Proceedings of ICEIPI 2026 Symposium: Inclusive Education, Cultural Transformation, and the Ethical Dimensions of Learning
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.LD34532

Research on Ethnic Music Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

Xinyan Hu

School of Music, Anhui Normal University, Wuhu, China
1519222351@qq.com

Abstract. This study reviews the existing studies on ethnic music education in primary and secondary schools. It does not only discuss the topic from one single angle. Instead, it tries to build a framework with several parts for analysis. In terms of regional practice, this study does not stop at describing the present situation. It also looks at differences in curriculum design, the logic used in choosing teaching materials, and the main problems in building digital resources in different regions. This is especially clear under the urban-rural dual structure. The study aims to explain how ethnic culture can be passed on in schools. From the view of human factors, this paper treats people as a key variable. It analyzes teachers' lack of skills and the limits of pre-service training. It also discusses students' cognitive psychology and the barriers that affect their acceptance. In this way, it shows the deeper reasons behind different teaching results. From a wider cultural view, ethnic music education is not only about teaching musical skills. It is also an important part of strengthening cultural identity and carrying out national aesthetic education policies. But it still faces serious problems in real practice. The dominance of Western music systems, structural shortages of teaching staff and the absence of evaluation mechanisms all hinder the sound development of ethnic music education. Accordingly, this paper proposes a new teaching paradigm centered on "cultural understanding". It also calls for integrating social resources, improving the support system, and exploring the in-depth application of intelligent technologies in educational scenarios. Future research can be expanded to an international comparative perspective and establish a long-term evaluation mechanism, so as to promote the transformation of ethnic music education from formalization to systematization.

Keywords: Ethnic music education, cultural identity, teacher training, educational reform, digital preservation

1. Introduction

Based on the databases of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Data and CQVIP, this study screened and analyzed approximately 270 papers including core journal articles, master's and doctoral dissertations, as well as conference proceedings. Although fewer newspapers and monographs were referenced, the available academic literature is sufficient to support this research. A review of existing studies reveals that academic attention mainly falls on four aspects: differentiated regional practices, two-way interaction between teachers and student acceptance,

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reconstruction of the cultural value of ethnic music education, and current reform dilemmas and solutions.

Among around 170 relevant journal articles, researchers have focused on the practical implementation in different regions and schools, especially the persistent and prominent urban-rural divide. Most of these studies start with a critical review of ethnic music content and tune selection in teaching materials, and further explore ways to preserve the essence of music with distinct ethnic characteristics in teaching. Research in this field shows a progressive trend from macro overview to targeted exploration.

From a macroscopic perspective, most studies take provincial regions or specific cultural circles as research objects and analyze the current status of curriculum implementation through extensive statistical data. Scholars pay attention not only to the proportion of ethnic music in teaching content, but also to whether the selected tunes are locally representative. The compilation logic of teaching materials has long been a controversial topic, which mainly concerns how to balance the proportion of Han Chinese music and ethnic minority music, as well as strike a balance between classical and contemporary elements. Notably, in recent years, scholars have begun to reflect on the decontextualization in teaching materials, referring to the practice of teaching melodies without introducing relevant cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile, the digital trend has also influenced macroscopic research. Discussions on constructing ethnic music databases, online education platforms and artificial intelligence-assisted teaching have provided newer and more comprehensive infrastructure for the systematic delivery of education [1].

At the microscopic level, studies concentrate on the inheritance practices carried out within schools. Many scholars take specific musical forms such as Peking Opera, Cantonese Opera and Yu Opera as research subjects to discuss their dissemination strategies in classrooms [2]. A variety of innovative teaching methods have emerged. Teachers adopt easy-to-play musical instruments such as hulusi and ocarinas for hands-on practice, and organize activities like campus operas to enable students to experience folk art performances. Interdisciplinary integration with poetry, history and dance has become an important approach to boost student engagement in primary and secondary education [3-5]. In terms of technological application, immersive experiences delivered by VR/AR technology, such as the restoration of the performance environment for the guqin, together with multimedia courseware, are transforming traditional teaching modes [6].

In view of the above research findings, educational authorities are urged to strengthen top-level design and formally incorporate ethnic music education into the core curriculum system. For schools, it is advisable to develop school-based curricula with Chinese characteristics, adopt diversified evaluation methods, and make full use of digital media and video platforms to break the constraints of time and space, so as to revitalize ethnic music on campus.

2. Research on teachers and student acceptance

The literature review shows that studies in this field mainly include monographs and a small number of review papers. Teachers and students are the two main participants in education. The quality of their interaction directly affects the results of ethnic music education. Current studies have moved their focus from "what to teach" to two key questions: "who teaches" and "who learns" [7].

Empirical studies show that the situation of teachers' literacy and professional development is not ideal. Many music teachers in primary and secondary schools only have a basic and direct understanding of ethnic music. On the one hand, this problem is related to the curriculum design of traditional normal universities. These universities often give more attention to Western music than to traditional Chinese music. On the other hand, weak pre-service training also makes teachers less

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prepared for real classroom teaching. Some programs, such as the National Teacher Training Program, have been started to solve this problem. But the lack of clear evaluation methods greatly weakens the results of training. At a deeper level, the key problem is cultural identity. Studies show that teachers' emotional involvement in ethnic music teaching is positively related to teaching depth. Teachers' weak cultural confidence in traditional music has become an internal barrier to improving teaching quality.

Studies on students' cognition and learning psychology also show clear problems. In the 21st century, students are deeply influenced by popular music. Many of them think that traditional ethnic music is old-fashioned, difficult, and hard to understand. Because of this, most students do not take the initiative to learn ethnic music. This is a major internal reason for the problem mentioned above [8]. Students at different grade levels also show clear psychological differences. Lower-grade students prefer vivid, scene-based, and game-based learning content. Senior students are more willing to explore the deeper stories and cultural backgrounds behind musical works.

Because of this, teachers need to design teaching strategies according to students' age groups and cognitive levels. They also need to use teaching methods that fit different learners. Methods such as scene creation and interdisciplinary teaching can reduce students' learning difficulties. These methods can also help students accept traditional music while popular music remains highly influential.

In short, current studies have started to build a people-oriented view of traditional ethnic music education. But some limits still remain. These include the limited coverage of professional music samples and the lack of long-term tracking studies. Future studies should further examine the small-scale mechanisms of teacher-student interaction. They should also build a more systematic support system for ethnic music education.

3. Research on the cultural function and value of ethnic music education

Although the number of studies focusing on the cultural functions and values of ethnic music education is relatively limited, with fewer than 60 relevant publications, the research depth of these literatures is worthy of high attention. Studies in this field essentially attempt to answer the ultimate proposition of ethnic music education: as music educators, what is the fundamental purpose of our teaching?

The core answer to this question lies in cultural identity and cultural inheritance. Against the backdrop of globalization, Chinese ethnic music education serves as a crucial support for constructing national cultural identity and resisting cultural shocks in the musical field. It not only contributes to the protection of intangible cultural heritage including folk songs, traditional operas and national instrumental music, but also acts as an important approach to cultivate teenagers' cultural confidence [9]. The collected relevant literature has conducted in-depth analyses of the unique timbre, modes and structural characteristics reflected in ethnic music appreciation, and explored ways to cultivate students' patriotism in the new era through music classroom teaching.

In addition, the evolution of policy orientation is another key research focus in this field. Relevant studies have professionally interpreted the requirement of "promoting ethnic music" specified in the Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards. Furthermore, under the background of the double reduction policy, researches discuss how ethnic music education can seize development opportunities, and actively guide students to develop diverse musical horizons and multi-dimensional thinking modes, so as to explore the potential high-quality development model of ethnic music education.

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4. Current challenges and reform approaches

Most existing literature presents a critical perspective on contemporary ethnic music education and summarizes its fundamental underlying contradictions. Music educators are confronted with numerous challenges. The current teaching system relies heavily on Western music theoretical frameworks, which makes ethnic music lose its indigenous characteristics and fail to adapt to local educational contexts. Additionally, primary and secondary ethnic music education suffers from inadequate educational resources, a shortage of professional teachers and outdated teaching materials. The absence of a systematic professional evaluation system also makes it difficult to quantify students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, this field faces pressure from external environments. All these problems are compounded by the impacts of exam-oriented education and the prevalence of popular music.

Drawing on the experience of international music education approaches such as the Kodály Method and traditional Japanese music education, scholars have put forward four major solutions to address the above challenges:

(1) Paradigm transformation. A new teaching paradigm oriented toward "cultural understanding" should be established, shifting the focus from mere skill teaching to in-depth cultural comprehension.

(2) Collaborative education. It is necessary to break the boundaries of school education and build a linkage mechanism connecting universities, research institutions, primary and secondary schools and cultural venues, so as to rationally integrate social resources for music teaching.

(3) Improvement of the education system. A comprehensive support system needs to be established covering policy support, professional curriculum design, teacher training and teaching evaluation.

(4) Empowerment by technology. The introduction of artificial intelligence can expand teaching scenarios, realize personalized learning and further stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation.

5. Conclusion

Overall, current research on ethnic music education in primary and secondary schools has formed a multi-angle and multi-level research framework, covering a wide range of topics from theoretical discussion to practical teaching implementation. Future research can be further deepened in terms of international comparative research, long-term evaluation mechanisms, and integrated technological application pathways, so as to promote the systematic implementation and innovative development of ethnic music education in basic education. This study puts forward systematic and operable policy suggestions and development strategies for the future development of ethnic music education in China. First, it is essential to construct a new paradigm of ethnic music education centered on "cultural understanding". Second, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence should be fully utilized to empower personalized ethnic music learning and optimize students' learning experience.

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