

Original Paper

Exploration of the Application of Orff Music Teaching Method in Preschool Music Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

Qingxiu Zheng

Chongqing Vocational Institute of Tourism, Qianjiang, 409000, Chongqing, China

Received: February 5, 2026

Accepted: February 28, 2026

Online Published: March 5, 2026

doi:10.22158/jetss.v8n1p82

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jetss.v8n1p82>

Abstract

As one of the three influential music education systems in the world, Orff music teaching method takes "originality" as the core, emphasizes the integration of music with action, language and drama, and pays attention to students' active participation and creative expression, which is highly compatible with the talent training objectives of preschool education in higher vocational colleges.

The preschool education program serves as a vital discipline for training frontline early childhood educators, where the quality of music instruction directly shapes future teachers' musical literacy and practical teaching skills. This study examines the application value, implementation pathways, and optimization strategies of the Orff music teaching method in this program, considering the unique characteristics of music education and student demographics in vocational colleges. By analyzing existing challenges in teaching practices and proposing targeted solutions, the research aims to enhance music education quality and cultivate practical, industry-ready professionals for early childhood education.

Keywords

Orff Music Pedagogy, Higher Vocational Colleges, Preschool Education Major, Music Teaching, Teaching Application

1. Introduction

The "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" provides clear guidance for the development of children's artistic abilities, emphasizing the importance of stimulating their imagination and creativity through diverse art activities. It encourages children to experience and appreciate various art forms and works, which in turn sets more specific requirements for the professional skills of early childhood educators in music education.

As a cornerstone of early childhood education, preschool music education in vocational colleges must

go beyond imparting basic musical knowledge and skills. It should cultivate students' practical teaching abilities, innovative thinking, and deep understanding of children's music education. However, traditional teaching methods in this field often rely heavily on knowledge cramming and skill drills, resulting in a rigid approach that prioritizes theory over practice and technical proficiency over real-world application. This passive learning model leaves students struggling to connect theoretical knowledge with classroom realities, making it difficult for them to meet the demands of early childhood music education after graduation.

The Orff Method, developed by German music educator Carl Orff in the early 20th century, transcends traditional music education boundaries by integrating music with language, movement, dance, and drama. Guided by the principle of "learning through play and doing," it aligns with children's developmental needs and music's inherent learning patterns, while perfectly matching the "application-oriented, skill-focused" talent development goals of preschool education programs in vocational colleges.

The introduction of Orff music teaching method into preschool education music teaching in higher vocational colleges is not only the reform and innovation of traditional music teaching mode, but also the inevitable requirement to improve the quality of preschool education professional personnel training and adapt to the development of early childhood education industry.

2. Current Status of Music Teaching in Preschool Education Majors in Higher Vocational Colleges and Issues in the Application of Orff Methodology

(1) The Present Situation of Music Teaching in Preschool Education Major of Higher Vocational Colleges

The questionnaire survey found that the music teaching of preschool education major in higher vocational colleges mainly has the following problems:

1. The teaching model is traditional, resulting in low student engagement.

The survey shows that more than 85% of music teachers still use the traditional teaching mode of "teacher lecturing + students imitating", and the teaching process is teacher-centered, and students lose their learning initiative.

In classroom instruction, teachers tend to focus on explaining music theory and training professional skills like piano, vocal music, and dance, while lacking diverse teaching activity designs. This results in low student engagement and a lack of classroom participation. Some students mentioned that although they personally love music, music classes feel dull and monotonous, as they merely mechanically imitate the teacher's movements and playing techniques, making it hard to appreciate the charm of music.

2. Disconnection between teaching content and actual preschool education practices

The curriculum design emphasizes professional music skills training, such as piano, vocal techniques, and dance movements, while content related to early childhood music education—like nursery rhyme

singing, percussion instruction, and music activity design—accounts for less than 30%.

At the same time, the teaching content lacks integration with the actual life of young children, neglecting the incorporation of local cultural elements such as China folk music, nursery rhymes, and traditional festival music. This results in students being unable to apply their knowledge to the practical teaching of children's music after graduation, leading to the phenomenon of "learning without application."

3. Students' uneven musical foundation poses challenges in teaching difficulty control

The student body of preschool education programs in vocational colleges comprises diverse backgrounds, including high school graduates and vocational school graduates specializing in preschool education. Their musical proficiency varies significantly. Survey data indicates that approximately 30% of students possess some musical foundation, having studied professional skills like piano or vocal music; around 15% have only basic exposure to music; while about 55% lack any musical foundation whatsoever.

In the classroom teaching, teachers are difficult to take into account the students with different foundation, the teaching content and teaching progress are mostly based on the standard of the middle foundation students, which leads to the students with good foundation to complete the task and wait, and the students with weak foundation, which affects the overall teaching effect.

4. Weakness in practical teaching components and insufficient cultivation of teaching competencies

The music education in preschool education programs at higher vocational colleges tends to emphasize theoretical instruction and skill training, while practical teaching components remain underdeveloped. Surveys indicate that most institutions' music practice teaching only includes classroom simulation exercises and limited kindergarten observations, lacking systematic early childhood music pedagogical activities.

5. Faculty development requires further enhancement

Currently, some teachers lack in-depth understanding of the physical and mental development characteristics of young children and the principles of early childhood music education. Approximately 80% of teachers have not systematically studied the Orff music teaching method, lacking a solid theoretical foundation and extensive practical teaching experience, which makes it difficult for them to flexibly apply the Orff music teaching method in classroom instruction.

(2) Problems in the Application of Orff Music Teaching Method

1. Misunderstanding of the Core Concepts of Orff Music Pedagogy

Some teachers only learn the Orff music teaching method on the surface, without understanding the core concept of "originality", "comprehensiveness" and "creativity", and simply equate the Orff music teaching method with "percussion teaching" or "body movement teaching".

In the teaching, only mechanically using the Orff teaching method, such as making students to use percussion instruments to play rhythm, do the body movement, etc., but ignore the students' active participation and creative expression, deviate from the essence of Orff music teaching method.

2. Lack of integration between localization and professionalism in instructional content design

When implementing the Orff music pedagogy, some educators mechanically adopt foreign teaching materials and case studies without integrating them with China's cultural context, children's daily experiences, or the distinctive features of early childhood education. Moreover, their curriculum design prioritizes entertainment value over professional pedagogy, failing to incorporate the cultivation of music teaching methodologies and instructional design competencies. This disconnect between content delivery and the actual needs of professional talent development creates a gap between classroom practices and the requirements of early childhood education programs.

3. The application of teaching methods is formalized, lacking practical effectiveness.

Some teachers, when applying the Orff music teaching method, overemphasize the diversification of teaching formats while neglecting practical effectiveness. They design numerous games and activities in class but lack clear teaching objectives and effective guidance. As a result, students merely engage in "play" without acquiring musical knowledge or mastering teaching techniques through the process.

In the teaching of percussion, students are allowed to play freely, but they are not guided to feel and arrange the rhythm, which makes the teaching activity become a mere formality and fails to achieve the teaching effect.

4. Insufficient teaching resources constrain instructional implementation

The implementation of Orff music teaching method needs certain teaching resources support, such as Orff percussion instruments, music classroom, multimedia teaching equipment, etc.

The survey revealed that some vocational colleges, constrained by limited funding, lack professional Orff music classrooms and sufficient percussion instruments. Many instruments are outdated or damaged, failing to meet teaching requirements. Additionally, the absence of systematic Orff music teaching materials and resource libraries forces teachers to rely on online resources and self-study materials, compromising the systematic and standardized nature of instruction.

5. Lack of a comprehensive teaching evaluation system

At present, the evaluation system of music teaching in preschool education major of higher vocational colleges is still based on the traditional skill assessment, such as piano, vocal music, dance grade results, and ignores the evaluation of students' teaching practice ability, innovation ability, teamwork ability and other comprehensive quality.

After the application of Orff music teaching method, the teaching evaluation system is not adjusted in time, still using the traditional evaluation method, unable to evaluate the students' learning effect and the teacher's teaching effect comprehensively and objectively, and it is difficult to play the guiding and motivating role of teaching evaluation.

3. Implementation Path of Orff Music Teaching Method in Preschool Education Majors of Higher Vocational Colleges

(1) Clarify teaching objectives and align with job requirements

The application of Orff music teaching method in preschool education major in higher vocational colleges should be closely related to the professional training objectives and the post requirements of preschool teachers, and the stratified teaching objectives should be clearly defined.

The foundational objective is to equip students with the core principles, fundamental methodologies, and essential musical knowledge and skills of the Orff music pedagogy, thereby fostering their musical literacy. The intermediate objective aims to enable students to integrate Orff music pedagogy with practical early childhood music education, designing simple teaching activities to enhance their instructional design and hands-on skills. The advanced objective seeks to develop students' ability to flexibly apply Orff music pedagogy, creating locally adapted early childhood music activities that cultivate their innovative thinking and pedagogical research capabilities.

(2) Optimize teaching content to achieve the integration of localization and specialization

1. Incorporate local cultural elements

Integrate local cultural elements such as China's folk music, nursery rhymes, proverbs, traditional festival music, and ethnic dances into teaching content. For example, adapt folk nursery rhymes like "The Sun Comes Up, Joyful" and "Pulling the Radish" into Orff music activities, and incorporate movements from ethnic dances like Yangko and dragon and lion dances into rhythm training. This allows students to experience the charm of Orff music while inheriting and promoting China's excellent traditional culture.

2. Aligning with the Practicalities of Early Childhood Music Education

The teaching content should be closely combined with the children's life and the post requirements of children's music teaching, and the proportion of children's music teaching methods, children's music activity design, children's percussion teaching, children's singing teaching and other contents should be increased.

3. Balancing Musical Fundamentals and Professional Skills

Given the varying musical proficiency levels among students, the curriculum is structured into two modules: a foundational module and an advanced module. The foundational module focuses on basic rhythm training, percussion techniques, and nursery rhyme singing, designed for all students to build a solid musical foundation. The advanced module emphasizes music composition, instructional design for early childhood music education, and innovative applications of the Orff method, tailored for students with stronger musical backgrounds to develop their creativity and pedagogical research skills.

(3) Innovate Teaching Mode, Highlight the Student's Subjective Status

The traditional teaching mode of "teacher lecturing and students listening" is abandoned, and the teaching mode of "experience, inquiry, practice and creation" is built.

1. Experience Section

Teachers design lively and interesting music experience activities, so that students can mobilize multiple senses to participate in the activities, and personally feel the rhythm, melody and emotion of music, and stimulate students' interest in learning.

2. Exploration Phase

On the basis of students' experience, teachers put forward questions to guide students to explore and think independently, so that students can find the answers through group discussion and cooperative exploration, and cultivate students' independent learning ability and thinking ability.

3. Practical Sessions

The practical component is pivotal for enhancing students' teaching competencies, comprising two phases: classroom simulation and kindergarten immersion. During the simulation phase, students work in groups to conduct simulated music lessons, applying the Orff teaching methodology they've learned. Classmates provide feedback and suggestions, while teachers offer targeted guidance. For the immersive phase, students visit kindergartens to implement Orff music instruction, developing their teaching skills and adaptability in authentic educational settings.

4. Creative Creation Phase

Teachers guide students to create music and teaching activities based on their acquired knowledge, combined with children's daily life and local culture.

(4) Enrich Teaching Methods and Improve Teaching Effect

The teaching methods such as game teaching, group cooperation teaching, situation teaching and case teaching are used to make students love music activities from the heart.

(5) Strengthening Practical Teaching to Improve Students' Job Competence

1. Increase the number of simulated practical class hours

Increase the proportion of simulation practice sessions to ensure students have opportunities for simulated teaching activities in every class. Teachers should provide timely guidance based on students' simulated teaching performance, identify existing issues, and offer improvement suggestions to help students continuously enhance their instructional design and implementation skills.

2. Implement Regular Kindergarten Internship Programs

Organize students to regularly visit kindergartens for routine observation activities, allowing them to observe how kindergarten teachers apply the Orff music teaching method in conducting music education for young children, thereby understanding the characteristics of children's music learning and practical teaching needs. Simultaneously, students are encouraged to assist kindergarten teachers in organizing music activities, accumulating practical teaching experience.

3. Arrange on-the-job internships to participate in real teaching

During the third year of their studies, students are assigned a 3-6 month kindergarten teaching internship, where they independently conduct Orff music instruction as preschool teachers, applying their acquired knowledge and skills to real teaching scenarios.

4. Enhancing Innovation Capabilities Through Graduation Projects

The application of Orff music teaching method is integrated into the graduation design, and students are asked to design innovative and practical music teaching activity program for children with the theme of "Application of Orff music teaching method in children's music teaching", and then carry out practical verification.

4. Optimization Strategies and Guarantee Measures for the Application of Orff Music Teaching Method in Preschool Education Majors of Higher Vocational Colleges

(1) Optimization Strategy

1. Deepening Teachers' Theoretical Learning and Practical Training on Orff Music Teaching Method

In view of the problem of teachers' deviation in understanding the core concept of Orff music teaching method, higher vocational colleges should strengthen the theoretical study and practical research of teachers, so that teachers can deeply understand the core concept and teaching method of Orff music teaching method.

2. Constructing a Localized Orff Music Teaching Content System

Organize teachers to compile Orff music teaching materials and teaching resource library suitable for preschool education majors in higher vocational colleges, which will integrate local cultural elements, practical music teaching for children and professional skills training, and provide systematic and standardized teaching content support for teaching implementation.

3. Emphasize the practical effectiveness of teaching methods and avoid formalism

When applying the Orff music teaching method, teachers should clearly define teaching objectives, design teaching activities around these objectives, emphasize the practical effectiveness of teaching methods, and avoid formalism. Meanwhile, teachers should promptly adjust teaching methods and activities based on students' learning progress and teaching outcomes.

4. Establishing a Diversified Teaching Evaluation System

The traditional single skill assessment method is abandoned, and a diversified teaching evaluation system is constructed to evaluate students from the dimensions of knowledge, skills, abilities and qualities.

Formative assessment primarily evaluates students' classroom participation, group collaboration performance, simulated teaching effectiveness, and internship experiences; summative assessment focuses on evaluating students' musical knowledge and skills, instructional design capabilities, and music composition abilities.

(2) Safeguard Measures

1. Strengthening the Faculty Development

Optimize the structure of the teaching staff, establish a teacher assessment and incentive mechanism, encourage teachers to carry out teaching research and practice innovation of Orff music teaching method, and commend and reward teachers with excellent teaching effect.

2. Increase investment in teaching funds and improve teaching resources

Vocational colleges should increase financial investment in music education for preschool education majors and improve the construction of teaching resources. Establish professional Orff music classrooms equipped with sufficient Orff percussion instruments, multimedia teaching devices, and music teaching aids; purchase systematic Orff music teaching materials, video resources, and teaching resource libraries.

3. Enhancing School-Community Collaboration to Achieve Industry-Education Integration

Vocational colleges should strengthen collaboration with local education authorities, kindergartens, and early education institutions to establish a deep industry-education integration mechanism. They should jointly develop talent cultivation plans with kindergartens, incorporating the latter's job requirements into teaching content. Additionally, they should invite outstanding kindergarten music teachers to participate in school teaching as part-time instructors, sharing practical experience in early childhood music education with students.

4. Creating a Positive Teaching Environment

Create a vibrant Orff music teaching environment by organizing diverse cultural activities on campus, allowing students to experience the charm of Orff music and enhance their musical literacy and comprehensive abilities.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of Orff music pedagogy in preschool education programs at vocational colleges constitutes a systematic endeavor. Educators must thoroughly comprehend its core principles, integrate them with program-specific characteristics and practical early childhood teaching scenarios, while continuously exploring, reflecting upon, and refining instructional practices. As China's preschool education landscape evolves and the professional standards for early childhood educators rise, the application of Orff music pedagogy in vocational preschool education programs is expected to gain increasing recognition.

In the future, the application of Orff music teaching method will develop in a more localized, professionalized, and innovative direction. Meanwhile, it will strengthen the teaching research and practical innovation of Orff music teaching method, continuously explore teaching models and implementation paths suitable for preschool education majors in higher vocational colleges, and provide stronger support for improving the quality of talent cultivation in preschool education.

It is believed that with the joint efforts of the education department, higher vocational colleges, kindergartens and all sectors of society, the application of Orff music teaching method in preschool education majors of higher vocational colleges will be continuously improved and deepened, which will cultivate more teachers with rich teaching skills for the development of preschool education in China and promote the upgrading of the quality of music education in preschool education in China.

Fund Project

[1] Chongqing Tourism Vocational College 2024 School-level Research Project: Application Exploration of Orff Music Teaching Method in Preschool Music Education Courses for Higher Vocational Education (xj2327)

[2] Chongqing Tourism Vocational College 2025 School-Level Teaching Reform Project: Exploration of Music Curriculum Reform in Preschool Education Major under the Perspective of Market Demand (YJJG2024031)

References

Action Plan for Enhancing Vocational Education Quality and Excellence (2020-2023). *Ministry of Education*, 2020.

Carl Orff. (2002). *Orff's Music Education Thoughts and Practice*. Shanghai Education Press.

Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6. Beijing Normal University Press, 2012.

Jiang Yong. (2019). *Preschool Education*. Higher Education Press.

Li Dana, Xiu Hailin, & Yin Aiqing. (2009). *Orff Music Education Theory and Practice*. Central Conservatory of Music Press.

Liu Yang. (2020). Application of Orff Music Pedagogy in Piano Teaching for Preschool Education Majors. *Art Education*, 2020(08).

Wang Li. (2019). Orff Music Teaching Practice in Preschool Education Major of Higher Vocational Education Based on Job Requirements. *Vocational Education Research*, 2019(12).

Wang Yaohua. (2018). *Introduction to Chinese Folk Music*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.

Zhang Li. (2021). Analysis of Music Teaching Reform in Preschool Education Majors of Higher Vocational Colleges. *Music Creation*, 2021(05).

Zhang Yuhang. (2023). Exploring the Application of Orff Music Pedagogy in Preschool Education Programs at Higher Vocational Colleges: A Case Study of the "Sight-Singing and Ear Training" Course. *Theater Home*.

Zhou Jing. (2020). *Preschool Children's Language Education*. Beijing Normal University Press.