and authoritative. The specifics of the interviews are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Statistical Overview of Teacher Interviews

Region	Eastern Region	Central Region	Outside the Province
Number of Interviews	20	10	3
Interview Format	Field interview, Phone interview	Field interview, Phone interview	Phone interview

III. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis follows a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to ensure trustworthiness and validity (Nowell et al., 2017). NVivo software is used for organizing and managing qualitative data.

IV. RESULTS

Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire Results

To gain a more detailed understanding of the current state of primary school music teachers, various analysis tools were used to ensure the accuracy of the data collected from the teacher questionnaire. SPSS data analysis tools, CNKI data analysis tools, and other relevant tools were employed for this purpose.

Table 6. The research and analysis of the teacher’s difficulty level of the music teaching process

Items	Know musical notes	Sing	Listening music	Musical Instruments	Music composition
1.What do you do most when teaching music?	40(41.67%)	70(72.92%)	36(37.5%)	20(20.83%)	6(6.25%)
2. Your challenges in the teaching	18(18.75%)	7(7.29%)	24(25%)	28(29.17%)	56(58.33%)
3. Which part of the training material do you think is best written?	26(27.08%)	56(58.33%)	38(39.58%)	11(11.46%)	10(10.42%)
4. Which part of the textbook do you think is not well written?	14(14.58%)	12(12.5%)	20(20.83%)	33(34.38%)	29(30.21%)
5. What you think is most important when teaching	54(56.25%)	63(65.63%)	45(46.88%)	19(19.79%)	23(23.96%)
6. What you think is not the most important thing in the learning material	11(11.46%)	7(7.29%)	9(9.38%)	33(34.38%)	24(25%)
7. What do you think students learn easiest?	16(16.67%)	80(83.33%)	17(17.71%)	8(8.33%)	4(4.17%)
8. What do you think is the most difficult thing for students to learn?	30(31.25%)	3(3.13%)	19(19.79%)	34(35.42%)	44(45.83%)

According to the analysis presented in Table 6, the most well-mastered teaching content by teachers is "singing," while the least mastered content is "composition." Teachers generally find "teaching musical notation and composing music" difficult and believe that students are not interested in these topics.

For students, the most common and easiest learning content to master is "singing," followed by composition of musical instruments. The selection of teaching content by teachers tends to be biased, and their limited understanding of comprehensive development reduces students' interest and engagement in learning. As a result, the role and impact of music education are somewhat diminished, Table 7.

Table 7. The research and analysis of the student’s favorability of the learning music

School Location * What is your favorite part of Music class? (multiple choices) crosstab								
			What is your favorite part of Music class? (multiple choices)					Total
			Sing	Music theory	Music note	instrume nts	Music games	
Location of	Eastern	Count	133	43	0	0	0	176

school	rural areas	Location of school %	75.6%	24.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
		Total amount %	22.5%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.7%	
	Cities in the Eastern Region	Count	0	63	28	0	0	91	
		Location of school %	0.0%	69.2%	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
		Total amount %	0.0%	10.6%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	
	Central Region	Count	0	0	21	29	0	50	
		Location of school %	0.0%	0.0%	42.0%	58.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
		Total amount %	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%	4.9%	0.0%	8.4%	
	Rural areas of the central region	Count	65	0	0	65	95	225	
		Location of school %	28.9%	0.0%	0.0%	28.9%	42.2%	100.0%	
		Total amount %	11.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.0%	16.0%	38.0%	
	Cities outside the province	Count	5	45	0	0	0	50	
		Location of school %	10.0%	90.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
		Total amount %	0.8%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	
	TOTAL		Count	203	151	49	94	95	592
			Location of school %	34.3%	25.5%	8.3%	15.9%	16.0%	100.0%
			Total amount %	34.3%	25.5%	8.3%	15.9%	16.0%	100.0%

From the analysis of Table 7, the data show that primary school students in rural and urban areas in the central and eastern regions have the lowest percentage of liking singing, music, and playing in music lessons. Therefore, it can be concluded that in primary school music lessons, students prefer simple and interesting music lessons and are not interested in music theory knowledge, which is relatively difficult to learn, which also shows the problems faced in primary school music lessons. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the comprehensive development of students.

The reform of music education in elementary schools in Inner Mongolia is essential for fostering creativity, cultural preservation, and student engagement. By integrating interactive teaching methods, leveraging technology, and providing better teacher training, the quality of music education can be significantly enhanced. Future research should focus on assessing the impact of these reforms and exploring further innovations in music pedagogy tailored to the cultural and educational landscape of Inner Mongolia. In the case of teacher interview analysis, the interview process involved 33 teachers from both urban and rural areas.

Table 8: Overview of Teacher Interview Participants

Category	Number of Teachers
Urban Teachers	18
Rural Teachers	15
Total Teachers	33

The topics discussed included musical teaching materials, curriculum standards, teaching environment, teacher structure, teaching methods, and more. Musical Teaching Materials & Curriculum Content: The materials used by the teachers were all from "folk education publications," and many teachers noted that there were various versions of these materials that differed in terms of content alignment and difficulty level.

Table 9: Musical Teaching Materials and Curriculum

Aspect	Observations
Source of Materials	"Folk education publications"
Variation in Materials	Differences in alignment and difficulty
Teacher Preference	Familiar materials for smooth teaching

Teachers prefer using materials they are familiar with, as this helps in the smooth implementation of the teaching process. Teaching Content for Primary School Students: Teachers emphasized that the content for primary school students should be easy to grasp and engaging. Popular topics include "singing," "rhythm," "role-playing," and "musical games." These are aligned with the developmental needs of young children, as their motor and cognitive skills are still developing. The simplicity of singing and rhythm, in particular, attracts the most interest from students. "Musical games" and "rhythm" are seen as effective methods to engage students by tapping into their natural energy and curiosity. Challenging Content for Primary School Students: Teachers identified more complex topics such as "musical theory," "musical notation," "choral singing," and "Mongolian folk songs" as challenging for students.

Table 10: Teaching Content for Primary School Students

Category	Examples	Engagement Level
Easy and Engaging	Singing, Rhythm, Role-playing, Musical Games	High
Challenging	Musical Theory, Musical Notation, Choral Singing, Mongolian folk songs.	Low

Implementation of the "Music Curriculum Standards": In terms of the implementation of the "Music Curriculum Standards" (2022 edition), teachers expressed that approximately two-thirds of them were able to meet the goals set out in the intermediate section of the standards. However, one-third of teachers were unable to fully meet these goals due to various factors such as inadequate professional development, lack of resources, and limited support for music education in schools.

Table 11: Implementation of "Music Curriculum Standards" (2022 Edition)

Level of Goal Achievement	Percentage of Teachers
Fully Met	66%
Not Fully Met	34%

Teaching Methodologies: In terms of teaching methodologies, the interviewed teachers suggested a wide range of strategies, including "experiential teaching," "inquiry-based teaching," "discovery-based teaching," "game-based teaching," and "collaborative teaching." However, many teachers still do not adapt their teaching methods to the specific needs of their classrooms. The general consensus is that music education should be student-centered, with teachers creating opportunities for active participation, building students' interest in music, and promoting self-directed learning.

Table 12: Teaching Methodologies Used

Methodology Type	Description
Experiential Teaching	Hands-on learning experiences
Inquiry-Based Teaching	Encouraging questioning and exploration
Discovery-Based Teaching	Learning through discovery
Game-Based Teaching	Using games to enhance learning
Collaborative Teaching	Peer-based learning strategies

Issues in Current Music Education: Several challenges were identified in the current state of primary school music education: Inadequate number of music teachers: There is a shortage of music teachers, and the professional quality of music teachers needs improvement. Inadequate training in specialized music skills such as accompaniment, choreography, and instrumental performance is evident. Lack of emphasis on music education: Schools often do not prioritize music education, and music classes are treated more as formalities. Financial investment in music education is insufficient, and the environment for music teaching is not well-established, especially in rural areas. Implementation of "student-centered" teaching concepts: Despite progress in educational reforms, the implementation of student-centered approaches in music education is still lacking. Outdated teaching methods, failure to address individual differences, and neglect of music's role in education are still prevalent.

However, the purpose of the student interviews was to understand their attitudes toward music education and assess their perceptions of music teachers. The main findings are as follows: Student Attitude Towards Music: The majority of students expressed a strong interest in music classes. They enjoy singing, dancing, and playing musical games. These activities are particularly appealing because they are fun, engaging, and appropriate for their developmental stage. Perceptions of Music Teachers: Students generally have a high regard for their music teachers. They view their teachers as capable and enjoy attending music classes. The quality of teaching is positively correlated with students' enthusiasm for the subject, and a supportive teacher-student relationship contributes to a positive learning experience. The interview analysis reveals that while students enjoy music education and have positive perceptions of their teachers, challenges such as teacher shortages, outdated methodologies, and inadequate resource allocation hinder the effectiveness of music education in Inner Mongolia. Future reforms should focus on professional development, technology integration, and enhancing student-centered teaching approaches.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight both the strengths and challenges of primary school music education in Inner Mongolia. While music education plays a crucial role in fostering students' creativity, cognitive development, and cultural appreciation, various obstacles hinder its full implementation.

One of the key strengths identified is students' positive attitude toward music education. The majority of students enjoy music classes, particularly when they involve interactive elements such as singing, rhythm exercises, and musical games. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that active learning strategies enhance student engagement in music education (Hallam, 2010; Swanwick, 1999). Teachers' commitment to incorporating engaging methods, such as experiential, inquiry-based, and game-based learning, is promising. However, despite recognizing these strategies' effectiveness, many educators struggle to implement them consistently. This may be due to inadequate professional development opportunities, a concern echoed in earlier studies on music education in resource-limited settings (Ho, 2017).

The shortage of qualified music teachers remains a significant challenge. Many teachers lack specialized training in accompaniment, choreography, and instrumental instruction, leading to a reliance on traditional, teacher-centered approaches. This is consistent with research indicating that professional development is critical in improving the quality of music instruction (Pitts, 2000). Addressing this gap through targeted training programs and workshops could significantly enhance the effectiveness of music education in Inner Mongolia.

Additionally, the study reveals disparities in resource allocation, particularly between urban and rural schools. Rural schools often lack appropriate musical instruments, facilities, and financial support, making it difficult to implement a comprehensive music curriculum. The limited availability of standardized teaching materials further exacerbates this issue. Variations in content difficulty across different versions of "folk education publications" suggest a lack of consistency in curricular standards. These findings align with previous research indicating that resource constraints negatively impact music education outcomes (Cox & Stevens, 2016).

Another important challenge is the implementation of the "Music Curriculum Standards" (2022 edition). While two-thirds of the teachers report meeting the curriculum's intermediate goals, a substantial portion struggles due to resource and training limitations. This raises concerns about whether national education policies adequately support music teachers in achieving curricular objectives. Prior studies have emphasized that effective curriculum implementation requires both institutional backing and teacher readiness (Gouzouasis et al., 2014).

VI. CONCLUSION

The study underscores the need for systematic reforms in primary school music education in Inner Mongolia. Although students exhibit enthusiasm for music classes, challenges such as teacher shortages,

inadequate training, insufficient financial support, and disparities in resource distribution hinder the full realization of music education's potential.

To enhance music education, several recommendations can be made. First, professional development initiatives should be expanded to equip teachers with specialized skills in music pedagogy. Second, a standardized and culturally relevant curriculum should be developed, ensuring consistency across different schools. Third, rural schools require greater investment in infrastructure and musical instruments to provide an equitable learning experience. Lastly, adopting student-centered teaching methods can further improve engagement and learning outcomes. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these interventions and examine innovative teaching approaches tailored to Inner Mongolia's unique cultural and educational landscape. By addressing the identified challenges, policymakers and educators can create a more inclusive, effective, and culturally enriching music education system.

VII. LIMITATIONS

Despite the strengths of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on qualitative methods, while valuable for in-depth understanding, limits generalizability beyond the specific study context (Creswell, 2013). The findings are specific to music teachers and students in particular educational settings and may not fully represent broader populations. Second, participant self-reports in interviews and focus groups may introduce response bias, as individuals might provide socially desirable answers rather than fully candid responses (Patton, 2015). Third, resource constraints, such as time limitations for extended observations and the availability of participants, may impact data richness. Future research could integrate longitudinal studies or mixed-methods approaches to enhance validity and breadth.

VIII. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study suggest several future research directions. First, further studies could explore how professional development programs impact music teachers' instructional effectiveness and student outcomes over time. Second, investigating the role of technology and digital tools in music education could provide insights into innovative teaching strategies that enhance engagement. Third, comparative studies between different cultural and educational contexts could reveal best practices applicable to various learning environments. Lastly, policy-oriented research examining the effectiveness of government and institutional support for music education could help inform more sustainable and equitable educational reforms.

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