

# Research on Modular Teaching Design of Music Education Courses in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** This paper elaborates on the significant importance of modular teaching design in music education courses at the higher education level. It analyzes the basic principles and methods of modular teaching design for music education courses and proposes fundamental strategies, namely: clarifying educational objectives to establish a scientific teaching system; prioritizing student-centered teaching tailored to individual needs to construct personalized teaching models; emphasizing practical components to establish practical teaching bases; and highlighting cultural inheritance and innovation to enhance artistic and humanistic qualities. It is hoped that this simple analysis will provide valuable reference for future researchers.

**Keywords:** Higher education; Music education; Modular curriculum; Teaching design

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## 1. Introduction

Curriculum systems and teaching models are inherently contextual and goal-oriented, subject to change with societal transitions. However, any transformation must be grounded in the practical needs of education without deviating from its essence. For a considerable period, various universities in China have tended to replicate and imitate performance majors in their music education programs. Consequently, while focusing solely on mastering the technical skills of their majors, they have neglected the cultivation of fundamental abilities and teaching capabilities among teachers. This has led to a situation where music education majors can only sing, keyboard majors can only play the piano, and dance majors can only dance. This departure from the essence of “teacher training” has resulted in a dilemma where music education majors are neither capable performers nor competent in basic music education.

Curriculum constitutes the core element of talent cultivation in higher education institutions. As primary sources of future music teachers in primary and secondary schools, students majoring in music education are directly impacted by the curriculum design and teaching methods. Modular teaching design in music education courses, guided by modern educational philosophies and methods, aims to cultivate students’ practical and innovative abilities. It involves dividing music education courses into several modules, each consisting of specific teaching units, with organic connections and close links between modules. This modular teaching design endows music education courses with strong specificity and practicality, effectively fostering students’ innovative spirit and practical skills. Therefore, to meet the developmental needs of the times and the training objectives of music education professionals, modular teaching design is imperative for music education courses in higher education. It is not only a necessary requirement for the construction and reform of music education programs but also a crucial pathway to enhancing the quality of talent cultivation in music education at the university level.

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### About the Author

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## **2. Content and Essence of Modular Curriculum Design**

Curriculum serves as a vital indicator of educational quality, a crucial component in implementing quality education, and a yardstick for measuring the cultural development of a school. Moreover, it reflects whether a school can truly produce competent talents in accordance with the needs of societal development. Based on these considerations, the paper discusses the contents of a “modular” curriculum system, focusing on three aspects: “modularized” curriculum structure, “teaching content,” and “teaching evaluation.”

### **(1) Modularized teaching content**

At the university level, students already possess certain humanistic qualities (such as history, literature, etc.), have begun to form their worldviews and values, and have developed initial thoughts and aesthetic awareness in music appreciation. Some students may also possess certain skills in performance, singing, dancing, etc. Against this backdrop, to better develop students’ artistic talents and cater to their interests and strengths in music knowledge at the university stage, the content of university music courses includes music appreciation, singing, instrumental performance, composition, music and dance, and music and theatrical performance. By offering various modules for students to choose freely, the new curriculum reform adheres to a student-centered approach, respects individual lives, and promotes comprehensive and personalized development.

### **(2) The essence of modular teaching**

The curriculum design approach of modular teaching reflects a shift in educational philosophy from “knowledge-based” to “life-based.” Allowing students to choose their own modules respects their intellectual differences, interests, and autonomy in learning. After completing the compulsory appreciation modules, students can choose other modules according to their actual situations, delve deeper into modules such as singing, instrumental performance, and composition, develop their talents in music, and enhance their artistic cultivation and aesthetic abilities. Modular teaching emphasizes student participation and the cultivation of practical abilities, values the accumulation of students’ life experiences and emotional experiences, emphasizes the subjectivity and initiative of aesthetics, and reflects a transformation in music teaching from focusing on knowledge and skills to focusing on the learning process and laying the foundation for students’ lifelong development.

## **3. Discussion on Problems Existing in University Music Education**

Since the beginning of the new century, with the expansion of university enrollments, the curriculum construction in such institutions has been significantly strengthened, thereby promoting the development and improvement of curriculum offerings and systems. In these fundamental disciplines, the teaching content of music courses has expanded, and teaching methods have seen some updates and developments. Consequently, our university has made significant achievements in curriculum construction. However, due to various constraints, there are still some significant problems in the current music courses in Chinese universities, which seriously affect the quality and efficiency of education.

Firstly, there is an overemphasis on theoretical aspects, leading to the characteristic of “concrete imagery” in music teaching, making it difficult for students to understand. We know that due to the abstract nature of music theory knowledge, it is challenging for students in higher vocational colleges to grasp it. Furthermore, the aesthetic sense of music cannot be fully expressed through language alone. Currently, music education in Chinese universities still relies on traditional theoretical explanations, which neither completely eliminate the abstract characteristics of music aesthetic theory nor adequately express the beauty of music that cannot be verbalized. This greatly limits the quality of curriculum teaching.

Secondly, the content of music courses is too broad, without highlighting the emphasis of teaching based on

the characteristics of various disciplines and the differences among students. University music education primarily focuses on singing, performance, and acting as the main research directions in foundational courses. However, the teaching and training contents and forms vary across different professional directions. Therefore, the content of music education in various professional directions is also different. However, the current university music teaching largely remains at a comprehensive education philosophy, making it difficult to meet the personalized needs of music education and training in various professional directions and thus failing to fully support teaching in these professional areas.

Thirdly, there is a lack of cross-disciplinary connections with other majors, which hinders the cultivation of students' creative thinking. From the perspective of anthropology, the beauty of music does not arise out of nowhere but has specific cultural and psychological backgrounds. This necessitates that in music teaching, we not only focus on music but also organically integrate the aesthetic expression methods of other sister disciplines such as dance, literature, and fine arts. From a deeper cultural psychological perspective, students should profoundly understand the commonality in aesthetic spirits and connotations among various artistic disciplines, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the beauty of music and experiencing the unique aesthetic effects of music. However, current university music teaching mainly revolves around music itself, lacking horizontal connections with the aesthetic expression forms of other sister disciplines. Therefore, it is challenging for students to have a deep understanding and integration of the aesthetic spirit and connotations of various artistic disciplines, making it difficult for them to fully unleash their creativity in music composition.

#### **4. The Significant Importance of Modular Teaching Design in University Music Education Programs**

Modular teaching design in university music education programs refers to the division of music education courses into several modules, each comprising specific teaching units that are organically integrated and closely interconnected. This modular approach effectively enhances the teaching efficiency of university music education programs and students' practical abilities. Modular teaching design not only enriches the content of music education courses, broadens students' knowledge horizons, and fosters their comprehensive abilities but also promotes students' individual and holistic development. Therefore, modular teaching design in university music education programs holds significant importance, playing a crucial role in enhancing the quality of talent cultivation in university music education programs and nurturing high-quality music professionals who can adapt to the needs of societal development. Through modular design, teachers in music education programs can clarify educational objectives, develop a scientific teaching system based on the nature, content, and characteristics of the courses, integrate and optimize teaching content and curriculum structure, establish a scientific teaching system, enhance classroom teaching efficiency, and consequently improve students' learning efficiency and quality. Throughout the process of modular teaching design in university music education programs, teachers should adhere to basic principles and methods such as clarifying educational objectives, constructing a scientific teaching system, adopting a student-centered approach, tailoring teaching methods to individual needs, strengthening practical components, establishing practical teaching bases, and emphasizing cultural inheritance and innovation, as well as enhancing artistic and humanistic qualities.

#### **5. Basic Principles and Methods of Modular Teaching Design in University Music Education Programs**

Modular teaching design in university music education programs is a reform based on modern educational ideologies and methods. It is tailored to the school's educational objectives, societal demands for talent, school

operating conditions, and students' individual characteristics. This approach divides music education courses into several modules, each composed of specific teaching units. Through teaching design, students can grasp the knowledge system of music disciplines, engage in music education practice, and enhance their music education abilities. Therefore, when conducting modular teaching design in university music education programs, it is essential to adhere to basic principles such as scientificity, targeting, and comprehensiveness. Educational objectives and content should be determined based on societal demands for talent and students' actual situations, and scientifically rational teaching methods and approaches should be employed to enhance the quality of modular teaching design in university music education programs.

## **6. Basic Strategies for Modular Teaching Design in University Music Education Programs**

### **(1) Clarify educational objectives and build a scientific teaching system**

The talent cultivation objective of music education programs is to train comprehensive music teachers for the nation and society. Guided by this objective, teachers in university music education programs should make long-term plans for students' future development. Additionally, they should continuously optimize teaching content, methods, and approaches according to societal demands for music talent. This ensures the cultivation of students' comprehensive music literacy and abilities. Therefore, universities should establish music education talent cultivation objectives that align with societal needs and construct a scientific, rational, and practical modular curriculum system based on these objectives. Only by doing so can students' music abilities be improved, and their comprehensive literacy and capabilities be enhanced, thereby nurturing outstanding music teachers who can meet societal needs comprehensively.

### **(2) Develop student-centered, tailed and personalized teaching models**

In the process of modular teaching design, teachers should prioritize students' needs and conduct comprehensive and objective analyses of their actual situations. Starting from students' basic backgrounds, professional strengths, musical abilities, and individual characteristics, teachers should establish personalized teaching models. For example, when designing modular courses for music education majors, teachers can employ different teaching methods based on students' varying levels of musical foundation and learning abilities. For students with strong foundations and high learning capabilities, a "learning before teaching" approach may be suitable, whereas for those with relatively weaker foundations, a "teaching before learning" approach may be more effective. Only by fully considering students' diverse levels, abilities, and musical backgrounds throughout the teaching process can teachers better cultivate students' musical literacy and abilities.

### **(3) Strengthen practical components and establish practical teaching bases**

Modularization of university music education programs should involve applying theoretical knowledge to practical contexts. Therefore, teachers should focus on cultivating students' practical abilities during teaching to enhance their innovation and comprehensive qualities. Schools should establish practical teaching bases in accordance with the requirements of modular teaching design, integrating the unique characteristics of music education programs. Moreover, schools should encourage students to participate in social practical activities and provide necessary support. For instance, organizing student teaching internships in primary and secondary schools or kindergartens, providing music coaching in cultural centers or public art galleries, and facilitating educational exchanges with other institutions. Through these activities, students can enhance their comprehensive qualities and professional skills while applying theoretical knowledge to practice.

### **(4) Emphasize cultural inheritance and innovation, and enhance artistic and humanistic qualities**

Given the dual background of economic and cultural development in China, modular teaching design in music

education programs should focus on cultivating students' artistic and humanistic qualities, making them artistic talents with rich connotations and cultural heritage. Teachers should consciously cultivate students' understanding of national music culture and guide them to appreciate the humanistic spirit embodied in different national music styles, enriching their cultural heritage. Additionally, teachers should enhance students' artistic qualities through curriculum reform and teaching design to promote comprehensive improvements in students' music literacy. This can be achieved by integrating knowledge of national folk music and traditional Chinese culture into the curriculum content and adopting multimedia tools and diverse teaching methods to allow students to gain rich knowledge through artistic appreciation and practical experience.

## 7. Further Reflections on Curriculum Reform

(1) In the information age, how should teachers navigate and choose from diverse teaching resources? Fresh teaching content can stimulate students' interest in learning, but how can various online information and case studies be standardized?

(2) Modern teaching methods are becoming increasingly diverse, with the proliferation of online courses, teaching terminals, and various software applications driving changes in teaching approaches. As teaching methods undergo significant transformations, how do teachers and students adapt? What strategies can be employed for adaptation?

(3) With curriculum-based modularization, will there be a dual challenge of project-based learning and the trend of vocational education centered around work? How can these approaches be integrated? What measures can be taken to meet the needs of contemporary development and enable vocational colleges to better adapt to the demands of the times?

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, with the continuous development of science and technology in China and the country's transition to a new economic normal, the innovation and development of talent cultivation models are crucial for local ordinary universities. To achieve this, curriculum-based modular teaching design is essential. In the current context, to cultivate applied and compound talents for society, innovation is necessary.

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