

The Application of the Kodály Teaching Method in Chinese Primary School Music Classes

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Abstract: Aim: This study aims to investigate the current implementation and localization effects of the Kodály teaching method in Chinese primary school music classrooms. Research Design: Adopting a qualitative research design, the study conducted in-depth interviews and thematic analysis with four music teachers from Shanxi Province who possess professional musical backgrounds. The research systematically explores the practical impact of this method on daily lesson planning, students' creative output, and classroom interaction. Results: The findings indicate that the Kodály method — through its emphasis on hand signs, rhythmic training, and multi-sensory engagement — significantly enhances students' pitch accuracy, teamwork, and overall interest in music. Although challenges such as memorization difficulties among younger students and asynchrony between gestures and pitch were identified during implementation, educators successfully localized the approach by integrating multimedia aids and adapting traditional Chinese folk songs. This study fills a research gap regarding the application of the Kodály method in rural Chinese primary schools, confirms its practical value in improving music education quality, and provides essential references for future curriculum optimization and teacher professional development.

Keywords: Kodály teaching Method, Chinese primary schools, Music education

1. Introduction

Education is vital for competency development, with learning transfer critical, educators prioritize “educating” over “training” [1]. Music enriches experiences and cultivates diverse skills [2]. Among methods like Orff [3,4,5,6], this study focuses on Kodály's singing-centered approach, exploring its classroom impact and advantages [7].

The Kodály Method, mostly used in Europe, faces Asian adaptation challenges due to cultural differences and curriculum sequences [8]. Teacher competency and reluctance to adopt new methods [9,10] hinder its use. This study explores its advantages and implementation effects to boost adoption and creativity.

1.1 Research Question

(1) What are the effects of implementing the Kodály method in music education on students' creative output and the structuring of lesson plans.

(2) What advantages does this method offer to educators and learners compared to other teaching approaches?

1.2 Research Objectives

(1) To analyze the impact of integrating the Kodály method into music education regarding students' creative output and the organisation of lesson plans comprehensively.

(2) To evaluate the advantages offered by the Kodály method to both educators and learners in the context of music education.

1.3 Significance of Study

The Kodály Method, mostly used in Europe, faces Asian adaptation challenges due to cultural differences and curriculum sequences [8]. Teacher competency and reluctance to adopt new methods [9,10] hinder its use. This study explores its advantages and implementation effects to boost adoption and creativity. Chinese Kodály studies mostly compare it with other methods [11] or focus on secondary/higher education [12]. This study fills gaps by focusing on its primary school application.

2. Research design

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the adaptation of the Kodály method to daily lesson planning, particularly in the context of Chinese music education, and to evaluate the advantages both teachers and students can gain from this method. The study will be using a qualitative approach to explore and understand the effects of implementing the Kodály

method on students’ daily courses.

This study will interview primary school music teachers by purposive sampling to collect the subjective information from individual’s perspective and interpretations from experiences in the application of the Kodály method. The population of this study will focus on primary school students in Shanxi Province of China. Data will be collected through interviews with open-ended questions and will be transcribed into written text. The method of data analysis used is content-based analysis. The data transcribed from the interview will be read through and coded by the researchers. Any themes resulting from this process will be measured and trace the relationship of the themes.

3. Participants selection

We have contacted 4 participants all the way from China and asked for their permission to take part in this interview session regarding application of Kodály method in primary school music classes. All participants had been using the Kodály Method in primary school classes for at least three months. They have a musical background and hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in music.

Table 1. Participants’ backgrounds			
	Educational background	Major	Grades taught
Participant 1	Master	Undergraduate: Music Education	Grade 1
Participant 2	Master	Undergraduate: Music Performance	Grade 2
Participant 3	Bachelor	Undergraduate: Music Performance Master: Music Education	Grade 5
Participant 4	Bachelor	Undergraduate: Music Performance Master: Music Education	Grade 6

4. Data collection process

We have prepared a few interview questions in the purpose of solving our research questions and achieving our research objectives which are stated below:

- (1) Please provide an overview of your experience with the Kodály teaching method.
- (2) How did you first become interested in or exposed to the Kodály method?
- (3) How have you implemented the Kodály method in your teaching?
- (4) What are the challenges you have faced when implementing the Kodály method?
- (5) What measures have you taken to overcome the challenges?
- (6) What is your vision for the future of the Kodály method in the context of evolving music education practices?

Each of these questions stated above were being analyzed with care in order to make sure they truly bring out the result we envisioned at the start of the research paper. It goes from the background of each of the teachers, exposure to the Kodály method, experience with the teaching method to challenges and vision with the implementation of the Kodály method. The interviews were carried out individually due to schedule complication with the teachers and also in Mandarin due to cultural differences. All of them were conducted by using Facetime application and fully recorded for thematic analysis purposes. The transcripts were being translated into English after the interviews to smoothen out our analysis process. We believe that with different groups of students due to interviewing teachers from different schools will provide unique opinions and understandings towards our research focus and greatly enriches us with various perspectives on the Kodály method.

5. Thematic Analysis

Interviews with four Chinese primary school music teachers yielded rich insights into the Kodály method’s application.

On effectiveness (Question 1): Participant 1 reported improved pitch accuracy via singing, pitch practice and note-gesture matching. Participant 2 noted higher student interest using Kodály gestures and games versus traditional methods. Participant 3 fostered teamwork by grouping students by note gestures. Participant 4 creatively used gestures to replace notes.

On Kodály exposure (Question 2): Participant 1 encountered it in college. Participant 2 adopted it after witnessing students’ apathy in traditional classes, finding online Kodály resources yielded immediate improvements. Participant 3 was inspired by a mentor. Participant 4’s college exposure shaped her approach.

On implementation strategies (Question 3): Participant 1 grouped students by notes for collaboration. Participant 2 integrated multimedia (videos, games) for engagement. Participant 3 used blackboard-drawn gestures as visual aids. Participant

4 adapted it with familiar Chinese folk songs.

Conclusion: The teachers' practices highlight the Kodály method's adaptability—engaging students via collaboration, innovation and cultural relevance, enhancing music education quality.

6. Discussion

All four primary school music teachers encountered challenges in Kodály method implementation. Participant 1 noted Grade 1 students struggled to memorize gestures; Participant 4 found students failed to link gestures with pitches, causing asynchrony in singing. Participant 2 faced poor group intonation leading to clashing pitches. Participant 3 dealt with capable students neglecting gestures (feeling lessons too easy) and craving popular songs, disrupting class order.

Teachers devised targeted solutions: Participant 1 used pictures/videos to aid young students' gesture memorization. Participant 2 used piano accompaniment to guide intonation, combining it with gesture practice to connect movement and pitch. Participant 3 grouped students by musical background, having advanced students mentor peers — fostering collective awareness: “music and the collective are closely connected.” Participant 4 chose slower, level-appropriate songs to align gestures and singing.

All teachers endorsed the method. Participants 1 and 2 praised its suitability for primary students, believing it enriches music education and deserves wider adoption. Participants 3 and 4 proposed community-building: Participant 3 suggested Kodály competitions (judging teachers/students) to “unleash potential and promote mutual learning.” Participant 4 advocated seminars for teachers to share implementation experiences and solve drawbacks.

7. Conclusion

The Kodály method, globally acclaimed due to Zoltan Kodály and the International Kodály Society, has been actively integrated into teachers' lesson plans. Practice shows it significantly enhances students' learning outcomes and experiences—a win-win educators pursue. Teachers effectively tackled implementation challenges, fully demonstrating the method's practicality, which music schools can leverage for syllabus and lesson plan optimization. Multiple approaches exist to evaluate its effectiveness, so future research could explore its limitations. A key direction is comparing it with other teaching methods, as different philosophies may expand understanding, and combining methods could bring extra benefits. Ultimately, student learning experience remains the core evaluation criterion for educators.

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