

The Current Status and Optimization Strategies of Popular Music Education in Chinese Universities under the Context of Technological Transformation

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Abstract

With the rapid development of science and technology and the continuous innovation of artificial intelligence technology, new creative tools, ideas and methods have emerged in the field of modern popular music, which puts forward new requirements for the education mode of popular music majors in colleges and universities. In the context of ongoing technological advancements, this paper analyzes issues such as curriculum design and teaching practicality in the current popular music education system in China, based on the present state of the field. It also explores practical approaches to updating teaching content and optimizing course structures, in line with technological trends and industry needs. The aim is to provide targeted ideas and references for teaching reforms and talent cultivation in relevant professional fields at universities, helping students better adapt to future changes in the music industry within the context of the integration of technology and art.

Keywords : Technological change; College music education; Popular music; Teaching status quo; Optimization strategy

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, many professional music and art colleges, comprehensive universities and teacher training colleges in China have set up popular music majors and related courses, aiming at cultivating compound music talents. Up to now, China's college popular music education has made remarkable progress in discipline construction, curriculum system and practical teaching. In today's globalized context, popular music, as a global cultural phenomenon, has existed in the field of music education at Chinese universities for many years. However, to this day, it has not yet formed a relatively scientific and comprehensive educational model. Compared with classical music education, it also receives less attention in the realm of university music education, leading to numerous challenges in adapting to the ever-changing industrial demands and technological transformations.

Teaching status of popular music major in Chinese universities

Shortage of teachers

Compared with traditional music education, pop music is a relatively late discipline in the field of music education in Chinese universities. At present, teachers with professional competence and industry experience are still relatively scarce, which leads to a long-term improvement space for its teaching quality and students' learning effect. In particular, normal universities and comprehensive universities generally lack full-time teachers with corresponding educational background. Some of them have insufficient mastery of cutting-edge popular music related technologies for a long time, which directly affects the update of teaching content and the development of majors. Cultivating students' original ability is the core goal of pop music teaching, which not only requires them to compose, arrange and sing by themselves, but also to master basic accompaniment and production skills. This goal also puts forward high requirements for teachers' professional quality. Teachers need to have the corresponding comprehensive ability of popular music major, so as to really play a demonstration and guidance role in practical teaching. However, many teachers engaged in pop music teaching in colleges and universities at present either suffer from the limitation of professional refinement or originally engaged in traditional music teaching. After turning to the field of pop music, they have the problem of insufficient adaptability and are unable to solve practical problems in teaching (Peng et al., 2012).

Outdated teaching concepts

The popular music courses in many colleges and universities still follow the traditional teaching methods in classical music teaching mode, ignoring the uniqueness of popular music in cultural attributes and talent training path, and failing to adjust and update the teaching methods and curriculum structure accordingly (Xie, 2011). Music colleges in a large number of teacher training institutions and comprehensive universities still take classical music, acoustics and form analysis as compulsory courses for all majors. Their teaching content focuses more on problem solving, generally lacks practical application, and is slightly insufficient in terms of practicality for popular music majors. Take music production as an example. It involves a wide range of knowledge fields and is diverse. However, the existing courses of music production in many colleges and universities are mostly taught according to the traditional composition theory framework. The teaching content is fundamentally different from the digital music production process, and generally lacks timely response to the current technological innovation trend and industry demand. In addition, there is also a lag in the compilation of teaching materials. The compilation of teaching materials often takes a long time and cannot reflect the development and change of cutting-edge technologies in time. The compilation speed of corresponding tool teaching materials often cannot keep up with the speed of software development and update, which leads to the long-term difference between the selection and application of teaching materials and the actual situation.

Lack of market orientation

As technology continues to evolve, so do the demands on the industry's practitioners. However, at present, many students majoring in popular music in colleges and universities are unable to obtain the opportunity to work in related fields after graduation, which reflects the lack of employment ability of students. In the current popular music education at universities, many specialized courses still adopt traditional lecture-based teaching methods. Among them, some teacher training institutions and local colleges generally lack sufficient practical components in their curriculum, with theoretical content taking up a larger proportion. There is a relative lack of important practical elements such as band rehearsals and stage performances, which makes it difficult for students to gain adequate practical training opportunities in today's teaching environment. Over time, this not only diminishes students' interest in learning but also gradually weakens their awareness of self-directed learning. In addition, the current curriculum for popular music majors severely lacks sufficient interdisciplinary integration. The teaching content is relatively monolithic, with students primarily receiving demonstrations and guidance from teachers. Specific professional directions such as singing, instrumental performance, and music production have not been effectively linked in the teaching process. This results in students being unable to integrate various skill resources during their studies, thereby limiting their development space for comprehensive abilities in popular music. Therefore, although most students majoring in pop music can master some skills at the present stage, their comprehensive practical application ability related to pop music is relatively insufficient, which makes it difficult to meet the actual needs of the current music industry. In the context of rapid advancements in artificial intelligence technology in today's music industry, China's college programs in popular music are currently experiencing rapid development and an urgent need for transformation. Although scholars have proposed innovations in disciplinary systems and talent cultivation models in related research fields in recent years, there remains a certain degree of disconnection between current teaching content and industry needs. Therefore, these programs still face practical issues such as aligning teaching models with actual industry demands.

The influence of technological development on college pop music education

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence has promoted the continuous evolution of digital audio technology, which in turn has led to changes in the creation, production and dissemination of modern popular music. This series of changes not only promotes the structural adjustment of the music industry, but also puts forward more targeted new requirements for college pop music education. Its education mode needs to be adjusted in time according to the development of technology, so as to meet the demand of the industry for compound music talents in the new era. Advancements in technology have enriched the tools and methods for music creation, enabling students to not only master comprehensive technical skills such as digital audio workstations (DAW), MIDI arrangement, recording, and mixing, but also to move beyond traditional music learning and creation methods. They can gradually break free from conventional thinking and establish a comprehensive music skill system oriented towards multiple media. In addition, with the continuous enrichment of music works transmission channels, TikTok and other short video platforms are gradually becoming their main carriers, which to some extent brings the distance between music creators and listeners closer. This phenomenon may promote the creation and teaching of music works with short time and functional characteristics into college classrooms. At the same time, other auxiliary skills related to it may gradually be integrated into the curriculum system of popular music in colleges and universities in the future, which puts forward higher requirements for the comprehensive teaching ability of college music teachers. However, at present, some colleges and universities are still using a relatively traditional teaching system, which cannot effectively connect with the development of technology in terms of curriculum arrangement and teaching methods. There is a certain deviation between the teaching content and the actual needs of the current popular music industry, which not only affects students' learning motivation but also limits their further improvement of comprehensive abilities to some extent.

Although artificial intelligence is gradually affecting the creative ways and working habits of contemporary pop music practitioners, as a teacher of popular music major in colleges and universities, it is necessary to guide and help students to correctly understand the boundaries of technology use in the teaching process. The information conveyed by musical works is

not confined to the sound itself; it also encompasses the emotions and thoughts invested by the creator, which can be reflected in performance practices. If the technical subject lacks the ability to perceive emotions and make value judgments, the music content they process will struggle to transcend mere vocal expression. Consequently, it will be difficult to establish deep emotional connections with listeners and to endow musical works with more comprehensible meanings through actual performances (Huang, 2023). Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers should not only pay attention to students' mastery of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, but also focus on guiding students to understand the importance of emotional expression in music creation and performance. By combining music analysis, live creation demonstration and rehearsal practice, students are helped to realize that emerging technologies are means and tools for artistic expression, rather than an alternative to the existence of emotional subjects. By strengthening students' understanding and experience of the inner emotional structure of music art, it is helpful for them to more naturally integrate their own thoughts and emotional expression in the process of singing, playing and making. In the context of rapid technological change, adherence to a people-oriented artistic creation concept is essential for producing music with real emotional connotation and ideological depth.

In summary, the field of popular music education has shown new development trends with technological innovation. Universities, as the main body of education, need to face the multiple impacts brought by technological changes head-on, actively promote adjustments and optimizations in course content and teaching methods, and establish a closer connection between educational cultivation and industrial practice. Only then can they better meet the current demand for versatile talent in the music industry.

Explore the path of education optimization in line with the development trend of the industry

Optimize the construction of teachers

Currently, there are generally few teachers specializing in popular music at Chinese universities, especially those with relevant educational and practical experience. Due to the gradually increasing recruitment standards for universities, most institutions tend to require a doctoral degree as a basic requirement for employment. Moreover, there are relatively few universities in China that offer doctoral programs in popular music. This situation makes it difficult for many talented individuals with industry experience to enter academia due to mismatches in educational qualifications. If teachers generally lack practical experience in the industry, it is difficult to fully reflect the practicality of teaching in the classroom, which further aggravates the shortage and structural imbalance of teachers. In addition, in the current educational evaluation system of undergraduate and higher institutions, the weight of theoretical research is significantly higher than that of practical skills. The hiring, promotion, and evaluation of university teachers are often tied to academic research outcomes. This has a significant impact on the distribution of work priorities in daily activities. Many teachers report that the pressure of research has made it difficult for them to focus on teaching and education. Teachers need to devote a large amount of time and energy to research, leaving little room for organizing and planning practical teaching activities. If teachers maintain this working state for a long time, their attention and commitment to teaching will gradually diminish, which can negatively affect the quality of teaching to some extent. The development of popular music education in colleges and universities cannot be separated from a team of teachers with solid professional background, advanced teaching concept and rich practical experience. Therefore, optimizing the construction of teachers is the key link to comprehensively improve the quality of popular music teaching at present.

Focus on the effective implementation of practical teaching

At present, the importance of pop music education in China's university music education system is still relatively low. Due to the limited understanding of pop music by school management and some teachers, the hardware configuration of related courses often fails to meet the actual needs of teaching, which affects the effect of practical teaching to some extent. In addition, some teachers are more inclined to traditional aesthetics and lack of understanding of the artistic value and educational function of modern pop music, which leads to the lack of openness of teaching content and is not conducive to students' establishment of multiple musical understanding and judgment (Li & Zhu, 2017). As the current music education system pays more attention to academic research, many teachers of popular music lack direct contact with the industry. In the teaching process, they tend to use relatively traditional teaching methods such as singing and playing existing works, which cannot bring new trends and technologies in the industry into the classroom in time, thus bringing some obstacles to the effective implementation of practical teaching. From this, it is evident that the cultivation of popular music talent cannot remain at the level of traditional theory and technique for long. It requires combining advanced teaching concepts and technical equipment with effective practical teaching to help students acquire comprehensive skills in popular music and related practical operations through practical sessions. This will comprehensively enhance their overall abilities in the field of popular music, better aligning them with the demands of future industry development.

Improve the teaching structure and curriculum content

As the discipline of popular music started to develop late, many colleges and universities lack the practicality that popular music teaching should have in terms of teaching structure and curriculum setting, resulting in insufficient connection between teaching content and practical application, and insufficient conformity with market demand, thus affecting the quality of teaching and the cultivation of students' ability. Specific problems include unclear teaching planning, inaccurate curriculum setting and single teaching method, which lead to students' inability to continuously build a systematic and comprehensive

knowledge system according to the content they have learned, thus limiting the development of their comprehensive ability (Yu, 2020). In addition, at the present stage, Chinese academic circles tend to focus more on the historical and cultural aspects of popular music research, which makes it difficult for the research results to be directly applied to the educational practice needed in the era of technological change. These factors also affect the effectiveness of talent training in the field of popular music education in colleges and universities. Therefore, in order to conform to the current trend of industry development, the teaching mode needs to be systematically optimized around the goal of integrating technology, art and market, and maximize the practicality of teaching under the background of technological innovation. First of all, fundamental and targeted adjustments should be made in the basic structure of teaching, so as to arrange basic courses, compulsory courses and elective courses that are in line with the professional content for students majoring in popular music, which is different from the classical music education system. Secondly, the curriculum content related to music technology should be strengthened so that effective linkage can be generated among various professional directions of popular music discipline, and help students understand and master the comprehensive skills required for relevant work in contemporary popular music field. Thirdly, attention should be paid to the flexibility and foresight of the course, with modular teaching methods introduced and a dynamic adjustment mechanism established to optimize teaching content in response to technological development and industry feedback, thereby maintaining the course system's relevance and vitality.

Conclusion

In today's era of rapid development of science and technology, the wide application and continuous evolution of technical means make the learning, creation, production and dissemination of music more diversified. In this context, as a kind of art form that pays great attention to practical operation and performance, pop music can hardly meet the current demand for compound talents in the music industry by relying only on the conventional skills available under the traditional training mode. The popular music education in colleges and universities should adapt to the development of the times and transform into a diversified education mode. Through the optimization and improvement of the education mode, students can combine emerging technologies, master the ability to transform their knowledge into practical operation, and improve their comprehensive professional quality through diversified learning, practice, thinking and practice.

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