

Comparative Study of Modern Music Education in China and the West from the Perspective of Comparative Musicology

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Abstract: This paper aims to conduct an in-depth study of modern music education in China and the West from the perspective of comparative musicology, revealing similarities and differences in educational goals, curriculum design, teaching methods, evaluation methods, and teacher training. By analyzing the historical background, practical experiences, and challenges of music education in China and the West, this study explores the impact of cultural, social, policy, and economic factors on music education systems. Using a comparative research method, the study contrasts the main characteristics and development trends in music education between China and Western countries, summarizing their respective strengths and weaknesses. The results show significant differences in the concepts, methods, and practices of music education between China and the West, which not only affect the quality of education but also influence the musical literacy and development of students. Ultimately, the paper provides suggestions for improving music education in both regions, aiming to offer references for future educational practices and policy-making.

Keywords: Comparative musicology, music education, Chinese and Western music education, education systems, historical background.

1. Introduction

Music education is vital in global education systems, serving as a key avenue for cultural heritage and significantly impacting individual artistic literacy and social development. Both Chinese and Western music education have evolved markedly since modern times. Influenced by Western concepts and methods, Chinese music education has developed unique characteristics, while Western education has integrated diverse global music styles and teaching methods. With globalization, comparative research on Chinese and Western music education has gained academic focus, offering new perspectives to enhance educational practices. This study aims to systematically compare and analyze modern music education in China and the West from a comparative musicology perspective, highlighting differences and similarities in educational goals, curriculum design, teaching methods, and teacher training. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to provide in-depth academic insights and practical improvement references. The main objectives are to: explore the core characteristics and development trajectories of Chinese and Western music education systems; analyze the cultural, social, policy, and economic factors influencing music education; and propose targeted improvement

suggestions to promote mutual learning and integration. Using comparative research methods, historical analysis, literature review, and theoretical framework analysis, the study establishes a solid theoretical basis, conducts detailed comparisons, and offers practical improvement suggestions, aiming to provide valuable references for academic research and practical application in music education.

2. Theoretical Framework of Comparative Musicology

2.1. Definition and Development of Comparative Musicology

Comparative musicology, a branch of musicology, aims to reveal universal rules and unique characteristics of music by comparing music from different cultures and regions. It explores commonalities and differences in music, focusing on performance, creation, social functions, cultural backgrounds, and historical evolution. The discipline originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, initially emphasizing ethnomusicology's descriptive research. Over time, it shifted to theoretical and analytical studies, focusing on music structure, function, and cultural background. In the mid-20th century, comparative musicology methods developed significantly, incorporating systematic analysis and statistical techniques. Influenced by anthropology, sociology, and psychology, the field broadened its perspectives and methods, exploring music's social functions and meanings. Recently, globalization and cross-cultural exchanges have expanded comparative musicology's scope[1]. Modern research includes traditional ethnomusicology and emerging topics like music fusion and cross-cultural exchanges. Scholars use multidisciplinary approaches to conduct in-depth analyses, revealing the complexity and diversity of global music culture. This research enhances the understanding of music culture and supports music education, policy, and practice. In summary, comparative musicology has evolved from descriptive to analytical, and from partial to holistic studies. It enriches our understanding of music phenomena and offers valuable perspectives and methods for other musicology branches [2].

2.2. Research Methods of Comparative Musicology

The research methods of comparative musicology are diverse and comprehensive, aiming to uncover universal rules and unique characteristics of music through systematic analysis. One fundamental approach is the historical comparative method, which compares music from different historical periods to reveal the evolution of music forms, styles, and functions. By analyzing music data from various times and regions, scholars can understand the impact of historical contexts on music evolution. Another key method is the structural comparative method, which focuses on analyzing the internal structures of different music works or cultures. This involves detailed comparisons of elements like melody, harmony, rhythm, and form, highlighting structural differences between music traditions and styles. Additionally, the functional analysis method examines the social and functional roles of music in different cultures. It studies how music functions in rituals, celebrations, education, entertainment, and other social practices, often using theoretical frameworks from anthropology and sociology to analyze the relationships between music and social structures[3]. Modern comparative musicology increasingly incorporates interdisciplinary methods, drawing on theories and techniques from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cognitive science. This interdisciplinary approach allows for more comprehensive analyses, revealing the complexity of music phenomena from multiple perspectives. The fieldwork method also occupies an important position in comparative musicology research. This method involves direct participation and observation of actual music performances and practices, including interviews with musicians, recordings of music events, and on-site observations. Fieldwork provides rich empirical data, enabling theoretical research to closely integrate with actual music practices. Overall, by combining historical comparison, structural analysis,

functional research, interdisciplinary methods, and fieldwork, comparative musicology deeply explores the commonalities and specificities of different music cultures. This comprehensive application not only enriches the theoretical system of musicology but also provides valuable references for music education and practice[4].

2.3. Comparative Framework for Music Education

Establishing a comprehensive and systematic comparative framework is crucial in the study of music education. This framework helps researchers effectively compare music education in different regions or cultural backgrounds, revealing unique characteristics and commonalities. Key elements include educational goals and concepts, which vary across cultures, focusing on aspects such as cultivating musical skills, enhancing aesthetic abilities, and strengthening cultural identity. By comparing these goals, researchers gain insights into their educational focus and teaching practices. Another important element is curriculum design and teaching content, encompassing music theory, performance, composition, and history. Comparing curricula reveals differences in breadth and depth, affecting students' mastery of musical knowledge and skills. Teaching methods and strategies are also essential in this comparative framework. Different education systems employ various methods such as lectures, interactive teaching, project-based learning, and cooperative learning. By comparing these methods, researchers can understand their effectiveness and impact on learning outcomes. Evaluation and feedback mechanisms form another critical component. Education systems use diverse methods like exams, performance reviews, teacher assessments, and peer evaluations. Comparing these mechanisms helps assess their impact on students' learning effectiveness and how they improve teaching practices. The quality of the teacher workforce and training is closely linked to music education quality. This includes teachers' qualifications, professional abilities, training opportunities, and career development. Comparing these factors allows researchers to assess their role in educational quality and practice. Additionally, educational resources and support, such as teaching facilities, instructional materials, and performance opportunities, along with policy support, significantly influence music education. Comparing these resources highlights the impact of resource allocation and identifies issues of insufficiency. Finally, the impact of cultural and social background on music education cannot be ignored. Cultural traditions, social customs, and economic conditions deeply influence music education. Analyzing these factors helps researchers understand their effect on the implementation and effectiveness of music education. By integrating these elements, the comparative framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of music education systems, revealing differences and similarities. This comparison aids in understanding each system's characteristics and advantages, providing valuable references for improving music education practices and policies [5].

3. Historical Background of Modern Music Education in China and the West

The historical background of modern music education in China and the West is fundamental to understanding the evolution of their educational systems. Modern music education in China began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, accompanied by the introduction of Western culture and the country's modernization process. During the late Qing Dynasty, with the invasion of Western powers and the intensification of social changes, Western music concepts and educational methods gradually entered China. Early music education mainly concentrated in missionary schools and diplomatic institutions, where Western music theory and performance techniques were introduced into China's education system. The establishment of the St. Joseph Music School in Shanghai in 1903 and the Chinese Music College in 1907 marked the formal beginning of music education in China. During this period, music education not only introduced Western music textbooks and teaching methods but also began training local music teachers, gradually establishing a music education system with

Chinese characteristics[6]. Compared to China, the start of modern music education in the West occurred much earlier. The modernization process of Western music education began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, alongside the advancement of the Industrial Revolution and education reforms. By the late 18th century, European countries began establishing systematic music education systems, with music academies like the Leipzig Conservatory and the Paris Conservatory being established in Germany and France, respectively. These academies laid a solid foundation for the development of music education. In the 19th century, with the rise of Romantic music and the popularization of music education, Western music education continuously innovated in curriculum design and teaching methods, forming a relatively complete evaluation system and teacher training mechanism [7]. During this period, the Western music education system gradually established a comprehensive system from basic education to higher education, promoting the professionalization and systematization of music education. In the 20th century, with the acceleration of globalization, both Chinese and Western music education systems experienced significant changes. In China, after being influenced by historical events such as the Cultural Revolution, music education gradually recovered and developed. Following the reform and opening-up, China's music education system began introducing more international elements, advancing the modernization of music education. Meanwhile, the Western music education system continuously adapted to the challenges of globalization, incorporating more music elements from different cultures and regions. The exchanges and integration between the two have not only enriched their respective educational content but also promoted the globalization of music education. In summary, the historical background of modern music education in China and the West shows their unique development trajectories. China's music education experienced a process from Western introduction to localization, while Western music education established a relatively complete educational system early on. With the advancement of globalization, the exchanges and integration between Chinese and Western music education systems have deepened, bringing new opportunities and challenges for the development of music education. By analyzing the historical background, one can better understand the formation and evolution of Chinese and Western music education systems and provide useful references for future music education research and practice[8].

4. Comparison of Chinese and Western Music Education Systems

The comparison of Chinese and Western music education systems involves multiple aspects, including educational goals, curriculum design, teaching methods, evaluation systems, and teacher training. These differences reflect the influence of respective cultural and historical backgrounds on music education and reveal the unique characteristics and strengths of each education system. Firstly, in terms of educational goals, Chinese and Western music education each have their own focuses. Western music education usually emphasizes the comprehensive development of musical skills and the cultivation of music professionals. The educational goals in Western countries are clear, including cultivating students' musical performance abilities, music creation abilities, and music theoretical knowledge. The education system emphasizes the artistry and professionalism of music, aiming to train high-level music talents. In contrast, traditional Chinese music education goals have focused more on enhancing students' overall qualities, including aesthetic ability, cultural identity, and the role of music in personal growth. In recent years, Chinese music education has also gradually introduced more professional goals, promoting the development of music education towards professionalization and systematization. Secondly, the curriculum design and teaching content differ significantly in the music education systems of China and the West. Western music education curricula typically include music theory, instrumental performance, music history, and music composition, with systematic and professional curriculum design. For example, European music academies often have dedicated music theory and technical courses to cultivate students' professional

skills. Western music education content emphasizes the combination of music skills and theory[9]. Chinese music education curricula are more diverse, including traditional music theory and instrumental performance courses as well as the teaching of traditional Chinese and ethnic music. In recent years, China has been continuously advancing the internationalization and professionalization of curricula, gradually adopting Western curriculum design models. Regarding teaching methods and strategies, Western music education tends to adopt student-centered teaching methods, emphasizing interaction and participation [5]. For example, Western music classes often involve group cooperative learning, improvisational performance, and music creation activities, encouraging students' active participation and innovation. Western education systems also frequently integrate modern technological tools, such as digital music production software and online learning platforms, to enhance teaching effectiveness. Traditional Chinese music education has focused on teacher-led lecture methods, but in recent years, more interactive and innovative teaching methods have been introduced. Especially in higher education, many music academies have started adopting teaching strategies similar to those in the West, enhancing students' engagement and practical abilities. Evaluation and feedback mechanisms differ significantly between Chinese and Western music education systems. Western music education evaluation systems usually include regular exams, performance reviews, and project showcases, with diversified and targeted evaluation methods. Such a diversified evaluation mechanism helps comprehensively measure students' musical abilities and progress. In comparison, traditional Chinese music education evaluation mechanisms have focused on exams, but in recent years, more project showcases and practical evaluations have been introduced for a more comprehensive assessment of students' musical abilities. The evaluation system in Chinese music education is gradually moving towards diversification and comprehensiveness to better meet the practical needs of music education. Teacher workforce and training are critical comparative dimensions in music education systems. Western music education systems usually have relatively complete teacher training mechanisms, with teachers typically having high professional backgrounds and teaching experience, continuously receiving training to maintain teaching standards[10]. Western music academies emphasize teachers' career development and research capabilities to improve educational quality. The teacher workforce in Chinese music education has gradually established a relatively complete training system after many years of development. However, teacher training still faces challenges, such as insufficient training resources and the accumulation of teaching practice experience. Chinese music education institutions are also continuously strengthening the construction of the teacher workforce, promoting teachers' professional development and international training. Finally, educational resources and support differences significantly affect the implementation effectiveness of music education. Western countries usually have abundant music education resources, including advanced teaching facilities, rich instructional materials, and extensive music performance opportunities. The richness of these resources provides strong support for the implementation of music education. Educational resources in Chinese music education have significantly improved in recent years, but there are still some gaps compared to Western countries, such as insufficient music education facilities and imbalanced resource allocation. Chinese music education policies are also continuously adjusting and improving to increase support and investment in music education. Through the comparison of these aspects, it is evident that there are significant differences between Chinese and Western music education systems in terms of goals, curriculum design, teaching methods, evaluation mechanisms, teacher training, and resource support. These differences reflect the unique cultural and educational traditions of each region while also revealing the strengths and challenges of each education system. In-depth comparative research not only helps understand the characteristics of different music education systems but also provides valuable references for promoting global exchange and cooperation in music education [11].

5. Practices and Challenges of Chinese and Western Music Education

The practices of Chinese and Western music education each have their own characteristics but also face unique challenges. In practice, the implementation of Chinese and Western music education systems demonstrates different teaching concepts and methods, while each system must address a series of challenges in response to the changing educational environment and social demands. In Chinese music education practices, the system has made significant progress in recent years. With the country's emphasis on cultural education, music education has continuously improved in curriculum design, teaching methods, and educational resources. Chinese music education practices cover all stages from primary to higher education, with curricula and teaching methods gradually aligning with international standards, particularly in music colleges and art institutions. For instance, music courses encompass traditional music theory and performance techniques, integrating modern music technology and cross-cultural music exchange content[12]. Chinese music education also actively promotes artistic practice and creation, encouraging students to participate in various music performances and creative activities. However, Chinese music education also faces challenges such as uneven educational resources, insufficient professional training for music teachers, and the disconnection between music education and practical needs. These challenges, to some extent, restrict the development and quality improvement of music education. Western music education practices exhibit a high level of maturity and systematization. The Western music education system, with a long history of accumulation and development, has formed relatively complete curriculum design and teaching methods[13]. Western music education emphasizes personalized development and the comprehensive ability cultivation of students, employing flexible and diverse teaching methods such as group collaboration and project-based learning to enhance students' practical skills and innovative consciousness[14]. Furthermore, Western music education leverages technological tools such as digital music production and online learning platforms to enrich teaching methods and resources. However, Western music education also faces challenges, including rising educational costs, issues of educational equity, and the changing demands of society on music education. For example, the increase in music education resources has led to higher educational costs, posing a financial burden on some families. Additionally, the Western music education system needs to continuously adapt to the trends of multiculturalism and globalization, maintaining inclusivity and adaptability in education. In the context of globalization, the practices and challenges of Chinese and Western music education have certain intersections and complementarities. Globalization brings diversity in music culture and exchanges in educational models, providing new opportunities for the integration of Chinese and Western music education. Chinese music education is learning from and adopting Western advanced experiences while striving to maintain the uniqueness and innovation of local culture. Western music education, by incorporating multicultural elements and international teaching methods, enriches its educational content and forms. Despite this, globalization also brings challenges such as educational quality differentiation and cultural identity issues, necessitating continuous adjustment and optimization of Chinese and Western music education systems to adapt to the new educational environment and social demands. In conclusion, the practices of Chinese and Western music education each have their own characteristics, but both face their own challenges in development. In-depth analysis of these practices and challenges can provide useful references for the reform and development of music education, promoting exchanges and cooperation in music education globally. This also helps each country's music education system better meet the requirements of the new era, achieving improvements in educational quality and the comprehensive ability cultivation of students[15].

6. Conclusion

The Chinese and Western music education systems exhibit significant differences in historical background, educational goals, curriculum design, teaching methods, and evaluation mechanisms. These differences reflect the unique cultural and educational traditions of each region while showcasing their respective strengths and challenges. In recent years, Chinese music education has made significant progress, especially in curriculum internationalization and teaching method innovation, but still faces challenges such as uneven resource distribution and insufficient teacher training. The Western music education system is mature and systematic, focusing on personalized development and technology application, yet also contends with rising educational costs and equity issues. The globalization process has brought complementary and integrative opportunities for Chinese and Western music education, allowing for mutual learning and reference. However, globalization also introduces new challenges, such as educational quality differentiation and cultural identity issues. Therefore, both Chinese and Western music education systems need to continuously adjust and optimize practices to adapt to the evolving educational environment and social demands. Through in-depth comparison and exchange, Chinese and Western music education can achieve more effective cooperation and development, advancing the progress and innovation of global music education.

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