

A Survey and Research on the Current Situation of the Introduction of Chinese Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes

——Taking Jining of Shandong Province as an Example

He Qianjin, Department of Arts and Design, International College, Krirk University, Thailand

Abstract: Chinese traditional ethnic musical instruments have undergone a legacy of five thousand years, from the exquisite bone flutes of the ancient Xia and Shang dynasties to the pinnacle of plucked string music in the Sui and Tang dynasties. Many ethnic instruments and musical pieces with enchanting tones and boundless charm have been passed down, making them a brilliant gem in the world of music. Since the early 1990s, Xu Le has advocated for the inclusion of these excellent traditional instruments in primary and secondary school music classes to enrich the content of music education and strongly promote the implementation and popularization of aesthetic education policies. Chen Jinfeng believes that take introducing ethnic instrumental music as basic education can comprehensively cultivate students' interests, enrich their aesthetic experiences and tastes, and achieve a high degree of integration between traditional ethnic instrumental music and quality education. This paper investigates the implementation of introducing ethnic instrumental music into classroom in three primary and secondary schools in Jining, Shandong Province. The data is collected and analyzed by field interviews and online questionnaires. And the necessity and urgency of introducing ethnic instrumental music is highlighted after summarizing, comparing and analyzing the study. It is hoped that this research will continuously propel the introduction of ethnic instrumental music in primary and secondary school curricula, contributing to the enhancement of overall quality and the popularization of aesthetic education.

Keywords: Ethnic instrumental music; music class; quality education

Introduction

Chinese traditional ethnic instrumental music have endured the vicissitudes of five thousand years of Chinese history, preserving a wealth of outstanding traditional compositions and performance forms. However, the seventy years following the founding of the People's Republic of China were a challenging period focused on safeguarding people's livelihoods and developing the economy, causing these excellent traditional ethnic instrumental music to be neglected like a pearl dropped in the ocean. It was not until 2015, when the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools Nationwide*, that the importance of music education was emphasized. This led to an increased emphasis on music education within the school curriculum, and the gradual inclusion of Chinese traditional ethnic instrumental music in school teaching. This development has facilitated the better inheritance and advancement of ethnic instrumental music in music education. In 2017, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council jointly issued the *Opinions on Implementing the Project to Inherit and Develop Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture*. This document highlighted the unique ideas, wisdom, demeanor, and charm inherent in Chinese excellent traditional culture, which contribute to the deep-seated confidence and pride of the Chinese people and nation. It explicitly called for the enhancement of the inheritance of Chinese excellent traditional culture across various educational fields, including early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, and continuing education.

However, the current state of traditional ethnic instrumental music education in primary and secondary school music classes is not promising. Traditional ethnic instrumental music are

diverse, originating from different regions and ethnic groups, and have continuously evolved and been passed down through Chinese history. These historically significant ethnic music forms embody the unique musical cultures of China's various ethnic groups (Yuan Jingfang, 2004), carrying different emotions and memories of these groups and reflecting the diligence and wisdom of the Chinese people. With their intelligent minds and dexterous hands, the Chinese people have not only created a glorious chapter in ethnic instrumental music but also contributed to the rich tapestry of Chinese excellent traditional culture.

This paper will investigate and collect data on the implementation of traditional ethnic instrumental music in the music classes of three primary and secondary schools in Jining, Shandong Province. It will explore and analyze the problems encountered during this process and propose solutions to more effectively promote the integration of traditional ethnic instrumental music into primary and secondary school music education. Furthermore, this study aims to accelerate the inclusion of traditional ethnic instrumental music, which symbolize Chinese music history, into school curricula, thereby expanding students' knowledge and exposing them to the rich diversity of Chinese ethnic music. This initiative will fundamentally protect and pass on many traditional ethnic instrumental music.

1. Development of Chinese Traditional Ethnic Musical Instruments

1.1 Ethnic musical instruments in prehistoric times

Around seven to eight thousand years ago, in prehistoric times, humans learned to use tools to make musical instruments. According to current archaeological findings, the earliest musical instruments were wind instruments made from animal bones. The most ancient of these is the bone flute unearthed from tomb M282 at the Jiahu site in Wuyang County, Henan Province, during 1986-1987, which is now housed in the Henan Museum. This bone flute has a verifiable history of approximately 8000 years, marking the beginning of the history of Chinese traditional ethnic musical instruments. The discovery of the Jiahu bone flute proves that prehistoric humans were capable of making complex and functionally mature musical instruments, rather than just using simple percussion stones or chanting to express their joys and sorrows.

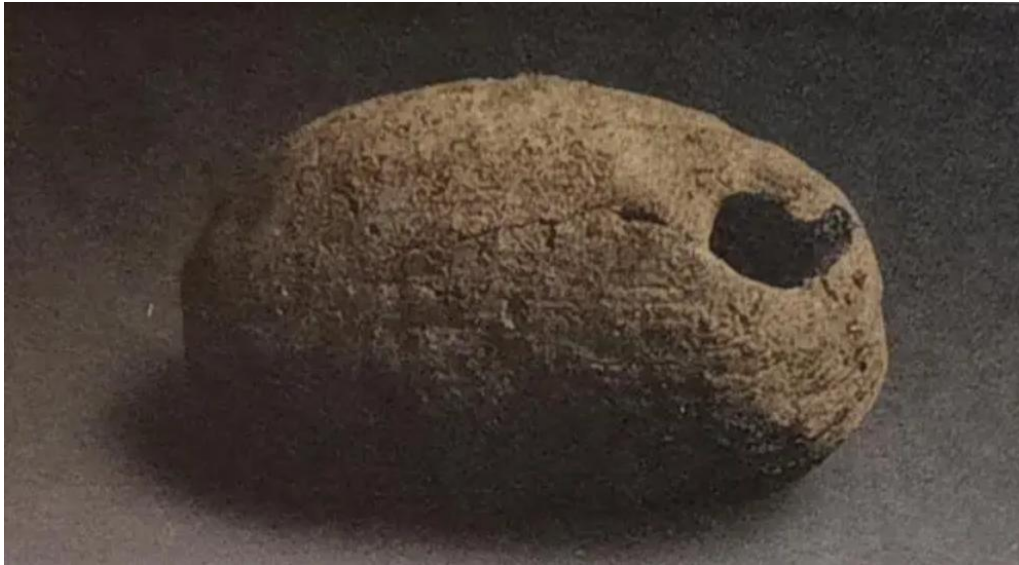
The bone whistles (currently housed in the National Museum of China) and clay xun, which is the Chinese ocarina (currently housed in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum) unearthed from the Hemudu site in Yuyao, Zhejiang Province, further demonstrate the technological advancements in musical instrument making by prehistoric humans. These bone whistles and clay xun were meticulously crafted from the midsection bones of birds. Their surfaces are smooth and polished, and the angles of the blowholes were refined through repeated experiments to achieve optimal sound production. The discovery of the clay xun is particularly significant as it indicates that prehistoric humans had already mastered the technology of firing clay. They come in various shapes, such as tubular, olive, and egg-shaped forms (Tang Yi, 2013). They also exhibit diverse playing methods, including single blowholes, multiple sound holes, or no sound holes at all, reflecting prehistoric humans' pursuit of both functionality and aesthetics in musical instruments. The different clay xun unearthed from various historical periods show that these instruments were continuously improved and perfected over time. The emergence of various prehistoric musical instruments not only marks the origin of musical art but also showcases the boundless wisdom of prehistoric humans in musical instrument production and technological innovation. These discoveries provide valuable insights into the cultural and spiritual life of early human societies.



Bone flute from Jiahu site



Bone whistle



Clay xun

1.2 Ethnic musical instruments in the medieval period

Throughout the development of ethnic music in the medieval period, the classification standards for musical instruments gradually became more sophisticated. During the Western Zhou Dynasty, instruments were typically classified based on the materials used to make them into the “eight sounds”, which included metal, stone, earth, leather, silk, wood, gourd, and bamboo. This classification not only enriched the variety of musical instruments but also promoted the emergence of numerous solo instruments. These solo instruments can be further categorized into four types: wind instruments such as bone flutes and bamboo flutes, bowed string instruments such as the xiqin and erhu, plucked string instruments such as the thirteen-stringed qin and guzheng, and percussion instruments such as clay drums. This detailed classification system reflects the sophisticated understanding and development of musical instruments during the Western Zhou period, highlighting the diverse and rich musical culture that evolved during this time.

As a representative of plucked string instruments, the guqin is known for its deep, resonant tone. It is also famous for the story of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi, who found their soulmates thanks to the guqin music of “High Mountains and Flowing Water”, and has become an important tool for the literati to express their sentiments, symbolizing the difficulty of finding a soulmate. Another prominent plucked instrument, the pipa, was introduced to China via the Silk Road. Its bright and versatile tones made it an indispensable instrument in folk music and theatrical performances. The famous line “Suddenly, we hearing the sound of pipa from the other boat; the host forgetting to return, and the guests lingering” reflects its captivating allure. The sanxian, widely used in folk music, opera, and pingtan, a storytelling performance, is another plucked string instrument. It is characterized by its crisp, clear sound and strong rhythmic qualities, making it a vital element in these musical traditions.

During the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the yangqin, a string instrument, became prominent and is unique among Chinese traditional national instruments for its global presence. Unlike other string instruments that are played by striking the strings with bamboo mallets to produce crisp, melodious sounds, the yangqin can serve both as an accompaniment and a solo instrument. This era also marked the pinnacle of the development and transmission of traditional Chinese opera. Instruments such as the jinghu, ruan, and suona were commonly used in opera performances. Among them, the suona, a wind instrument often referred to as the “king of Chinese instruments”, is particularly noteworthy. Known for its powerful and exuberant tone, the suona is widely used in traditional folk music and opera across China, holding a unique and irreplaceable position in Chinese music. In terms of percussion

instruments, early forms included the clay drum (also known as the earthen drum). Made by shaping clay into a drum frame and covering it with animal skin, the clay drum evolved over time into more sophisticated forms, such as the earthen drum, leather drum, and bronze drum.

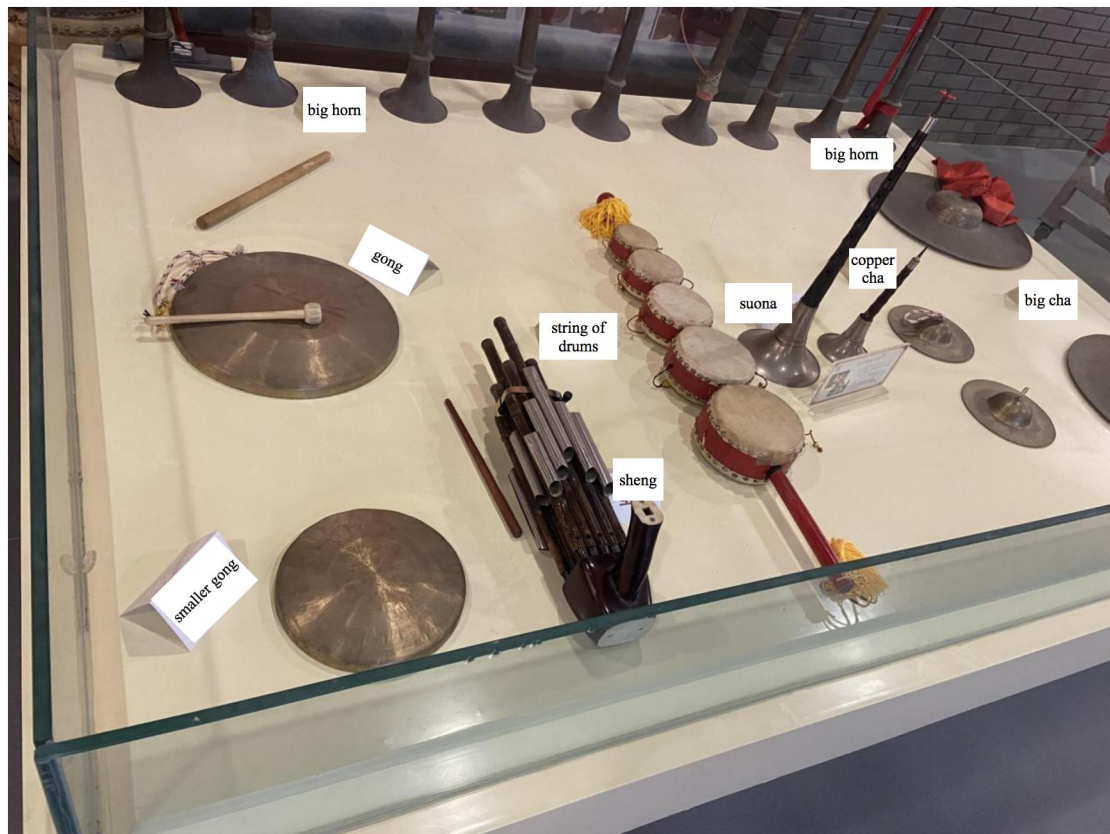
In addition to the instruments mentioned above, there are also instruments such as the guzheng and the dongxiao. The guzheng is renowned for its wide range of tones and rich expressiveness, while the dongxiao possesses a unique ethereal and melodious beauty. Overall, the emergence of solo instruments has laid a solid foundation for the formation and development of ethnic instruments.

1.3 Ethnic history and culture create ethnic musical instruments

Outstanding traditional ethnic instruments are inseparable from the music culture of the ethnic group. Each ethnic group in China has representative ethnic instruments (Li Mo, 2008). As an important component of music culture, ethnic instruments bear the profound historical heritage of the ethnic group and reflect the overall spiritual core of the ethnicity.

The representative bowed string instrument is the Morin khuur (often referred to as the horsehead fiddle) of the Mongolian ethnic group, named for its horse-head carving at the top, also known as “choor”. It is commonly used to perform narrative long tunes, expressing the life insights of the Mongolian people. Looking at plucked string instruments, the Uyghur’s plucked string instrument, the rawap, has a soundbox made of animal skin. The traditional plucked string instrument of the Kazakh ethnic group, the dombra, has a long history and can be played solo or used for singing and accompaniment. Among the Yi people, the commonly used plucked string instrument is the yueqin, which shares similarities in construction with the Han people’s yueqin but differs in shape and distribution of instrument types. In terms of percussion instruments, the Yao people’s long drum, a type of slender waist drum mainly used for dance accompaniment, is an instrument exclusive to the local people, which cannot be transferred or sold, reflecting the uniqueness and sacredness of the musical culture in Yao areas. As for wind instruments, the hulusi of Yunnan’s ethnic minorities is a vertically blown flute-like instrument, named for its gourd-shaped base. It has a melodious tone and distinct ethnic characteristics.

In China, there are 56 ethnic groups, each with its unique music culture. The melodies played on ethnic instruments belong to local folk music. Due to the differences in ethnic cultures and customs in each region, they have formed their own ethnic music cultures (Peng Ting, 2014). The folk culture of each ethnic minority is a symbol of history, possessing unique ethnic characteristics that are irreplaceable and deserving of our respect and protection.



(The image materials are collected from the internet, and the copyright belongs to the original creators. If it infringes on your rights, please contact us promptly, and we will remove it.)

2. Literature Review of the Introduction of Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes

2.1 Statistics of Chinese scholars' research literature

In a search on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) for the theme “Instrumental Music Teaching in the Classes”, a total of 677 relevant documents were retrieved. Among these, there were 230 academic journals related to instrumental music, 80 thesis (all master’s), and 20 conference papers. Only 18 documents were related to ethnic instrumental music, with 9 focusing on ethnic instrumental music teaching and merely 5 addressing the introduction of ethnic instrumental music into classes. From this analysis, it is evident that there is a greater interest and attention towards the study of Western musical instruments, while research efforts and attention towards the outstanding musical instruments of Chinese ethnic groups are notably insufficient.

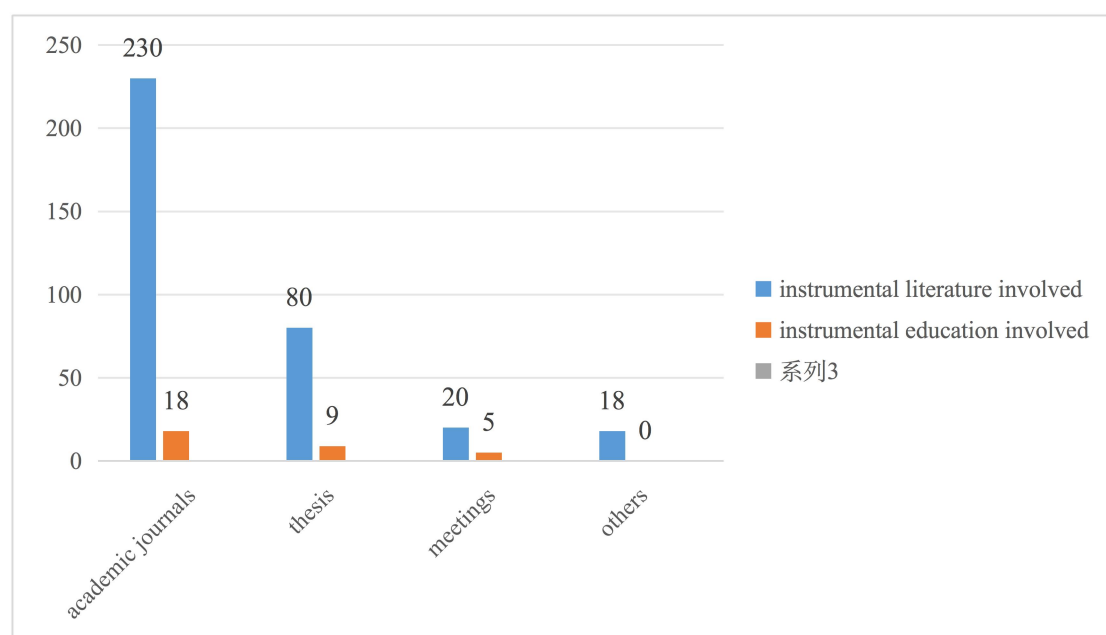


Figure 1: Statistical bar graph of the research by Chinese scholars on the classroom teaching of instrumental music

Date source: Statistical mapping of this study

Research by Chinese scholars on instrumental music teaching in classes began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1989, an article titled *My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes* by Song Baohui was published simultaneously in the first issue of *Music Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, the second issue of *Children's Music*, and the third issue of *Musical Life*, sparking a significant debate in academic circles. Xu Le published *On the Direction of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools—Dissent on the Article “My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes”* in *People's Music*, providing a macroscopic analysis and exploration of the importance of implementing instrumental music in primary and secondary schools. During this period extending into the early 21st century, Chinese scholars focused on discussions and research regarding educational system reforms, curriculum guidelines, and evaluation systems. However, specific implementation measures were not introduced by relevant authorities. It wasn't until 2011, following continuous research and discussions, that China introduced a new curriculum system and new standards, marking the true beginning of instrumental music teaching integration into classes. Articles such as *Bringing Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes: A New Chapter in Inheritance—Practical Strategies of Mingjiu Qin in Secondary School Music Teaching* by Gou Xiandong and *Reflections on Conducting Ethnic Instrumental Music Teaching in Basic Music Education* by Chen Jinfeng from Hunan University of Technology emphasized the importance of conducting ethnic instrumental music teaching in basic education. This not only promotes the inheritance and development of ethnic culture and spirit but also fulfills students' psychological needs for a sense of achievement, integration, and ethnic pride. Ding Runjin's master's thesis from Nanjing Normal University, titled *Exploration of the Practice of Ethnic Musical Instruments in Primary School Music Regular Courses—A Case Study of Tianzheng Primary School in Nanjing*, discussed the situation of integrating ethnic instrumental music into classes in other Asian countries. Taking Thailand as an example, Ding noted that Thailand's music education runs parallel with Western music but focuses mainly on indigenous music. Thailand is very serious about preserving its traditional music, with traditional instruments such as the gong orchestra and various ethnic percussion instruments being standard in Thai schools. These practices provide new ideas for frontline teachers to inherit Chinese traditional music culture. Similarly, Niu Jing's master's thesis from Inner Mongolia Normal University, titled *Classroom Teaching of Ethnic Instrumental Music: A Survey of Music Teaching at Xiguan Primary School in Qinshui*

County, Jincheng City, argued that the use of ethnic musical instruments in school music classes is essential for practicing the basic requirements of core literacy development for Chinese students in the 21st century. It is also a crucial approach to enhance students' awareness of different music cultures and their sense of belonging to their own national culture.

One point worth noting is that, from a more rigorous perspective, ethnic musical instruments can be classified into Han ethnic instruments and minority ethnic instruments. In the search results on the CNKI using “classroom teaching of ethnic musical instruments” as keywords, most studies combine the two and refer to them collectively as “ethnic musical instruments”. In the limited number of literature available, minority ethnic instruments are exemplified by the hulusi, a typical example. For instance, Guo Chengshan, Hu Qing, and others published a paper in 2008 titled *Promoting the Essence of Ethnic Music to Strengthen Artistic and Humanistic Foundations—A Study on the Practice of Introducing the Hulusi, a Minority Ethnic Musical Instrument, into Primary School Classes*, focusing on the hulusi originating from Lianghe County, Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, as the main research subject. Ji Shan's 2024 paper titled *Research on Optimizing Elementary Music Teaching through the Introduction of Ethnic Musical Instrument Hulusi into Classes* also centered on the hulusi being introduced into primary and secondary classes. On the other hand, Han ethnic instruments are typically represented by the bamboo flute. Zhang Hui's 2023 paper, *Feasibility Study of Introducing Ethnic Instrumental Music into Elementary School Classes—Taking the Bamboo Flute as an Example*, focused on the bamboo flute originating from the Yellow River Basin as the research object. Additionally, in recent years, innovative ethnic instruments such as the Liyue Xiangge Four-stringed Qin or the Mingjiu Qin have seen an increase in research frequency. For example, Wu Siyu's 2023 paper, *The Impact of Introducing the Liyue Xiangge Four-stringed Qin into Classes on Elementary Students' Cultural Identity*, and Zheng Ziyin's 2022 paper, *Investigation and Research on Introducing the Mingjiu Qin into Classes*.

In summary, the current level of attention given to the integration of ethnic instrumental music into classes is still far from optimistic. A dozen or so academic publications over the past few decades clearly falls short, with few new viewpoints or approaches proposed for addressing existing issues and emerging trends in implementation. Moreover, there is minimal discussion on how to integrate social forces and family education into specific practices. The proposition of integrating ethnic instrumental music into classes is a societal endeavor that requires mobilizing the entire society to promote and implement it, rather than merely conjecturing at the academic level. Starting from elementary school, with easily accessible instruments, tangible progress should be made to garner widespread support and truly effect fundamental changes in the essence of integrating ethnic instrumental music into classes.

Year	Description	Type of relevant musical instruments
1989	<i>My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes</i> was published and sparked discussion in the academic community	Han ethnic instrument
1993	Xu Le published <i>On the Direction of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools—Dissent on the Article “My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes”</i> to explore the significance of teaching instrumental music	Han ethnic instrument
1990-2010	Continuous discussion on the reform of the teaching system, syllabus and evaluation system	Han ethnic instrument
2006	Chen Jinfeng published <i>Reflections on Conducting Ethnic Instrumental Music Teaching in Basic Music Education</i>	Han ethnic instrument
2008	Guo Chengshan, Hu Qing, and others published	Minority ethnic

	<i>Promoting the Essence of Ethnic Music to Strengthen Artistic and Humanistic Foundations—A Study on the Practice of Introducing the Hulusi, a Minority Ethnic Musical Instrument, into Primary School Classes</i>	instrument
2011	Instrumental music teaching sees growth as China introduces new curriculum and new standards	Han ethnic instrument
2018	Niu Jing published <i>Integration of Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes: A Survey of Music Teaching at Xiguan Primary School in Qinshui County, Jincheng City</i>	Minority ethnic instrument
2019	Ding Runjin published <i>Exploration of the Practice of Ethnic Musical Instruments in Primary School Music Regular Courses—A Case Study of Tianzheng Primary School in Nanjing</i>	Minority ethnic instrument (Thailand)
2021	Gou Xiandong published <i>Bringing Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes: A New Chapter in Inheritance—Practical Strategies of Mingjiu Qin in Secondary School Music Teaching</i>	Minority ethnic instrument
2022	Zheng Ziyin published <i>Investigation and Research on Introducing the Mingjiu Qin into Classes</i>	Minority ethnic instrument
2023	Zhang Hui published <i>Feasibility Study of Introducing Ethnic Instrumental Music into Elementary School Classes—Taking the Bamboo Flute as an Example</i>	Han ethnic instrument
2023	Wu Siyu published <i>The Impact of Introducing the Liyue Xiangge Four-stringed Qin into Classes on Elementary Students' Cultural Identity</i>	Minority ethnic instrument
2024	Ji Shan published <i>Research on Optimizing Elementary Music Teaching through the Introduction of Ethnic Musical Instrument Hulusi into Classes</i>	Minority ethnic instrument

Figure 2: An overview of the research literature on the integration of instrumental music into classes by Chinese scholars

Date source: Statistical mapping of this study

2.2 Statistics of international scholars' research literature

A search on the Web of Science website for "Instrumental music teaching into the classroom" yielded a total of 17 relevant documents, including 14 papers and 3 conference papers. This research trend began in the late 1990s, with an annual publication output of no more than 3 papers per year. Overall, the level of attention to this field or phenomenon appears to be relatively low. In 1998, Smith published *Defining "good" music teaching: Four student teachers' beliefs and practices* in the Journal of Illinois, which observed and reflected on the experiences and classroom effects of four student teachers specializing in different musical instruments. The paper emphasized the effectiveness of qualitative methods and clarified that the involved instrumental music teaching is a process of good teaching practice. In 2008, Dontsa and Luvuyo's article *From the museum to the music classroom: teaching the umrhubhe as an ensemble instrument* in the International Journal of Music Education focused on the strong interest among music majors in South African universities in indigenous musical instruments. However, instruments like the umrhubhe (a traditional African bow without a resonator) had not yet made their way into the classroom, with most attention still devoted to the teaching and learning of Western instruments. The article briefly discussed the significance of teaching the umrhubhe in South African music education. In early 2022, an article by June Boyce-Tillman and Keith Swanwick on instrumental music teaching and special education became the second-most cited paper in the history of the *British Journal of Music Education*. The article, based on interviews, explored Boyce-Tillman's music background and experience with instrumental music teaching. The interviews focused on

concepts such as materials, dialects, and musical values, particularly examining how these conceptual frameworks influence classroom practices.

Apart from these three articles from different periods, other literature primarily focuses on qualitative research on the psychological changes of teachers and students in instrumental music teaching, the supportive role of instrumental music introduction in the curriculum hierarchy, and the soft dynamics for substantial professional development. These points of focus differ significantly from those of Chinese scholars. The main reason for this difference is closely related to the stage of social development. Internationally, the focus has shifted away from how instrumental music introduction into classrooms is conducted as a teaching method, and instead, subsequent research directions primarily involve post-integration teaching management, new teacher psychological assessments, and the psychological changes in student acceptance.

3. Survey and Analysis of the Integration of Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes of Primary and Secondary Schools in Jining

3.1 Awareness of traditional ethnic instrumental music among primary and secondary school students

As time progresses and economic and social development thrives, there is an increasing demand for comprehensive and refined quality education. Consequently, artistic education has gradually garnered attention from various sectors. China, as one of the four ancient civilizations that has never interrupted its cultural heritage, boasts a rich diversity of ethnic musical instruments and possesses its unique system of music theory knowledge. With nearly a hundred styles of distinctive ethnic music, China presents a unique landscape in the world of music (Xu Lufeng, 2020).

The author randomly selected 100 students from each of the three primary and secondary schools in Jining that have shown good participation in introducing ethnic instrumental music into classes, conducted a survey on their music cognition, and provided options for recognizing both Chinese and Western musical instruments, options for instruments they like and have an interest in learning, and options for instruments they are currently learning. The author distributed 300 questionnaires, collected 286 responses, and after organizing and summarizing, the following issues are identified: Firstly, currently, 80% of primary and secondary school students' recognition of Chinese and Western music remains at a primary stage, and they are not clear about the characteristics and differences between Chinese ethnic music and Western national music. Secondly, only 15.8% of students are currently learning an instrument, with 65.9% learning Western instruments such as piano, jazz drums, violin, and guitar, while only 34.1% are learning Chinese traditional ethnic instruments such as guzheng, bamboo flute, erhu, pipa, and suona. Thirdly, when asked about familiar instrumental pieces, only 24.5% of students can name three to five Chinese traditional instrumental pieces, 70.5% of students are familiar with world-famous pieces such as the *Alla Turca* and *Canon and Gigue in D*, in addition to the national anthem, and 4% of students have no understanding of instrumental pieces at all. Furthermore, when asked about the next step in choosing an instrument to learn, selecting from ten Western instruments and ten Chinese traditional instruments, the proportion of students choosing Western instruments is as high as 69%, with only 31% of students choosing to learn traditional ethnic instruments. When asked for reasons, the responses fall into three categories: first, they think it's cooler; second, they think it's more fun; and the third reason is what their mother said, that they should listen to their mother. There are very few people who choose to learn ethnic instruments that they truly like, less than 10%.

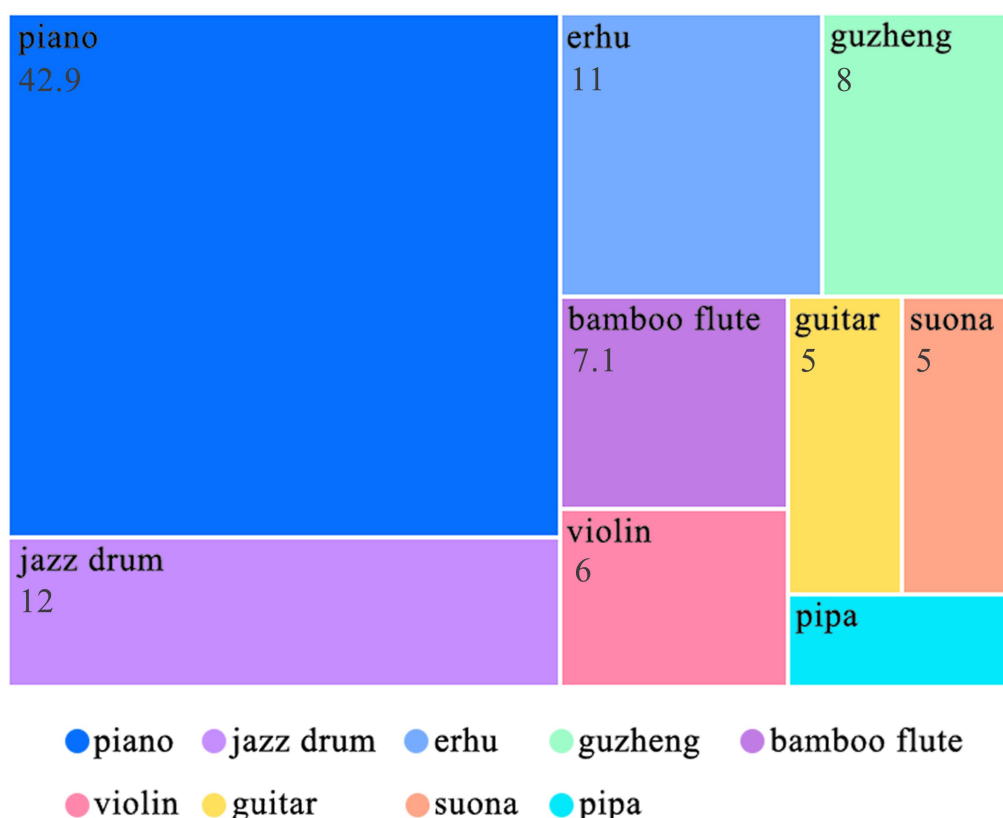


Figure 3: Research and statistics on the cognitive learning of instrumental music in some primary and secondary Schools in Jining

Date source: Statistical mapping of this study

In summary, the current understanding and awareness of Chinese traditional ethnic instrumental music among primary and secondary school students are still at a stage of unfamiliarity and ignorance. The main reason for this is the lack of correct education and guidance. We are now in a new era of rapid knowledge iteration and vast information. With new things emerging constantly, students are more inclined to accept new genres of music. However, their understanding of traditional ethnic instrumental music still retains a stereotypical impression of being “old-fashioned”, with perceptions that its performance and tone are “too rigid” and that it lacks “coolness” in performance, resulting in a fundamental lack of interest in learning and understanding it. Therefore, their understanding and recognition of these traditional ethnic instruments are essentially blank.

3.2 Staffing of primary and secondary schools

According to research, every primary and secondary school in Jining has a dedicated music teacher based on the teacher-student ratio, achieving full coverage of school staffing. Most of these music teachers graduate from music education programs, with a majority specializing in vocal music while also having a minor in piano. Some teachers specialize in disciplines such as dance, pipa, violin, and other musical instruments. Although not all teachers specialize in traditional ethnic instrumental music, they all possess solid musical fundamentals and a comprehensive understanding of traditional ethnic instrumental music. They are capable of conducting basic teaching activities to promote traditional ethnic instrumental music. Education authorities can also organize activities such as “Traditional Ethnic Instrumental Music in Schools”, where teachers specializing in traditional ethnic instruments from across the city participate in performances, and regularly organize teachers to go out for exchange

and learning to improve their teaching abilities and supplement the teaching staff. Additionally, they can recruit external professionals with expertise in ethnic instrumental music to enrich and consolidate the quality education in schools.

3.3 Implementation of the introduction of ethnic instrumental music into classes

In the surveyed primary and secondary schools in Jining, the integration of traditional ethnic instrumental music into music classes varies in effectiveness. For instance, a key primary school in a certain district only offers optional extracurricular courses for students, where four in-house music teachers and two externally hired teachers specializing in guzheng (a traditional Chinese zither) and bamboo flute conduct after-school teaching sessions on ethnic instrumental music. They have formed an ethnic music ensemble, setting an example of distinctive teaching that is being promoted citywide. However, it must be acknowledged that only a portion of students benefit from this, with 85% still receiving generalized arts education to enhance basic musical skills, leaving them with minimal knowledge or understanding of ethnic music and instrumental performances. At Jining Experimental Middle School, activities integrating ethnic instrumental music into classes are conducted, albeit primarily in lower grades. However, these activities cease by the second semester of the second year due to heavy academic workload and numerous assignments, leaving students with insufficient time for music studies. Even in lower grades, the ethnic instrumental music classes are merely appreciation sessions, with only a few students showing interest in practicing on weekends or after completing their homework at home. Nonetheless, students at least demonstrate some level of understanding and appreciation for ethnic instrumental music, as indicated by a survey where 40% of respondents could identify one or two ethnic musical instruments and articulate their main characteristics and representative pieces, showing significant progress. The situation at a surveyed private high school is less optimistic. While music classes are offered in the first year, they become elective courses in the second year, with only around 3% of students preparing for music entrance exams receiving systematic music education. Such curriculum arrangements run counter to the national advocacy for quality education and remain entrenched in the cycle of exam-oriented education. It's understood that the pressure for higher education admission in high school leads many students and parents to abandon other interests, including learning musical instruments, in favor of subject-specific training, a widespread phenomenon.

The survey findings reveal a concerning trend: as academic pressure mounts, resistance to integrating ethnic instrumental music into classrooms increases. While this teaching activity receives widespread support from school leaders and parents during the primary school stage, with commendable learning outcomes, such support diminishes significantly during junior high school and even more so in high school. These results underscore the prevailing influence of exam-oriented education in China's educational landscape. Despite some progress, there remains insufficient societal attention to quality education and specific cultural enrichment, this is still far from enough for the development of the students themselves. However, despite the challenges, integrating ethnic instrumental music into classes remains a commendable model aligned with the principles of quality and aesthetic education. It's imperative to persevere with such initiatives, recognizing their importance not only for cultural preservation but also for the holistic development of students.



(The image materials are collected from the internet, and the copyright belongs to the original creators. If it infringes on your rights, please contact us promptly, and we will remove it.)

4. Problems and Significance of Introducing Traditional Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes

4.1 Problems and solutions

4.1.1 Problems

The survey findings indicate that most students are largely unfamiliar with traditional ethnic instrumental music. Many students perceive ethnic instrumental music as outdated, with comments such as “nobody enjoys listening to it anymore” or “it belongs in history museums”. In the 21st century, it’s undeniable that students are more inclined towards popular music genres like rock, punk, and jazz. Traditional ethnic instrumental music has minimal presence and popularity in their daily lives. Even among students specializing in traditional ethnic instrumental music, some admit that their interest stems more from familial influence rather than genuine personal preference. They undergo music education due to persuasion from family members who see it as a beneficial hobby for personal development and future prospects. Additionally, some students express a preference for Western instruments, citing their perceived ease of learning and the more straightforward nature of Western music. Chinese musical scales and modes, based on the pentatonic scale, are noted for their complexity, with nuances that are challenging to grasp and require gradual comprehension. Therefore, diligent study of Chinese ethnic music theory is deemed necessary to excel in learning traditional ethnic instrumental music and progress further. The fundamental issue underlying these challenges lies in the current educational materials in China, which primarily utilize the Western 12-tone equal temperament system as the basis for music theory. As a result, students' understanding and acceptance of music theory align more closely with Western music. Addressing this disparity is crucial for the successful introduction of traditional ethnic music into classes.

4.1.2 Solutions

Firstly, the most direct and effective way for students to understand traditional ethnic musical instruments is through school education. Traditional ethnic instrumental music courses can be offered as extracurricular activities in schools, and small ethnic instrumental music ensembles can be formed (Zhao Jingyi, 2013). This provides a platform and opportunities for performances and demonstrations, thereby increasing students' interest in learning and garnering support from parents, enabling students to understand traditional ethnic musical instruments in the most direct and effective manner. Secondly, schools should actively seek government funding support or donations from social welfare organizations to acquire some popular and excellent traditional ethnic instrumental teaching aids. This allows students to have a more intuitive understanding during music classes, enhancing their awareness of the timbre and performance characteristics of Chinese traditional ethnic instrumental music, thus stimulating a stronger interest in learning. The most fundamentally effective approach is for educational authorities to increase the proportion of Chinese traditional ethnic scale-based knowledge points in the curriculum (Qin Xu, 2016). Only by enabling students to gain a basic understanding of the pentatonic scale in Chinese traditional music in the classroom, and fostering a deeper understanding of the performance characteristics and timbre of traditional ethnic instrumental music, can their interests and hobbies be fundamentally ignited. This can reverse the current situation where traditional Chinese ethnic musical instruments account for less than 10% of extracurricular instrument learning.



(The image materials are collected from the internet, and the copyright belongs to the original creators. If it infringes on your rights, please contact us promptly, and we will remove it.)

4.2 Significance of introducing traditional instrumental music into classes

Music is an indispensable means of cultivating healthy sensibilities or aesthetic experiences (Zhang Fan, 2000). Western musical instruments and ethnic musical instruments both have their own characteristics and advantages in the educational system. The former emphasizes technical training and the study of music theory, while the latter emphasizes emotional

expression and improvisation. With the changing times and social progress, there has been a qualitative change and improvement in people's material lives. Nowadays, people are more eager for spiritual needs. While breaking away from old thoughts and accepting new things is certainly a good thing, we must not lose excellent traditional elements that have a positive energy orientation. These elements constitute the roots and soul of a nation. Just like the DNA flowing in our blood, traditional culture is the bridge and bond that distinguishes us from other ethnic groups, providing us with emotional havens and synesthetic experiences. If we blindly accept new things, in the end, we may lose our way forward. When we look around the world, everyone may be wearing suits, speaking the same language, and listening to the same style of music. At that point, it may become impossible for us to rediscover the diverse and colorful worlds we once knew.

Therefore, promoting the introduction of traditional ethnic instrumental music into classes is of extraordinary significance. Learning ethnic musical instruments is not only an important part of music education but also profoundly influences individuals' career choices and the process of ethnic cultural inheritance.

From a perspective of professional career planning, with the introduction of traditional ethnic musical instruments into primary and secondary school classes, according to relevant data estimates, approximately 4.8% of students may sustain interest in ethnic musical instruments and consider related fields in their future professional choices. For students who are not professionally engaged in the field of ethnic music, among those who have learned ethnic musical instruments in primary and secondary classes, about 70% of students have already experienced the benefits of learning ethnic musical instruments, such as enhanced cultural identity, improved levels of understanding, increased psychological well-being, and enhanced self-worth. According to surveys, students participating in ethnic music education have a sense of identification with Chinese traditional culture about 30% higher than students who do not participate. Their math and language scores average an improvement of about 10% to 15%. Individuals who regularly engage in playing ethnic musical instruments have an average 20% lower score on depression symptom assessments, and overall psychological health is better. Learners of ethnic musical instruments experience about a 40% increase in self-efficacy, and their confidence and self-assessment also show significant improvement during the learning process.

From the perspective of employment prospects, although Western musical instruments enjoy broader popularity and demand on a global scale, in the local market, ethnic musical instruments possess a more unique cultural value and market demand in China, especially in the fields of cultural inheritance, educational promotion, and tourism performances. The Chinese government emphasizes the implementation and active promotion of policies for the protection of national cultural heritage, which includes the inheritance and development of traditional music. Ethnic musical instrument education has received a significant amount of policy and financial support in national cultural projects and school education. It is estimated that the annual growth rate of government investment in traditional cultural education and protection projects is around 5% to 10%. The more realistic situation indicates that the annual growth rate of schools introducing ethnic musical instrument courses in primary and secondary schools is about 8%. An increasing number of schools are incorporating ethnic music education into their curriculum, which not only enhances students' understanding of ethnic culture but also increases the demand for ethnic musical instrument teachers. Moreover, considering the trend of "enthusiasm for Chinese traditional culture" in the tourism market, performers of ethnic musical instruments receive high levels of attention, especially in cultural exhibitions, traditional festivals, and tourist attractions. The demand for performances related to ethnic musical instruments in the tourism market is growing at an annual rate of about 12%. With the push from various factors, the proportion of music production and distribution involving ethnic musical instruments is also increasing year by year, with an annual growth rate of about 7%. Especially in the category of national-style music, ethnic music occupies a dominant position, which in turn promotes the popularity of ethnic musical

instruments in policies, education, tourism, and other aspects, leading to a positive cycle of growth.

The introduction of ethnic instrumental music into classes, especially at the basic education stage, not only maximizes the many advantages of ethnic musical instruments and provides a new foothold for the development of traditional ethnic instrumental music but also fosters the cultivation of students' emotional intelligence and sparks innovative thinking, laying the foundation for their comprehensive development. As students gradually understand and inherit their own ethnic music culture, they enhance their cultural confidence, increase their sense of identity and belonging to their ethnic culture, and thus contribute to a more distinct and diverse style. They showcase a more youthful and vibrant Chinese image in the global trend of cross-cultural exchange. This represents a new contribution to traditional ethnic culture and a perfect response to the new tasks and requirements of the times for advancing with the times while adhering to tradition and innovation. The inheritance of excellent traditional culture should start from the basic education stage. Primary and secondary school students are at the best stage to accept new ideas and learn. Through the initiative of introducing ethnic instrumental music into classrooms, a broader path can be sought for the development of traditional ethnic instrumental music. This initiative helps cultivate modern citizens who possess both ethnic sentiments and an international perspective. It is also more conducive to the inheritance and development of traditional ethnic music culture, truly achieving the modern identity transformation and construction of ethnic instrumental music.

Conclusion

China, as an ancient country with a history of five thousand years of civilization, boasts a long and rich cultural heritage, with prominent ethnic characteristics in various fields. Traditional ethnic music exhibits strong ethnic and cultural characteristics in aspects such as music theory, notation methods for various instruments, and performance techniques. We should view the historical and cultural status of traditional ethnic instrumental music from the perspective of cultural development and inheritance, and actively undertake the responsibility of protecting and promoting traditional ethnic instrumental music. Integrating traditional ethnic instrumental music into primary and secondary school music classes and using the school education platform to expand its popularity and influence among student groups will make significant contributions to the development and inheritance of Chinese traditional ethnic instrumental music culture. Furthermore, this initiative will contribute immensely to the enhancement of the overall quality of the population and the popularization of aesthetic education.

Reference

- [1] Chen Jinfeng(2006). Reflections on Conducting Ethnic Instrumental Music Teaching in Basic Music Education. *Journal of Hunan University of Science and Engineering*, 2006(4)290-292.
- [2] Ding Runjin(2020). **Exploration of the Practice of Ethnic Musical Instruments in Primary School Music Regular Courses—A Case Study of Tianzheng Primary School in Nanjing**. Master's thesis, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China.
- [3] Li Mo(2008). **Survey on the Status Quo of Folk Bands in Shanghai Junior High Schools and Countermeasures Research**. Master's thesis, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China.
- [4] Niu Jing(2018). **Integration of Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes: A Survey of Music Teaching at Xiguan Primary School in Qinshui County, Jincheng City**. Master's thesis, Inner Mongolia Normal University, Hohhot, China.
- [5] Peng Ting(2014). **Ideas and Suggestions for Integrating Changde Silk Strings into Local Primary and Secondary School Music Classes**. Master's thesis, Hunan Normal University, Changsha, China.
- [6] Qin Xu(2016). **Call of Tradition**. Beijing, China: Beijing Publishing Group Ltd.
- [7] Song Baohui(1989). My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes. *Music Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 1989(01)26-27.
- [8] Tang Yi(2013). **Chinese Musical Instruments You Must Know in Your Lifetime**. Beijing, China: Enterprise Management Publishing House.
- [9] Xu Le(1993). On the Direction of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools—Dissent on the Article “My Views on the Introduction of the Flute into Classes”. *People's Music*, 1993(05)15-16.
- [10] Gou Xiandong(2021). Bringing Ethnic Instrumental Music into Classes: A New Chapter in Inheritance——Practical Strategies of Mingjiu Qin in Secondary School Music Teaching. *Music Education in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 2021(06)14-16.
- [11] Xu Lufeng(Translate)(2020). **A Brief History of Anthropology** (Florence Weber). Beijing, China: The Commercial Press.
- [12] Yuan Jingfang(2004). **Ethnic Instrumental Music**. Beijing, China: Higher Education Press.
- [13] Zhao Jingyi(2013). **A Practical Study of Ethnic Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary School Folk Music Clubs--Taking the Third Primary School of Zhongguancun, Haidian District, Beijing as an Example**. Master's thesis, Central University for Nationalities, Beijing, China.
- [14] Wang Qijun(2021). **Form can not Replace Meaning——Comparison of Chinese Painting and Folk Music comparison talk**. *Art Magazine*, 2021(04):19-21.
- [15] Boyce-Tillman, June; Anderson, Anthony(2022). *Musical development then and now: in conversation with June Boyce-Tillman*. *BRITISH JOURNAL OF MUSIC EDUCATION*, 2022(39)51-66.
- [16] Dontsa, Luvuyo(2008). *From the museum to the music classroom: teaching the umrhubhe as an ensemble instrument*. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MUSIC EDUCATION*, 2008(26)177—190.

- [17] Schmidt, M(1998). *Defining “good”music teaching: Four student teachers’ beliefs and practices*. BULLETIN OF THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN MUSIC EDUCATION, 1998(138)19—49.
- [18] Mixon, K. (2009). *Engaging and Educating Students with Culturally Responsive Performing Ensembles*. MUSIC EDUCATORS JOURNAL, 95(4)66–71.
- [19] Boyu, Z., Hui, Y., & Schippers, H. (2015).*Report: The Rise and Implementation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection for Music in China*. THE WORLD OF MUSIC, 4(1)45–59.
- [20] Kelly-McHale, J. (2013).*The Influence of Music Teacher Beliefs and Practices on the Expression of Musical Identity in an Elementary General Music Classroom*. JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN MUSIC EDUCATION, 61(2)195–216.
- [21] Brahmstedt, H., & Brahmstedt, P. (1997). *Music Education in China*. MUSIC EDUCATORS JOURNAL, 83(6)28–52.