

# *The Practice of Music Education Reform in Modern China*

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**Abstract:** As an important part of the development of human culture, music education has an impact on the progress of social civilization and has an irreplaceable effect on the entire human history. In the practice of modern music education reform, there is a certain degree of difference between Chinese traditional music and Western music creation. In order to cater to the changes of the social era, Chinese music education also follows the changes. The purpose of this article to study the reform of modern music education is to analyze the modern situation of the country through music and understand the history of the country. This article mainly uses data method, comparative method and survey method to carry out relevant research on the development of modern Chinese music education. According to the survey in this article, students' music class hours average about 1.5 hours per week. This data also meets the basic requirements for modern music teaching.

## **1. Introduction**

China is a country with a history of 5,000 years of civilization. Under this background, music education as a cultural phenomenon has gradually attracted people's attention. The development of music education is an indispensable and inevitable part of the progress of human civilization. It can not only cultivate people's sentiments, but also improve self-cultivation. Modern music has also experienced a long, complicated and brilliant development process. China's music education reform can be traced back to the end of the 19th century, when the society was turbulent and the economy was in depression. In order to meet the requirements of economic development and national security, it is necessary to nurture and educate the national thinking, so music is selected as a method of ideological education.

There are many theoretical results on the educational history of modern Chinese music. For example, BanYuanjing said that general music education in modern China has inherited the ancient tradition of "music education", influenced by the practice of childcare and compulsory education in Western countries, and has continued to evolve as Western learning spreads to the east [1]. Sun Yuling said that the development of music curriculum is the most powerful manifestation of the

development of music education in modern China. The study of curriculum development in the initial stage of Chinese school music education should not only pay attention to the history of curriculum development itself [2]. Zhao Yan said that with the development of modern Chinese history for more than one hundred years, modern Chinese music education has also developed with the modern history movement [3]. Therefore, this article also intends to promote the further development of contemporary Chinese music by studying the reform of music education in modern China.

This article first studies the history and current situation of modern Chinese music education. The second study is the related arrangements of music education courses in various periods. Finally, relevant investigations were conducted and data results were obtained.

## **2. Reform and Practice of Modern Chinese Music Education**

### **2.1. The History and Status Quo of Modern Chinese Music Education**

Since modern times, our country's music education has begun to develop, but at that time our country did not have a real modern music teaching system. Although this period was based on the imperial examination system, a special relationship between schools and teachers was formed. However, due to factors such as social system and economic conditions, this phenomenon continued until the end of the Qing Dynasty and then gradually disappeared. And soon after the founding of New China, it entered the stage of modernization and established its basic school-running principle-"School Music Education" at this time. This also enabled China's music education to enter a new period of development [4, 5].

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's music education was mainly based on "wen", and the content of music teaching was also formulated according to the social environment at that time. However, with the development of the times, technological progress and the continuous improvement of people's spiritual needs and material enjoyment, many new musical instruments, Western dramas and other cultural forms have emerged to enrich the essence of our traditional national art. After the rapid economic development of the country after the reform and opening up, the living standards of the people have been significantly improved, coupled with the great support of our country in all aspects, so music education began to become one of the mainstream social trends at that time is also an undisputed fact [6, 7].

In the new period, the reform and development of music education in our country keeps pace with the times, completely liberating the original traditional feudal thoughts. However, due to the stagnation of social economy, politics and all aspects at that time. And backwardness becomes a trend. After the "May 4th Movement", the Chinese national consciousness began to awaken and was gradually awakened and recovered and carried forward. After the reform and opening up, a large number of advanced intellectuals have emerged in the country to engage in art work, which is also one of the important reasons for the reform and development of music education [8, 9].

The end of Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China was the most critical period in the development of Chinese music. At this stage, a large number of innovative and creative composers with high artistic standards, relatively developed and highly recognized composers appeared. These people made significant contributions to the music education in China at that time [10, 11].

China's national cultural background. Many of the traditional Chinese music education were introduced by Western powers and were affected to a certain extent. And these Westernization Schools mainly use "Harmonious Life" as their premise. Social environmental factors play a role in

promoting the development of contemporary music: China's national culture has a long and colorful history, and it is constantly being updated. There have been new breakthroughs and innovations in the form and content of Western music creation. In such a relatively special social environment, music education can adapt well to the economic and cultural development level at that time, and it is also very adaptable [12, 13].

With regard to the development of national music, China has adopted various forms such as "closing the country", "representing the voice with literary works, and adopting the imperial examination system". These are all due to the ruler's hierarchical system. Modern Chinese society is turbulent. Therefore, most of the intellectuals at that time started to learn Western musical instruments from an early age, instead of trying Western dramas and the integration with Chinese local culture, and frequent exposure to Western art and cultural knowledge and technical ideas before they really entered our country's music education. The road of career development is coming up [14, 15].

China's music education has achieved certain achievements in national development, but compared with Western countries, it is still slightly behind. From an overall point of view: First, modern music education in China is mainly based on traditional culture. Although our country has a long history and richness, it is well-known and has been passed down for thousands of years. It is very influential that cultural classics such as Confucianism and Taoism have content about modern Chinese music. Second, China's national development is relatively slow and relatively closed, so for Western countries, there is a big gap between it and other countries in the world.

The direction of music education curriculum reform in modern China includes the following aspects, as shown in Figure 1.

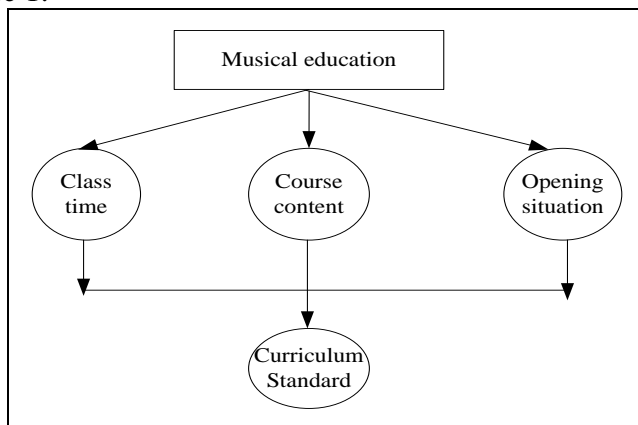


Figure 1: Reform direction of music education

## 2.2. School Songs

### 2.2.1. Social Background

During the reign of the Qing Dynasty, Chinese music showed a situation of "acting officials went to Lu, and Yale died for a long time, and the music was infatuated, which harmed the customs". The music education system has exposed more and more flaws. Music education has stagnated, its status has been overthrown by the ruler, music activities have been restricted, and music education has been severely restricted in terms of content.

In 1840, Britain launched the first Opium War against China. Since then, our country has entered the treaty era. In 1859, the Second Opium War broke out. Burning down the Summer Palace has

become a shame to the Chinese. Under the double blow of the Opium War and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement, the Qing government had to "Westernize". This enabled China to learn from the West, which enabled China to take the first step towards modernization and achieved a breakthrough. The Opium War led to the colonization and passive acceptance of culture.

### **2.2.2. The Introduction of Western Schools**

School music, as the name suggests, refers to music songs taught in schools. Since the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the school has gone through three stages of development: In the first stage, due to the failure of the Anti-Japanese War, missionaries entered the Chinese church, and reformist intellectuals constituted the intermediate level. Wenhuiwan is a new cultural and sports school established by the government later. Wenhuiwan is a representative of the early church school. The content and teaching methods of these sectarian schools are fundamentally different from traditional Chinese court teaching methods: most sectarian schools offer music courses.

The songs created by the Chinese Conservatory of Music and the Song Dynasty are based on the extensive and profound Chinese culture, and are different from traditional Chinese musical works in content, melody, and method of notation. The reason is that the creators of these songs grew up in China and were nurtured and influenced by Western civilization. These songs produced in religious schools have advanced composition skills, using Western harmony, polyphony and texture to create chord songs. Western missionaries imported a large number of Western books. At the same time, a large amount of Western music was introduced. The introduction of European opera into China only reminds us that the early repertoire was actually a form of comedy, which was also very new in Europe at that time. "

### **2.2.3. Establish a Religious School**

Organizing schools and providing music lessons in China is an important way for missionaries to spread church music and related knowledge of Western music. The continued expansion of sectarian schools has created an education system that is not managed by the Chinese government. However, the sectarian schools of this era also have one thing in common: all sectarian schools must take religious teaching and Western cultural and scientific knowledge as their main subjects, and offer Chinese classics and history courses as their main subjects. Their music lessons are mainly "reading and singing", including singing lessons, supplemented by Western music theory and music knowledge lessons, as well as piano, pipe organ and other musical instruments.

## **2.3. Music Education System during the Nationalist Government**

### **2.3.1. Political Basis**

In the early years of the Republic of China, the Ministry of Education carried out a number of tasks: reforming the education system and curriculum, formulating and promulgating new educational goals, and formulating a new school system, etc., all made specific arrangements. The Chinese education in the New Culture Movement period focused on learning from Japan, Germany and the United States. After the National Government made Nanjing its capital, it established the Art Education Committee of the Graduate School and held its first meeting. The second session discussed "Directly Supporting Cases of Musical Drama Cooperation in European and American Countries". Therefore, it can be said that during the period of the Republic of China, China paid

more attention to learning Western art, and paid more attention to art education in middle schools.

### **2.3.2. Ideological Basis**

With the deepening of the New Culture Movement and the development of national capitalism, Confucian classics are advancing upstream under the banner of Confucianism. Its schools include populist education, pragmatism education, dual education and general education. Pragmatic parenting thought was the most popular and influential parenting thought at that time, and it was developed from the materialistic parenting thought in the early years of the Republic of China. After the establishment of the new education system, various advanced Western educational concepts and methods have been continuously introduced into China, each with its own merits. At that time, the Chinese education circles were concerned about the education system and specific education methods. With the influx of this new education concept, without the guidance of "clear educational goals", it would be impossible to find specific goals for standardizing education. To play a role in the realization of "education to save the country"

Recognize the indispensable nature of educational goals. In addition, China's nationalist ideology began to strengthen, and the influence of pragmatic educational ideology gradually faded. In this case, the establishment of a new unified educational goal has become a matter of concern.

### **2.3.3. Thoughts of Music Education Teachers**

In the early days of the Republic of China, many talents chose to study in Japan. The musicians who returned from studying in Japan brought a wealth of music knowledge and brought Japanese music education concepts to China. These musicians organize music magazines, translate Japanese music works, organize various music clubs, etc., and actively promote Western music culture in China.

With the advent of the New Culture Movement, China's education system once again led learning to the United States: a large number of musicians from the United States returned to China, bringing a lot of music education and Western music ideas. After a period of time, learning from Japan in the early Republic of China, the Chinese music industry has a certain understanding of Western music knowledge. The announcement of the new school system imitated the "six three threes" school system in the United States; the educational ideas of students studying in the United States played a prominent role in shaping this school system. In this context, the musicians who returned from studying in the United States also played a certain role in shaping the music education system during this period.

### **2.3.4. The Content of the Music Education System**

In modern China, while spreading Western music theories and techniques, it also cultivates music research talents, while retaining and continuing ancient Chinese music. The School of Music offers undergraduate courses, teacher training courses and elective courses. Courses include theory, singing, piano, pipe organ, west wind stringed instruments, western stringed instruments, and Chinese orchestral instruments. The length of study varies. The Department of Education of South China Women's University offers courses in music education, and the Department of Music offers courses in piano, music, and singing. Singing is a compulsory course from grade one to grade four. Established Aimei Private High School, specializing in visual arts and music. In addition to the general intermediate music class, there are also elective music classes.

## 2.4. Music Education System during the War of Resistance Against Japan

### 2.4.1. Socio-political Background

After the Meiji Restoration was gradually strengthened, Japan gradually embarked on the road of militarism. In 1931, the "September 18th" incident of Japan's invasion of China, and the outbreak of the Lugou Bridge incident in 1937, laid the foundation for the Anti-Japanese War.

### 2.4.2. Cultural and Educational Background

The War of Resistance Against Japan broke out in 1937. Before the Anti-Japanese War, only more than 80 universities were left during the Japanese bombing. The number of teachers and students also dropped sharply, and property losses amounted to tens of millions. Some politicians and educators strongly advocate the opening of special schools during the war or national defense period, as well as the suspension of all formal education and the suspension of high schools and universities.

Since the full-scale invasion of China, China's education has suffered huge losses. Many schools had to be relocated, closed, etc. In terms of teaching standards, primary school music education aims to adapt to the nature of children. Intermediate music education is divided into music theory, songs and musical instruments. Music theory and songs are compulsory courses, and musical instruments are elective courses. Each school year of middle school has two hours of teaching time per week, and the first and second grades of middle school have one hour per week. Both universities and ordinary schools have music subjects. It also regulates the examination and admission of music courses.

In addition to public teaching halls, public schools are also an indispensable element. Elementary schools provide basic education, basic knowledge and skills for out-of-school children and children over the age of compulsory education. In terms of music, singing and interpreting courses at elementary and advanced levels are offered to achieve the educational goal of "teaching female voices, playing musical instruments, awakening the understanding of music, and stimulating interest in music". In the singing class, listening to songs is the primary class, and visual singing can be added to the advanced class. Moreover, when teaching new songs, students must first understand the meaning of the lyrics. Musical accompaniment is not recommended to avoid confusion.

In order to stimulate the peasants' anti-Japanese sentiment and convey the concept of land, they also used the rural education service vehicle to get to the fields and used music to promote and educate everyone.

## 2.5. Music Education System during the Civil War

### 2.5.1. Socio-political Background

After the end of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1945, the contradictions between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party intensified. While advocating peace negotiations, the Kuomintang actively attacked the territory and prepared for war. In August 1945, Chiang Kai-shek invited Mao Zedong to Chongqing three times before and after Japan's surrender to discuss "major international and domestic issues." The KMT and the Communist Party agreed to avoid civil war, but failed to reach a consensus on the legitimacy of the communist regime and military. In 1949, the People's Liberation Army crossed the river to occupy the Nanjing Presidential Palace, and the Kuomintang authorities were forced to leave Nanjing and retreat to Taiwan.

### 2.5.2. Cultural and Educational Background

After the end of the Anti-Japanese War, the Ministry of Education continued the original school education policy, and school education was generally in an orderly state. After Japan surrendered, the National Government took measures to restore education, because most of the schools had been destroyed by the war and education was almost at a standstill. During the War of Resistance Against Japan, when the education system was simplified and basic education institutions were almost paralyzed, the National Government first expanded and restored administrative education institutions to ensure the development of education.

In addition to the expansion and transformation of educational institutions, many schools were unable to sustain themselves due to the extremely scarce educational funds during this period, and further development of schools was almost impossible. In the early days of the Civil War, the national government's school education went through a preliminary stage of recovery, but it quickly collapsed with the Kuomintang's disastrous political and military defeat. In terms of higher education, it is manifested in the restoration and relocation of colleges and universities.

### 2.5.3. School Music Education

During this period, most of the courses and teaching methods in primary and secondary schools were conducted in accordance with the curriculum standards set by the Ministry of Education. During this period, the infrastructure of school music teaching was mostly imperfect at all levels.

### 2.5.4. Social Music Education

Due to the large-scale offensive of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, social education has even been paralyzed and has not been restored. Although popular education halls and singing teams have been established all over the country, although music education activities have been carried out, they are still not popular. Social education during this period also showed signs of depression. The Kuomintang government implemented a cultural autocratic policy and increased its control over cultural enterprises. Various cultural institutions are mostly operated by the state, and private cultural institutions cannot be maintained. State-owned cultural enterprises are also facing many difficulties due to economic collapse and severe shortage of funds: many rely on facade support, have no development at all, and are almost completely paralyzed in the later stages.

Although China's music education has made considerable progress, it still has some shortcomings compared with Western countries, especially in terms of teachers. In modern China, teachers generally lack experience and teaching skills due to many factors such as feudal ideology and culture, backward concepts, and lack of resources. At the same time, the adoption of an education system centered on examinations and enrollment has severely restricted the scope and quality of schools. In addition, the lack of professional music talents has caused many students to be unable to properly maintain their music education, let alone master modern music creation skills. Second, about the curriculum system. In the context of the reform of modern music education, the combination of traditional Chinese national culture and modern Western music creation has produced a large number of outstanding music works that have the characteristics of the times, conform to the laws of realistic development, and embody perspectives. This work had a huge impact on people's thinking and concepts at that time. In order to adapt to this change, it is necessary to build a building that meets the aesthetic needs of today's Chinese people and can spiritually support visual and auditory pleasure.

In China's education system, music is a compulsory course, which plays an important role in

cultivating students' patriotism and national self-esteem. Therefore, music lessons should be organically linked with China's modernization. One is to strengthen teachers' learning of modern music creation theory and related skills. The second is to improve the quality and performance of teachers. You must have a certain level of professionalism and be able to skillfully use the theoretical knowledge you have learned to create works that meet the needs of the society and are highly artistic. Reflect and value the composition skills they have acquired in a flexible way, and they can be applied to practice.

### **3. Investigation and Research on the Historical Data of the Development of Modern Chinese Music Education**

#### **3.1. Investigation Background**

Music education is an important part of national development, and it plays a vital role in China's economic and social development in the new era. It plays an irreplaceable role in China's social, economic and political reforms. With the new curriculum concepts, teaching methods, and teacher team building, great changes have taken place. However, music creation in modern China has not been able to get rid of the traditional mode. To advance with the times in the reform of music education in our country, we must insist on people-oriented, teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, and close theoretical connections.

#### **3.2. Survey Objectives**

Regarding the reform of music education in our country, a modern music curriculum system with Chinese characteristics should be established to lay the foundation for other disciplines and professional learning in the future. At the same time, we must focus on cultivating students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills. First of all, there should be breakthroughs on all levels of modern social background, national consciousness, and personal accomplishments. The second is that teaching methods should also be changed and innovated to adapt to the changes and development of the times. Thirdly, teachers should integrate traditional culture into the classroom in the teaching process.

#### **3.3. Investigation Process**

The survey of music education in this article is mainly based on the collection of relevant data from experts and books. This article first uses Internet technology to collect data on the development of modern music and the distribution of courses. Then we asked 10 experts for their opinions and got some data.

### **4. Analysis of Survey Results**

#### **4.1. Average Distribution of Weekly Class Hours of Modern Music Education in Different Periods**

According to the findings of the survey, this article mainly analyzes the time distribution of music courses in different periods in primary schools, middle schools, and full-time or normal colleges, and derives some data, as shown in Table 1:



Table 1: The average distribution of weekly class hours of modern music education in different periods

	Republic of China	During the Anti-Japanese War	Period of civil war
Primary school	2	1.5	2
Middle school	1.5	1.5	1.5
Junior college, Normal school	1.5	2	2

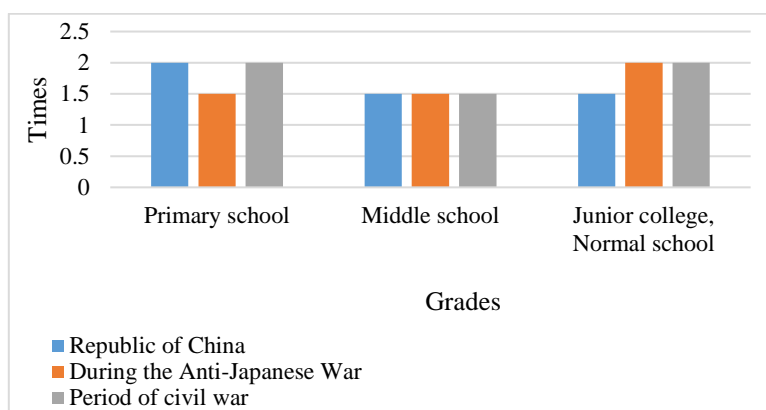


Figure 2: The average distribution of weekly class hours of modern music education in different periods

As shown in Figure 2, we can find that in elementary schools, the music lessons are longer, about 2 hours per week, while the time in middle schools is the least. About 1.5 hours on average. Although according to the results of the survey, the time for music education is insufficient, its importance in modern China cannot be ignored. The distribution time of courses will change, and the overall situation is roughly the same.

## 5. Conclusion

In the reform and development of music education in the new era, we must proceed from the following aspects: First, we will carry out comprehensive reforms in some backward and underdeveloped regions and countries in our country at that time. The second is to make corresponding requirements for people from all walks of life. In the new era, the focus of China's music education reform is to effectively integrate traditional culture and foreign ideas, making it a national art with Chinese characteristics and in line with the needs of the construction of socialist spiritual civilization. For this reason, the music class hours in our country can be appropriately increased. According to the survey in this article, the average music class time of modern students is 1.5 to 2 hours, which can be increased appropriately.

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