

Experiences, Issues, and Challenges in Curriculum Implementation of a Music Training Institution in China

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Abstract: Experiences, Issues, and Challenges in Curriculum Implementation of a Music Training Institution in China. Objectives: The study described the curriculum of Music Training Institution in Beijing, China in terms of goals, objectives, learning outcomes, content, instructional, and strategies. Likewise, it identified the existing issues and concerns of the institution to propose a management improvement plan. **Methods:** Data were gathered by retrieving the documents of the institution and interviewing purposively selected music education teachers. **Findings:** Documentary and thematic analyses revealed that teachers use discovery, performance, passive, and differentiated approaches in teaching music. **Conclusion:** Individual differences, parental involvement, and interest of the students emerged as issues and challenges which led to the development of a proposed management improvement plan. Recommendations were provided to further improve the curriculum implementation of the institution.

Keywords: curriculum implementation, improvement plan, training institution, music education.

Abstrak: Pengalaman, Masalah, dan Tantangan dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Lembaga Pelatihan Musik di Cina. Tujuan: Studi ini mendeskripsikan kurikulum Lembaga Pelatihan Musik di Beijing, Cina dalam hal tujuan, sasaran, hasil pembelajaran, konten, pengajaran, dan strategi. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi masalah yang ada dan keprihatinan lembaga untuk mengusulkan rencana perbaikan manajemen. **Metode:** Data dikumpulkan dengan mengambil dokumen lembaga dan mewawancarai guru-guru pendidikan musik yang dipilih secara purposif. **Temuan:** Analisis dokumenter dan tematik mengungkapkan bahwa guru menggunakan pendekatan berbasis penemuan, kinerja, pasif, dan terbedakan dalam mengajar musik. **Kesimpulan:** Perbedaan individu, keterlibatan orang tua, dan minat siswa muncul sebagai masalah dan tantangan yang mengarah pada pengembangan rencana perbaikan manajemen yang diusulkan. Rekomendasi diberikan untuk lebih meningkatkan implementasi kurikulum institusi.

Kata kunci: implementasi kurikulum, rencana perbaikan, lembaga pelatihan, pendidikan musik.

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■ INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, China's socialist modernization construction has gained remarkable achievements. The standard of living has improved. This can be proven by the rise of private training schools catering the learning expectations of parents for their children and provided favorable opportunities for the development of the educational training market in China. The private training institutions which may be independent or mixed cater students from the kindergarten to the university level, including postgraduate training, disciplines include a wide range of categories such as Chinese education, mathematics, foreign languages, art and vocational skill training and others. However, statistics show that over 90% of primary and junior middle school students in large and medium cities join the extracurricular training. Western countries have focused on the studies of curriculum principles, curriculum development and curriculum evaluation but paid insufficient attention to the curriculum management issues since the generation of curriculum theory at the beginning of the 20th century (Middleton & Burton, 2001).

Domestic and foreign training markets, as well as private training schools, have developed rapidly. With the influx of knowledge economy, the increase in employment and academic pressures, have expanded sharply and maintained the high-speed growth of training education in the market. In other countries, training education includes the enhancement of vocational ability not only of adults but the teenagers as well. In China, according to the statistics by the Ministry of Education, the number of students trained by private training schools reached 12,768,353 in 2010. It was also estimated that the gross value of the training market of only English in 2010 reached RMB 40 billion (Ministry of Education, 2007). Moreover, the data from China English

Training Market Survey Report showed that educational training in English has become an unignorably huge market (Sinacom, 2005).

Consequently, Zeng and Xie (2008) scrutinized the perspective of the organizational image and corporate culture of private training institutions in China. Studies related to curriculum management of institutions are quite limited. Training institutions focused on strategies, marketing, way of life and image for their survival and development. Consequently, the study focused on the curriculum management on the assumption that curriculum is the core of all educational activities conducted by training institutions, and it is the true value of the core competitiveness of training institutions.

While training institutions helped students to enhance the vocational skills and enabled the students to better meet the needs of jobs, training institutions had left the bad impression of "overgrowth of chaotic phenomena". Public evaluation of training institutions conducted by Sohu education in 2009 listed overcharging of curriculums, different teaching levels of teachers, inconsistent advertising, the unscientific setting of curriculums as the significant issues encountered by the training institutions in China. (Sohu Education, 2010). Li (1998) noted that curriculum management research involves more specific issues such as "curriculum goals, curriculum structure, curriculum implementation, and curriculum evaluation." Evaluation results suggest that setting and implementation of curriculum and exaggerated advertising are related to curriculum management. At present, a lot of training institutions pay too much attention to market promotion but ignore the curriculum management; hence, the "chaotic phenomena". Evaluation and assessment of teachers have brought a series of serious consequences. Some of them of the consequences are; (1) unnecessary pressure on teachers; (2) feeling of unfairness or are

dissatisfaction with the results of evaluation and assessment; (3) high turnover rate; (4) failure to achieve favourable opportunities for their own development; (5) difficulty for the music training institution to enhance the teaching quality and form the competitive advantages; (6) inability of the music training institution to form the stable and high-quality teaching troop; and (7) difficulty to survive or achieve the significant development in the fierce competition (Zhang, 2006). Consequently, school curriculum is also seen as teacher motivation in curriculum implementation (Kagama, 2018). Lau and Grieshaber (2018) recognized how an institution-based integrated curriculum facilitates a “balanced, flexible, and coherent” course of study for the students and teachers. In terms of instruction, teachers are encouraged to experience and “share with students their own experiences of learning through failure” (Becker, 2019). Gage, et al (2019) found out that learners are at an advantage when taught by an “open-minded and committed” teacher, particularly in popular music.

Other studies on curriculum management include the Rustic Opinions on Curriculum Management of Vocational Schools (Deng, 2016) which describe the necessity and importance as well as the principles and methods of curriculum management of vocational technical education under the new situation from the general perspective of curriculum with the curriculum goals, curriculum design, teacher role transformation and curriculum evaluation. More than 30 related in-depth doctoral and master’s dissertations related to curriculum management were also found in the CDMD on CNKI. The studies include curriculum management on information technology and other specific curricula. Various education purposes and teaching targets included in any education theories as well as the ideas and concepts must be finally realized with the help of curriculum as a bridge (Huang, 2008). Moreover, Crawford and

Southcott (2016) have argued the essence of digital technology when it comes to teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers’ professional development is deemed contributory to the curriculum development and implementation success (Handler, 2010).

Zhou (2008) took a primary school as the research object and discovered 6 major issues existing in management. The issues include: (1) there are terms but no awareness in the process of curriculum management; (2) schools lack curriculum construction and management capacities; (3) curriculum management of schools mechanically applies the operation models of teaching management; (4) curriculum management of schools relies too much on administrative measures; (5) the idea of “examination first” manipulates the operation process of curriculum management of schools; and (6) separation of reforms in teaching and organization of curriculums makes the curriculum management of schools become a mere formality. Issues identify are very representative in the curriculum management of vast primary and middle schools as well as colleges and universities. The study finally proposed the transformation of single-dimensional contents to multi-dimensional; transformation of curriculum management from flat to three-dimensional; transformation from administrative management to professional management; transformation of school organization from bureaucracy to empowerment.

Results of investigation to a number of music training institutions in Beijing indicate that the annual average turnover rate of teachers of music training institutions is over 20% and schools with a turnover rate of over 25% account for up to 1/3. Young teachers who have been working from 1 to 3 years in music training institutions account for over 60% in the total teaching troop, and many of them are waiting for the opportunities to enter public schools or other development opportunities. The performance of music training

institutions assesses the performance of teachers simply “based on the results” but ignores the efforts of teachers during the process of teaching. It takes no account of the vocational development of teachers as an important reason for such phenomenon. The researchers also investigate how administrators assess teachers’ performance including the issues and challenges in the management aspects.

The study on curriculum management models of music training institutions is still unexplored in China. Some training institutions only attached importance to the temporary interests, the teaching quality was poor and the phenomenon of “one-shot deal” was very severe (Tu, 2010). Some illegal training institutions which do not have standardized textbooks, courseware or teaching methods, regular teachers, or test equipment that correspond to the requirements of mainstream application environment bloom in large quantities. It not only disturbs the market order but also significantly affects the healthy development of the training industry. Hence, curriculum management means the planning, guidance, decision-making, supervision, coordination and other measures adapted by relevant departments (or institutions) and personnel to all the operational aspects of curriculum. It includes the management of curriculum generation system, curriculum implementation system and curriculum evaluation system (Zhong, 2007). Souza (2019) consider teachers and students as agents in the practice of curriculum.

Native Chinese teachers who fully understand the requirements of music training are very scarce. It has been the “bottleneck” restricting the development of high-level training. Followers will emerge after some training institutions with Research & Development capabilities develop a good training project and promote such a project to the market. However,

observant and conscientious persons may discover that teachers appointed by such followers are scarcely different from the teachers appointed by the foregoers. He (2004) pointed out that the advantages of traditional learning ways and digital learning should be combined to both give play to dominant role of teachers in the process of leading, inspiring and monitoring teaching and fully reflect the initiative, enthusiasm and creativity of students as the subject of learning process. For some high-end projects, perhaps there are only a few teachers who can teach such projects in the country. Under such circumstances, it always increases the costs of teachers in the training institutions and restricts the further development of training institutions. Some training institutions pursue the “copinism.” They copy the curriculum but do not have the independently developed core curriculums. Local cases are very few, and such cases are not targeted or systematic (Sohu Education, 2009). The present study investigated the curriculum management of a Music Training Institution. Yu and Leung (2019) looked at the local scenario and advocated for the need to revisit the focus of the curriculum being “knowledge-centered” to “society-centered” and “student-centered”.

Connotations of modern curriculum change and emphasize curriculum as the experience in addition to goal or plan. In this paper, curriculum is described as the educational environment designed for the teaching and learning of teachers and students as well as a wide range of educational activities and experiences conducted in such an environment (Xu, 2007). These approaches are anchored on the suggestion of Jazmines & Ancho (2019) in pushing for learners to be “more empowered in being autonomous in taking control of their own learning.”

This study aimed to describe the status of a Music Training institution in China. To fully achieve this objective, the following questions were

addressed: (1) How can the curriculum of the Music Training Institution be described in terms of goals, objectives, and learning outcomes; content; and instructional approaches and strategies; and (2) What are the issues and challenges on curriculum implementation in the Music Training Institution?

■ METHODS

This study is qualitative in nature since it involves a direct case study as regards the status of the Music Training Institution to design an improvement plan. This paper described the current curriculum management, particularly focusing on what the issues are and why such issues exist. Adapting case study for the research hopes to obtain the general experience of curriculum management which has reference significance to the vast training institutions in the end. Participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling.

Initially, the researchers constructed preliminary research questions which will cover the central theme of the study. Then, questions were checked and validated by research and

curriculum experts. Comments and suggestions of the experts were considered in the final form of the instrument. In addition, the researchers used the existing documents of the institution and the information from the school's website which helped in forming themes of the curriculum implementation of the training institution, particularly the goals, objectives and learning outcomes. Participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling. The length of service and nature of work in the institution are the primary standards in the selection process considering that the study aimed to look for the emerging themes about the issues and challenges of the institution.

The fundamental data needed for the completion of this study were collected from music teachers of the Music Training Institution. There were 30 participants comprising 13 females and 17 males who participated in the process. Based on Table 2, there were 3 teachers who have been in the institution for 10-11 years; 10 of them have been working for almost 6-9 years; 11 participants have stayed for 3-5 years already while 6 employees were still young in the service (1-2 years).

Table 1. Summary of Basic Profile of Teachers

Basic Profile		Frequency (f)	Percentage (p)
Number of years in the Music Training Institution	1 – 2 years	6	17.65
	3 – 5 years	11	32.35
	6 – 9 years	12	35.29
	10 – 11 years	5	14.71
Gender	Male	19	55.88
	Female	15	44.12

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Curriculum of the Music Training Institution

In describing the goals, objectives and learning outcomes and contents of the Music Training Institution, the researchers reviewed the existing documents and reading materials, particularly the school manual and syllabus. The researchers also conducted an interview with several music teachers to identify the different

instructional approaches and strategies employed in teaching music and varied assessment tools. The following are the findings based on the thematic analysis:

Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Based on the data found in the school manual, the Music Training Institution is a professional music training school registered and approved by the national government department.

As a music institution, it is committed to: (1) provide high quality programming in a professional and healthy environment that contributes to student success, (2) value and celebrate the excellence in teaching and innovation achieved by the school's faculty; and; (3) sustain and enhance a supportive, caring and responsible community among the students, families, and faculty.

This music institution also considers itself as a learning haven with rich experiences in teaching and learning, has a serious and rigorous teaching attitude, strict management system inviting and conducive teaching environment, aligned assessment to learning objectives, a culture of commitment to comprehensive, enthusiastic and caring services, and offers peace of mind for parents. To effectively uphold this kind of school climate, administrators, teachers, and personnel are committed to the following school values: *High achievement*. The school believes in assisting each student to achieve full musical potential. This begins by developing significant individualized programs relevant to the students learning needs, abilities, and goals; *Excellence in teaching*. Upholding Excellence in teaching in the institution begins by establishing harmonious and strong relationships between faculty, students and families and is further nurtured by collaboration among colleagues. Music education is taught by professionally trained music educators with proficient knowledge and skills in the areas of music performance, pedagogy and musicianship. The school also values the professional development of teachers in promoting music excellence; and *Instilling lifelong music learning*. Music education should foster independent and creative musicians, equipped for lifelong engagement with music and music making.

Content

Content in this study is defined as the courses, disciplines and programs offered in the Music Training Institution. Based on the documentary analysis, the following are the contents of the curriculum: (1) Vocal music: music that is performed by a single singer or by group to which the main focus is on the singing of the performer; can be done with instruments or acapella, (2) Instrumental music: music centered on the performance with the use of different instruments such as violin, piano, saxophone, and others, (3) music theory: a theory consists of topics focus on understanding and developing the music skills of a student such as music notation, rules of harmony, ear training, etc, (4) solfeggio and ear training: pieces of trainings that develop skills on hearing, pitches, intervals melody, chords, rhythms, and other basic elements, (5) piano accompaniment: training on the use of piano to provide rhythmic and/or harmonic to support for the melody, (6) music form and structure: also known as training on musical architecture that is focused on the general music plan and structure of music, and (7) music appreciation class: this class highlights the understanding of the worth and distinction of diverse styles of *music* is appreciated by most students.

Instructional Approaches and Strategies

Based on the interview of thirty (30) music teachers, there were four themes which emerged as the instructional approaches and strategies employed in teaching music namely: (1) Discovery Approach; (2) Performance/Experiential Approach; (3) Passive Approach; and (4) Differentiated Approach. The emerging themes would serve as a reference of the administration in designing capability building to further improve the instructional skills of music teachers. The table below shows the emerging themes based on the analysis.

Table 2. Emerging Themes in Terms of Instructional Approaches and Strategies

Themes	Strategies
<p>Performance / Experiential Approach</p> <p>There are varied strategies the participants employed in the delivery of the music curriculum. Most of them agreed that Performance/Experiential approach is widely used. Under this approach, all of them noted that practice and demonstration methods are the most effective to employ. Employing the aforementioned themes as instructional approaches allowed the music teachers to attain the objectives of the curriculum. Although the institution has a standardized teaching plan, teachers have their own different strategies for the delivery of the lesson basically anchored from the content structure of the course.</p>	<p>Demonstration Song creation Stage practice experience Solo / chorus performance Practice and practice technique Poetry recitation</p>
<p>Passive Approach</p> <p>Although most teachers require students to perform activities in a music class, it is inevitable not to employ the lecture method. Through lecture, the teacher can impart the basic knowledge and concepts about music. Similarly, the question and answer strategy allow the music teacher to gauge the learner's learning whether he or she learns something after the discussion.</p>	<p>Lecture method Question and answer technique Model teaching</p>
<p>Discovery Approach</p> <p>Pedagogically, the heuristic method of teaching allows students to learn or discover something. In music education, the respondent claimed this can be done by letting students sing in imagination, then, the contents of the lyrics are created through a picture. Through this method, students are able to quickly put their feelings into the works of singing, so as to achieve the singing effect with the sound of emotion and help them better interpret their works.</p>	<p>Implement the Inquiry Method Heuristic method Scaffolding teaching strategy Teaching with emotions Metaphorical</p>
<p>Differentiated Teaching Approach</p> <p>There is no standardized teaching methodology to deliver the goals and objectives of music education. The choice of teaching method is dependent on the content characteristics of the student condition, aptitude and interest, and content of the discipline.</p>	<p>Rational teaching method Life experience and reality combination Focus on aptitude Short teaching plans Teaching material contexts Creativity emphasis</p>

Issues and Challenges in the Curriculum Implementation

Another purpose of this study is to identify the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching music. Addressing these problems might create an impact in the improvement of the music curriculum. Administrators might have a clear picture not just on the positive side but rather on the areas needing improvement. Considering these areas that need clarification, administrators may take necessary steps to address the issue, improve the system, by designing, planning and implementing a management plan which directly targets the identified problems. Consequently, as administrators locate institutional problems,

chances are they have now the reference to position the plan of change or improve the existing curriculum.

To do such, respondents were asked to answer the question “What are the problems you encountered at the Music Training Institution?” Thematic coding and analysis from the responses formed three themes namely: (a) Individual Differences; (b) Parental Involvement and Interference; and (c) Student’s Interest. In the management perspective, administrators were also asked about the challenges they encountered in managing their teachers. Teachers’ attitude (theme 4) and employee tenure (theme 5) emerged in the analysis of responses.

Table 3. Emerging Themes of Issues and Challenges in the Curriculum Implementation

Themes	Core Ideas
<p>Individual Differences</p> <p>Music teachers considered the age, level and preparation of learners to learn music as difficulties in the delivery of lesson. The individual differences of students are common factors to the attainment of the objectives of the curriculum. A class with different levels of ability and have an age gap requires a bulky load from the teacher, from the preparation of the lesson up to the execution of the activity. The teacher is tasked to prepare different activities based on the background and student’s characteristics. Consequently “one size fits all” principle in music training institutions does not apply at all.</p>	<p>Uneven level of students The age of students is not the same Too many students level and heavy amount of lesson Student situation</p>
<p>Parental Involvement / Interference</p> <p>Parents are considered as teacher’s problems when they tend to be grade conscious parents, too much expectation and demand beyond the teacher’s responsibility. These attitudes of parents affect and interrupt the music teaching plan, thus directly influencing the quality of teaching and student’s achievement.</p>	<p>Grade conscious parents Forced by parents to learn music Parents’ outlook on exam scores as a manifestation of musical ability</p>

<p>Students' Interest</p> <p>Interest should be the first and foremost primary factor for the students to successfully learn music. This internal motivation for the benefits of learners will set the tone of learning. However, music teachers experienced that this factor hinders the development of musical ability.</p>	<p>Losing interest in learning and practicing Lack of attention in class Lack of enthusiasm Inactive students Child initiative to practice/study at home</p>
<p>Teachers' Attitude</p> <p>School administrators are very much aware that teachers' attitude towards school policies is one of the issues to address. Responses from the interview showed that teachers display disobedience towards the policy particularly in tutorial classes and to the management. Although there is a standardized music curriculum in the institution, administrators believed that non-uniformity of teaching tasks, content and methods add up to the problems.</p>	<p>Deviation from school policies Disobedience</p>
<p>Employee Tenure</p> <p>Another issue that the administrators are trying to address is the tenure of the employee. Unfavorable salary gap between full-time and part-time teachers caused other teachers to leave the institution. Likewise, students enrolled in the Music Training Institution also left when teachers transferred or resigned from the school.</p>	<p>Full-time Vs. Part-time teachers Resignation of teachers</p>

■ CONCLUSION

This study looked into the curriculum implementation of a Music Training Institution. It described the institution's music curriculum in terms of goals, objectives learning outcomes, content, instructional approaches and assessment practices. As an educational organization, the school also faces several issues and challenges like teachers' attitudes, parent interference, student's interest, and employee tenure. These problems were taken into consideration in designing and proposing a management improvement plan.

Curriculum management presents a more specific focus on the curriculum development process in comparison to educational management alone. In the context of music

education and for the purpose of the present study, curriculum implementation has been magnified to present the case of the Music Training Institution's status and prospects of curriculum implementation towards the development of an improvement plan. This assessment allowed the researchers to index the current instructional and assessment approaches of the institution that are mostly geared towards the assessment of learners' performance in terms of singing or playing specific instrument which measures the institution's expertise and the ultimate goal of honing students' capability in musical ability.

Consequently, managerial approaches in the curriculum implementation shall be a mechanism in cultivating the standing and prospect of any

institution that requires adaption, integration, flexibility, and willingness of internal and external stakeholders to be able to allow continuous improvement to coincide. Hence, the present study has shed light on the gaps in the different aspects of curriculum implementation of the Music Training Institution that needs to be addressed to provide better learning experiences and services to the students and arrange better professional development for the teachers and staff in the institution.

The primary purpose of this study is to describe the curriculum implementation of the Music Training Institution and designed a management improvement plan. Hence, administrators are strongly encouraged to implement the proposed improvement plan since it strategically addresses the issues and challenges in the curriculum implementation through the identified areas for development. It is highly recommended that the institution intensifies the partnership with stakeholders notable Parent-Teacher Association. This step is crucial to immediately communicate the gaps and educational needs, solicit support and assure transparency.

The institution may also conduct internal accreditation to review its existing program and projects. External evaluators may also be invited to validate the accreditation processes and outcomes. This evaluation process is helpful for the institution to create a bigger and comprehensive picture in all aspects of educational management including facilities, researches, faculty, student services, and administration areas. This study also revealed authoritative management of the Music Training Institution but somehow, disobedience among teachers is prevalent. Administrators, therefore, are strongly encouraged to review the existing school policies that would address balance and effective implementation.

Administrators are also advised to analyze the appraisal system of the institution. Although,

employees are rewarded, teachers' exodus caused constraint in curriculum management implementation. School leaders should look into and establish a fair system of teachers' performance assessment and evaluation. Likewise, school administrators must have a comprehensive review of the remuneration of full-time and part-time teachers. Professional progress and the system of promotion of teachers must also be emphasized. Lastly, A future initiative is invited in the advent of evaluating other school components like Guidance Services, Physical Plants and Facilities, and Student Development. Follow-up researches may also be conducted to validate the findings of the present study employing other data collection methods like observation checklist, research design like the mixed-method design.

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