

## Thought on Music Education Strategy of Rural Primary and Secondary Schools in Northeast Sichuan Area

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### Abstract

As domestic compulsory education level develops and makes progress as a whole, the development of music education is also continuously deepened. However, compared with the music courses provided by schools in large and medium-sized cities in China's developed areas, the quality of music courses provided by many primary and secondary schools in many remote rural areas is worrying. Besides, this has become the major obstacle hindering the reform of music courses in primary and secondary schools of China and the development of quality-oriented education. The author investigated and studied the music courses provided by primary and secondary schools in the rural areas of northeast Sichuan, deeply thought about and analyzed issues arisen in the hope of helping the development of rural music education in the northeast Sichuan area.

**Key words:** Northeastern Sichuan; Rural primary and secondary schools; Music education Strategy; Current situation

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### 1. CURRENT SITUATION OF MUSIC EDUCATION OF RURAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHEAST SICHUAN AREA

Kodaly, a great educationist, once said: "music is an indispensable part of human education". That is to say, music education plays a vital role in education. However, the author found through investigation that the development of music education in northeast Sichuan area was still in a relatively behindhand phase.

In the investigation, the following phenomena have been found:

(a) The primary and secondary school students in rural areas of northeast Sichuan don't obtain high music accomplishment, because both the education department and schools unilaterally pursue enrollment rate and classify music course into the category of "minor subject"; in addition, the score of music course is not included in the entrance examination for secondary school or college entrance examination so music course cannot help students to enter a higher school.

(b) Teachers' professional teaching level is not high. As the administrative department doesn't attach importance to music education, rural music teachers' work enthusiasm cannot be aroused. Without a specific teaching task, teachers won't teach music theory, solfeggio and other specialized music knowledge but carelessly teach them some songs on the textbook.

(c) The formulation of teaching materials and development of teaching activities are not based on the local practical situation. In such a situation, it's almost impossible for students in rural areas of northeast Sichuan to accept good music education. If this continues, the gap in music accomplishment between rural and urban students will be unimaginable.

## **2. ANALYSIS ON THE CAUSES FOR CURRENT SITUATION OF MUSIC EDUCATION OF RURAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHEAST SICHUAN AREA**

### **2.1 The Differences in Cognition of Music Education**

(a) Factors related to the society and schools: The society doesn't attach enough importance to music education. Even though quality-oriented education has been implemented in China for many years, as a matter of fact, the essence of "exam-oriented education" has not been changed. Most rural schools in northeast Sichuan area still consider enrollment rate and score as "inhibiting magic phrases", and link up teachers' benefits with students' scores. Therefore, nobody cares about whether students needed to accept good music education let alone how to help students to develop in an all-around way in this social environment of only pursuing high scores and enrollment rate. As music, art and PE are not included in the subjects of exam, many teachers only focus on Chinese, mathematics and other "major subjects" and even occupy music courses for such so-called "major subjects" for the purpose of appraisal and promotion; schools also don't stop this. As a result, music, PE and art became the so-called dispensable "minor subjects".

(b) Family-related factors: The economically underdeveloped northeast Sichuan area cannot provide a satisfactory employment environment, so many local young people have to go to cities for work with children and the old staying at home. According to the investigation and statistics, there are 61,025,500 children in rural areas nationwide, accounting for 37.7% of rural children and 21.88% of nationwide children. There are large numbers of left-behind children in rural areas of Sichuan and Henan, accounting for the highest proportions in the total number of left-behind children in national rural areas; besides, their proportions respectively reach 11.34% and 10.73%. As left-behind children stay with their grandparents from childhood, they cannot obtain good guidance due to grandparenting. Similarly, the parents in rural areas don't have enough knowledge about music education, are busy in working and are ideologically conservative, so they only emphasize that "their children can survive in the world as long as they've learned mathematics, physics and chemistry well"; therefore, for them, music education is inessential.

(c) Compared with urban students, students in rural schools have poorer ability to accept art. Students in developed areas accept a comprehensive and systematic educational way from childhood and parents pay more attention to their comprehensive development. However, rural students accept the opposite education and their interest in music is not cultivated from childhood, so they have poorer ability to accept art.

### **2.2 Little Importance Attached to Music Education**

#### **2.2.1 Music Teachers' Professional Quality Is Generally Low**

There is no specialized music college in northeast Sichuan area. As schools in northeast Sichuan area is remote, economically underdeveloped, relatively poor in teaching environment and provides low wages and welfares to teachers, some graduates from specialized music colleges or normal colleges stay in the central schools in counties or towns with relatively good conditions even though they area assigned to work in northeast Sichuan area. Therefore, a part of music courses in rural primary and secondary schools were taught by teachers who teaching other subjects so that students fail to accept good and systematic music education. It's known that the music teachers in rural areas of northeast Sichuan don't involve many teaching and research activities, basically don't know the competition of excellent music courses at provincial and city levels and other relevant information, perform ordinarily and are not active in applying for participation.

In addition, teachers teach with dialects in many rural schools of northeast Sichuan and there is no exception in the music course, because teachers feel convenient to communicate with students with dialects in teaching. However, singing with clear articulation and a mellow and full tune of language is actually extremely important, so it's even more important for music teachers to speak mandarin well. Although language is not the key point of music course, a teacher cannot correctly express the thoughts and feelings contained in a song with a dialect or a language mixed with a dialect, cannot provide a listening pleasure to students and will lower students' interest in music learning.

#### **2.2.2 The Education Department Doesn't Supervise Music Education Strictly Enough**

After the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, some rural schools in earthquake-stricken areas in northeast Sichuan area obtained the aided construction provided by other sister provinces and cities, so new teaching buildings were reconstructed and there was a qualitative leap in the level of educational hardware, such as the digital piano classroom, multimedia music classroom, multifunction rehearsal room and dancing room. However, their practical utilization rate is low and a lot of such facilities were laid unused. Only when the higher authorities come to schools for inspection or when teachers participate in teaching competitions or teaching appraisals, such facilities will be used; in the other time, such facilities are only laid unused and untouched.

### **2.3 Unreasonable Formulation of Teaching Materials for Music**

Music education is based on the music teaching program and aims to cultivate and enhance students' aesthetic ability, so it is especially important to select good teaching

materials. However, the author found a lot of issues in teaching materials in rural areas of northeast Sichuan during the investigation and research.

### **2.3.1 Backwardness in Content of Music Textbooks**

Due to the backward economy in rural areas, many schools adopt the “textbook transfer system”; namely, the senior students transfer their textbooks to junior students so as to reduce waste. Although this helps to reach the goal of saving textbooks, the content in textbook is neither updated nor changed with the times, and still stays in the backward stage. Meanwhile, children’s songs of the 1970s and 1980s instead of some contents favored by current students are still selected in many textbooks and most contents are far from students’ life, so they cannot get interested in such strange contents.

### **2.3.2 Irrationality in Arrangement of Music Textbooks**

The theoretical knowledge of music is the relative major part of many music textbooks. In order to attain a teaching task, teachers have to strengthen the training of theory, solfeggio and other aspects for students. However, faced with such boring music knowledge, how can students get interested in music course? Sukhomlinskii said: “our music education is not to cultivate composers or performers but to mainly cultivate qualified audiences”. This sentence exactly points out the issues in our music education. However, some teachers in remote schools don’t have high specialized qualities and only teaching inflexible and stereotyped contents, so students’ learning interest cannot be aroused.

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## **3. SUGGESTIONS ON CHANGING CURRENT SITUATION OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN RURAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF NORTHEAST SICHUAN AREA**

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### **3.1 Changing the Difference in the Cognition of Music Education**

We need to change our understanding of music education rather than always stay in the past state of school education and a state of “studying mechanically” and “just studying from textbooks”. Actually, we need to “creatively study” and “apply” the knowledge we’ve learned.

Firstly, it is required to strengthen the understanding of music education from the big environment of society instead of treat music education in the old way. The basic task of our society and education department is to “cultivate talents who are developed comprehensively in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education and are useful for the society” instead of those who only get high scores in exams. Therefore, when training students to study hard, we should also cultivate their all other aspects, including good music education.

During the new curriculum reform, school leaders should also strengthen their own business learning and the learning of advanced teaching theories, be good “bellwethers”, and really experience the benefits brought by quality-oriented education.

Secondly, it is required to alter the traditional teacher-student relationship in teaching. Students and teachers should be in harmonious and equal relationship instead of a leader-member relationship. Rural school teachers should also actively learn the most advanced teaching mode, help students to walk out from the traditional learning life, and actively cultivate students’ creative spirit and practical ability. Meanwhile, teachers should also change their understanding and perspective of music class, apply the open teaching mode in class, and become a guide from a teacher, so that students can learn and discover new knowledge by themselves, make efforts to solve problems and thus acquire a bigger sense of achievement. Thus, students can slowly get more interested in music and accept music course in the heart.

Finally, it is also required to lay importance to family education. When solving family financial difficulties, we should also consider the quality-oriented education for children and make parents to essentially understand the importance of music education for children’s future development so that their parents will support their children to participate in all sorts of music practice activities organized by the school. The happiness obtained and knowledge learned by children after participation will be the best return to their parents.

### **3.2 Implementing Teaching According to Local Conditions**

The present textbooks are not formulated based on the local practical conditions so students in rural areas of northeast Sichuan are unfamiliar with much music knowledge they learn. For this reason, the education department should formulate textbooks based on the current practical teaching characteristics of local schools and, then, carry out characteristic teaching activities according to textbooks. For instance, teachers in the rural areas of Nanchong have included the boatmen’s work song in Jialing River, north Sichuan big puppet music and northern Sichuan light drama music into textbooks. Besides, the local mountain songs, folk songs and dramas etc. can also be selected in the content of textbook because they were from the local students’ life and students can contact them at any time. In this way, not only children can learn the music knowledge with local characteristics more deeply but also our traditional arts and cultures can be inherited and developed in a better way.

### **3.3 Emphatically Solving Issues Related to Teachers**

The top urgent issue in music education in rural areas of northeast Sichuan is the issue related to teachers, so

it is required to firstly enhance the treatment of present teachers and increase school leaders' concern about music course. Meanwhile, it is suggested that local education departments periodically organize rural music teachers to participate in training and learning so as to continuously raise the current teachers' teaching level. When solving the issue of music teachers' quality, we also hope that governmental departments can formulate corresponding preferential policies to actively encourage excellent graduates from art academies can work in rural areas and support the development of rural music education in northeast Sichuan area.

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## CONCLUSION

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Rural music education is an indispensable part of quality-oriented education. Strengthening the music education in rural areas of northeast Sichuan is to make quality-oriented education develop in a better and faster way. Therefore, changing the current backward state of music education in rural primary and secondary schools and improving the teaching quality of rural primary and secondary schools are the highest priorities to shorten the urban-rural gap. As for the development of music education in rural primary and secondary schools in northeast Sichuan, not only it is required to improve music teaching modes and methods and to closely follow the pace of new curriculum reform, but also the education management department needs to enhance supervision over music education and teaching in rural areas. Moreover, music teachers should also start from themselves and try to improve their specialized teaching level. In addition, the education department needs to combine the characteristics of local rural music education when formulating textbooks, explore music textbooks applicable to the local areas and schools, and try to develop the music education in rural areas of northeast Sichuan in a good and fast way.

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