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## Music Teacher Education in China

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### Abstract

The content of music teacher education study programmes is conditioned by the needs of the market economy and information society, higher education as a mass phenomenon, penetration of humanist ideas into the curricula and many other factors. The aim of these study programmes is to respond to the needs of society, develop the competencies of teacher education and establish the right conditions for successful implementation and to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The training of music teachers in China requires overall improvement in the level of music teacher training. The Ministry of National Education provides the curriculum for music teacher education as well as the guidelines for teaching compulsory courses for music teachers at general institutions and prestigious universities in China. This profession is important in professional courses and in the field of pedagogy; therefore, integrating the content of elective courses into professional courses could be more prolific and comprehensive.

Keywords: Music teacher education, study programme, music education.

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## **1. Introduction**

The globalisation of the world economy and technology as well as the fact that higher education became a mass phenomenon has necessitated the design of study programmes to be one that meets the needs of the society and adopts a more people-oriented approach into the curriculum. The Reform Outline of Basic Education Curriculum (2001) was put forward to promote high-quality education, stressing that the goals and training objectives of the curriculum should reflect the requirements of the times. In primary and secondary schools, teachers and educational institutions were expected to adapt their teaching objectives to the aims and content of the reformed curriculum. Therefore, the music curriculum reform of basic education influenced the reforming of the curriculum of music teachers in higher education. The Ministry of Education issued a Guidance Program of Undergraduate Curriculum of Music Major in National Colleges and Universities (Teacher Education) (2004), which clearly pointed out the goals of music teacher education, the training model and the curriculum structure, which were to be adopted in the overall planning for music teacher education in the country.

This paper analyses the basic educational laws and higher education regulations of China, and expounds the basic education and higher education systems in China. In order to expand the reform of the music teacher education curriculum and improve the quality of music teachers, the Ministry of Education issued the Music Curriculum Standards of High School (2011), which included music curriculum objectives, curriculum contents and suggestions for implementation. Improvement of the quality of education and successful implementation of the teacher education reform have become important research topics of many scholars (Lin & Zhao, 2013; Lu & Zhu, 2016; Wang & Si, 2016; Xu & Dong, 2010; Yin & Guo, 2014; Yin, Zhang & Wang, 2014). The main goal is to create a scientific and reasonable course structure that would be as clear and concise as possible (Xu, 2007). The music teacher training programme should be designed to improve the abilities of music teachers and to ensure the smooth implementation of basic music education.

In 2006 the Ministry of Education issued National Instructions for the Training of Music Teachers for Compulsory Undergraduate Study Courses (2006), which specified the construction of specialised courses of music teachers, curriculum, syllabus, teaching organisation, teaching evaluation, teaching management and provided an important basis for the construction of teaching materials. The basic content listed in the document is an important basis for the teaching of the course.

### **1.1. Problem statement**

The Ministry of National Education presents the curriculum for music teacher education as well as the guidelines for teaching compulsory courses for music teachers at general institutions and prestigious universities in China. Therefore, attempts are made to uncover the importance of the Chinese music education programmes by discussing their goals, intended learning outcomes and curriculum.

### **1.2. Purpose of study**

The aim of the research is to conduct the analysis of music teacher education programmes implemented in China.

## **2. Methods**

Analysis of scholarly literature sources, legal acts and strategic documents of educational policy in China; analysis of study programmes of music teacher education.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The laws on education and higher education in China

The Chinese government has taken steps to promote fairness in education and make the development of education more balanced. The education law of the People’s Republic of China (2015) was issued in order to develop educational undertakings and promote the building of a socialist material civilisation and spiritual society. In order to adapt to the needs of the socialist market economy, the development and social progress of the nation, the education system, including the lifelong learning system, had to be improved. The state has implemented a nine-year compulsory education system. The compulsory education law of the People’s Republic of China (2006) was adopted to guarantee that school-aged children and adolescents receive compulsory education. According to the document, it became law that all legal citizens of People’s Republic of China who are school-aged children and adolescents, regardless of gender, nationality, race, family status or religious beliefs, have equal rights to receive compulsory education.

The higher education law of the People’s Republic of China (2015) was published to enforce the development of higher education, to implement the strategy of rejuvenating the country, and promote the construction of a socialist and spiritual society. According to the document, the goal of higher education is to cultivate talents with an innovative spirit and practical abilities, development of science, technology and culture and to promote the modernisation of society. Higher education includes academic and non-academic education. The education system includes full-time and part-time education. Higher education is divided into specialty education, undergraduate education and postgraduate education.

Based on the education law of the People’s Republic of China (2015) and the higher education law of the People’s Republic of China (2015), this article analyses Chinese music education. In general, Chinese music teacher education programmes are meant to educate music teachers who will be able to work in primary and secondary schools. Music teacher education uses the content of music education as the foundation. Therefore, the basic music education in China should be analysed first in order to properly examine the music teacher education system.

#### 3.2. Basic music education in China

The outline of the basic education curriculum reform is as follows: to actively promote the adaptation of the new basic education curriculum system, structure and content; to ensure that the new programme meets the requirements of high-quality education, as well as the new basic education curriculum system. With the basic education curriculum reform as the core, the Ministry of Education formulated the compulsory education standard of music curriculum in high schools. Figure 1 introduces the basic music education system in China.

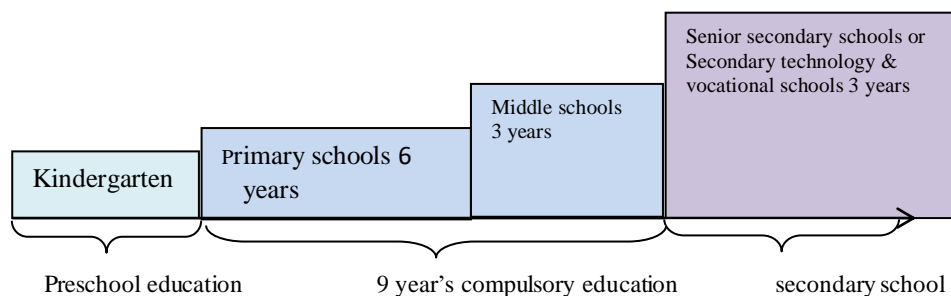


Figure 1. The system of basic music education in China

Figure 1 illustrates the system of basic music education in China. It includes three stages: kindergarten, 9 years of compulsory education and secondary school. Kindergarten education is designated for children aged 3–6 years old. Nine years of compulsory education targets at children aged 7–16 years (this stage includes primary school (6 years) and middle school (3 years)). The nine-year compulsory education music curriculum is comprised of compulsory subjects. The duration time of a secondary school is 3 years and this stage includes the senior secondary schools, secondary technology and vocational schools.

Senior secondary school includes a music course as a compulsory subject. The basic music course is meant to cultivate the students' musical aesthetic, to create a lasting interest in music and to develop the students' creativity. The course puts emphasis on musical practice, encourages the creation of music, teaches about the prominent features of music, ensures that the students learn about national music, promotes cultural diversity among all students and pays attention to the development of personality. The course content is reflected through three dimensions: feeling and appreciating music, musical performance/music creation and teaching of music related to the nation's culture.

In order to ensure that the basic music education curriculum is implemented successfully throughout the country, special attention has to be paid to music teacher training. The guidance program of undergraduate curriculum of music major in National Colleges and Universities (Teacher Education, 2004) (hereinafter referred to as the "curriculum") was issued to improve the quality of education and teaching.

### 3.3. Higher music teacher education in China

The different levels of music education in China are provided in Table 1. According to the Law on Higher Education of the People's Republic of China, higher education is divided into specialty education, undergraduate education and postgraduate education (Table 1).

**Table 1. The higher music education system**

Cycle	Duration	Awarded
The first cycle	2–3	Specialty education
The second cycle	4–5	Bachelor degree
The third cycle	2–3	Master degree
The fourth cycle	3–4	Doctor degree

*The first cycle is specialty education:* With higher education becoming a mass phenomenon, the Chinese government has expanded the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions, and strongly promoted the development of Higher Vocational Education. In China, teacher education programmes at the specialised education level are provided by general education and higher vocational education. The learning time for general specialty education and vocational education is 2–3 years. High-school graduates and vocational high-school students can pass the national examination and continue with specialty education or higher vocational education. Graduates that have completed the prescribed course of study and collected the necessary credits are awarded a specialty diploma. Specialty education aims to cultivate the students' professional skills, gives them the necessary basic music education skills and enables them to work in kindergartens or primary schools after graduation.

*The second cycle is the bachelor's degree:* This cycle is meant for educating future music teachers who will be able to work in institutions that provide basic music education. The basic length of undergraduate education is 4–5 years, in which the students are required to collect the necessary credits to earn a bachelor's degree. The music teacher programme consists of about 150 credits.

*The third cycle is the master's degree:* Graduates with bachelor's degrees may apply for a master's degree. Those who pass the examination may continue to study at the postgraduate level. The music teacher of the master's degree studies aims at training music teachers who will be able to work in

primary or secondary schools and preparing future music education researchers. The basic length of the master's degree programme is 2–3 years.

*The fourth cycle is the doctoral degree:* The admission of doctoral students can vary according to the different higher education institutions. The educational institution decides the requirements for application and designs the examination. The examination is usually divided into three parts: qualification examination, written test and interview. Qualifications include individual doctoral research, scientific articles published in music-oriented journals and such, and recommendation letters. The content of the written examination and interview depends on the higher education institution. The basic length of doctoral education is 3–4 years, during which the student is expected to collect the required credits, but the length of the studies can be extended. The main goal of the doctoral degree study programmes is to educate competent researchers in the music academic field.

### **3.4. Study programmes of music teacher education in China**

#### **3.4.1. The specialist education cycle**

In February 1996, the State Sports and Art Education Department formulated the Higher Normal College for Two Year (Three Year) (Art) Music Curriculum Program (Draft) (1996) in order to expand the reform of higher normal college art education, to improve the quality of teaching, to train qualified middle school art teachers and to improve the basic education (Ma, 2002). With the development of teacher education, the national requirements on teachers' education have been improved; college art education is gradually turning to the cultivation of primary school art teachers. Due to the economic development of the area and the saturation of students in the state primary schools, the overall quality of music teachers needed to improve. As most schools require music teachers with a bachelor's degree, the proposed research project of specialty education guaranteed employment of teachers in rural primary schools, kindergartens and social training institutions (Huang & Peng, 2017; Li, 2015).

The general music specialty education cultivates talents in music that can work in basic education after graduation. Xinxiang University, which is a public full-time undergraduate university, can be taken as an example. The university's history can be traced back to 1949, when the public Xinxiang Normal School was established. In 2007, the merger of the former Xinxiang Teachers College, Pingyuan University, Xinxiang Institute of Education into upgraded institutions of higher learning was approved by the Ministry of Education. In 2014, Xinxiang Institute successfully passed the undergraduate teaching assessment conducted by the National Ministry of Education. At Xinxiang University, there are two levels of music education, namely specialty education and undergraduate (bachelor's) studies.

The objectives of the training programme for musical education in specialised training are basic knowledge and basic skills for professional training, as well as an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of the qualified graduates. The Chinese teacher education is a special case that requires a more detailed explanation. Therefore, music education in Xinxiang University is organised into two directions. One is for the training of basic music knowledge and basic skills of music and prepares music teachers for work in a primary school, while the other puts emphasis on cultivation of students' entrepreneurial and innovative spirit (Table 2).

**Table 2. The structure of music education curriculum (specialist education) in Xinxiang University**

Type of course	Credits	Hours
General education	32	576
Subject compulsory education	51	918
Subject elective education	22	396
Practice education	35	630
Total	140	2520

The main subjects include basic music theory, solfeggio, China music history, the history of western music, piano, vocal music, dance and other professional courses and educational practice. The duration of studies in specialty education is 3 years; it consists of 140 credits and the estimated study time is 2,520 hours.

### **3.4.2. Bachelor degree studies**

The aims of the study programme of music teacher education are as follows: to encourage students' all-round development, to help them master the basic theory of music education, acquire the basic necessary skills; to foster an innovative spirit, to acquire the required practical abilities and the ability to conduct research. First of all, the main goal of music teacher training is to cultivate music educators. It is also important to teach the students to successfully conduct music education activities and to become competent in scientific research. However, the music teacher education curricula in university institutions varies in the process and the goals, which makes the overall curricular norms unclear (Dai, 2007), and makes it impossible to pinpoint the main universal aim for teacher training programmes (Xu, 2007).

The training objectives of music teacher education are mainly based on the curriculum's structure. The structure of the music teacher education curriculum is reasonable and scientific. It helps educators acquire the necessary learning experience and abilities, and understand the main goal of music teacher education.

What skills and abilities should teachers have? What can improve the quality of music teacher education? Answering these questions could help with the adjustment of music teacher training curriculum standards. Researchers have analysed these problems in-depth, and yet there is no unified framework for teacher competency standards.

According to the 'curriculum guidelines', the intended learning outcomes for a music teacher are to make the student passionate about teaching, to enable them have a good moral character and social responsibility; to master basic music knowledge and basic skills necessary for music education at the school level; to have high literacy, artistic expression ability and comprehensive practical ability, to be capable of successfully conducting school music education activities and laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The research projects state that education programmes should be people-oriented (Zhou, 1999), respond to the needs of the employment market, cultivate the comprehensive ability of music educators as well as foster their talent and teaching ability (Yan & Jin, 2009). In hand with the music teacher training process, the students shall develop their basic professional skills and enhance their learning competencies.

*The structure (Table 3) of music teacher education curriculum: 'Curriculum guidelines' point out that the guiding scheme in the course of the total hours of all courses in class is 2,600 to 2,800 hours, including the public course that consists of about 720 hours (according to the relevant provisions of the Ministry of Education). The practice includes social practice, education practice, art practice and research practice. The proportion of the teaching plan of the Music Department is too small. In order to realise the music teacher training objectives, an adjustment is necessary. 'Curriculum guidelines' is put forward with the aim to add the particularity of music education, music education creation*

psychology, the theory of educational philosophy, psychology of children’s education, music teaching method and pre-service teacher leadership and other related courses to the curriculum. The scientific research practice and credit ratio is disproportionate. The graduation thesis writing is meant to improve the students’ basic knowledge and interdisciplinary ability, good writing and reading comprehension skills required to read scientific literature, their ability to conduct a literature analysis and collect data – it takes time to complete the process. In some western countries, the counselling of students for their thesis begins in the fifth semester of undergraduate studies. Each semester, the student is required to complete relevant tasks, up until the eighth semester where the student must hand in the completed graduation thesis and present the thesis in an oral defence.

**Table 3. The guideline curriculum programme in China**

Type of courses		Credits	Hours
General education		40	720
Subject education	Compulsory subject courses	55–60	1000–1200
	Elective courses	45	810
	Local and university’ courses	10	180
Total		150	2600–2800

### 3.4.3. Master degree studies

The Music Department of Nanjing Normal University is the training base for artistic talents. Musicology is the core programme at the Music Department (The Study Programme in Nanjing Normal University, 2016). The training aim of the musicology programme is to cultivate qualified music teachers with good capability of educational research who are able to meet the needs of cultural and social development, to develop in an all-round way themselves, to grasp the basic theory, knowledge, and skills of music and music education. The duration of the master degree music education programme of Nanjing Normal University is generally three years. The total number of credits is 30, including degree courses required, having no less than 19 credits. Students who collect the required credits and successfully complete their master’s thesis are granted a master’s degree.

Table 4 illustrates four main parts in the structure of the music education curriculum in the master’s degree studies implemented in Northeast Normal University. The total credits should be not less than 36, comprising basic courses, subject courses, elective subjects and practice of teaching. The basic degree courses include foreign languages (2 credits), political theory (including teacher professional ethics education) (2 credits), introduction to the principles of modern pedagogy (2 credits), curriculum and teaching theory (2 credits), primary and secondary school education research methods (2 credits), adolescent psychological development and Education (2 credits). The curriculum must meet the requirements of primary and secondary school teacher profession. It should cultivate the comprehensive abilities and application of knowledge as the key elements of a music teacher, highlight the importance of teaching practice and scientific research, and pay attention to the cultivation of graduate students’ consciousness. The basic period of schooling is 2 years and consists of 36 credits.



**Table 4. The structure of music education curriculum (Master) in Northeast Normal University**

Type of courses	Credits	Remarks
Basic degree course	12	For the study of non-normal professional undergraduate students are required to take three courses, interdisciplinary students must take two courses, the above are not counted in the total credits.
Subject compulsory courses	10	
Subject elective courses	6	
Practice of teaching	8	
Total	36	

#### 3.4.4. Doctoral degree studies

The aims of the music education doctorate study programme in Northeast Normal University are the following:

- The students shall be capable of conducting a solid and broad musical research, shall be capable of creating music and be competent in music education, performing arts and other fields of professional theory, as well as reach a profound artistic accomplishment.
- The students shall master the research methods of the music discipline, shall have a pioneering and innovative spirit, shall be able to grasp the frontiers and development trends of the subject accurately, and shall study the music discipline independently.
- The students shall have the ability to use a foreign language for international communication and be able to read sources in a foreign literature.

The structure of the programme curriculum of doctoral degree studies in the Northeast Normal University is shown in Table 5. It contains three parts: compulsory courses (8 credits), public elective courses and subject elective courses (2 credits).

**Table 5. The structure of music education curriculum (Doctor) in Northeast Normal University**

Type of course	Credits	Hours	Remark	
Compulsory courses	Marxist theory	3	60	
	Theoretical research in musicology	3	60	
	Frontiers of music studies	2	40	
Public elective courses	First foreign language	2	40	Take at least one course
	Secondary foreign language	2	40	
	University's teachers professional development course	2	40	
Subject elective courses	Music education theory and documentation	2	40	
	Ethnomusicology theory and documentation	2	40	
	Piano art theory and literature	2	40	
	Vocal art theory and documentation	2	40	
	National vocal music theory and literature	2	40	
	Total	10	200	

#### 4. Conclusions

The results revealed that since 2001 the reform of the curriculum of higher education in China has contributed to improvement of the curriculum of music education. The music teacher education in China highlights the professional characteristics of the learning outcomes. The profession of music



teacher is important in professional courses and pedagogy; therefore, integrating the content of elective courses into the professional courses could be more prolific and comprehensive.

The curriculum reform of basic education and basic music curriculum standard are set out to improve music teachers' competences and help them meet the basic requirements of music education. Music education of teachers must adjust the personnel training mode to meet the needs of the market.

In the face of globalisation of the world economy and popularisation of higher education, the training of music teachers should be oriented to training of ordinary school music teachers. The music teacher education should be people-oriented and has to improve the teachers' learning competencies. The curriculum content of music teacher education must be scientific and reasonable. According to the basic education curriculum reform, the legal policy of the basic music education curriculum should target at improvement of music teachers' abilities and ensure smooth implementation of basic music education.

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