

Research on the Issues and Strategies of Music Literacy Development for Vocational College Early Childhood Education Major Students

Qi Huifang¹, Jiang Hao²

¹*Art and Design College, Guangzhou Vocational College of Technology&Business, Guangzhou, China*

²*University of the Cordilleras, Baguio, Philippines
316287571@qq.com*

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Abstract: Music literacy is an essential component for early childhood education professionals, as it contributes to the comprehensive development of students and improves their employability. Currently, vocational colleges tend to prioritize the development of technical music skills in their early childhood education programs, while neglecting the cultivation of students' music literacy. This oversight hinders the overall quality of professionals in early childhood education. To gain a better understanding of the current state of music literacy development among early childhood education majors in vocational colleges, this research aims to examine the practical conditions of these students in Chinese vocational colleges. It discusses ways to enhance students' foundational knowledge of music, their musical sensitivity, and their aesthetic appreciation. By doing so, this study aims to help early childhood education students improve their music literacy and promote their overall development.

1. Introduction

With the development of society, the focus of talent cultivation in vocational early childhood education has shifted from emphasizing the development of basic skills to prioritizing the cultivation of comprehensive qualities and overall intellectual abilities. In 2023, the Ministry of Education's Department of Teacher Affairs issued a notice regarding the publication of the "Key Points for the Work of the Ministry of Education's Department of Teacher Affairs in 2023." The notice emphasized the need to enhance the quality of training for kindergarten teachers in primary and secondary schools. It also highlighted the importance of strengthening the construction of a regional teacher research and training system, formulating opinions on strengthening the development of teacher development institutions at the county level in the new era, and improving the research and training level of these institutions [1]. In 2018, the "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Development in the New Era" proposed to comprehensively improve the quality of kindergarten teachers and build a high-quality teaching workforce that excels in preschool education. The goal of the early childhood

education profession is to cultivate high-quality and highly skilled teaching staff for kindergartens [2]. The goal of the early childhood education profession in China is to provide high-quality teaching staff for kindergartens. At the same time, music literacy is an essential skill for early childhood education majors. It plays a crucial role in their overall development and directly affects the quality of music education for young children.

Based on an understanding of the current status of music literacy among early childhood education major students in vocational colleges, this study aims to analyze and identify existing issues. With the goal of enhancing the music literacy of early childhood education majors, this research focuses on strategies to improve music literacy. The emphasis is on enhancing the quality of talent cultivation for early childhood education professionals, which in turn enhances the employability of early childhood education major students.

2. The Essence of Music Literacy

Contemporary American philosopher of music education, David Elliott, provides the following explanation of music literacy: "Music literacy is synonymous with understanding music, and it encompasses a multidimensional, effective comprehension and practice." "It refers to the production of multidimensional, relevant, coherent, productive, open, and educable awareness within the context of artistic music creation and professional music listening" [3]. Music literacy is not just a single professional skill; it is a comprehensive, multidimensional ability. It encompasses various aspects, including fundamental knowledge of music, cognitive abilities in music, aesthetic capabilities in music, and emotional intelligence in music, among others. It encompasses a combination of foundational knowledge and cognitive abilities in music, aesthetic sensitivity and appreciation of music, as well as holistic competence in music.

Music literacy encompasses a broad range of skills and abilities, including the ability to appreciate, perceive, understand, create, and express oneself in the realm of musical art [4]. It is an essential component of the curriculum for students majoring in early childhood education at vocational colleges, as it contributes to enhancing their overall competence. Music literacy primarily consists of components such as artistic appreciation, aesthetic perception, cultural understanding, imaginative creativity, and artistic expression [5].

3. Survey and Analysis of Music Literacy among Early Childhood Education Students

3.1 Survey of the Overall Situation of Music Literacy among Early Childhood Education Students

In response to the increasing demand for enrollment in early childhood education programs at vocational colleges, driven by societal development, there is a growing number of students entering these programs. However, the overall level of music literacy among these students is generally low. According to a survey conducted by Wang Xinle, only 45% of students had taken music classes before enrolling, while 55% of students had not participated in any music-related learning prior to entering the early childhood education major [6]. In a study conducted by Zhang Ling, it was found that the majority of students had some exposure to music in their daily lives prior to entering college. However, a staggering 90% of them had not received any formal music education. Even among the few who had received some music education, the duration of study was very short, with less than 5% having studied for over a year [7]. According to Wang Xinle's survey, 55% of students majoring in early childhood education had never received formal music education during their childhood, resulting in a lack of basic music theory knowledge. They were unfamiliar with basic vocal techniques, singing skills, and had never encountered instruments such as the piano. They had not listened to choral music,

compositions, symphonies, or any other musical works, resulting in a narrow musical perspective. The proportion of students who could play the piano or keyboard, perform other musical instruments, or have learned dance did not exceed 10%. As the Figure 1 these surveys reveal that a significant number of early childhood education students had no prior exposure to music before enrolling in the program. Even those who did have some exposure had limited opportunities for systematic music learning, let alone instrument playing or more comprehensive music education [6]. These findings indicate that the music foundation of early childhood education students is weak, and there is a significant lack of music literacy among them.

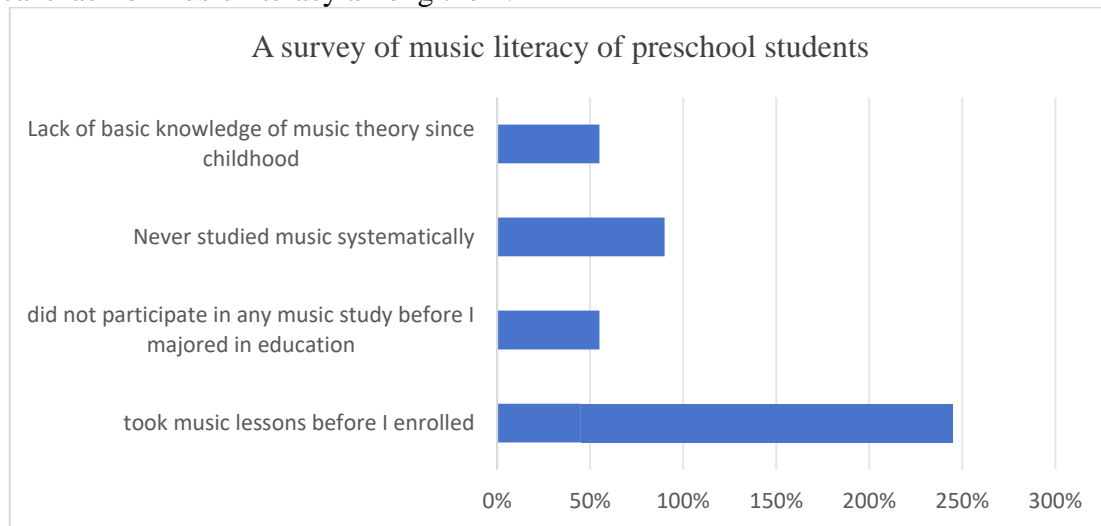


Figure 1: A survey of music literacy of preschool students

3.2 Survey of the Music Literacy Abilities Possessed by Early Childhood Education Students

The music literacy of early childhood education students encompasses not only musical skills but also foundational knowledge of music, perceptual abilities in music, and an understanding of music aesthetics. According to Zhang Ling's survey, 100% of the students considered learning music important for their future careers. The survey revealed that over 90% of students majoring in early childhood education in the national college entrance examination (Gaokao) came from a humanities background. Before entering college, most of these students had little to no exposure to music, resulting in generally low music literacy [7]. In a study conducted by Song Jingyun, it was found that 89% of vocational college early childhood education students believed that music teachers should have musical abilities. Regarding their existing knowledge, 19.4% of students believed they had theoretical knowledge in harmony and composition techniques, while 4% believed they already had knowledge of music history [8]. According to a survey conducted by He Xiaomin, only 2.6% of respondents were able to recognize solfège, which is a simplified musical notation. Furthermore, a mere 0.2% of participants demonstrated proficiency in playing a musical instrument. Their exposure to music education was limited, and very few had studied basic music theory systematically. They were also largely unfamiliar with the functional aspects of music language performance, such as pitch, rhythm, timbre, dynamics, musical forms, and harmony [9]. Similarly, Zhang Ling's survey indicated that music aesthetics courses were marginalized. However, the survey results from students showed a demand for music appreciation courses, with 65% of students considering it essential in their curriculum [7]. According to a survey conducted by Hua Tingting, 7.4% of primary school teachers demonstrated a complete grasp of music appreciation, while 19.1% had a basic understanding, 30.9% possessed some knowledge, and 42.6% had no knowledge of it. Yuan Qiongwen found that 85% of participants believed that music appreciation was an important aspect of musical abilities [10]. As the

Figure 2 there survey data above highlights that students in vocational college early childhood education programs generally have a weak foundation in music literacy. They lack adequate knowledge of music fundamentals, have limited music perceptual abilities, and lack an understanding of music aesthetics.

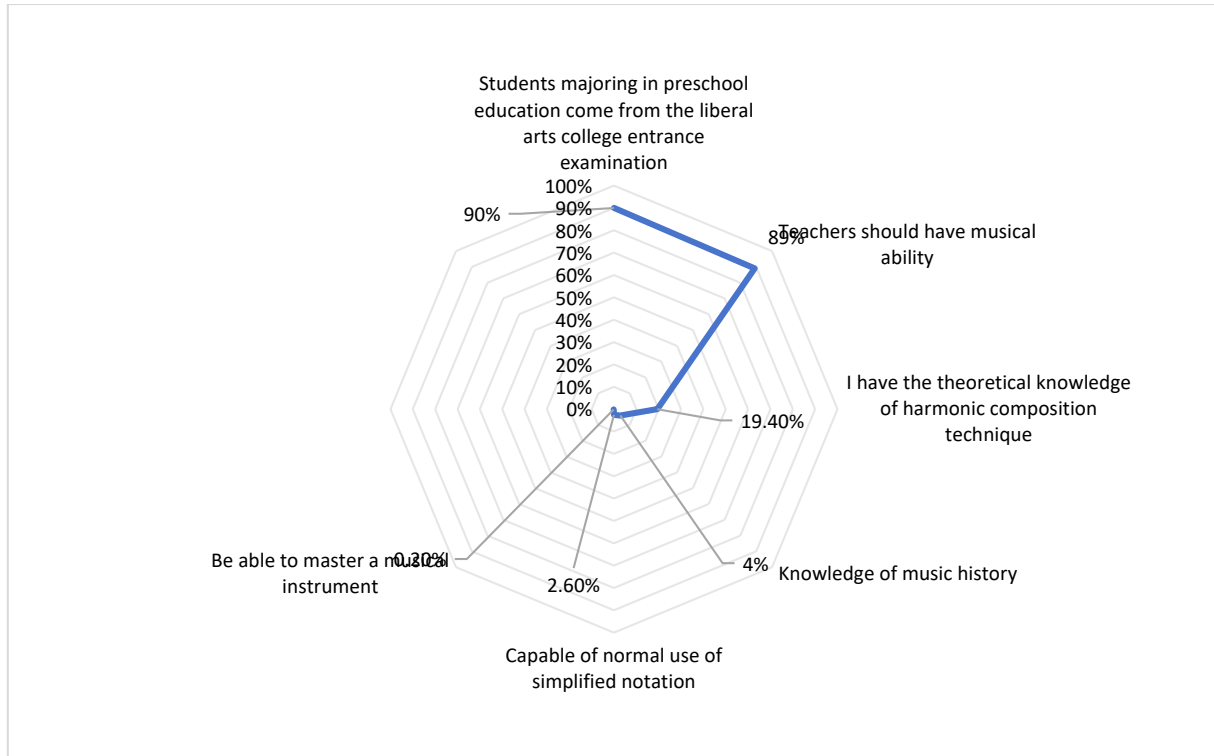


Figure 2: A survey of pre-school students' ability of music literacy

4. Issues in the Cultivation of Music Literacy Among Early Childhood Education Major Students

Early childhood education major students are the future backbone of kindergarten teachers. They serve as both the initiators of early childhood education and the cultivators of children's artistic abilities. Their musical literacy not only influences their own development but also plays a crucial role in the music education of young children. Many schools offer mandatory courses in music theory, music appreciation, playing children's songs, creating children's songs, and choreographing children's dances. However, most schools tend to focus on the superficial aspects of singing, playing, and dancing, neglecting the development of students' music literacy. The issues in cultivating music literacy among early childhood education major students primarily manifest in the following areas.

4.1 Weak Foundation in Music Fundamentals Among Students

The study of music fundamentals serves as the foundation for developing other musical abilities. It includes music theory, sight-singing, rhythm imitation, and ear training, among other things. It is one of the most crucial foundational courses in music education. Music fundamentals contribute to enhancing students' musical skills, developing a musical sense, and helping students better understand and appreciate music. As students majoring in early childhood education, their career goal is to become preschool teachers. The ability to sing and dance is essential. However, many schools primarily focus on the superficial aspects of singing and dancing, often neglecting the study of fundamental music principles. Most students in vocational colleges' early childhood education

programs have not received specialized music education prior to enrolling. Typically, their exposure to music has been through online platforms or television [11]. Only a small minority have formally studied music and possess a foundation in music. This results in a lack of music fundamentals or weak music fundamentals among students majoring in early childhood education.

4.2 Teachers Neglect the Cultivation of Music Perception Abilities

Music perception ability refers to an individual's intuitive sensory response to music, encompassing their cognitive understanding of it. The development of music perception ability requires students to not only master the fundamentals of music but also to appreciate the beauty of musical elements such as melody, rhythm, harmony, and form. Only when students have a solid understanding of these fundamental music concepts can their perceptual abilities in music be enhanced, ultimately improving their overall perception of music.

Currently, teachers in vocational colleges tend to either emphasize music theory knowledge or solely focus on skill development during their lectures. Rarely do they prioritize cultivating students' music perception abilities. This lack of emphasis on developing music perception abilities among vocational college students leads to uninspiring performances or singing that lacks soul, similar to plain water without any flavor.

4.3 Students Lack Music Aesthetic Abilities

Music aesthetic ability is a highly important, yet abstract skill. Cultivating an individual's musical aesthetic ability requires exposure to a wide range of musical compositions and the study of relevant music theory. Many vocational college students lack an understanding of which compositions to appreciate, how to appreciate them, or what constitutes good music. They often lack a conceptual foundation in this regard. This deficiency can hinder their development of aesthetic awareness, potentially leading to exposure to music compositions that may not be conducive to promoting healthy and uplifting content. Because of their limited sense of music aesthetics, they may struggle with selecting appropriate musical pieces [12]. Teachers should integrate music aesthetics into every aspect of their teaching in order to cultivate and enhance students' appreciation for music, fostering their music aesthetic abilities through ongoing engagement in music appreciation activities.

4.4 Unreasonable School Curriculum Design and Content

Curriculum design is based on talent development plans, and its rationality directly affects the quality of talent cultivation. Currently, schools lack a scientific and rational curriculum design, instead focusing more on courses that aim to equip students with specific skills. Additionally, these courses often lack coherence, which hinders the development of students' overall competence. Music literacy is a crucial component of the comprehensive skills of students majoring in early childhood education. However, the curriculum design often neglects the development of music literacy, which is detrimental to students' overall growth and development.

Furthermore, the course content is quite narrow, focusing on specific areas such as vocal music, piano, and music theory. These music courses tend to emphasize technical and theoretical aspects with a traditional teaching approach, overlooking the development of students' music literacy and abilities.

5. Thoughts and suggestions on improving the music quality of preschool education professionals

5.1 The school emphasizes teaching music fundamentals to help students establish a solid foundation for developing their musical literacy.

Firstly, the school needs to raise awareness about the importance of students mastering music knowledge and effectively monitor the quality of music fundamentals education. Music basic knowledge is essential for every music learner or early childhood education major. Only by mastering the basics of music can students open the door to learning music. It is crucial for students to acquire performance skills, study music appreciation, and enhance their overall musical competence. When teaching music basics to students at vocational colleges, it is important to select appropriate textbooks that are specifically designed for early childhood education majors [13]. The teaching approach should avoid being overly theoretical in order to reduce the dryness of learning music basics and make the process more engaging.

Secondly, teachers should not only focus on teaching music theory but also emphasize the practical application of skills such as singing, ear training, and rhythm. Music basic knowledge encompasses not only music theory but also practical skills such as sight-singing, ear training, and rhythmic understanding. Students should improve their skills in sight-singing, ear training, and rhythm development so that they can perform music by reading sheet music or hearing a song without delay. This approach will enable students to firmly grasp the basics of music and apply them in practical contexts.

Lastly, knowledge of music is an essential component of music literacy. It serves as the foundation for cultivating students' musical literacy. A solid understanding of music fundamentals helps students comprehend the elements, forms, and compositions of music. This understanding is beneficial for enhancing their musical skills, acquiring knowledge, developing musical sensitivity, and cultivating aesthetic appreciation. This paves the way for students to develop their music learning, music practice, and overall musical competence in the future.

5.2 To inspire students' interest in learning and enhance their musical sensitivity:

Firstly, by cultivating students' musical sensitivity, we can help them experience the beauty of music, sparking their interest in learning music. Teachers, in their music classes, should assist students in exploring and studying the principles of music education. This will enable students to develop the ability to convey artistic aesthetics. It immerses students in musical scenarios, enabling them to experience the essence of music, appreciate its beauty, and consequently enhance their sensitivity to music, thereby strengthening their musical perceptiveness.

Secondly, integrate the fundamentals of music into the music experience to enhance musical sensitivity. Music fundamentals, such as rhythm, pitch, melody, harmony, and musical forms, can help students gain deeper insights and a better understanding of music. As students initially engage with music, they can develop a cognitive understanding of various musical styles.

Lastly, while igniting students' interest in learning, create a pleasant atmosphere that enables them to fully immerse themselves in the enchantment of music. A joyful learning environment is conducive to awakening students' musical perception and enhancing their sensitivity to music. Teachers should establish an enjoyable atmosphere for students, which in turn creates an environment conducive to experiencing music. In such an environment, students can immerse themselves in music without external distractions, listen to music, and appreciate its beauty. By delving deeply into the meaning of music within the atmosphere created by teachers, students can elevate their thoughts and emotions. They not only develop an appreciation for the emotions conveyed by music but also enhance their

musical sensitivity.

5.3 To emphasize the cultivation of aesthetic awareness and promote the improvement of students' aesthetic abilities:

Firstly, enrich students' aesthetic experiences to help them develop an awareness of aesthetics. A diverse range of musical works offers a multitude of aesthetic experiences to be gained through appreciation. When appreciating musical works, students should pay attention to various aspects. These include sensing the basic emotions conveyed by the music, memorizing the main thematic melodies, understanding the performance or singing style of the music, and distinguishing the timbre of different instruments, among others.

Secondly, enhance students' aesthetic awareness and cultivate their musical aesthetic abilities. As students accumulate aesthetic experiences, their awareness of aesthetics naturally improves. Developing and enhancing aesthetic abilities is crucial. Students majoring in early childhood education in vocational colleges should not only engage in music but also develop emotional and intellectual appreciation. When appreciating or studying a musical work, individuals should consciously explore various aspects of the piece. This includes considering the author, the era in which it was composed, the background of the composition, the subject matter, the musical form, and the genre. By doing so, individuals can comprehensively enhance their aesthetic abilities.

Finally, approach music from an aesthetic perspective and adopt an aesthetic attitude to comprehend music. Approaching music from an aesthetic perspective is beneficial for fostering the aesthetic interests of students who are majoring in early childhood education in vocational colleges. Musical interest is a combination of aesthetic sentiments and tastes, representing one's attitude towards musical works. Approaching music with an aesthetic attitude largely reflects a person's aesthetic interests. When appreciating music with an aesthetic attitude, it is beneficial for one's emotions to resonate with the work [14]. This resonance leads to the cultivation of aesthetic sentiments, noble moral qualities, and a deeper understanding of the beauty of music.

5.4 To improve curriculum design and emphasize the integration of theoretical and practical aspects of music literacy:

Firstly, in accordance with industry standards and by benchmarking against professional competence standards, it is important to establish talent standards for early childhood education majors in vocational colleges. Subsequently, the curriculum for early childhood education should be refined based on these talent standards. Teachers in the school's teaching and research department should rigorously design their instruction in alignment with the curriculum, establish clear teaching objectives, and strive to improve the music literacy of aspiring early childhood educators. For example, develop a music literacy course that includes both theoretical and practical components.

Secondly, optimize the curriculum configuration and allocation according to the current context of the era. The school should conduct research on enterprises, schools, and students to understand the current state of industry development and society's demand for talent. Increase the proportion of music literacy courses and the number of class hours to ensure that students have a comprehensive understanding of music literacy. This will enhance the overall quality of students and improve the alignment between talent and job requirements.

Finally, emphasize a learning approach that integrates music theory literacy with practical application. The correct learning approach can assist students in improving their learning efficiency and enhancing the quality of teaching. In everyday music courses, teachers should actively incorporate the development of music literacy into each course, rather than solely focusing on theoretical knowledge or skills. For example, teachers can engage students in simulated teaching

experiences in actual early childhood classrooms. They can use methods such as playing and singing children's songs, Orff courses, and music composition to foster students' appreciation for music, develop their composition skills, and enhance their musical expression abilities. By combining practice with music literacy theory, this approach will enhance students' competence, boost their music literacy levels, and develop their teaching abilities.

6. Conclusion

The music literacy of vocational college early childhood education majors not only affects their individual comprehensive abilities but also directly impacts the development of early childhood music education in future employment. Therefore, it is imperative to cultivate and enhance the music literacy of early childhood education majors in vocational colleges. Through addressing several issues in the current cultivation of music literacy in students, the author argues that schools should prioritize the development of students' music fundamentals. This involves not only mastering the fundamentals of music but also enhancing their capacity to appreciate music. Furthermore, there should be an emphasis on nurturing students' musical aesthetics to enhance their music literacy, enabling them to grasp the true essence of music. Additionally, this approach can contribute to an increase in the employment rate of individuals majoring in early childhood education.

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