

# Research on the Reform of Teaching Models in Traditional Composition Majors from the Perspective of New Liberal Arts

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the reform of the traditional composition major teaching model under the New Liberal Arts education concept and concludes that the reform measures such as interdisciplinary integration, application-oriented enhancement, and cultivation of innovative thinking abilities. The paper discusses two aspects: first, the teaching implications of the New Liberal Arts education concept for the traditional composition major. Second, the current situation and existing problems of the traditional composition major teaching model. Through successful teaching concept reform cases in different disciplines, it provides some feasible reform plans for the composition major teaching model reform. Then, it explores the reform effect of the traditional composition major teaching model under the New Liberal Arts perspective, examined through the cultivation of composition talents. Future research can consider the reform effects and implementation paths of other music majors under the New Liberal Arts perspective.

**Keywords:** New Liberal Arts; Traditional composition; Teaching model reform; Interdisciplinary integration; Innovative thinking

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background and significance

Globalization and technological advancements have significantly impacted the education sector. The emergence of the New Liberal Arts educational philosophy offers new directions for reforming traditional disciplinary teaching models. As a critical component in cultivating music creators aligned with contemporary demands, the reform of teaching models in traditional composition majors becomes imperative. This study investigates how the New Liberal Arts philosophy can reshape traditional composition pedagogy, aiming to contribute to its transformative development<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 1.2. Research objectives and questions

This study aims to determine the influence of the New Liberal Arts education concept on the traditional teaching mode of the composition major. On this basis, it explores and proposes a reform plan for the traditional teaching mode that meets the requirements of the New Liberal Arts in the new era. Specifically, the following questions need to be answered: What is the New Liberal Arts education concept? What are the problems existing in the traditional teaching mode of the composition major? How does the New Liberal Arts education concept provide solutions to solve the problems of the traditional composition teaching mode? What are the specific measures to achieve teaching reform in the context of the New Liberal Arts?

## 1.3. Research scope and limitations

The focus of this paper lies in exploring the reform of the traditional composition major teaching mode under the background of the New Liberal Arts. Due to the length limit, this paper cannot elaborate on all the teaching contents of the composition major. It can only cover the specific issues regarding the influence of the New Liberal Arts education concept on the traditional composition major teaching mode and the reform methods.

## 2. The New Liberal Arts philosophy and the current state of traditional composition

### 2.1. Overview of the New Liberal Arts philosophy

The concept of New Liberal Arts education is a “wonderful prescription” for the drawbacks and shortcomings of traditional liberal arts education from the perspective of the era of globalization and informatization. It aims to cultivate a new talent training model for students with an international vision, an innovative spirit, and practical abilities<sup>[2]</sup>. This model focuses on the cross-integration of liberal arts, science, and engineering, the training of thinking abilities, and the connection and realization of social scenes. It is a new thinking and a new idea for cultivating outstanding liberal arts talents with a global vision, an innovative consciousness, and capabilities<sup>[3]</sup>.

The most prominent features of the New Liberal Arts are as follows:

- (1) It is characterized by interdisciplinarity, which means breaking through the boundaries between traditional liberal arts disciplines, and the integration and intersection of disciplines, making new knowledge and New Liberal Arts learning and research objects and achievements.
- (2) It is innovative, which means that on the basis of learning necessary disciplinary knowledge, students are encouraged to explore new fields, stimulating their innovative consciousness and ability.
- (3) It is application-oriented, emphasizing the combination of theory and practice, and encouraging students to step off campus and engage in social practice, applying the knowledge they have learned to practical problems.

The concept of New Liberal Arts education has achieved good development in the field of education, effectively accelerating the upgrading and transformation of liberal arts majors, promoting the rapid integrated development of interdisciplinary subjects such as liberal arts, science, engineering, and economics, and providing a good guarantee for the cultivation of compound talents<sup>[4]</sup>.

### 2.2. Current state of the traditional composition major

The traditional composition major, as an important branch of music education and artistic creation, aims to cultivate a mature composer with unique musical skills and literacy. The course content of its training direction includes basic music theory courses such as music theory, composition techniques, harmony, polyphony, and orchestration, thereby building a solid foundation of music for teaching. However, with the continuous

development of the new era, the traditional composition major has encountered many problems. For example, the continuous development of technology and music has led to the fact that traditional composition techniques can no longer meet the needs of current music. The demand for composition talents in society is also constantly evolving. Composers not only need to have solid composition techniques but also possess innovative consciousness and interdisciplinary literacy<sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, the new liberal arts education concept will assist in the new transformation of the traditional composition major. The combination of interdisciplinary studies and the improvement of innovation ability will play a very positive role in promoting the long-term transformation and development of the traditional composition major in the new liberal arts environment, expanding the vision and direction of the research of the traditional composition major and providing a broader creative space for the innovation of contemporary music creation<sup>[6]</sup>.

### **2.3. Development of the traditional composition major under the New Liberal Arts framework**

The integration of the traditional composition major and the educational concept of the new liberal arts is both possible and necessary. On the one hand, the educational concept of the new liberal arts focuses on intersection and interdisciplinarity, and pays attention to innovation in the way of thinking, which contrasts sharply with the technical limitations of the traditional composition major. Introducing the educational concepts and methods of the new liberal arts into its traditional “wellhead” is the best way for it to get rid of constraints and broaden its horizons<sup>[7]</sup>. Conversely, the traditional composition major is an important base for music education and artistic creation, has accumulated a rich cultural foundation, and contains great artistic charm. The integration of the new liberal arts educational concept is conducive to rejuvenating the traditional composition major, keeping up with the times, and achieving innovative development<sup>[8]</sup>. Specifically, the integration of the new liberal arts and the traditional composition major is reflected in three aspects:

- (1) The integration at the curriculum setting level, by adding cross-disciplinary courses and innovative practice courses to enrich the curriculum content of the traditional composition major<sup>[9]</sup>;
- (2) The integration at the teaching method level, project-based learning, flipped classrooms, etc. can all be applied in teaching, and these teaching methods are used to cultivate students’ enthusiasm for learning and innovative vitality;
- (3) The integration at the evaluation system level, integrating a diversified and comprehensive evaluation mechanism into the course assessment, and evaluating students’ mastery of composition from two aspects. On the one hand, it examines their mastery of composition techniques, and on the other hand, it examines their mastery of innovative thinking and interdisciplinary ability<sup>[10]</sup>.

## **3. Problems and challenges of the teaching mode in traditional composition major**

### **3.1. The limitations of the teaching mode**

The current teaching model cannot meet the demands of the existing market in terms of cultivating students’ innovative ability, interdisciplinary learning ability, practical ability, etc.

- (1) There is a lack of cultivation of on-site performance ability. In traditional composition teaching, the focus is on imparting composition methods and techniques and imitating various composition techniques and music styles. Students have no opportunity to have contact or perform together with major bands, resulting in weak creative ability and band coordination ability of students. Moreover, students lack an

- in-depth understanding of the music market and lack systematic training integrating theory and practice.
- (2) The intersection of disciplines is ignored. The traditional composition education method relatively neglects the integration with other disciplines. Composition is a comprehensive discipline integrating multiple fields such as mathematics, physics, and literature. However, for a long time, composition education has only attached importance to the music field and lacks the introduction and integration of relevant knowledge from other disciplines, thus lacking the cultivation of interdisciplinary thinking.
  - (3) The teaching is templated. The traditional composition teaching model attaches too much importance to theoretical learning and practical skills, ignoring the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality and ability. Because a composer should not only have composition techniques but also know how to convert composition works into sounds and even visualize music. Often in traditional teaching, students only improve in skills, but the qualities related to skills are hardly cultivated, and the abilities of each student are limited by so-called standards, resulting in students being trained being uniform and lacking characteristics.

### **3.2. The lack of digital skills and cross-cultural communication abilities among students**

The composition major has new requirements for composition talents with the development of the times and changes in the market. Skills such as digital skills and cross-cultural communication abilities all belong to the qualities that compose talents in the new era should possess. Composers need to enhance their digital capabilities. Due to the digitization of music and the advancement of technology, composers need to know digital skills such as digital music production and composition programming in order to meet the composition needs in the digital age. However, conventional composition courses often do not teach these digital skills to students, making it difficult for students to adapt to the digital music environment. Against the background of the rapid development of information exchange and cultural diversity, composers need to have the ability of cross-cultural communication to understand and accommodate music materials from different cultural backgrounds. The traditional teaching mode of composition techniques is often based on domestic music culture for inheritance and popularization, and lacks the introduction and horizontal comparison of different music cultures from other countries, resulting in the inability of students to improve their cross-cultural communication abilities.

### **3.3. The educational resources and teaching environment are not good**

The inability of teaching resources and teaching environment to keep up with the actual teaching requirements is also a major reason affecting the development of the traditional composition major teaching mode. On the one hand, the imbalance in the distribution of teaching resources means that some schools have insufficient teaching resources and outdated teaching equipment, which cannot guarantee the teaching level of teachers, thus resulting in low teaching quality. At the same time, the limitations of the teaching environment also restrict the development of the traditional composition major teaching mode. The traditional mode confines students to classroom teaching and the school environment, lacking social interaction and communication, which is not conducive to broadening students' horizons and exercising their practical abilities.

## **4. Reform and innovation of the traditional composition major under the New Liberal Arts framework**

### **4.1. Interdisciplinary integration and teaching reform of the composition major**

Firstly, for the traditional composition major teaching mode under the concept of new liberal arts education,

teachers should, based on teaching goals and tasks, organically integrate disciplinary contents with relevant knowledge in multiple disciplinary fields such as literature, drama, and film and television, expand students' learning scope, allow music creation to interact with different disciplinary fields, and realize the innovation of the teaching mode of disciplinary integration. The School of Music and Dance of Quanzhou Normal University actively explores and practices the construction of music academies. It has made attempts in aspects such as innovating the characteristic curriculum system of new liberal arts and building a "dual-teacher" concurrent team for the construction of music academies, thereby promoting the development of music education. This attempt to construct music academies of the new liberal arts "general education" also provides a good reference for the composition major and realizes the integration of music and dance disciplines<sup>[11]</sup>.

#### **4.2. Cultivation of comprehensive abilities and innovation in the teaching mode of the composition major**

The educational concept of the new liberal arts focuses on the cultivation of application abilities. In the teaching of composition major, this requires educators to pay attention to cultivating students' practical application and innovation abilities. By offering some practical courses, creative competitions, etc., learning is realized through practice, and students' creative abilities and practical experience are improved in the actual creative process. Inner Mongolia Arts University and Xinjiang Arts University have carried out initial exploration and practice in the inheritance of national music culture. Through activities such as offering national music majors and arranging national music performances, they have inherited and disseminated national music culture<sup>[12]</sup>. This provides a certain reference for the thinking on the reform of the teaching mode of the composition major: It is necessary to emphasize the inheritance and promotion of national culture and the improvement of application abilities in the reform of the teaching mode, and to improve students' cultural literacy by integrating national cultural elements and other methods, thereby enhancing students' innovation abilities<sup>[13]</sup>.

#### **4.3. Cultivation of innovative thinking and the development of teaching models in composition major**

One of the important contents of the new liberal arts education concept is to emphasize innovative thinking. Under the perspective of the new liberal arts, the Department of Psychology of Southwest University has achieved the improvement of talent cultivation through the construction of a trinity, three-dimensional and all-round integrated high-quality talent cultivation model of "teaching - learning - research - application"<sup>[14]</sup>. This theory has certain inspiring effects on the teaching reform of composition-related majors. In the composition major education under the new liberal arts, teachers should cultivate students' innovative and critical thinking. By guiding students to pay attention to hotspots and phenomena, their creative and innovative thinking can be expanded; students' innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities can be cultivated through forms such as setting up innovative thinking training courses. Under the background of the new liberal arts, Jilin University has explored and practiced a high-quality undergraduate education model of the three-dimensional interactive integration of "teaching-research-application", emphasizing the mutual promotion and integration of course teaching, scientific research and practical application. Through measures such as supporting scientific research projects and building scientific research platforms, students' interest in scientific research is stimulated and their scientific research literacy is cultivated<sup>[15]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Research conclusion

During the exploration process of this paper, the influence of the new liberal arts education concept on the traditional teaching mode of the composition major was fully explored. Through reforms, measures such as integration and intersection, application of abilities, and cultivation of creative thinking were proposed. At the same time, by drawing on the successful cases of reforms in other related disciplines, certain inspirations and references were provided for the reform of the teaching mode of the composition major. It indicates that the new liberal arts education concept has made a positive contribution to the reform of the traditional teaching mode of the composition major, and a beneficial reform path for the traditional teaching mode of the composition major in the new liberal arts has been explored.

### 5.2. Outlook and suggestions for future research

In the future, the teaching application effects and influence mechanisms of the new liberal arts education concept in other music disciplines can be studied; the application strategies and methods of interdisciplinary integrated composition teaching can also be studied; and the implementation paths and effect evaluations of the cultivation of application and innovation abilities can also be studied. The reform plans and strategies of the teaching mode of music disciplines from the perspective of the new liberal arts can be further improved.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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