

# Exploration of the Value and Practical Path of Pop Music in Contemporary Music Education

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**Abstract:** In the current era of multicultural integration, popular music has injected fresh vitality into traditional Music education with its advantages of being close to life and having strong infectiousness. Based on the policy orientation of the "Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" and combined with the research data of the Music education Professional Committee of the Chinese Education Society in 2023 (covering 1,730 middle school students in 12 provinces and cities across the country), this paper explores its core values in activating learning interests, cultivating diverse artistic literacy, and inheriting cultural genes, and analyzes the current problems of insufficient teaching staff and imbalanced content screening in teaching. Based on literature research and case analysis, feasible practical paths are proposed from the dimensions of curriculum optimization, teaching method innovation, and faculty development to help the deep integration of the two and practice the aesthetic education purpose of "educating people through aesthetics". The experiment conducted by Chaoyang District Teaching and Research Center in Beijing shows that scientific integration can raise students' classroom participation rate by more than 40 percentage points, providing solid reference for Music education reform.

**Keywords:** Pop music, Music education, Aesthetic education value, Practical path, Curriculum integration.

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## 1. Introduction

Under the wave of digital media, Pop music has already deeply penetrated the daily life of young people. New media platforms such as TikTok and NetEase Cloud Music have become their main channels of access to music. More than 90% of young people can sing many popular songs fluently, and the average daily exposure to Pop music is more than 1.5 hours, which is longer than the music learning time in the classroom. However, traditional Music education has long focused on classical and ethnic music as the core teaching content, with knowledge teaching and skill training as the main focus, and rarely incorporating high-quality popular works that are in line with the current aesthetic trends of young people, forming a clear mismatch with students' real aesthetic needs [1]. The Ministry of Education clearly stated in the Music education reform document in 2001 that high-quality extracurricular music resources can be included in classroom teaching; The 2022 version of the music curriculum standards has further refined the requirements for aesthetic education, proposing the need to "be close to students' actual lives and stimulate their interest in music learning", providing clear policy support for the reasonable entry of popular music into campus classrooms. According to a national survey conducted by the Music education Professional Committee of the Chinese Education Society in 2023, only 11.6% of middle school students in China have access to popular music in music classrooms. The lack of teaching ability in popular music among teachers and the lagging update of textbook content have become increasingly prominent in primary and secondary school teaching. The imbalance between aesthetic supply and demand not only disconnects music classrooms from students' life experiences, but also directly weakens the attractiveness and infectiousness of the classroom. Based on this clear reality, exploring the unique educational value of popular music in Music education, building a scientific and comprehensive teaching practice path, has profound practical significance for

solving the current teaching difficulties in Music education and effectively improving the practical educational effect of aesthetic education.

## 2. The Core Value of Popular Music in Contemporary Music Education

Pop music has broken the single boundary of traditional Music education and created a more approachable and diversified educational carrier for it. Its unique educational value is not an empty concept, but a practical educational force that can be implemented in the classroom, which can be perceived from three dimensions [2]. Firstly, activate learning initiative and alleviate the tedium of music classrooms. The fast-paced rhythm and straightforward emotional expression of popular music are highly compatible with the cognitive patterns and psychological needs of teenagers, and can quickly bring music closer to students. According to the 2024 teaching experiment conducted by Chaoyang District Education and Teaching Research Center, Beijing, the introduction of high-quality popular music materials has raised the active participation rate of students in music classrooms from 32% to 78%. Students not only shift from passive listening to lectures to active humming, but also actively share their insights on listening to music, collect similar works, and even try to adapt lyrics with simple melodies and showcase creative clips on stage. The classroom atmosphere is completely free from monotony and full of vivid expression desires [3]. Positive works such as "China in the Warm Glow of Lights" can not only strike a chord with students' innermost feelings, but also convey positive values through melodic immersion. Secondly, cultivate diverse musical literacy. Pop music is naturally characterized by its inclusiveness. In addition to classical and ethnic elements, it often collides with folk, jazz and other styles. Jay Chou's "Blue and White Porcelain" carries the classical meaning through popular arrangement, and the hidden guzheng melody in its arrangement echoes the porcelain culture in the

lyrics, allowing students to simultaneously enhance their music theory cognition and literary literacy in appreciation. Folk pop songs like "Chengdu" can help students perceive simple emotions, learn to distinguish the expression logic of different music elements, and make originally boring music theory knowledge vivid and perceptible. Thirdly, build a new bridge for cultural inheritance. The outstanding popular music bears the distinctive imprint of the times. Pop music integrated with local elements such as Qinqiang Opera and Yue Opera is included in the teaching. Teachers explain the background of the works in combination with local culture, which can not only help students understand the contemporary cultural ecology, but also enable national elements to be spread in a younger way, which can stimulate students' desire to explore local culture. Many students will actively collect similar works after class to build a strong sense of cultural identity in familiar melodies.

### **3. The Realistic Dilemma of Integrating Popular Music into Contemporary Music Education**

Although the educational value of popular music has been verified, in the actual process of teaching implementation, the difficulties are not isolated, but rather a common reality in primary and secondary schools across the country, hindering the deep integration of the two. Firstly, there is a deviation in teaching concepts. Some teachers are deeply influenced by the traditional concept of "high art first" and subconsciously equate popular music with "superficial entertainment content", ignoring its educational value and aesthetic significance, and even unwilling to actively engage with popular music, fearing that it will overshadow the teaching of classical art of high art in the classroom, and directly exclude it from the core category of classroom teaching. According to a survey conducted by the China Conservatory of Music in 2023 on music teachers in primary and secondary schools across the country, 67% of teachers have a background in classical Music education and generally lack systematic knowledge reserves and teaching cognition of popular music. Secondly, there is an imbalance in the selection of course content. At present, popular music content accounts for less than 5% of primary and secondary school music textbooks, and most of them are classic works from the 1980s and 1990s, which are seriously disconnected from the aesthetic trends pursued by contemporary students. According to a sample survey conducted by Guangzhou Academy of Educational Sciences in 2024 on 8th-grade students, over 80% of them reported that the new version of the textbook did not include high-quality popular music from the past two decades. They felt that the old songs in the textbook were outdated and boring, which directly reduced the attractiveness of classroom learning and did not arouse their interest in active learning. There were also few classroom music interactions. Thirdly, there are obvious shortcomings in the teaching staff's ability. Most teachers are good at playing classical instruments and explaining music theory, but lack the ability to play popular music, arrange music, and interpret culture. They are not familiar with popular instruments such as guitars and electronic synthesizers, making it difficult to design in-depth teaching activities [4]. As a result, popular music teaching often stays at the surface of simple teaching and singing, failing to touch on the core of the work and guide students to appreciate the creative ideas and cultural connotations of the work. Fourthly,

the evaluation system is not perfect enough. The existing evaluation model always focuses on standardized assessment of music theory knowledge and performance skills, completely ignoring students' aesthetic experience and emotional expression [5], making them afraid to express their true preferences and falling into the misconception of "studying merely for examinations", greatly restricting the practical effectiveness of popular Music education.

### **4. Principles and Paths for Content Selection of Integrating Pop Music into Music Education**

In the process of integrating popular music into Music education, scientifically selecting teaching content is the key to effective implementation in teaching. Faced with a massive amount of popular works, it is necessary to make precise choices, strictly control, and adhere to the three core principles, so that popular music can truly become a nourishment for students' aesthetic education. First is the Principle of Positive Ideological Orientation, which prioritizes the selection of works that carry positive values such as patriotism, original aspirations, and inclusiveness, such as the sincerity of "With Me" and the healing of "Rice Aroma". At the same time, value orientation is judged based on students' cognitive characteristics, avoiding obscure or overly adult-oriented content, firmly rejecting songs that promote hedonism and vulgar taste, building a solid aesthetic bottom line, and avoiding negative influences on students [6]. The second principle is the principle of artistic adaptability, which focuses on selecting works with timeless melodies, intricate structures, aesthetic qualities, and teaching feasibility. Particularly, popular works that integrate classical rhythms and ethnic heritage are favored, considering the feasibility of classroom teaching arrangement and explanation. This not only allows students to feel the vitality of popular music, but also connects with music theory teaching, achieving a two-way empowerment of aesthetics and skills [7]. The core of age adaptability lies in adapting to the cognitive gradients and aesthetic preferences of students in different age groups: primary school students can choose works with light rhythms and clear lyrics such as the simplified version of "Little Happiness", and combine them with fun rhythm teaching; Middle school students can introduce Chinese-style songs such as "Preface to the Lanting Pavilion" and folk works such as "An He Bridge" to appreciate the cultural significance through rhythm, and even guide them to use simple tools to break down the arrangement logic. On a practical level, a complementary teaching repertoire of "classic+popular" can be built, such as a patriotic theme unit, which juxtaposes the grandeur of "Ode to the Yellow River" with the gentleness of "China in the Warm Glow of Lights", guiding students to experience the patriotism of different eras through the collision of melodies. At the same time, we will deeply cultivate local cultural resources, excavate popular works adapted from Suzhou Pingtan and Shaanbei Xintianyou, incorporate regional cultural explanations into the school-based curriculum, flexibly adjust according to the existing teaching resources of the school, take into account the differences in urban and rural teaching, endow the teaching content with distinct characteristics and cultural warmth, and enrich the humanistic dimension.

## 5. Innovation and Practice of Teaching Methods in Pop Music Education

Innovative teaching methods are the core of activating the vitality of popular Music education. Only by breaking free from the traditional shackles of "teaching and singing sentence by sentence" can aesthetic education truly immerse the soul. Firstly, the comparative appreciation method can be cleverly used, without being confined to the generalized experience of international master classes. It is advisable to choose specific works to anchor teaching - for example, listening to the string arrangement in Jay Chou's "The Seventh Chapter of the Night" in parallel with Mozart's symphonic polyphonic techniques, guiding students to analyze how popular melodies draw on classical harmonic logic, and through the collision of ancient and modern rhythms, hone students' critical aesthetic judgment and in-depth music interpretation abilities, rather than simply staying at technical analysis [8].

Furthermore, experiential teaching is used to activate creative potential, and a "Pop music Creation Workshop" is built based on campus art festivals and club activities, guiding students to work in groups to deconstruct classic songs: either incorporating Kunqu Opera's Shuimo Tune into the popular version of "Jasmine Flower", or adding classical piano harmonies to the folk song "South of the Nanshan Mountain". Teachers are no longer mere guides, but companions and co-creators, demonstrating guitar chord arrangements through hands-on guidance and using simple arrangement software to assist in melody polishing, to help students grasp the essence of music creation through hands-on practice.

At the same time, leveraging multimedia technology to empower the classroom, utilizing tools such as CapCut and Audacity to guide students in breaking down the drum beats and bass lines of popular songs, and even analyzing the dissemination logic of music on short video platforms [9]; Then, relying on the campus music official account and the class community, work-sharing meetings will be held, so that students can actively stand on the platform to talk about their creative ideas, and the classroom interaction will change from passive response to active expression.

We must break down disciplinary barriers and practice interdisciplinary integrated teaching. In addition to interpreting the celadon culture and Song Ci poetic imagery in the lyrics of "Blue and White Porcelain", it is also possible to link "Map of Mountains and Rivers" with geography and history, and analyze the famous mountains, rivers, and historical allusions mentioned in the lyrics; Alternatively, the lyrics of popular songs can be used as modern poetry for appreciation, guiding students to imitate and write melody-adapted words, allowing music to deeply blend with literature, history, and geography, and realizing the educational goal of "conveying values through music and educating students in an all-round way".

## 6. Construction of a Guarantee Mechanism for The Healthy Development of Popular Music Education

Building a comprehensive guarantee mechanism is a solid foundation for popular Music education to evolve from scattered pilot projects to sustainable in-depth development. Efforts need to be made from the three aspects of teachers,

evaluation, and collaboration to form an educational synergy. Firstly, we will deepen the construction of the teaching staff and carry out targeted empowerment training for the shortcomings of teachers' popular music literacy. We will arrange the training time reasonably based on teachers' daily teaching tasks to avoid conflicts with conventional teaching. It not only covers core modules such as music theory knowledge, popular instrument performance, and innovative teaching methods, but also can set up various forms such as short-term training and one-on-one mentorship. We will invite independent musicians, music producers, and senior popular music teachers to conduct special workshops to teach arrangement skills and stage teaching experience step by step, filling the gaps in their professional competencies; At the same time, a regional teacher co-construction platform will be established to promote high-quality cases through online teaching and research salons, offline demonstration course observations, and other forms, allowing teachers to achieve skill iteration through communication and collision.

Secondly, reconstruct the scientific evaluation system, break the single evaluation inertia of "emphasizing skills and neglecting literacy", and establish a three-dimensional evaluation framework of "knowledge+emotion+practice". The evaluation criteria are refined to different stages. Primary school students focus on participation and interest cultivation, while middle school students focus on creative and aesthetic expression of works [10]. In addition to assessing music theory knowledge, multiple carriers such as classroom interactive participation, completeness of original works, and aesthetic perception reports (taking into account both written and oral expression) can be used to comprehensively capture students' emotional resonance and innovative potential, making evaluation a link to guide students to perceive music and express themselves, rather than a mechanical assessment tool.

Finally, establish a collaborative education network between the family, school, and community. Through immersive activities such as parent salons and parent-child music sharing sessions, we aim to deconstruct the educational value of high-quality Pop music and dispel parents' misconception that Pop music is irrelevant to formal education; Proactively collaborate with music platforms to develop school-based curriculum materials, work with cultural and creative institutions to conduct music creation workshops, collaborate with community cultural centers to provide performance venues, regularly hold campus Pop music showcases and original song competitions [11], allow students to hone their practical abilities, and form aesthetic consensus among schools, families, and society, jointly creating an inclusive and diverse artistic education atmosphere that immerses the soul.

## 7. Conclusion

Pop music, as an important cultural carrier rooted in the spiritual world of young people and reflecting the style of the times, has unique and irreplaceable educational value in awakening enthusiasm for music learning, cultivating diverse artistic perceptual abilities, and inheriting excellent cultural genes. Its deep integration with Music education is not simply a superposition, but a necessary part of the reform of aesthetic education in the new era that conforms to the laws of youth growth and cultural development trends, and can make the cultivation of abstract artistic literacy tangible. At present, the integration of popular music into the classroom still faces

practical challenges such as fixed teaching concepts, imbalanced curriculum content, weak teacher capabilities, and a single evaluation system. These challenges are like invisible barriers that hinder the full release of its educational value. It is necessary to combine the faculty and resource conditions of different schools, accurately screen and anchor the direction with content, activate the classroom with dynamic teaching methods, and build a solid foundation with sound guarantee mechanisms to solve development problems one by one. In practice, we must always adhere to the educational philosophy of "putting students first", find a point of convergence between classic melodies and popular trends, strike a balance between its entertainment attributes and aesthetic values, and integrate skill training with literacy cultivation, so that popular music can truly transform from a "leisure companion" for students after class to an aesthetic nutrient that nourishes the soul in the classroom. In the future, it is necessary to continue to deepen the iteration of the curriculum system, adapt to the teaching needs of urban and rural schools, refine the humanistic dimension of evaluation standards, strengthen the systematic improvement of teachers' ability to teach popular music, and enable popular music to accurately serve the core goals of "educating people through aesthetics and cultivating people through culture", cultivate students' core competencies of aesthetic judgment, cultural inclusiveness, and innovative spirit, inject fresh and lasting power into the high-quality development of contemporary Music education, and let the flower of aesthetic education bloom in diverse melodies.

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