

Analysis of Strategies for Stimulating the Students' Interest in Music Learning in Middle Schools

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Abstract: Music education plays a significant role in middle school education. However, inspiring the students' interest in music and maintaining their engagement pose a challenge for many educators. This study explores the strategies for stimulating the students' interest in music learning. The research first analyzes the current status and issues in middle school music education, and then delves into strategies such as innovative teaching, activity organization, classroom atmosphere creation, and home-school cooperation and so forth tailored to different students' characteristics and needs in the hope of providing valuable theoretical reference and practical guidance for music educators in middle schools.

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the 21st-century education, music education is playing an increasingly prominent role. From nurturing the students' aesthetic emotions to promoting their innovative thinking and enhancing their social-emotional skills, music education has been widely recognized in fostering their holistic development. However, the current situation of music education in middle schools is not so satisfactory, there are various problems such as schools' insufficient attention to music education, music teachers' lack of innovation in teaching methods and skills, single teaching content, and students are not interested in music education.^[1]The author has consulted a large number of research data on middle school music education, experts and scholars have paid attention to this problem, middle school music education has to face this major challenge: how to stimulate and continue students' interest in music learning. In the past research, the educators and researchers have explored various methods to address this issue, but it remains an unresolved challenge due to the lack of more effective and adaptable strategies. This study delves into how to stimulate middle school students' interest in music learning and provides more effective solutions through strategy analysis.

Starting from the characteristics and needs of middle school students, the paper studies the innovative teaching methods and tools and next explores how to leverage technology and new media to enhance the quality of music education. The goal is to design a comprehensive set of strategies to enhance the appeal of music classrooms. The existing studies are analyzed through literature review and empirical research and the strategies are validated and optimized through practical cases. The significance of this research lies in providing a comprehensive and innovative strategy analysis. This

can not only help the music educators address the challenge of stimulating the students' interest but also drive progress in the field of music education. New insights will be offered for practical teaching and new thinking will be sparked on music education principles and approaches.

2. Current Status and Issues in Middle School Music Education

Firstly, not sufficient store has been set upon music education in many schools. Despite the emphasis placed on music education by the educators and researchers, music classes are often seen as a peripheral subject in the practical teaching process. Many schools prioritize subjects such as language and mathematics in their curriculum, allocating less time and fewer resources to music classes. Consequently, music teachers often face to the shortage of time and resources.

Secondly, many music teachers' teaching methods and techniques are not satisfactory enough. Traditional music education focuses on the imparting of music knowledge and skills but neglects the cultivation of the students' learning interest. Some teachers overemphasize music theory but disregard practice. Consequently, the students perceive music learning as dull and lose their interest.

What is more, many students show little interest in music education. On the one hand, they think that music learning can't improve their academic performance or benefit their future employment and development. This results in a lack of motivation. On the other hand, they believe that they lack musical talent or face insurmountable difficulties in music learning. This leads to a sense of frustration.

These problems and challenges undermine the effectiveness of middle school music education and hinder the students' understanding and appreciation of music.^[2] It is a pressing issue to find effective strategies to stimulate their learning interest.

3. Analysis of Strategies to Spark Student Interest

3.1 Strategies for Different Student Characteristics and Needs

Strategies should be tailored to different student characteristics and needs. First of all, it is important to have a deep understanding of the students' personalities and interests. Each student has their unique music interest and talents. Diversified teaching methods should be employed to meet their needs.^[3] For example, for those who love singing, vocal training should be provided. For those who are interested in musical instruments, opportunities to learn various musical instruments should be offered. Besides, they should be encouraged to participate in music activities to enhance their musical skills and appreciation. What is more, for those who have limited knowledge of music but are eager to learn, their interest and appreciation should be stimulated and they should be guided to explore different types of music.

In a music course focused on music appreciation and composition, the students may have a strong interest in music, but their areas of interest vary. Some students enjoy singing, while others prefer playing the piano or composing music. To cater to these diverse needs, a series of strategies should be implemented. For those who enjoy singing, vocal training sessions should be included in the curriculum to help them improve their singing skills. For those who are interested in playing the piano, piano lessons should be provided for them to enhance their skills. For those who are dedicated to music composition, creative tools and guidance should be offered to help them transform their ideas into music. Through these strategies, their different needs are met, their passion for music is sparked and their musical skills and appreciation are enhanced.

3.2 Innovative Teaching Methods and Techniques

Innovative teaching methods and techniques are a crucial way to spark student interest in music

education. Diversified and personalized teaching approaches such as role-playing, musical theater, and music production can create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment and arouse the students' learning enthusiasm. Technological tools like music production software and music games can also stimulate their interest and improve their practical skills. During the teaching process, the teachers should make full use of various teaching methods, adjust their instructional strategies based on the students' interest and needs, and ensure effective teaching outcomes.^[4]

In a music class in a certain middle school, the teacher implements an innovative teaching method called "musical theater." Based on the script of a musical, role-playing is organized and the students are allowed to express their emotions and tell their stories through singing and playing the musical instruments. Next, they are guided to create their own music with music production software. The music class is lively and interesting. The students have not only learned music knowledge but also improved their performance skills and creative thinking ability.^[5] The instructional strategies are adjusted in accordance with the students' feedback and performance and the effectiveness of the teaching approach is ensured.

3.3 Organization of Music Activities and Competitions

Music activities and competitions are one of the key strategies to enhance student interest. Music activities provide the students with opportunities to apply their music knowledge, improve their musical skills, and cultivate their teamwork and innovative thinking. Through music competitions, the students can challenge themselves in a friendly competitive environment, experience the charm and joy of music, and be motivated to work harder in their music learning. When activities and competitions are organized, the students' interest and characteristics should be considered. Interesting challenging activities should be designed to increase their participation and learning outcomes.^[6]

In an in-school musical theater competition organized by the music teachers in a certain middle school, each class was required to select a musical theater piece, create their own script and direct and perform by themselves. During the preparation process, the students rehearsed the songs from the musical, designed stage settings and engaged in role-playing. An opportunity was given to them to apply their music knowledge, develop their teamwork skills and foster their innovative thinking. On the day of the competition, they enthusiastically showcased their musical talents on stage and earned waves of applause from their peers. This competition not only allowed them to experience the joy of music but also motivated them to develop a deeper love for music learning.

3.4 Creation of A Music Classroom Atmosphere

A vibrant, positive and enjoyable learning environment is essential to spark the students' interest and enthusiasm in the music classroom. Firstly, the teacher should establish a conducive music atmosphere before the class by playing some rhythmic and emotionally engaging music to guide the students into the world of music. During the class, she should make full use of all kinds of teaching aids, such as various musical instruments, to help them grasp the rhythm and melody. Simultaneously, with the help of comprehensive situational simulations, the students can experience the stories and emotions behind the music, thereby enhancing their music appreciation skills. Lastly, the teacher should encourage the students to explore the world of music independently and promote their self-directed learning abilities and creativity.^[7]

In the teaching of the "Serenade" from the *New Era Music Textbook*, the teacher begins by creating a pre-class atmosphere through playing music that evokes a strong nighttime ambiance and leads the students into the world of music. During the class, she guides them to experience the elements of the night in music through the imitation of sounds and rhythm. With the help of the teacher's demonstration and guidance, the students grasp and express the rhythm and melody with the violin

and immerse themselves in the world of music. Towards the end of the lesson, they are allowed to enjoy the charm of music and encouraged to express themselves and collaborate in small groups to create music compositions with the theme of “Night.” This lively classroom atmosphere sparks their passion and interest and enhances their music appreciation skills.

3.5 Using Technology and New Media to Enhance the Quality of Music Education

Technology and new media are an extremely effective teaching aid in music education. They can provide the students with rich learning resources, awaken their interest in learning, and help them better understand and appreciate music.^[8] The teachers can expose the students to various styles of music with the help of various online music libraries and allow them more freedom and flexibility in creating their own music with the help of music composition software such as GarageBand or FL Studio. Social media platforms like TikTok or Weibo can also be leveraged to share outstanding music works and help them continue exploring the world of music outside of class.

Taking a music lesson with the theme of “The Ordinary Road” as an example, the teacher starts by playing different versions of the song from a music library, allowing the students to experience the expressive differences among various performers. Then, using music composition software, she guides them in breaking down the different tracks of the song and better understanding the musical structure and melody of the piece.^[9] Towards the end of the lesson, she encourages them to create their own versions of the music with the help of the software and upload them to the school’s TikTok or Weibo account for all their schoolmates to appreciate. This integration of technology and new media in teaching not only enhances the students’ understanding and creative abilities but also stimulates their passion and interest.

3.6 Encouraging the Students to Engage in Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is an essential skill in music education. The students are required to independently analyze problems, consider various aspects of the issues, and make judgments based on the evidence. They are encouraged to question the known information and challenge traditional viewpoints rather than merely accepting whatever their teachers have imparted. In music teaching, the teachers can encourage the students to engage in critical thinking through various ways. Firstly, the students can be required to analyze and evaluate different musical works. This includes technical analysis of music, such as melody, rhythm, and harmony, as well as artistic evaluation, such as the emotional expression and thematic exploration in music. Through such analysis and evaluation, the students can understand under what backgrounds the musical works are created and how the composers use music to convey their thoughts and emotions.^[10] The students can also be prompted to discuss how music influences their emotions and perception. This not only helps them understand the psychological effects of music but also enables them to discover their own music preference and inclination.^[11]

For example, in a “Music Appreciation” course, the students are required to select two familiar songs – one they like and one they dislike – and do detailed analysis, including aspects such as the structure, melody, rhythm and harmony. They should also provide reasons for their preference or disliking. In this process, they not only gain a deeper understanding of the music works but also develop their critical thinking abilities. They need to analyze and evaluate in a rational manner rather than relying solely on their feelings or personal preference. Through such teaching activities, their ability to think independently is cultivated and their understanding and appreciation of music are improved.

3.7 Interdisciplinary Teaching

Interdisciplinary teaching combines knowledge and skills from different disciplines and enables the students to understand and apply knowledge in a broader context. Music is closely connected with other subjects such as history, art, mathematics and science and so forth. By integrating music with other disciplines, the students can not only gain a deeper understanding of music but also enhance their interdisciplinary thinking and learning abilities. For example, if music and history are combined together, they can learn about the social backgrounds and cultural characteristics of different historical periods through the study of the historical development of music. If music and art are teamed up, they can observe and analyze the artworks to experience and understand the similarities and differences between music and art. If music and mathematics are integrated, they can comprehend the mathematical structure of music through the calculation and analysis of musical rhythm and melody. If music and science join hands, they can understand the physical properties of sound and the basic principles of music acoustics through experiments and observations.^[12]

In a “Music and Society” course, the teacher designs a series of interdisciplinary teaching activities. Firstly, she introduces different historical periods of music to help the students understand how music reflects and shapes the society and culture. Then, through the presentation and analysis of the artworks, she requires them to perceive the similarities and differences between music and art in expressing emotions and themes. Next, the students are encouraged to engage in music composition and use their mathematical knowledge to design and analyze the musical rhythm and melody. Lastly, through experiments and demonstrations, she helps them understand the physical properties of sound and the basic principles of music acoustics. Interdisciplinary teaching not only allows the students to understand and appreciate music from multiple perspectives but also stimulates their interest in learning and improves their interdisciplinary thinking and learning abilities.

3.8 Home-School Collaboration

Home-school collaboration plays a crucial role in music education. The enhancement of the students’ interest and enthusiasm for music learning relies on effective communication and collaboration between teachers and parents. Through meaningful communication with the parents, the teachers can gain more information about the students, for example their interest, learning habits and family environment. Such information can help the teachers personalize their teaching methods to meet the students’ diverse learning needs. What is more, parental involvement and support can arouse the students’ learning enthusiasm and strengthen their motivation. Therefore, effective home-school communication and active parental participation are an effective strategy to enhance the students’ interest in music learning.^[13]

In a middle school in a certain city, a music teacher implements an activity called “Family Music Concert.” She assigns specific music tasks for the students to complete at home and invite their parents to participate. These tasks involve watching recordings of music concerts or learning the basic playing techniques of a musical instrument together. Through this approach, the parents not only familiarize themselves with their children’s progress but also encourage and support their learning enthusiasm. They may even engage in music composition and performance together with their children. The teacher communicates with the parents regularly, providing updates on the students’ learning progress and performance at school and listening to the parents’ observation and feedback regarding their children’s learning situation.^[14]

4. Conclusion

This paper delves into the current status and issues of music education in middle schools and

discusses how to stimulate the students' interest in learning through various strategies. In the modern society, music education plays a crucial role in the middle school stage. However, the educators also face challenges such as school doesn't pay enough attention, a monotonous and lackluster curriculum, lack of innovation, and little student interest and engagement. Nevertheless, the circumstances can be changed by appropriate strategies, the students' interest in music learning can be ignited and the quality and effectiveness of music education can be improved. These strategies not only help the students better understand and appreciate music but also cultivate their innovative and critical thinking skills and stimulate their interest in learning. In summary, the goal of middle school music education is not only to impart knowledge and skills but more importantly, to ignite the students' passion, nurture their creative abilities and critical thinking skills, and enable them to find themselves and enjoy the learning process. Only when they have developed their interest in music learning can their musical competence be enhanced and can music education fulfill its intended role. This paper is hoped to provide inspiration and assistance to the music educators in their future teaching endeavors.

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