

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv

Faculty of Music Pedagogy

Department of Music Pedagogy and Conducting

dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" on the topic:

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE STATE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR "MUSIC"
IN THE SCHOOL EDUCATION IN CHINA AND IN BULGARIA**

Professional field 1.3 Teaching Pedagogy in...

Doctoral program: Methodology of Music Teaching

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The topic of the dissertation has been chosen according to a solid motive – established lower than the expected, and the necessary, level of development of the musical skills of students who have already completed a 12-year course of music training in school. The author has rightly aimed to search for experience and effective practices in the musical education of another country, and, in the comparison of the two systems, to highlight what makes the Bulgarian musical education successful. This is also related to the comprehensiveness of the formulated objective – to compare not only teaching methods, means and results, but also elements of the music education system such as the training of music educators. This not only makes the advantages of the Bulgarian music education system accessible for mastering, but also becomes the basis for exchange of valuable experience, for improvement of both educational concepts. The deep and ambitious approach of the author is also evident from the set tasks, such as *"To bring out and analyze the cultural environments and educational concepts behind the various standards"* (p. 6). Wu Meihong aptly notes that the two systems could not be considered in isolation from the world music education. In this regard, the activity of the most respected international music organizations is examined, emphasizing that they, cooperating with governments, can influence the formation of educational policies that are not only up-to-date, but also have gathered the experience of scientists, experts, educators from many countries.

The dissertation examines in detail various studies related to music, music-pedagogical systems, the author has searched and described historical facts concerning the forms of cooperation in the field of music between Bulgaria and China. Some problems hindering this cooperation are also indicated, as well as measures to overcome these problems. Among the ideas for the development of cooperation between the two countries are listed some new practices, never seen before in the musical collaboration of the two countries, such as the joint composition of musical works by Bulgarian and Chinese authors, in which they learn the musical language of the other country and create a unique mixed style, joint study of music teaching methods in different age groups, exchange of digital music

education resources. These ideas of the author deserve further development within the limits of bilateral cooperation.

The music education in China from ancient times to the present has been extensively traced.

In connection with what has been said so far, I cannot fail to note Wu Meihong's excellent knowledge of the issues of the national and international music education.

In the analysis of "Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Art Education", the author emphasizes three main aspects – training of individuals with high morals; aesthetic education, allowing learners to distinguish valuable examples of world artistic creativity from low-value forms of subculture; building correct views on history, ethnicities, traditions and a sense of belonging to the national and the universal themes in culture.

The doctoral candidate makes a very valuable general suggestion about teaching as he advises teachers to consider the "internal logic of knowledge" (p. 89), to strive for integration with other subjects and take into account the specific situation, which can lead to the emergence of creative lessons.

Another recommendation is to know the modern technologies that can be used by the teachers in teaching their classes. Thus, a natural connection between modernity and tradition is built and the creative potential of young people is stimulated.

Wu Meihong also reminds that it is necessary to pay special attention to tracking the actual progress of the students.

Regarding the creation of textbooks and teaching aids, the author suggests adding new elements, some inspired by the real life and others based on projects and assignments.

The doctoral student frankly admits and describes some problems arising in the implementation of the new curricula. These problems affect both the interests and abilities of the learners and the quality of the teachers' training.

As problems related to the students, he sees their different abilities and, very often, from there - the decreased interest of the lagging students in music classes. To prevent this, Wu Meihong suggests personalizing the learning process, i.e. calling attention to any gap in the student's preparation and putting more effort into overcoming it.

The problem of insufficient musical literacy, the inadequate training of some teachers to conduct quality lessons according to Wu Meihong, refers to measures that should be taken by the statesmen responsible for education to provide enough courses and the teachers themselves to train actively and effectively.

There is also the problem of a shortage of trained teachers.

When comparing the Chinese and the Bulgarian music education systems, the doctoral student points out the following similarities and differences:

Both systems are oriented towards aesthetic education, development of musical and artistic skills, education of humanism. In the Chinese music education system, however, there is a marked

ideological accent, which is absent in the Bulgarian system. The Chinese music education is also aimed at fostering national self-esteem and belonging to a community with a common future. This aspect is less prevalent in the requirements for the musical education in Bulgaria.

Both countries consider important the development of artistic skills (the ability to perform music with an appropriate emotional attitude, which is a factor in achieving a finer appreciation of perceived tonal patterns and enriches the emotional response when listening to music) and creative skills (the ability to create own music, which favors creative thinking), the use of modern technologies, but, while in Bulgaria there is a clear emphasis on the theoretical knowledge of the musical means of expression, cultivating a deep love for the tonal art, respect for the music of different ethnicities, China is more focused on the development of each individual student, the development of his skills, participation in activities for expression - performance of music. In Bulgaria the focus is on the knowledge of different styles of music, the students are introduced to periodicals, the development of jazz, entertainment music, and the expression of personal opinion. In China, a detailed development of the overall competences of the learners is sought, and the integrative connections, not only with other arts (dance, visual arts, drama, opera, films, television, digital media art), but also with disciplines that are not a part of the aesthetic cycle, is much more pronounced.

The Bulgarian music education system is more effective in the achieved practical results in terms of knowledge, feeling, performance of Bulgarian musical folklore, folk dances, knowledge and revival of rites and customs incorporated in the religious holidays. In China, many forms of folk art remain unknown to the young people and gradually die out.

In China, the evaluation of the student's achievements also includes his daily development, and his evaluation is not expressed only by a number, but also includes detailed comments on the achievements noted by the learner. Assessment in Bulgaria is expressed in current, term and annual marks obtained through examinations and tests.

The main difference between the textbooks in Bulgaria and China is that the Bulgarian textbooks adhere to musical education and upbringing, i.e. they deal with the characteristics of the music art, in the Chinese textbooks music is integrated with other forms of aesthetic practice.

A relevant emphasis in the dissertation are the comments on the Chinese traditional music, but also the familiarization with the national art of the peoples of the world, as well as with the examples of the world's musical treasury.

Another successful requirement is the monitoring of the emotional reactions of the students during art classes to stimulate their interest in various forms of aesthetic practice, as well as creating an appropriate emotional climate for experiences that shape the emotional experience and for the expression of artistic skills.

An important moment is the establishment and use of integrative connections between the disciplines of the aesthetic cycle and the rest of the school disciplines, which, in addition to better

understanding and memorization of the taught information, leads to "training" the learner's brain to look for the interconnectedness of events, to discover links that can be used.

In conclusion, I will say that:

1. The historical development of music education in Bulgaria and China is thoroughly examined;
2. The section on the cultural exchange between the two countries is rich in historical facts;
3. On the basis of this knowledge and the comparison of music education in the two countries, valuable conclusions have been drawn to improve some aspects of the Chinese music education system.

I agree with the listed contributions. The abstract accurately reflects the content of the dissertation.

I strongly vote "in favor" Wu Meihong to be awarded the scientific and educational degree of Doctor.