

A Study on the Evolution of Music Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education in China in the 21st Century

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Abstract: *Since the 21st century, with the deepening of education reform, the concept of quality education has become more popular. Against this background, music education has received unprecedented attention and focus. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has issued a number of regulations and documents on music education at the compulsory education stage. Namely: the Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (Experimental Draft), the Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition), and the Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition). The introduction of these curriculum standards has effectively promoted the development of compulsory education in this century, and further promoted the reform of national basic music education. By comparing the different versions of music curriculum standards and climbing through the revision logic of the standards, it is conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the background and details of the implementation of the curriculum.*

Keywords: Music curriculum standards, Compulsory education, Comparative study.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the trend of “multiculturalism” has become more and more widespread, involving many fields such as culture, music and education, and there have been numerous related treatises, opinions and ideas, which have had a significant impact on the reform of China’s music education curriculum. In order to actively respond to the challenges brought about by the new concept of education, experts and scholars in the field of music education in China have translated many authoritative academic treatises, so as to keep abreast of the latest news in the music industry and the education sector. So far, China has promulgated three compulsory music curriculum standards. This paper compares the differences between the multiple versions of curriculum standards for compulsory education in the context of music education reform, which is conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the background and details of curriculum implementation.

2. Background of the Revision of the Three Versions of the Music Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education

At the beginning of the century, the Ministry of Education set up a team to develop curriculum standards, and in June 2001, after four years of in-depth study and repetition by experts and scholars in the national education administration, the Outline of Curriculum Reform for Basic Education was issued in the form of a public document of the Ministry of Education. The document pointed out the need to formulate curriculum standards for various subjects in basic education as soon as possible. In July of the same year, the music curriculum was reformed and revised on the basis of the 1992 curriculum standards, and the Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (Experimental Draft) was promulgated. The basic concept of “music aesthetics as the core” put forward in this version of the standards is not only a derivation of China’s “music education” tradition, but also a reference to and a

follower of the three major music education systems of the middle of the 20th century, as well as Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, Reimer’s theory of music aesthetics, and other ideas of music education. It is also a derivation of the “music teaching” tradition in China, as well as the three major music education systems in the middle of the 20th century, Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, Reimer’s theory of music aesthetics and other music education ideas. Therefore, with the formulation of this standard, the construction of music curricula for primary and secondary schools in China has entered a new stage of development.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Education has been deploying the revision of the Curriculum Standards (Experimental Draft), and after eight years of repeated revisions and deliberations, in December 2011, the Compulsory Music Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition) were officially published. During these ten years, as the social times changed, the changes that took place in the international and domestic societies demanded that China’s music curriculum keep progressing. In terms of music education ideology, it is represented by the academic debates of “aesthetic education” and “philosophy of music culture”. Scholars represented by Du Yaxiong and Guan Jianhua have proposed that the philosophy of international music education has shifted to the philosophy of music education of “music as culture”, and considered that the 2001 version of the standard “with music aesthetics as the core” is outdated. However, Reimer, Renhard, and House still support the aesthetic theory of music, and Guo Shengjian in China also agrees with this point of view, and has published the necessity of music education centered on aesthetics in many of his papers. In terms of social concern, it is represented by the work of aesthetic education in schools. For example, in 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee called for “improving the teaching of aesthetic education and enhancing students’ aesthetic and humanistic qualities”, and in 2015, the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the Work of Aesthetic Education in Schools gave a clear definition of “aesthetic

education". The Ministry of Education has also issued three documents, namely, Measures for Assessing the Artistic Qualities of Primary and Secondary School Students, Measures for Self-Assessment of Art Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, and Measures for the Annual Report on the Development of Art Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, demonstrating that China's emphasis on aesthetic education is undergoing a substantial shift from policy leadership to action guidance and supervision.

In January 2019, the Ministry of Education officially launched the third cycle of revision of curriculum standards since the 21st century, and each subject launched a comprehensive revision and development of the new curriculum standards based on the Compulsory Education Curriculum Approach (2022 Edition), focusing on specific requirements such as the orientation of core literacy, structured content, curriculum synthesis, and evaluation of academic quality. The Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) were integrated on the basis of the 2011 version of the music standard, art standard and art standard. This revision is based on the policies and regulations since the 19th National Congress, the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Vigorously Improving the Work of Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era, the spirit of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee, and the purposes of the Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition), and is in accordance with the achievements of the curriculum reform of basic education in the past two decades of the 21st century as well as the experience accumulated in art curricula, and the new trends of the international development of art curricula and the world's educational changes. It emphasizes the integration of art curriculum development and the effective articulation of various school segments, reflecting the new trends, breakthroughs and journey of art curriculum reform.

3. Textual Comparison and Interpretation of the Three Versions of Music Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education Stages

3.1 Value-Oriented

The socialist core value system was first proposed in 2006, and when the 2011 version of the curriculum standard was revised, China's in-depth grasp of the value system fell far short of the requirements, so it was necessary to incorporate the socialist value system into the guiding ideology of the 2011 version of the curriculum standard, as well as into the teaching materials for implementing the curriculum standard and teaching practice. 2022 version of the curriculum standard follows the will of the state and the guiding ideology of the state, and adheres to the orientation of practical problems and the orientation of inheritance, borrowing and innovation. The 2022 version of the standard follows the will of the state and the guiding ideology of the state, adheres to the practical problems, adheres to the inheritance and borrowing, and adheres to the correctness and innovation, and adheres to the goal of shaping the comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physicality, aesthetics and labor. In addition, one of the biggest highlights of the 2022 version of the standard is that it takes core literacy as its overarching principle, which is exactly what was missing in

the 2001 and 2011 versions of the standard. Core literacy embodies the value of curriculum nurturing, which is the correct values, necessary character and key competencies that students gradually develop in the process of curriculum learning, and strives to meet the needs of the society and the requirements of lifelong development of individuals. With the implementation of core literacy as the main line, the curriculum standard makes reasonable adjustments and plans for the content of the curriculum, defines new content requirements, sets new academic requirements and provides new guidance for teaching design, and proposes a system of academic quality assessment and an evaluation mechanism based on core literacy, in an effort to infuse the cultivation and development of core literacy in the teaching process.

3.2 Training Model

3.2.1 Program Objectives

In terms of curriculum objectives, the 2001 and 2011 settings are broadly similar, with three-dimensional objectives formulated to highlight the expected end results of the music curriculum. In contrast, the 2022 curriculum highlights innovations in teaching behaviors, student characteristics, and content, reflecting changes in the discipline, stage-specific characteristics, and activities. Combined with the four aspects of core literacy, it manifests itself in four levels: the first level focuses on improving students' aesthetic cognitive ability and experiencing the aesthetic process, and constantly perceiving diversified aesthetic elements such as the beauty of art itself, the beauty of natural life, and the beauty of social practice; the second and the third levels teach students to use the new informationized media and mediums, and to adopt informationized technology for the unique creation, communication, and presentation of the language of art; the fourth The fourth level aims to deepen students' understanding of traditional culture, helping them to master China's revolutionary culture, folk art and culture, etc., and to deeply appreciate and comprehend the charm and heritage of China's culture, so as to enhance their cultural self-confidence.

3.2.2 Segment objectives

In both 2001 and 2011 standards, there were three levels of schooling: lower elementary, middle and upper elementary, and middle school. All three versions of the standard retain the concept of stimulating and cultivating students' interest in music in the 1-2 grade section, but in 2022, it was changed to "Singing and Playing Music", which pays more attention to the connection between elementary and junior high school, and tries to form a good atmosphere of "teaching through music" through "activity, game, and life" music practice. It tries to form a favorable atmosphere of "teaching and enjoying" through "activity, game and life-oriented" music practice. In addition, the 2022 standard also emphasizes the cross-cultural communication and diversified teaching goals of music, integrating Chinese music culture and world music culture to realize diversified teaching.

Compared with the refinement of the three editions of the curriculum standard in the division of school segments, it can be said that the division of school segments in the 2022

edition of the curriculum standard is more in line with the cognitive development of today's children, and began to pay attention to the articulation of the art curriculum with the senior high school in the fourth semester. In terms of the teaching objectives of the curriculum, it extends to kindergarten and high school respectively, and makes more detailed planning for the articulation between kindergarten and primary school, and the articulation between junior high school and high school, so as to make it close to the stage and continuity of students' physical and mental development. Based on the new context of the curriculum, the subject characteristics of the music curriculum inherits the "auditory core" as in the past, and the mode of experience and expression still adheres to the principle of "singing as the main theme".

3.2.3 Nature of the course

In 2001, the nature of the music curriculum was summed up in one simple sentence, while in 2011 it was summarized in a concise manner in three properties. Among them, the humanistic and aesthetic natures can be distilled from the words of 2001, and "practicality" was proposed for the first time, highlighting the fact that music is a practical art discipline and emphasizing the necessity of combining the teaching of the music curriculum with a wealth of practical activities. 2022's standard once again added emotionality and creativity, not only reflecting the iterative upgrading of China's overall goal of educating people, but also demonstrating China's commitment to enhancing the future of the human race. The addition of emotion and creativity to the 2022 standard not only reflects the iterative upgrading of China's overall goal of educating human beings, but also demonstrates China's important decision and determination to enhance the competitiveness of future international talents.

3.2.4 Curriculum Concept

On the basis of the looser structure of the ten curricular concepts put forward in 2001, the 2011 standard has refined five core concepts and further upgraded them: "Understanding the diversity of musical cultures" has replaced "Understanding multiculturalism" in 2001, and although its content has been streamlined, the characteristics of the subject have become more obvious; "Highlighting the characteristics of music" has replaced "Promoting subject synthesis" in 2001. Although the content has been streamlined, the characteristics of the subject have become more obvious; "highlighting the characteristics of music and paying attention to the synthesis of the subject" has replaced "advocating the synthesis of the subject" in 2001. At the same time, the 2011 standard clearly requires teachers to fully demonstrate the characteristics of music in the process of teaching music, and to strike a balance between the comprehensiveness of the subject and the artistry of music itself.

The three major curriculum concepts of 2022, including "insisting on educating people with beauty", are guided by the Opinions to help students realize the leap from viewing and feeling beauty to expressing and even making beauty; "emphasizing artistic experience" insists on the orientation of practical activities, so that students can truly engage in various kinds of practical activities in the arts, thus enhancing their

artistic literacy and creativity; "highlighting the comprehensive nature of the curriculum" focuses on cross-disciplinary communication and cooperation to comprehensively cultivate students' physical and mental development. "Emphasis on artistic experience" insists on the orientation of practical activities, allowing students to truly immerse themselves in all kinds of artistic practical activities, thus enhancing their artistic literacy and creativity; "highlighting the comprehensiveness of the curriculum" focuses on interdisciplinary exchanges and cooperation, so as to comprehensively cultivate students' physical and mental development.

4. Course System

4.1 Course Content

The 2001 and 2011 curricula are broadly similar in terms of content. Among them, "Feeling and Appreciation" has replaced "Feeling and Appreciation", and "Improvisation and Creation" has replaced "Improvisation and Creation", further adapting to students' physical and mental development. This further harmonizes with the physical and mental development of students. The original standards have been lowered, while emphasis has been placed on the teaching of Chinese folk music, with special emphasis on the addition of one or two new folk songs to the required song list for each school year.

The music curriculum of the 2022 standard focuses on the four categories of appreciation, expression, creativity and connection, and its specific learning content involves 14 items, with two major phases for grades 1-2 and 3-9, and a structured format showing the learning tasks of the phases. Compared with the previous two versions of the standard, the 2022 standard requires that the music curriculum be centered on artistic practice, and the 14 specific music courses inherit the content of the compulsory music curriculum that has been systematized in China's previous basic education reforms, as well as implementing the Opinion of "Promoting the in-depth development of teaching reforms, and gradually creating a teaching paradigm that combines basic knowledge of the arts with skills, aesthetic sensibility, and artistic strengths". It also fulfills the requirement of the Opinion of "Promoting the deep development of teaching reform and gradually creating a teaching paradigm that combines basic knowledge of art with skills, aesthetic feeling and artistic specialty". At the same time, the 14 learning tasks are organized in a structured way, adhering to the principle of the co-existence of single-type and multi-type artistic practices. For example, in the "Performance in Context" learning task, there are not only single-type learning tasks focusing on performance, but also integrated learning tasks such as scenario performance.

4.2 Suggestions for the Development and Utilization of Curriculum Resources

Compared with the requirements of the previous two editions of the standard in terms of the development and utilization of curriculum resources, the 2022 standard seems to be more concise. First, it still emphasizes Xi Jinping's thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era and core literacy; second, the "basic equipment" includes hardware requirements such as teaching materials and facilities, as well

as software requirements for art education and campus cultural characteristics; and then, the curriculum resources in a broader sense include social resources, extracurricular art activities, extracurricular music resources, music teaching exchanges, and other resources, emphasizing the wide range of art learning. Then, curriculum resources in a broad sense also include social resources, extracurricular art activities, music resources outside the school, music teaching exchanges and other resources, emphasizing the breadth, depth and intensity of art learning; finally, in line with the development of the times, society and schools are required to continuously develop new teaching resources, and to promote the transformation and innovative development of teaching methods and approaches.

5. Teaching Reform

5.1 Design Ideas

The five design ideas of the 2011 standard responded to several major issues that needed to be dealt with in the music curriculum reform at that time. Meanwhile, the “emphasis on the design and integration of teaching objectives” added on the basis of the 2001 experimental draft, and the fourth item emphasized how to deal with various kinds of relationships in teaching and learning, gave fair and reasonable advice to teachers on how to deal with relationships between form and content, presupposition and generation, and so on. The fourth item emphasizes how to deal with various kinds of relationships in teaching, which gives fair and reasonable opinions for teachers to deal with the relationship between “form and content”, “predetermination and generation”, etc., and serves as a guide for front-line teachers to learn and comprehend the content of the new standard and deal with the teaching relationship in a flexible way.

The new standards for 2022 follow the principle of segmented design. The first section arranges a more comprehensive arts curriculum to more naturally connect kindergarten integration activities with elementary school subject teaching; the second section tries to integrate sister arts based on music and fine arts, which is conducive to students’ comprehensive and systematic grasp of the essence of the arts and mastery of the corresponding skills; and the third section provides a number of arts courses, which is better able to carry on the modularized teaching of senior secondary schools. At the same time, the 2022 standard starts with four types of practical activities in the arts, based on the practical, experiential and creative characteristics of arts learning, and seeks to harmonize the spiritual dimension, cultural connotation and artistic value.

5.2 Curriculum Program

As can be seen from the above table, the 2022 curriculum standard for the expansion of art courses, from the original two to five. Objectively speaking, the expansion of art curriculum subjects is a reflection of the development of art education in primary and secondary schools in China to a certain extent, is the result of the in-depth development of aesthetic education in schools and the prerequisite for diversification of curriculum and teaching methods, and it is a product of the state’s advocacy to improve and strengthen the

work of aesthetic education in schools. These five subjects should also be arranged according to the curricula at different stages of learning, that is, they should be divided into three different stages of design, namely, comprehensive, integrated and optional. However, whether schools in all districts are equipped to offer the above five subjects, whether they are equipped with appropriate teaching equipment and whether teachers with teaching qualifications and competencies have been recruited are factors to be considered in the course of action.

6. Evaluation System

Overall, the three versions of the evaluation system have evolved, going through the initial finalization of the evaluation system - the revision phase - and major innovations.

Although the 2001 version of the standard was an experimental draft, “evaluation” was incorporated into the curriculum standard system for the first time, establishing its important position in curriculum teaching; at the same time, the basic framework of music evaluation was established in terms of content, clarifying the basic principles, content, methods and approaches of music teaching evaluation. However, the limitation of this edition lies in the excessive reliance on educational evaluation science, with the benefit of playing a great role in concept popularization and function promotion. 2011 Curriculum Standard, although the generalized text on the evaluation system is the same as that of the 2001 edition, conceptual definitions of the three sets of relationships have been made and a small number of cases of practical application have been added, which provide the majority of front-line teachers with a reference direction for evaluation. Moreover, the 2011 version of the standard has weakened the evaluation requirements for teachers, curriculum management and curriculum development, and deleted the related expressions of “evaluation meaning” and “evaluation content” in the 2001 version.

The innovativeness of the 2022 version of the standard is firstly reflected in the fact that it breaks the original writing logic, changes the previous “evaluation content” and “text structure of evaluation methods and approaches”, and replaces them with “teaching evaluation”, “learning level examination” and “comprehensive assessment”. The text structure of “evaluation content” and “evaluation methods and methods” has been changed and replaced by “teaching evaluation”, “learning level examination” and “comprehensive assessment”. Secondly, particular emphasis has been placed on expressive evaluation. Lastly, the proposals for evaluation in this edition are based on the common characteristics of the group of arts courses and do not reflect the specificity of music courses.

The four key questions in the top-level design of the evaluation system are: why evaluate, what to evaluate, how to evaluate and what to promote. Looking back at the previous two editions of the standards, the prototype of “why evaluate” and “what to evaluate” was more often accomplished, and the thinking on the latter two questions was still rather vague. Therefore, the new idea of focusing on core literacy proposed in the 2022 edition of the standard constructs a logically

self-consistent evaluation system. The basic principle is “adhering to the literacy orientation”, with “the connotation of core literacy, the general objectives of the curriculum and the objectives of the academic segments”, “the content requirements of the curriculum, the academic requirements and the academic quality standards” as the basis for evaluation, and “artistic knowledge and skills”, “values, essential character and key abilities” as the evaluation contents.

7. Conclusion

The revision of the music curriculum standards highlights the continuous improvement of China’s comprehensive national strength and the continued advancement of music teaching ideas. The content and connotation of the core qualities indicated in the new curriculum standard, which incorporates the core qualities into aesthetic education and harmonizes the fundamental goal of educating people, points out the direction of art teaching and art development, and provides a leading plan for art education teaching practice. In addition, the music education curriculum is not a separate discipline, other disciplines contain the spirit and connotation of aesthetic education presents its close connection, the music curriculum of the time-honored dynamic innovation for the construction of China’s new development of art education to provide a mirror, help academics to enhance the aesthetic shaping, humanistic feelings, guidance practice, creativity stimulation and other all-round ability to enhance.

The Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) is not the end of art curriculum reform, but rather the starting point for China’s art education to move forward to a new journey and step onto a new stage. In terms of the effectiveness of the current implementation, the standards will certainly continue to play a leading role in guiding operations, with the expectation that a modernized aesthetic education system with the characteristics of the times will be realized in 2035, with diversified, full-coverage and high-quality aesthetic education, so as to enhance China’s cultural self-confidence.

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