

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

Oral History of General Music Education in Yangquan City, Shanxi Province

Yajie Zhao¹, Dongqing Liu¹, Miao Huang^{1,*}¹Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University, Nanchang, China

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development and evolution of the educational environment, teaching mode, teaching content and methods of general music education in Yangquan City from the perspective of the educated, with the aim of gaining insight into the development of general music education in Yangquan City and promoting the reform and development of general music education in Yangquan City. In the 1950s, there were no special music classes and teaching materials at the elementary school stage in Yangquan, and students learned through songs taught orally by teachers. At the junior middle school stage, there were singing classes and teaching materials, and piano was the main accompaniment instrument. In the 1980s, there were military drum corps and bands, and since the 2000s the teaching content and methods of music education have gradually diversified. In addition to learning basic textbook content, the learning of recorder and mouth organ has also been added. Teachers adopt games, homemade instruments and other ways to carry out the teaching activities, and the teaching is gradually student-centered. Although general music education in Yangquan is gradually developing with the development of the times, there are problems such as lack of attention to music curriculum and student-oriented teaching, and insufficient depth of teaching of music knowledge and skills. The relevant departments should pay full attention to the important role of general music education in quality education, guarantee that music classes are not occupied, hold more teacher training to enhance teacher strength, carry out teaching activities strictly according to the latest version of the new curriculum standards for primary and secondary schools, and promote the strength of various music competitions with a view to maximizing the role of music education.

ARTICLE DATA

Article History

Received 5 October 2022

Revised 10 October 2022

Accepted 27 January 2023

Keywords

Oral history

General music education

Yangquan City

1. INTRODUCTION

Yangquan City in Shanxi Province has a long history. Since the 1980s, Yangquan City has developed rapidly by taking advantage of coal resources. As an industrial city, general music education is the main way for local people to contact music. Education is a major way of passing on culture and knowledge, and an important means of performing the function of aesthetic education. Combining general music education in Yangquan City with oral history is conducive to gaining an in-depth understanding of the development of general music education in Yangquan City, and promoting the reform and development of general music education in Yangquan City. The

educatees selected were in different eras, and the development and evolution of the educational environment, teaching mode, teaching content and methods of general music in Yangquan City were explored from the perspective of the educated.

2. RESEARCH ON ORAL HISTORY

In the past two decades, scholars in China have explored and studied oral history of music in depth from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Zhao Shufeng and Shan Jianxin [1] reconsidered the phenomenon that theoretical research on music oral history had continued to heat up in the field of oral

*Corresponding author. Email: 1020100684@jxstnu.edu.cn

© 2023 The Authors. Published by Athena International Publishing B.V.

This is an open access article distributed under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

history in the past two years, thus correcting the attitude toward the research on oral history of music. Shan [2] consolidated the concept of oral history of music and discussed the research and application of oral history methods in the field of music research, with traditional music genres and musicians as the main objects of the interviews. Liang Dongmei and Liu Guangqing [3] conducted in-depth interviews and oral records on the origins, forms of transmission, historical evolution, and developmental influences of the five-tone drum in Changziying village.

In recent years, scholars have published more and more articles about local operas and oral cases of local music, and their research fields and contents have been deepened and broadened. Gao Cairong [4] demonstrated the advantages of oral history in terms of various problems in the research of local operas. Ge Zhaoyuan [5] discussed that in the process of collecting and sorting out the oral scripts of Songyang Gaoqiang (a kind of rhyme scheme of Chinese opera), some reference and demonstration on the sociality and authenticity of oral history were provided, which was of great theoretical significance to enlighten oral practitioners in their in-depth research.

In the 1940s, modern oral history emerged. Allan Nevins was the first scholar to study the theory of modern oral history. In recent years, the study of oral history has been widely applied in music and dance, followed by drama, film and television art. More scholars have joined in the study of the oral history of intangible cultural heritage in China. For example, Zhao Xiaona [6] studied the oral history of Ze Yingjun, the inheritor of the Aermi multi-voice folk song of the intangible cultural heritage project in Heishui County, Sichuan Province, explored the historical origin and singing skills of the Aermi multi-voice folk song, and considered and looked forward to the protection and inheritance of the Aermi multi-voice folk song. Chen Xiao [7] conducted a study of oral history of Yin Guanglan, the inheritor of the gong and drum of the intangible cultural heritage project in Hefei City, explored the historical development and music characteristics of the gong and drum, and supplemented the development history of the gong and drum in detail. Jichai Xiaoming's [8] research on the ancient songs of the Yi people, an intangible cultural heritage, promoted the protection of the ancient songs of the Yi people and laid a good foundation for the inheritance and development of the ancient songs of the Yi people. A sense of personal experience is a unique feature of oral history. Oral history plays an important role in the process of inheriting and protecting intangible cultural heritage. With regard to the great contribution of Yao Siyuan, a famous music educationist and professor at Capital

Normal University, in music theory, music teaching and composition, Li Xiaofei [9] made in-depth research and arrangement of the oral history.

As a part of the oral history, the oral history of education is the product of the alliance between the history of education and history. The main value of the oral history of education is not only to provide historical materials for the oral history, but also to bear the role of narrating educational events, as the basis for behavior practice, and to enrich the relevant content of the history of education. Based on the researchers' own learning and life experience, it is hoped to link oral history with the research on general music education in Yangquan City, explore the existing relevance, provide a basis for the research on general music education in Yangquan City, and promote the development of educational environment, teaching mode, teaching content and methods of general music education in Yangquan City.

3. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF GENERAL MUSIC EDUCATION IN YANGQUAN CITY

As an industrial city, cultural and artistic development in Yangquan is not outstanding. The way local people contact and learn music mainly comes from general music education. The interviewees in this study were all from the mining area of Yangquan City, and their educational experience was nine-year compulsory education. They studied in Honglingwan Primary School and No. 13 Middle School in Yangquan City.

3.1. General Music Education in Primary and Junior High Schools of Yangquan City in the 1950s

According to the memories of the educatees who were born in the 1940s, general music education at the primary school stage in Yangquan City did not receive high attention at the time, and there was no special music class and music teaching materials. Music learning was usually combined with physical education, and students learned through teachers' dictation of songs. In the 1950s, the development of general music education in junior middle school in Yangquan City was similar to that in primary school. Due to economic and other reasons, environmental facilities of the school had not been greatly improved. However, there were music textbooks in this stage, and there was only one music lesson weekly.

I went to the primary school when I was 8 years old. My father was a railway worker. Considering father's

job change, we settled in Yangquan City. At that time, there was no tuition for school, no music lessons, only arithmetic and Chinese. The homework was written on stone in the classroom. It was also a Chinese teacher who taught singing and sports. Everyone played games and sang children's songs (Looking for Friends) on the playground. The music class in junior high school was called singing class. It seemed that the music teacher came from Taiyuan. After teaching for a short time, they left, and no new teacher came. The teacher from Taiyuan could play the piano (made of wood). The teacher usually taught students to sing while playing the piano. In class, he also ordered people to sing one by one (Zhao Miduan, retired worker) [10,11].

3.2. General Music Education in Yangquan Primary Schools in the 1970s

According to the memories of the educatees in the 1960s, there were music textbooks in primary school. Teachers would teach simple music skills. In addition, they also learned dance and chorus. Most of the songs they learned were red songs.

I was born in 1966 and went to a primary school at the age of 8 years old. I had to pay for books to go to school. There were two music classes a week. We already had music textbooks. Most of the lessons were on the textbooks. Teachers would also teach students to dance and realize music (Zhao Guangyan, retired worker) [12].

3.3. General Music Education in Primary and Junior High Schools of Yangquan City in the 1980s

According to the memories of the educatees in the 1960s and 1970s, there were music textbooks in primary schools and junior middle schools. Teachers taught music score and had carried out activities. Most of the songs they learned were textbooks and red songs. In the 1980s, there were military drum teams and bands in primary schools.

I went to Honglingwan Primary School when I was 7 years old. Generally, there were two music classes a week. There was a music class in junior high school every week. At that time, we learned red songs. There was a choir competition in the school. We learned some simple red songs. The teacher also played the piano. When he played the piano, students would sing along with it. The teacher also taught us to recognize music score (Zhao Guangyan, retired worker).

3.4. General Music Education in Primary and Junior High Schools of Yangquan City in the 2000s and 2010s

According to the memories of the educatees in the 1990s, the contents and methods of music classroom teaching in primary schools had gradually been diversified. In addition to the basic teaching materials, the study of clarinet and accordion had also been added. Teachers would use games, self-made instruments and other ways to carry out teaching, and the teaching was gradually student-centered. In junior high school, teachers mainly carried out teaching through singing, and the teaching content was mostly the content of the teaching materials. The school held a chorus competition, and the curriculum was set up music classes for one week, but there were not much actual teaching hours of music classes [13].

When I was 8 years old in 2006, I started primary school as a freshman. I had two music lessons a week. I would have regular lessons in non-exam periods. Before class, I would review and sing one by one. The teaching content was mainly the content of teaching materials. We also played musical instruments as mouthpiece organ and clarinet. At the end of each semester, there would be a solo show, and teachers would adjust, teach and take students to play rhythm games. (Huo Zhixuan, student)

4. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF MUSIC EDUCATION OF THE TIMES

4.1. The First Stage: 1950s

In the 1950s, as an independent discipline, the history of music education was formally proposed. Li Chunyi, a famous music historian, put forward in his "Music Research" that while daring to affirm the achievements, the shortcomings in the research should be paid attention to, so that the research results could be continuously improved. As for the historical gaps, they should be enriched and improved, especially for the ancient history of national music, education and thought. In the history of music education, the independent subject of music education history proposed by domestic experts could be found [14,15].

In the general music education of primary school in Yangquan City, music education was in a state of extreme lack. Music was simply a way of entertainment and games, and the aesthetic education function of music had not been reflected. There were

no professional music teaching materials, there were insufficient professional teachers, and the age gap between students was large, which further increased the difficulty of teaching. In junior middle school, what was lacking most was good and abundant teachers. Music lessons were not paid attention to at that time, even dispensable. However, compared with that in the primary school stage, there were music textbooks. Teachers had strong personal music literacy and basic music teaching ability [16].

4.2. The Second Stage: 1970s

In 1989, the title of "History of Music Education" was officially published in the "Encyclopedia of China - Volume of Music and Dance". Under the entry of "Music Pedagogy" written by Ye Chunzhi, there was an entry of "History of Music Education", and the research scope was determined.

The general music education at the primary school stage in Yangquan City was further improved in the teachers compared with that in the 1950s. The class contents also mainly came from textbooks. The school facilities were gradually improved, and music teaching activities were gradually enriched. Teachers began to pay attention to the teaching of music skills. At this time, the study of red songs also accounted for a large proportion, indicating that the ideological and political functions of music had been better played.

4.3. The Third Stage: 1980s

The article "Oral History and Reflection on the Educational Process of a 'Piano Winner'" was Qiao Xin's statement based on the core principles of educational anthropology. She recorded a 'Piano Winner' through oral interview, and put forward the outstanding problems to be solved in the field of music education, which needed in-depth reflection. In the "Research on Oral History of Music Education", the discussion of Ma Jin and Ma Dongfeng was based on the research of Chinese music history and oral history, taking individual cases as examples, and deeply exploring the topic of oral methodology that explained the history of music education [17].

Compared with the general music education in primary schools and junior middle schools in Yangquan City, the music education of primary school at this time received more attention. Teachers consciously carry out the teaching of professional skills and the teaching content that was closely related to the teaching materials. In addition to the basic textbook content, the school also organized a chorus, created a military drum team and band, and created a good atmosphere for learning music.

However, the situation of music education in junior high schools during this period was very poor. Although there were music textbooks, the teachers were not enough. The personal quality and ability of teachers were not strong, and appropriate teaching methods were lacking. Music lessons could be reduced at will. The school's neglect of music lessons had led to some students having no music lessons for three years in junior high school [18].

4.4. The Fourth Stage: 21st Century

In the past 20 years, Chinese scholars deeply discussed the unsolved problems in the relevant theories and practices of the oral history of music [19]. In the second issue of "Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music" in 2005, Zang Yibing's article "Oral History and Music History: A New Perspective of Chinese Music History Writing" pointed out the indivisibility between oral history and music history, which was based on the new trend of contemporary historical theory, and showed that the technology and idea of oral history could be used to expand the discipline of music history. This new topic re-guided the development of music history research, and provided some theoretical and technical support for this research [20].

The general music education in primary and junior high schools in Yangquan City developed better than that before. The music teachers in the primary school stage had higher music literacy, and the content and methods of classroom teaching were gradually diversified, increasing the learning of basic elements of music, such as rhythm, scientific vocal methods, etc. Teachers also began to pay attention to students gradually. At that time, the school held many chorus competitions, which showed that the school paid more attention to art. However, the music lessons in the examination stage would still be replaced by the so-called "regular lessons", and the normal progress of music lessons couldn't be guaranteed. The overall school environment had been further improved at the junior middle school stage, but the infrastructure construction on music was not perfect. As music classes in primary schools were generally ignored, music teachers mostly used singing. Although the school would hold chorus activities, music classes in the second and third year of junior high were almost cancelled by default.

To sum up, the quality of music lessons in primary schools from the 1950s to the 1980s had been gradually improving, and the teaching methods had been also gradually diversifying. However, the music class in junior middle school had always been in a state of absence, and even the normal class hours

couldn't be guaranteed. Schools didn't pay enough attention to music lessons; the reserve of teachers was insufficient; teachers did not pay enough attention to the educational role of music; there was a lack of appropriate teaching methods; and students' interest in learning had not been well stimulated.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the narrations of the interviewees, the general music education in Yangquan City is gradually developing with the development of the times, the teaching environment is gradually improved, and the teaching facilities are gradually improved. Music textbooks are available in other periods except the primary school stage in the 1950s, but the role of music textbooks has not been fully played. Teachers still use the traditional teaching mode of "indoctrination", and the teaching content is simply to learn to sing songs in textbooks. However, it does not explore the aesthetic and educational role of music, and does not pay attention to the improvement of aesthetic and core quality. The schools do not attach much importance to music courses, teachers are insufficient, and teachers lack teaching motivation, do not pay attention to the cultivation of students' core literacy and aesthetic ability, lack methodological guidance in the teaching process, and cannot take students as the teaching subjects. The teaching of music knowledge and skills is not deep enough, and only stays at the basic level of spectrum, rhythm, etc.

In comprehensive development of quality education, music education is a key element. For the music education problem in ordinary schools, this study takes music education in primary schools in Yangquan City as an example, and suggestions are as follows. Firstly, relevant departments should pay full attention to the important role of general music education in quality education to ensure that music lessons are not occupied. The role of aesthetic education of music needs to meet objective conditions of having classes. Lack of attention to music courses has led to status quo of music courses, which has triggered a series of vicious cycles. The latest version of art teaching standards of compulsory education shall be taken as the implementation basis. "2022 Edition of the Art Curriculum Standards in Compulsory Education" emphasizes that it is necessary to pay full attention to the cultivation of core quality, highlight the function of aesthetic education, and make the new generation of students become a new generation with ideals, responsibilities, abilities and ideas from an early age. Teachers should formulate teaching plans according to latest curriculum standards, reasonably set

teaching objectives and give full play to the educational function of music courses. The education bureaus and schools should hold more teacher training to strengthen the faculty, strengthen strict certification and implementation of pre-service education for teachers and continuous follow-up of post-service renewal of teachers. Teachers should constantly learn to keep pace with the times and enhance their professional ability to achieve the goal of professional development. In addition, relevant departments should increase the strength of music competitions and publicize the importance of music learning, to form a good music learning atmosphere in society and maximize the role of music education.

REFERENCES

- [1] Zhao Shufeng, Shan Jianxin. New Thoughts on the Oral History of Music [J]. *Chinese Music*, 2016(01): 195–203. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.13812/j.cnki.cn11-1379/j.2016.01.021>
- [2] Shan Jianxin. On the Concept, Nature and Methods of Oral History of Music [J]. *Music Research*, 2015(04): 94–103. (in Chinese)
- [3] Liang Dongmei, Liu Guangqing. The Historical Evolution of Five-Tone Drum in Changziying, Daxing, Beijing [J]. *Huang Zhong (Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music)*, 2011(03): 38–42. (in Chinese)
- [4] Gao Cairong. Study on "Oral History" of Local Opera From a New Perspective [J]. *Chinese Drama*, 2010(06): 59–61. (in Chinese)
- [5] Yang Heping, Ge Zhaoyuan. A Case Study of the Oral History of Music: Taking the Collation, Excavation and Analysis of Oral Scripts of Songyang Gaoqiang as an Example [J]. *Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music*, 2015(01): 80–86. (in Chinese)
- [6] Zhao Xiaona. The Oral History of Ze Yingjun, the Inheritor of Aermay Multi-Voice Folk Song [J]. *National Music*, 2022(01): 51–54. (in Chinese)
- [7] Chen Xiao. The Oral History of Yin Guanglan, Inheritor of Gong and Drum in Hefei [J]. *Art Research*, 2021(03): 86–89. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.13944/j.cnki.ysyj.2021.0173>
- [8] Jichai Xiaoming. Research on the Protection and Inheritance of Ancient Songs of Yi Nationality From the Perspective of Oral History [J]. *Journal*

- of Inner Mongolia University of Finance and Economics, 2021, 19(03): 136–138. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.13895/j.cnki.jimufe.2021.03.036>
- [9] Li Xiaofei. Yao Siyuan's Oral History of "My College Music Education" (1945–1949) [J]. China Music Education, 2020(08): 4–8. (in Chinese)
- [10] Fu Guangming. Oral History: History, Value and Methods [J]. Gansu Social Sciences, 2008(01): 77–81. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.15891/j.cnki.cn62-1093/c.2008.01.022>
- [11] Yue Qingping. Five Questions on Oral History [J]. Social Sciences of Chinese Universities, 2013(05): 81–93 & 157–158. (in Chinese)
- [12] Zhou Hongyu, Liu Laibing. Research on Oral History of Education: Connotation, Form and Value [J]. Modern Education Management, 2018(11): 1–7. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.16697/j.cnki.xdjygl.2018.11.001>
- [13] Li Mei. Research on the Oral History of Education in Schools for Hui Nationality in Qinghai [D]. Qinghai Normal University, 2016. (in Chinese)
- [14] Zhao Ling. Quality Assurance of Teachers in Primary and Secondary School: Strategies in Australia [J]. Education Review, 2011(01): 162–164. (in Chinese)
- [15] Xia Chenchen, Li Li. Research on the Oral History of the Inheritors of Miao Nationality of Drum Dance in the West of Hunan Province [J]. Journal of Guangzhou Sport University, 2020, 40(01): 71–74. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.13830/j.cnki.cn44-1129/g8.2020.01.016>
- [16] Qian Maowei. Rethinking Oral History [J]. Historical Theory Research, 2021(05): 13–16. (in Chinese)
- [17] Jiang Hong, Fei Xiufen, Liu Liheng. Reflections and Improvement of Teachers in Rural Education [J]. Education Theory and Practice, 2022, 42(20): 29–32. (in Chinese)
- [18] Du Hongbin. Focusing on Core Literacy and Highlighting the Function of Aesthetic Education: Interpretation of the Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) [J]. Basic Education Curriculum, 2022(09): 57–64. (in Chinese)
- [19] Yue Jialei. Research on Protection Measures of Yangquan City [J]. Journal of Jishou University (Social Science Edition), 2016, 37(S2): 108–110. (in Chinese)
- [20] Wang Gang, Wang Ying. On the Reform of Music Education and Teaching Mode Under the Background of Quality Education [J]. Education and Vocation, 2010(09): 114–116. (in Chinese)
<https://doi.org/10.13615/j.cnki.1004-3985.2010.09.008>

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW OUTLINE OF ORAL HISTORY OF GENERAL MUSIC EDUCATION IN YANGQUAN CITY, SHANXI PROVINCE

Name of respondent:

Gender:

Age:

Years of schooling:

Educational experience:

1. When did you go to primary (secondary) school? What's the name of the school?
2. Was there any music class in primary (secondary) school? How many classes did you have a week? How long did you have the class?
3. Would music classes be taught according to the timetable?
4. How was the social environment at that time? What kind of people could go to school?
5. What would be learned in music class in primary (secondary) school period?
6. Was there any music textbook?
7. How was the teaching quality of the school? How were the teachers?
8. What was the teaching equipment at that time? How was the teaching method?
9. Did you still have the school photos?
10. What was the most unforgettable thing for you in the music class during the primary (secondary) school period?