Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Education Innovation and Philosophical Inquiries
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

Research on the Current Situation and Problems of Orchestral Music Education in Congruent Schools in H City

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Abstract. Orchestral music education is an expanded curriculum of music education. Congruent schools can implement orchestral music teaching for students in a longer-term and more targeted manner. Based on the current situation of orchestral music education in congruent schools in H City, this paper investigates the functional positioning and unique advantages of orchestral music in congruent schools respectively. The study finds that the grade division of orchestras in congruent schools is characterized by stages, coherence, pertinence and selectivity, the curriculum planning is flexible and reasonable, and the teaching mode fits the characteristics of orchestra teaching. At the same time, with the rapid development of the orchestral music education industry, various problems have emerged in the actual teaching process. This paper argues that the orchestral music education in congruent schools in H City has a utilitarian tendency, which is caused by the pressure of further education, interest chains, meritocratic ideas and the imbalance of educational resources. To solve this series of problems, it is necessary to guide positive values from society and schools, and help students and parents correct their attitudes.

Keywords: consistent-system schools, orchestral music education,utilitarian tendency, social meritocracy, values guidance

1. Introduction

As a school-running model with a longer academic system, congruent schools often achieve excellent teaching results in music education, among which orchestral music education is a particularly important art form in music education. A congruent school is a modern school-running model that integrates primary and junior high schools, making primary to junior high school education a continuous, systematic and integrated whole.

Compared with the more common school-running models of complete primary schools and complete middle schools in China, congruent schools are more conducive to carrying out orchestra club courses continuously from primary to junior high school according to students' differences in abilities and development. Relying on the advantages of its own educational philosophy and teaching mode, orchestral music education in congruent schools in H City has achieved relatively outstanding teaching results. However, in the implementation of orchestral music education in recent years, there has been a trend of utilitarian orientation, leading to some chaos in orchestral music education. This study aims to analyze the current situation of orchestral music teaching in several

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

consistent-system schools in H City, identify the existing problems, analyze the causes of such problems, and point out that correcting these phenomena requires a shift in the perspectives of all parties involved.

2. Literature review

In current research on continuous education, articles focus on the approach to break the constraints of the school education system and promote connection and cooperation between primary and junior high schools.Sun pointed out that consolidated schools can maximize curriculum resource integration, enabling resource sharing between primary and secondary schools, full utilization of resources, reduced expenditure, and optimal resource allocation [1].Wang argues that in unified consistent-system schools, teaching research transcends stage and space limits, enabling primary and secondary teachers to collaborate. This helps them understand adjacent stages, clarify their own tasks, and improve teaching from an integrated education perspective [2].It is evident that continuous education is a more rational school-running model. Thus, establishing high-quality nine-year consistent schools in contemporary Chinese society is both an inevitable requirement for improving national education quality and an internal need for school development.

In research on wind music education, school wind bands face dilemmas including intonation control issues, balance among voice parts,and management mechanism problems. Liu Dong also noted that, from the student perspective, "Wind music training is tedious and arduous, requiring long-term persistent practice. Such mechanical repetitive practice easily leads to student burnout." Regarding teaching staff,at the same time, it should be pointed out that the specialized training system for wind music teaching in domestic music education majors is still incomplete and wind music teaching demands high comprehensive literacy from teachers, requiring solid music theory, proficient performance skills, excellent teaching methods, and good communication skills, making qualified professionals relatively scarce [3].

Existing research has well documented the advantages of continuous education and the current state of wind music education. However, there is insufficient literature on the establishment of wind bands in continuous education schools, and few studies have addressed the utilitarian tendency in wind music education. This paper provides up-to-date cases for the research field of music pedagogy, and to a certain extent, fills the gaps in academic research on consistent-system music education in China, especially orchestral music education. Meanwhile, proceeding from the essence of music education, this study intends to examine the current situation and problems of orchestral music education in China, and further explore the relationship between music education and society.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research methods

3.1.1. Theoretical analysis

Sort out relevant theoretical literature and policy documents on music education, utilitarianism, meritocracy, and continuous education to provide theoretical and policy support.

3.1.2. Quantitative research

Interview Method: Conduct interviews with ninth-grade orchestral members and admitted art special enrollment students to obtain first-hand data on learning motivation and academic advancement

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

mindset.

In form of data statistics,Collect and quantify data on orchestral members' further education, proportion of faculty children, etc., for percentage calculation and comparative analysis.

Through text analysis,analyze curriculum plans, stage divisions, band organization models and other textual materials to extract characteristics of the current educational situation.

3.2. Data sources

3.2.1. Primary data

Interview records of current ninth-grade graduates and previous graduates of orchestras in each school; timetables, rehearsal schedules, and stage division plans of orchestras in 5 schools.

3.2.2. Secondary data

Publicly available school further education data and art special enrollment admission results; high school admission rates and key high school admission data in City H; academic papers and theoretical works in the education field.

3.3. Analysis procedures

First, summarize the organization, curriculum planning and teaching models of orchestral music education in consistent schools in City H. Then, combined with interviews and data, conclude the chaos at the student, school and parent levels under utilitarian tendency.

Subsequently, analyze the causes of chaos.The reasons include internal pressures of academic advancement and interest chains, as well as external prevalence of meritocracy and resource imbalance. Finally, propose improvement paths through collaboration among society, schools and families targeting the problems and causes.

3.4. Main research findings

3.4.1. Significant advantages in establishing orchestras in consistent schools

Consistent schools have outstanding systemic advantages in establishing orchestras, realizing continuous, systematic and long-term orchestral music education from primary to junior high school, with stable voice parts and smooth transition between primary and junior high school. Meanwhile, the organization of orchestras in consistent schools is scientific and standardized, with staged, coherent, targeted and selective stage divisions, adopting tiered teaching (basic classes, preparatory orchestras, official orchestras). The teaching model combines sectional rehearsals and full orchestra rehearsals, with hired professional musicians enhancing teaching professionalism. Furthermore, these schools arrange courses flexibly and rationally.For instance, nine-year consistent schools hold rehearsals on weekdays, while twelve-year consistent schools offer classes on weekends. This balances academic study and artistic training, as well as on-campus and off-campus student sources.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

3.4.2. Severe utilitarian tendency and alienation of educational essence

For the students, over 80% of ninth-grade official orchestra members are admitted to key high schools as art special enrollment students, viewing orchestral music as a shortcut for senior high school entrance examination, leading to utilitarian learning motivation.

Schools should hired teachers form personal connection chains; in-school teachers act as intermediaries; underhand operations exist in art special enrollment; schools use orchestras as tools to boost further education rates.

In terms of parents,some of them take advantage of information gaps to enroll their children in orchestras, reflected in the high proportion of faculty children in orchestras, intensifying unfair academic competition.

3.4.3. Internal and external actors

Pressure from senior high school entrance examination streaming and key high school admission; interest chains formed by off-campus private lessons and teacher personal connections.

Prevalence of social meritocracy and score-only orientation; imbalance in educational resources among regions, schools and between general and vocational education, exacerbating academic anxiety.

4. Discussion

4.1. Current situation of orchestral music education in H city

In recent years, H City has gradually grown into a leading new first-tier city and an important central city in eastern China, with its overall education level ranking among the first echelon nationwide and considerable achievements in music education.

This paper takes the orchestras in five consistent-system schools in H City as the main research objects, including three nine-year consistent-system schools: School A, School B, School J, and two twelve-year consistent-system schools: School Y and School T. The orchestras of the three nine-year schools have been established for more than ten years and are highly recognized in the province. Although the orchestras of the two twelve-year schools were both founded after 2020, they are equipped with complete orchestra formations and teaching staff, and have emerged in various domestic art exhibitions and performances.

Table 1. Orchestra configuration of five congruent schools in H city

Orchestra Organization	School Name	Strings	Wood winds	Brass	Percussion
Orchestra	School Y School T School J	Violin Viola Cello Double Bass	Clarinet, Flute, Piccolo, Oboe, Bassoon	Trumpet, Trombone, Horn, Tuba	Marimba Drum Set Timpani, etc.
wind band	School B School A	Double Bass	Clarinet, Flute, Piccolo, Oboe, Bassoon, Saxophone	Trumpet, Trombone, Horn, Tuba, Euphonium, Baritone	Marimba Drum Set Timpani, etc.

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4.1.1. Functional orientation of orchestras in consistent-system schools

As an extracurricular cultural and artistic activity in aesthetic education courses, orchestras enable students to master instrumental performance skills while cultivating their sentiments, and cultivate a competitive spirit and teamwork spirit in group cooperation.

From the essence of music education,music is the product of people's perceptual thinking, which can convey the thoughts and feelings of individuals, nations and even countries. As Sukhomlinskii said,music education — not to train musicians, first of all to train people [4].The goal of music education is to cultivate complete people. Education must take the art of life.The construction of personality and the cultivation of creativity as its main purposes.

Orchestral music education is characterized by practicality and intuitiveness, focusing on the learning of instrumental performance skills, music theory knowledge, and the cultivation of teamwork ability in ensemble.

When learning Western orchestral instruments, brass and string instruments require performers to have control over lip vibration and body breath; while playing woodwind and string instruments focuses more on the coordination of fingers and breath. Learning to play an instrument can improve students' motor skills, cognitive skills and performance skills.

From the perspective of the unique advantages of the consistent education in orchestral music education， Congruent schools can "target the problems of students' ability differentiation and development differentiation, anchor the development ladder with ability coherence, create a dynamic learning ecology with mixed ages, and adapt to the growth rhythm of students in grades 1-9 [5]", so as to better organize club activities for students of all ages.

Orchestral music education requires long-term accumulation. Congruent schools can continuously pay attention to students' learning effects for a long time, and reduce the pressure of students' transition from primary to junior high school, guiding students to better balance the sharply increased academic pressure and orchestra courses. At the same time, the orchestra can have more members, and the balance of each voice part of the orchestra will not be greatly affected by the departure of graduates.

Finally, congruent schools can mobilize more teachers and make longer-term teaching plans to build orchestras into more professional ones. In addition to the in-school responsible teachers, orchestras in multi-grade schools often employ professional musicians from local professional orchestras to teach voice part courses.

4.1.2. Organization of orchestras in consistent-system schools in H city

Since congruent schools cover all grades from primary to junior high school, each school has a specific mode in the organization of orchestras to give full play to its continuous advantages.

The division of teaching grades in orchestral music education in multi-grade schools is characterized by stages, coherence, pertinence and selectivity.

Among them, staging is reflected in that schools will arrange students of different grades into basic classes, preparatory orchestras and official orchestras (as shown in Figure 1). Meanwhile, students admitted to the preparatory orchestra, whether they enter the official orchestra or not, are required to participate in preparatory orchestra courses until the end of Grade 7, aiming to encourage new students through the exemplary role of senior students. At the same time, the teaching content received by students is more coherent. Pertinence is reflected in that students at different stages receive different training contents, and students of different levels can get more targeted one-to-one tutoring. Finally, selectivity is reflected in that students need to pass examinations organized by the

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

school to enter the preparatory orchestra and official orchestra, and only students with qualified performance ability can participate in higher-level orchestra training. This division of teaching grades is compatible with students' physical and mental development laws, is scientific, and can better cultivate students' independent performance and orchestra ensemble abilities.

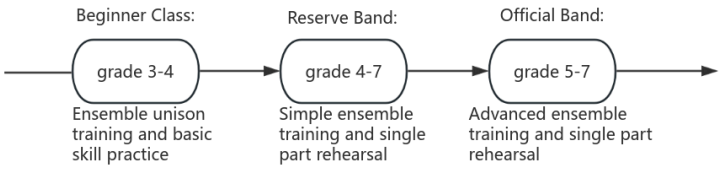


Figure 1. This figure illustrates the different level of orchestra students

The curriculum planning of orchestras in multi-grade schools is flexible and reasonable.

The scheduling time of orchestra courses varies in each school. The orchestras of the three nine-year schools all recruit students and carry out courses within the school from Monday to Friday, which can maximize the saving of rehearsal time and allow students to take more extracurricular courses on weekends; while the orchestras of the two twelve-year schools not only have in-school students, but also recruit members from the society, and rehearse on weekends. They can employ more senior teachers to tutor students after work, and students can participate in courses in a better state on weekends (see Table 2 for specific course information).

At the same time, schools often pay more attention to training the cooperation ability between orchestra members, and will devote more time to orchestra ensemble training. Voice part rehearsal focuses more on the cultivation of personal performance ability, with a smaller teaching scale and more targeted tutoring for each student.

Since the club courses and after-school practice time provided by the school are not enough to fully teach the required courses for students to learn to play instruments, there are few opportunities for small-class and one-to-one teaching. Therefore, learning to play only at school is less targeted for students. As a result, most students take one-to-one private lessons with external teachers arranged by the school on weekends.

Table 2. Curriculum planning of nine-year congruent schools in H city

Curriculum Planning	School B	School A	School J	School Y	School T
Single-Voice Part Rehearsal	After school on Monday	After school on Monday	After school on Monday	CAA (Co-Curricular Activities) courses: after school on weekdays	Half a day on holidays
Orchestra Ensemble Rehearsal	After school on weekdays; school club courses	After school on weekdays; school club courses	After school on weekdays; school club courses	Half a day on holidays	Half a day on holidays
Class Frequency	3 times/week	3 times/week	3 times/week	6 times/week	2 times/week

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

When organizing rehearsals, the orchestras of these schools often adopt the mode of voice part rehearsal plus orchestra ensemble rehearsal.

Voice part rehearsal is generally a teaching activity organized by external professional teachers for a single instrumental voice part, aiming to guide students' performance skills in the form of small-class lessons under the guidance of more professional teachers. These courses focus more on improving students' personal performance skills and cooperation within the voice part.

Orchestra ensemble rehearsal is a teaching activity organized by the orchestra conductor for all members of the orchestra, aiming to improve teamwork ability and collective sense of honor through the running-in of each voice part.

4.2. Utilitarian tendency

Due to the further clarified goal of educating people with beauty and culture , the government has increasingly emphasized aesthetic education in schools. Against this background, many key high schools in H City have begun to recruit art special students specializing in orchestral performance. However, this policy has led to the alienation of students' and parents' goals for music education, and many parents of students directly regard learning orchestral performance as a springboard and shortcut for further education from junior high school to senior high school.

4.2.1. The concept of utilitarianism

The theoretical source of utilitarianism can be traced back to Democritus' philosophy of happiness and Aristippus' theory of hedonism in ancient Greece. Bentham's utilitarianism points out that human beings have the nature of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. The tendency of any action to produce happiness is what we call utility, and the tendency to deviate from happiness is called harm.He believes that happiness is desirable and the only purpose of human behavior, and everyone has the right to pursue their own Greatest Happiness without harming the rights of others and legitimate expectations of happiness [6].However, this Greatest Happiness principle is difficult to explain justice, and in the process of implementation, it will inevitably infringe on the legitimate rights and interests of a few people, even sacrifice some people's freedom and welfare to make those who are already lucky more fortunate.

4.2.2. Embodiment of educational chaos under utilitarian orientation

With the increasing pressure of further education and social competition, various phenomena have emerged from schools, parents and other parties, reflecting that orchestral music education in H City has been affected by utilitarianism.

Students have mentality of seeking advantage and avoiding hardship.When interviewing members of the graduating junior high school orchestras of nine-year schools and some students who have successfully entered key high schools through special student examinations, most of them regard learning to play an instrument as a way to further education to avoid the diversion pressure of the high school entrance examination, and regard orchestral expertise as a stepping stone to top high schools.

The data (see Table 3) shows that the proportion of graduating candidates in the official orchestras of nine-year schools who become art special students is more than 80%, which is enough to prove that some students join orchestras to realize their wish to enter local high-quality high schools in the high school entrance examination. After entering senior high school, most students

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

have no choice but to choose art exams as a way to enter higher institutions because they cannot keep up with the learning pace of top high schools. This situation is a continuation of the psychology of seeking pleasure and avoiding hardship in the transition from junior high school to senior high school to a certain extent. From the above phenomena, it can be seen that orchestral music education has become a tool for some students to seek advantage and avoid hardship and cope with the diversion pressure of the high school and college entrance examinations. The purpose of education has been transformed into smooth further education and entering better schools.

Table 3. Further education of orchestra members in congruent schools in H city

	Total Number of Graduating Students	Number of Special Students	Proportion of Special Students	Number of Art Exam Students	Proportion of Art Exam Students among Special Students
School J Class of 2017	7	7	100%	4	57%
School J Class of 2019	15	13	86%	7	53%
School B Class of 2019	12	9	75%	2	22%
School B Class of 2020	11	9	81%	3	33%
School A Class of 2021	6	6	100%	3	50%
School B Class of 2022	20	19	95%	5	26%
School J Class of 2024	11	8	72%	/	/

Teachers and schools has the prevalence of favoritism .Since most external professional teachers of junior and senior high school orchestras work in several well-known local orchestras in H City, the colleague relationship has gradually bred a series of favoritism practices in the special student admission system.

The role of in-school music teachers responsible for orchestras in orchestral music education has gradually alienated into intermediaries. In addition to basic music education, these teachers also play a coordinating and managerial role in students' further education — orchestra management teachers often establish contact with relevant teachers of senior high school orchestras, arranging private meetings between students and senior high school teachers before the release of special student interview guidelines, aiming to reserve admission places for students through personal connections.

Regarding the school's attitude toward orchestras, on the one hand, it regards them as a characteristic extended course and a representative of the school's aesthetic education work; on the other hand, the school also regards them as an important way to improve the school's enrollment rate and key high school admission rate. Therefore, the school may acquiesce to the existing special

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

student admission model and does not dissuade this phenomenon. At the same time, the prevalence of private lessons makes orchestral learning more private, and these courses are out of school management, easily leading to shirking of responsibilities and dereliction of duty.

It can be seen that schools and teachers have inevitably regarded orchestras as profit-making tools. In the pursuit of personal Greatest Happiness, they chose to connive at these procedurally unfair practices, which to some extent inevitably infringed on the rights and interests of a few people.

For parents, as guardians of minor children, when parents are overly worried about their children's further education, they often hope to open a more stable path for their children's further education. The orchestral special student system, which is not yet known to most people, has become an excellent choice for parents to send their children to key high schools.

At the same time, there is a certain proportion of children of teaching and administrative staff in the orchestra members of almost each session (see Table 4). Obviously, some school teaching and administrative staff, with a better understanding of the operation procedures of the school orchestra, send their children to the orchestra early to receive orchestral training to pave the way for their children's future high school entrance examination. These staff regard the orchestra as a power-exclusive path to strive for opportunities for their children to enter key high schools, which to a certain extent loses fairness.

The above phenomena reflect that most parents take advantage of the current situation that orchestras are not popularized to the public and use information gaps to provide opportunities for their children's further education.

Table 4. Number of children of teaching and administrative staff in orchestra members of congruent schools in H city

	Total Number of Graduating Students	Number of Children of Teaching and Administrative Staff	Proportion of Children of Teaching and Administrative Staff
School J Class of 2019	15	2	13%
School B Class of 2019	12	4	33%
School B Class of 2020	11	3	27%
School A Class of 2021	6	1	16%
School B Class of 2022	20	1	5%

4.3. Causes of utilitarian educational chaos

The above educational chaos is caused by multiple factors, and social concepts and current situations jointly contribute to this phenomenon.

4.3.1. Internal factors

Internal factors are the internal causes of this educational chaos, which are problems of educational models and mechanisms and should be paid attention to and solved first.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

4.3.2. Further education pressure

Nowadays, the diversion of the high school entrance examination in society means that half of the students will enter vocational high schools to learn vocational skills. However, after entering vocational high schools, only a small number of students can be admitted to universities, and most students will enter the society to work after graduation. In the eyes of parents, entering vocational high schools is tantamount to losing the possibility of entering good universities in advance. Moreover, it is generally believed in society that entering vocational high schools means poor academic performance and no future, and they often experience academic discrimination in employment. At the same time, as students diverted by the high school entrance examination, vocational high school students may have weak learning ability and self-discipline, so vocational high schools are often considered to have a weak learning atmosphere and chaotic school spirit.

The admission rate of key high schools in the 2025 high school entrance examination in H City was 32.09%, while the rate of key high schools entering first-class universities was all more than 80%. Therefore, if students can enter key high schools through the special student system, it means they have a greater chance of entering socially recognized universities. As a result, many people call the high school entrance examination as one exam determines life. Under such diversion pressure, students and parents often regard the special student system as a "lifeline" to enter key high schools.

4.3.3. Interest chain

Since most students are advised to take one-to-one private lessons with external professional teachers arranged by the school after reaching a certain level of performance. Some professional teachers also master the situation of graduating students in different schools, and even some external professional teachers in primary and secondary schools are colleagues of external teachers in senior high school orchestras in the same orchestra. With the support of this relationship, in-school teachers will use personal connections to bridge students and senior high school orchestra teachers, acting as matchmakers in the enrollment process.

In order to make their children's further education more stable, parents often choose to send their children to professional teachers who are familiar with senior high school orchestra teachers, and these teachers can earn lesson fees through these private lessons and charge large sums of money to reserve places for special students.

This interest chain operates well, and parents and teachers maintain this set of procedures tacitly. Relevant teachers have earned a lot of fees through this process.

4.3.4. External factors

External factors are the external causes of this educational chaos, most of which are institutional and social structural problems, which are relatively deep-rooted.

One of the reasons is meritocracy.Meritocracy emphasizes that people obtain corresponding status and income based on their technical ability and educational level [7].However, Chai and Lv said winners often regard individual success as due to their own ability and efforts [8].To a certain extent, this concept can optimize the allocation of social resources, stimulate individual potential and improve work efficiency, but at the same time, it leads to the narrowing of the evaluation mechanism, and the score-only theory prevails in society. In order to achieve better results, various opportunistic and formalistic practices prevail, eventually leading to the decline of social fairness.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

Guided by this concept, students and parents enter key high schools through the special student system to cater to the social atmosphere of focusing on academic performance. In order to survive under this social concept, this opportunistic shortcut has been competed for by parents.

Unbalanced educational resources are the another reason.Between regions, due to the imbalance of economic development level, county-level cities often have fewer admission places for key high schools, which means that junior high school students in county-level cities have fewer opportunities and greater difficulty to enter key high schools.

Among ordinary high schools, there is an internal imbalance in the strength of teachers. Students in ordinary high schools have few paths for further education, and almost all of them hope to enter universities through the college entrance examination. However, good high schools are very few, and different schools have different resource allocation.

Finally, between vocational high schools and ordinary high schools, the high school entrance examination has advanced the diversion pressure of the college entrance examination. Due to the small number of high-quality ordinary high schools and great competitiveness in the college entrance examination, relatively speaking, the development of most vocational high schools is still not perfect, and the concepts of students and parents need to be reversed. The current situation that vocational high schools are not recognized and valued has further escalated the pressure of further education in the high school entrance examination.

5. Conclusion

Nowadays, these phenomena are composed of a series of factors. The educational pressure and money-power transactions behind the art special student system have led to this series of educational chaos. Although the current social concept of education tends to be abnormal, this phenomenon can still be rectified through active adjustment by all parties.

5.1. Correct guidance from schools and society

First of all, schools should recruit more music teachers with orchestral expertise, who can not only manage orchestras but also conduct simple teaching of various instruments for students, so as to facilitate school management to carry out teaching management. At the same time, these teachers from normal schools with teacher qualification certificates can pay more professional attention to each student's situation in teaching activities, and instill positive values into students while teaching skills.

The school management department should strengthen management and not allow the growth of these opportunistic trends, especially prohibiting school teachers and external teachers from profiting from special student places.

Social concepts need to be reversed, not to completely eliminate meritocracy, but to suppress extreme meritocracy, score-only and school-only deformed trends. While breaking the score-only theory, the status of vocational education should be improved. Vocational high schools should be regarded as another life choice rather than an inferior institution. No matter whether students enter key high schools, ordinary high schools or vocational high schools, they should not be discriminated against because of the score line.

The educational chaos of special students is also because parents and students are eager to have a greater chance to enter famous universities and thus have better employment opportunities. If major companies and enterprises in society can lower academic requirements and pay more attention to the experience and ability of each recruiter, it can alleviate parents' anxiety about their children's future

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.34331

career planning, so that they no longer need to strive for a place in famous schools for their children by any means.

Finally, and most importantly, schools and society should let music education play its original role in cultivating students' aesthetic ability and artistic accomplishment. While completing subject goals and letting students learn music, teachers should also pay attention to the cultural and aesthetic goals of music education, focus on the all-round development of students' morality, intelligence, physical education, aesthetics and labor education, and inherit local music culture.

5.2. Students and parents adjust their mindset

Students should study and communicate in orchestras with the idea of broadening their horizons, cultivating performance ability and teamwork ability.

Nowadays, parents need to calm down about their children's academic competition pressure, not excessively promote their growth prematurely, compete fairly for special student places, not exchange money for further education places, encourage their children to do their best, set a moral example for their children, and let their children form honest and strong qualities.

This essay enriches research on aesthetic education and orchestral music education in consistent schools, providing concrete cases for the study of utilitarianism in art education.

Provides practical references for education authorities in City H and similar cities to regulate art special enrollment systems and rectify educational chaos; helps schools return to the aesthetic education original aspiration of orchestral music education and guides parents to establish correct educational concepts.

Promotes educational equity, curbs educational chaos, and supports the realization of the educational goal of educating people through beauty and cultivating people through culture.

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