

Education Choice, Cultural Practice, and Personal Growth of Music Examinees from the Perspective of Chinese Art College Entrance Examination

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Abstract: From the perspective of the Chinese art college entrance examination, this research examines the education choice, cultural practice, and personal growth of music examinees, and expounds that the art examination is not only a unique way to enter higher education in China but also an important cultural phenomenon. The aim is to deeply explore the multi-dimensional influence of art examination and its practice in private art education institutions. By applying a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, this study provides insights into understanding the experience of music examinees, improving the quality of arts examination and cultural practices, and optimizing the management and teaching practices of private art training institutions. It can also provide a valuable reference for relevant decision-makers, practitioners, students, and their families in the choice and practice of music education.

Keywords: Art examination; Music examinee; Education choice; Cultural practice; Personal growth; Music education

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1. Introduction

Music education is a vital aspect of human social life, crucial for the inheritance of music culture, and a means for countries to elevate their citizens' quality. Reflecting on John Dewey's perspective in his *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, "the process of education is a process of gradual growth, and the growth of each stage is to enhance the comprehensive ability of learners"^[1]. China's music education pathway, particularly the art college entrance examination, is a formidable yet significant journey for high school students aspiring to pursue art majors. This examination not only advances music education and invigorates the art market but also serves as a pivotal channel for many to pursue their dreams and alter their destinies, highlighting its profound influence on the study of higher music education.

With the public high school music curriculum falling short of national art examination standards, a substantial art examination training market has arisen to address this gap^[2]. This necessitates a study into the learning motivations, status, satisfaction, and needs of music examinees to aid in better industry regulation and informed decision-making for examinees and their families. This research focuses on a private training school

in Jinan, Shandong Province, which stands out as a standardized, large-scale, and influential institution, offering a representative case for examining the interplay between individual student development and educational policies. The insights gained aim to assist Chinese music colleges and universities in refining their enrollment and talent selection processes and to contribute to the enhancement of Chinese music education through an analysis of the teaching characteristics, methods, and outcomes provided by private music schools.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Questionnaire and data analysis

In order to get a deeper understanding of the students' real thoughts and experiences, the researcher distributed questionnaires across the school. A total of 181 filled questionnaires were successfully collected. The survey was designed to be anonymous, ensuring that participants' privacy was strictly protected. The survey featured three types of questions: 28 Likert scale items to assess reliability and validity, 12 choice questions (single and multiple-choice) to determine specific preferences, and an open-ended question for detailed personal feedback. This approach aimed to capture a holistic view of the students' backgrounds, educational choices, cultural involvement, and mental health, providing a nuanced understanding to inform educational recommendations and enhancements.

Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the scale questions, utilizing SPSS26 software for data analysis (**Table 1**), which indicated that the majority of respondents resonated strongly with the given options, suggesting reliable and valuable questionnaire feedback for policy and educational practice improvement.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of scale data

Item number	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
6	181	1	5	4.02	0.894	0.8	-0.468	0.181	-0.527	0.359
7	181	3	5	4.44	0.709	0.503	-0.86	0.181	-0.547	0.359
13	181	1	5	4.4	0.829	0.686	-1.643	0.181	3.045	0.359
14	181	1	5	4.34	0.833	0.693	-1.475	0.181	2.822	0.359
15	181	1	5	4.36	0.789	0.622	-1.435	0.181	2.804	0.359
16	181	1	5	4.19	1.021	1.042	-1.525	0.181	2.211	0.359
17	181	1	5	4.49	0.735	0.54	-1.565	0.181	2.918	0.359
19	181	1	5	4.27	0.807	0.652	-1.417	0.181	3.179	0.359
20	181	1	5	4.27	0.881	0.776	-1.349	0.181	1.441	0.359
21	181	1	5	4.29	0.766	0.586	-1.23	0.181	2.577	0.359
22	181	1	5	4.48	0.637	0.406	-1.338	0.181	3.73	0.359
23	181	1	5	4.38	0.733	0.537	-1.164	0.181	1.792	0.359
24	181	1	5	4.41	0.682	0.465	-1.152	0.181	2 ⁻³⁴⁶	0.359
25	181	1	5	4.42	0.692	0.478	-1.288	0.181	2.792	0.359
26	181	1	5	4.17	1.003	1.006	-1.408	0.181	1.786	0.359
27	181	1	5	4.21	0.983	0.967	-1.497	0.181	2.187	0.359
29	181	1	5	4.46	0.749	0.561	-1.64	0.181	3.312	0.359
30	181	1	5	4.35	0.834	0.695	-1.603	0.181	3.32	0.359
31	181	1	5	4.34	0.864	0.747	-1.391	0.181	1.897	0.359

Table 1 (Continued)

Item number	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
32	181	1	5	4.28	0.782	0.612	-1.092	0.181	1.477	0.359
33	181	1	5	4.49	0.712	0.507	-1.679	0.181	3.934	0.359
34	181	2	5	4.45	0.703	0.494	-1.192	0.181	1.153	0.359
35	181	1	5	3.97	1.074	1.154	-0.885	0.181	-0.048	0.359
36	181	1	5	4.13	1.006	1.012	-1.12	0.181	0.623	0.359
37	181	2	5	4.38	0.769	0.591	-1.279	0.181	1.513	0.359
38	181	1	5	3.61	1.393	1.94	-0.568	0.181	-1.063	0.359
39	181	1	5	4.38	0.748	0.559	-1.479	0.181	3.105	0.359
40	181	1	5	4.23	0.918	0.843	-1.294	0.181	1.795	0.359

Item number = Question number in the questionnaire; N = Sample size; Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard error

In the feasibility analysis, the 28 scale questions were divided into four dimensions: educational choice, educational demand, cultural practice, and physical and mental health, and the data were analyzed on this basis. The Cronbach reliability analysis of the questionnaire data was carried out using SPSS26 (**Table 2**), and the results show that the questionnaire has high reliability.

Table 2. Cronbach reliability analysis results of questionnaire data

Dimension	Number of items	Overall Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α based on standardized items	Cronbach's α after item deletion
Overall	28	0.945	0.949	0.659
	6	0.675	50.681	0.637
Educational choice				0.614
				0.624
				0.626
				0.642
Educational demand	4	10.826	0.827	0.788
				0.814
				0.754
				0.756
Cultural practice	8	0.933	0.937	0.93
				0.931
				0.918
				0.921
				0.922
				0.919
				0.921
			0.93	

Dimension	Number of items	Overall Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α based on standardized items	Cronbach's α after item deletion
Physical and mental health	10	0.868	0.882	0.859
				0.847
				0.849
				0.846
				0.854
				0.855
				0.857
				0.856
				0.87
				0.862

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, SPSS26 was used to analyze the validity of the questionnaire data (**Table 3**). The overall KMO indicates high validity and good effectiveness.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's tests

KMO sampling adequacy measure		Overall	Educational choice	Educational demand	Cultural practice	Physical and mental health
		0.898	0.719	0.631	0.907	0.863
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate chi-square	3545.637	153.478	375.742	1195.467	786.030
	Degree of freedom	378.000	15.000	6.000	28.000	45.000
	Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

2.2. Semi-structured interview

In the study, semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers were conducted, involving 11 questions about demographics, their perspective on student participation in art examinations, teaching challenges, support for their children's participation, and the perceived impact of their work.

Teachers expressed a strong belief in the societal and cultural importance of their role, noting their contribution to student development and the broader musical culture. They emphasized their support in both academic and emotional aspects, guiding students toward their musical aspirations. The teachers' passion for education and their dedication to students underscored a student-centered approach, reflecting their professional responsibility and commitment to art education.

2.3. Fieldwork

In order to have a more intuitive and in-depth understanding of the actual situation, fieldwork was carried out for 6 months in the selected private art school. Through daily interactions with students and faculty, the researcher was able to observe firsthand the specific process of students' training and exam preparation, and how that process shaped their personal growth. This practice of fieldwork not only enriches the research data but also provides a solid basis for putting forward targeted education suggestions and improvement measures.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Influencing factors and educational choices in art examination

The art examination phenomenon reveals that educational choices are driven by self-realization, strategic planning, and the influence of family and societal connections, according to student surveys and teacher interviews. This process not only allows students to cultivate their interests and talents, highlighting the personalized nature of educational decisions but also emphasizes the critical role of family support and social culture. These choices are influenced by both individual aspirations and societal expectations, showing the intertwined relationship between personal choice and social structure. While the art examination represents a strategic route for students, emphasizing the value of cultural and musical education and the development of personal talents, it also underscores the need for rational consideration of personal circumstances and market demands, reflecting the intricacies and diversities of educational choices and the dynamic interplay between individuals, families, and society.

3.2. Perceptions and cultural significance in art examination

Survey data indicates that both students and parents view the art exam as a strategic avenue for musically talented individuals to access quality higher education and elevate their social status, highlighting an acute awareness of educational resource distribution and aspirations for social mobility. Culturally, the art examination is recognized by the education system as an affirmation of individual talent and effort, serving as an egalitarian platform for students of varied backgrounds and symbolizing the inclusivity of the educational assessment system. Moreover, societal perceptions of the art examination acknowledge the value of a pluralistic education system that nurtures diverse talents and meets different student needs, thereby reflecting societal endorsement of educational diversity and the support for multiple pathways of learning and achievement.

3.3. Achievement and cultural practices in art examination

The art examination is an important milestone for many students aspiring to the music field, not only because it is part of their professional development, but also because it plays a key role in personal growth and psychological improvement. In order to achieve their learning goals, students need to attend professional training and intensive training courses to improve their skills and performance ability. The professional training environment also provides students with the opportunity to interact with their peers, thereby promoting mutual learning and growth. Although the training and preparation in the process are full of hard work, it is this experience that gives students a firm will and the courage to pursue their dreams. Regular self-reflection is essential to a student's musical growth path. Self-reflection encourages students to remain thoughtful about music, while also cultivating habits of continuous learning and self-improvement.

3.4. Improvement strategies for private art schools

From the survey results, it can be seen that the career planning and educational counseling services provided by private art schools can help students and parents better understand the value of music education and future career paths, and ensure that schools enroll high-quality students who choose rationally and have a genuine love for music.

It can be seen from the questionnaire survey that students highly recognize the importance of participating in cultural practice activities such as concert performances and competitions. The closed campus management, tests, and examinations will bring great pressure to the students. In the interviews, teachers generally reflect that there are some difficulties in teaching research and management of students, such as students' learning attitude and time management. By establishing a more standardized management system, training schools can help

students improve their self-management ability and enhance mutual understanding and support among students, thus creating a more harmonious and favorable learning environment.

3.5. Educational and cultural influence on art examination

The art examination phenomenon in Chinese music education reflects its educational achievements, popularizing and deepening music education, and serving as a crucial step for students aiming for music specialization. Early initiation in music education and career planning is common among art examinees, highlighting the importance of thorough preparation. Training institutions adapt their teaching and support to meet diverse student needs, indicating innovative responses to art examination demands and a focus on individual student needs.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

In China's music education field, the art examination represents a critical challenge, intertwining skill assessment with educational, developmental, and cultural factors. Students navigate complex educational choices, balancing personal interests, career goals, family expectations, and exam difficulty, against a backdrop of social and national policy influences. Parental support, financial considerations, and teaching resources have a great impact on student's educational choices.

The high demand for quality music education has spurred the growth of the training market, with choices driven by course quality, teacher expertise, success rates, and personalized support. This dynamic interaction between educational choices, market forces, and the Chinese music education system offers insights for refining teaching strategies and advancing high school music education.

4.2. Recommendations

This study offers improvement suggestions for the music education model across individual, family, school, and societal levels. Individually, aspiring music students must cultivate self-awareness, match their interests and abilities with their educational and career goals, and prepare for the competitive nature of music examinations with passion and resilience. Family support is crucial, with emphasis on communication and the creation of a stress-free environment, alongside financial investment in music education tailored to their means.

The training schools play a critical role in guiding students through art examination preparation by innovating curricula, incorporating practical teaching methods, and fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. Professional development for teachers is essential to effectively address student and parental concerns. A flexible and personalized assessment system is recommended to optimize the learning experience.

At the societal level, promoting the value of music education is essential through varied communication strategies and redefining success to create an inclusive environment for music examinees. Government support through subsidies and career guidance is vital for alleviating financial strains and aiding career development.

Overall, the research underscores the sociocultural importance of music education and provides actionable strategies for educators, highlighting the need for ongoing research to refine our understanding and implementation of music teaching practices.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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