

Development of General Music Education in Chinese Universities in the Middle of the 20th – First Quarter of the 21st Centuries

Abstract. The development of general music education at Chinese universities from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century reflects significant transformations influenced by political, social, and cultural changes. This paper explores the evolution of music education programs, curricula, teaching methodologies, and institutional frameworks during this period. By examining key historical milestones, pedagogical approaches, and contemporary trends, we highlight the achievements and challenges faced by Chinese universities in fostering musical talent and promoting cultural appreciation.

Keywords: general music education, universities, China.

Music education in China has a long and rich history, but its formalization within university settings is a relatively recent phenomenon. The establishment and growth of music departments at Chinese universities have been shaped by various factors, including government policies, technological advancements, and international exchanges. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of general music education at Chinese universities from the mid-20th century to the present day, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity.

* **Yao Jie**, postgraduate student, Francisk Scorina Gomel State University (Gomel, Republic of Belarus).

Scientific supervisor: Vladislav A. Beizerov, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Assoc. Prof., Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy, Francisk Scorina Gomel State University (Gomel, Republic of Belarus).

In the aftermath of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there was a renewed emphasis on cultural development as part of the nation-building process. Several key institutions were established to promote music education, such as the Central Conservatory of Music (CCM) in Beijing and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (SCM). These institutions served as hubs for training musicians and educators, laying the groundwork for future developments in music education [4].

During the 1950s and 1960s, music education in China was heavily influenced by socialist realism, a doctrine that emphasized the role of art in serving the masses and promoting revolutionary ideals. Composers and performers were encouraged to create works that reflected the struggles and triumphs of the working class. As a result, traditional Chinese music was often adapted to incorporate revolutionary themes, while Western classical music was scrutinized for its ideological implications.

The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had a profound impact on music education, leading to the closure of many institutions and the persecution of intellectuals. However, it also sparked a revival of folk music and traditional arts as part of the campaign to “purify” culture from foreign influences. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, there was a gradual reopening of music departments, accompanied by efforts to rebuild and modernize the educational infrastructure.

Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China embarked on a series of economic and social reforms under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. These reforms extended to the field of education, with increased funding and support for higher education institutions. Music departments expanded their offerings to include a wider range of courses and specializations, catering to the growing demand for professional musicians and music educators [4].

As China opened up to the world, universities began establishing partnerships with international institutions to enhance the quality of music education. Exchange programs, joint research projects, and guest lectures by renowned musicians became common features of music departments. These collaborations facilitated the introduction of

new teaching methodologies, performance techniques, and repertoire, enriching the learning experience for students.

Curriculum innovations during this period focused on integrating traditional Chinese music with Western classical traditions, as well as exploring contemporary genres such as jazz and popular music. Many universities introduced elective courses on ethnomusicology, music theory, and composition, allowing students to pursue diverse interests and develop interdisciplinary skills. Additionally, there was an increased emphasis on practical training through ensemble performances, recitals, and community outreach activities.

The advent of digital technologies has revolutionized music education at Chinese universities. Online platforms, multimedia resources, and virtual classrooms enable students to access a wealth of information and interact with peers and instructors from around the world. Digital tools such as music notation software, audio editing programs, and online practice environments facilitate creative expression and technical proficiency. Furthermore, technology has enabled the preservation and dissemination of traditional Chinese music through digitized archives and interactive learning modules [1].

Contemporary music education increasingly emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches that bridge the gap between music and other academic disciplines. For instance, courses on music psychology explore the cognitive and emotional effects of music, while music therapy programs focus on using music to improve mental health and well-being. Other interdisciplinary areas include music business, sound engineering, and music education technology, reflecting the diverse career paths available to graduates [2].

Globalization has brought about greater cultural exchange and cross-fertilization of musical ideas. Chinese universities now host international festivals, competitions, and conferences that showcase both local and global talents. Students have opportunities to study abroad, participate in international ensembles, and collaborate on transnational projects. These experiences foster a deeper understanding of different musical cultures and prepare students for careers in an interconnected world [3].

Despite the progress made in music education, there are ongoing challenges related to quality assurance and standardization. Ensuring consistent standards across different institutions and regions remains a priority, particularly in terms of faculty qualifications, curriculum design, and assessment methods. Efforts to establish national accreditation systems and professional certification programs can help address these issues and promote excellence in music education.

Another challenge is expanding access to music education and promoting equity among diverse student populations. While urban centers like Beijing and Shanghai boast well-resourced music departments, rural areas often lack adequate facilities and qualified instructors. Initiatives aimed at reducing disparities in access to music education, such as mobile music schools, distance learning programs, and scholarships for underprivileged students, are crucial for achieving inclusive growth.

To stay competitive and relevant, Chinese universities must continue to invest in research and innovation in music education. This includes supporting scholarly investigations into the pedagogical effectiveness of different teaching methods, exploring the potential of emerging technologies, and fostering a culture of creativity and experimentation. Encouraging collaboration between academia and industry can also drive innovation and contribute to the development of new knowledge and practices.

The development of general music education at Chinese universities from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century represents a remarkable journey marked by resilience, adaptation, and transformation. From the foundational years of socialist realism to the current era of globalization and technological advancement, music education has evolved to meet the changing needs of society and the aspirations of students. By addressing the challenges and embracing the opportunities ahead, Chinese universities can further enhance the quality and impact of music education, nurturing future generations of musicians, educators, and cultural ambassadors.

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Яо Цзе*

Развитие общего музыкального образования в китайских университетах в середине XX – первой четверти XXI века

Аннотация. Развитие общего музыкального образования в китайских университетах с середины XX века до начала XXI века отражает значительные преобразования, на которые повлияли политические, социальные и культурные изменения. В данной статье рассматривается эволюция программ музыкального образования, учебных планов, методик обучения и институциональных рамок в этот период. Рассматривая ключевые исторические вехи,

* **Яо Цзе**, аспирант кафедры педагогики, УО «Гомельский государственный университет имени Ф. Скорины» (г. Гомель, Республика Беларусь).

Научный руководитель: Бейзеров Владислав Александрович, канд. пед. наук, доцент, декан факультета психологии и педагогики, УО «Гомельский государственный университет имени Ф. Скорины» (г. Гомель, Республика Беларусь).

педагогические подходы и современные тенденции, мы выделяем достижения и проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются китайские университеты в деле развития музыкальных талантов и поощрения культурного признания.

Ключевые слова: общее музыкальное образование, университеты, Китай.