Exploring Collaborative and Creative Learning Experience Through Playing Ocarina Ensemble in Chinese Public Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current general music class in China, especially in low income communities, does not provide students many opportunities to gain ensemble playing experiences, due to the cost of getting and maintaining various instruments and to the lack of music teachers who know and have experiences of teaching ensembles and the various instruments. According to current teaching pedagogy and learning theories, ensemble playing and collaborative and creative learning experiences are important to students. This chapter presents the value and benefits of group playing, collaborative and creative learning models, and the reasons for choosing ocarina as a media for gaining group playing experiences in Chinese public schools. In the last part of the chapter, some ocarina teaching activities are explored and discussed as examples of how students can learn creatively and collaboratively and gain ensemble playing experiences.

INTRODUCTION

The current general music classes in Chinese public schools are often composed of Chinese and world music appreciation courses, singing various kinds of songs, and playing instruments that are chosen by schools or their districts, based on the nine-year compulsory Chinese education curriculum. Although students have opportunities to play one or two instruments, students from public schools do not have many opportunities to gain ensemble or orchestra playing experiences due to the cost of purchasing and maintaining various instruments and due to a lack of music teachers who know and have experiences of teaching ensemble and various instruments. Unlike in private or international schools, where students have adequate resources to learn different instruments and gain ensemble playing experiences, students who study in low-income-district public schools often receive limited music learning experiences, such as singing songs, doing musical movements, playing one or two instruments, and reading stories about music history. These students do not have many ensemble playing opportunities. Moreover, the instructional training or teacher-centered method is often used in Chinese music classes, as well as in those of other subjects (Campbell, Demorest, and Morrison, 2008). Music teachers present students the material to be learned, and students follow the instruction and learn the subjects accordingly. There is not much collaborative or creative learning.

According to current music teaching pedagogy and learning theories, ensemble or group playing and collaborative and creative learning experiences are important and valuable to students, as are student-centered teaching modalities. The use of creative and collaborative learning methods can prepare students' social skills so that they will learn how to work and negotiate with others. Moreover, creative and collaborative learning method enhances students' individual and unique strengths so that they can contribute their creative minds to society. Creative and student-centered teaching provides students a positive, encouraging, and playful environment to think uniquely and to try different things with brave hearts. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the value and importance of group playing, to explore collaborative and creative learning methods, and to present reasons for choosing ocarina as a medium for exploring the learning styles and gaining group playing experiences in Chinese public schools, especially in lower-income cities or areas. In addition, some ocarina teaching activities are explored and discussed to show how students can gain ensemble playing experiences while learning ocarina, and how collaborative and creative learning method can be applied in ocarina ensemble playing.

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