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The Importance of a Conducive Educational Environment in Developing Learners' Musical Abilities According to China's New Curriculum: A Case Study of Luoyang City

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Annotation. According to China's curriculum, optimising the learning environment plays an important role in developing learners' musical abilities. A case study of Luoyang city examined teachers' perceptions of challenges in music education, including limited resources and funding, insufficient methodological support and professional teacher training, problems with assessment standards, limited family-school cooperation, academic pressure, concerns about curriculum content, and learners' motivation.

Keywords: *educational environment, curriculum standards, musical abilities.*

Introduction

Music education is widely recognized as a powerful force in shaping learners' personalities and supporting their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and creative growth.

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Research shows that music education fosters well-rounded development, enhancing not only artistic skills but also social, cognitive, and emotional abilities (Malhotra, 2024; Li, 2024). Musical abilities are best developed in childhood if favorable conditions are created for their development. Therefore, early musical education of children becomes especially relevant, providing opportunities to reveal the child's musical abilities and develop them (Gordon, 1997). Thus, music education is not only the transfer of knowledge but also the development of creativity, emotional expression, and abilities, for which the learning environment is especially important (Hallam, 2010; Zhang, 2014). A supportive educational environment can support active learning and promote learners' holistic development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Research shows that such an environment improves learning motivation and also strengthens learners' ability to engage in the educational process (Wang et al., 2024). However, the quality of the educational environment directly depends on the applied educational principles and educational policy direction. Until 2022, China applied the 2011 curriculum standards. After long trials, it was found to have a number of shortcomings, so a new curriculum was developed. Many of them were related to excessive standardization of learning outcomes, limited promotion of creativity, and insufficient attention to the individual needs of learners (Sun & Xie, 2008; Riley, 2013). Researchers and the education community have noted that the current system does not pay enough attention to competency-based education and does not meet the needs of modern learners. In 2022, the Chinese Ministry of Education introduced an updated curriculum and new educational standards in response to problems that had become visible in the education system over time. The new curriculum focuses strongly on the idea of "core literacy," which means that education should go beyond subject knowledge alone. More attention is now given to learners' creativity, communication skills, values, cultural understanding, and ability to learn independently (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE), 2022). As part of these changes, greater attention has also been given to the role of the learning environment in the educational process. Particular attention within these reforms has been directed toward music and arts education. In China, music is increasingly regarded as an important element of learners' personal, emotional, and creative development rather than simply an additional school subject. Therefore, music and other arts disciplines are becoming more integrated into the general education system, with clearer competencies and learning objectives being established (Cao, 2022; MOE, 2022). International research shows that participation in arts education is associated with better emotional well-being and stronger social skills among learners (Luo & Guan, 2024). These results suggest that arts activities can be a significant part of the educational process, contributing to the holistic development of students. The new program also emphasizes the integration of traditional Chinese music with contemporary musical styles and creative activities, thus promoting cultural continuity and creativity in the educational process. By actively participating in these activities,

learners can enhance their artistic expression, creativity, and understanding of cultural and aesthetic values (Wang & Jiang, 2022; Sun et al., 2024). Social, cultural, material, and psychological factors all play an important role in the learning process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Barrett et al., 2013). Therefore, creating supportive learning conditions is essential if the goals of music education reform are to be successfully implemented in both urban and regional schools.

As of the time of writing, nearly four years have passed since the 2022 curriculum standards were released. During this period, a lot of research has been conducted in the field of education, but there are still gaps in the creation of a musical education environment. Luoyang city is one of the oldest cultural centers in China and is characterized by a rich musical heritage, so it is a particularly suitable case to analyze how the educational environment affects the development of learners' musical abilities in the context of modern reforms. The analysis of the presented material shows that a favorable educational environment has a significant impact on the development of learners' musical abilities, and Luoyang city was chosen as a case study in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities of the educational community.

Research problem. The ongoing educational reform in Chinese schools is creating new requirements for music education; however, there is still limited understanding of how a conducive educational environment influences the development of learners' musical abilities. How are these changes occurring in different situations – urban and rural schools, where degrees of possibilities and resources are inequitable? Furthermore, there is a notable lack of empirical research data on teachers' experiences, learners' engagement with, and the practical applications of creating an educational environment. Given these challenges, the *problem questions* are as follows: How do new music education curriculum change teaching content, methods and assessment in urban and rural areas? How does the educational environment affect learners' musical abilities in different areas? What are the main opportunities for improving music education and what support is needed for teachers and learners? The city of Luoyang and its surrounding rural areas are a suitable place to study how the environment and community affect learners' musical abilities in the context of educational reforms.

The study aims to reveal how a favorable educational environment helps to develop learners' musical abilities according to the 2022 Chinese education program, based on the teachers' experience of schools in Luoyang city.

The novelty of this study lies in the fact that it analyses how music education actually takes place in Chinese schools after the 2022 education reform and what challenges teachers face in practice. Although the program itself emphasizes the importance of the educational environment and creativity, there is a lack of practical research that would show how all this looks specifically through the eyes of teachers, especially in rural areas. This research is unique in that it is based on teachers' statements and their experiences, which helps to understand what obstacles most often prevent music

education from taking place as intended. In addition, there is little talk about the differences between urban and rural schools – this study attempts to reveal how a favorable educational environment affects learners' opportunities to learn music.

Literature Review

The educational reforms implemented in China in 2022 have significantly changed the understanding of music education and the role of the educational environment in developing learners' musical abilities. This curriculum places strong emphasis on the student as an active participant in the learning process. Because of this, the role of the teacher is also changing – teachers are no longer seen only as providers of knowledge, but also as guides and coordinators who support and direct the learning process (Liu et al., 2024). The 2022 Chinese curriculum reform is often described as an important step toward a more modern and learner-centered education system. Many researchers argue that the reform creates more favourable opportunities for the development of learners' musical abilities, as greater attention is now given to creativity, emotional understanding, cultural awareness, and learners' active participation in the learning process (Zhang & Leung, 2023; Hu, 2025). At the same time, researchers note that most existing studies mainly discuss the aims of the reform and the structure of the curriculum itself. Less attention has been given to how these ideas are implemented in everyday school practice. As a result, it remains uncertain whether learners in regional schools with fewer resources have the same educational opportunities as learners in well-equipped urban schools.

Although the quality of life in China is improving rapidly, educational disparities between regions remain large (Sun & Xie, 2008; Hu, 2023). With the acceleration of economic growth and urbanization, high-quality educational resources are increasingly concentrated in cities, so that the differences between urban and rural schools have become increasingly obvious (Chan, 2024). Kaijie (2024) also notes that the uneven distribution of educational resources is one of the most pressing problems today – urban schools usually have more opportunities, better infrastructure and more qualified specialists, while educational resources in rural areas remain limited. For this reason, the balanced development of urban and rural education becomes a very important task for the modern Chinese education system. When it comes to music education, the situation in rural areas is even more complicated. Educational inequality is reflected in the gap in education in some rural areas. Compared with urban areas, local students have relatively limited access to educational resources and qualified teachers (Hu, 2025). For a long time, art education has been underestimated. As an important part of education, art education is gradually gaining public attention, thanks to the long-term development of the country. Nevertheless, empirical research still rarely

provides systematic comparisons between different school contexts or examines in detail how the quality of the educational environment influences the development of learners' musical abilities.

The concept of a conducive educational environment itself is also understood differently in the literature. Some authors pay more attention to the physical learning environment – classroom spaces, teaching aids, technologies or school infrastructure (Barrett et al., 2015). Others emphasise the emotional climate that supports teacher-student relationships, a sense of security and learners' opportunities to freely express their thoughts and emotions (Pianta et al., 2008; Liu, 2024). In the context of music education, this is very important; good curricula or material conditions alone are not enough to develop musical abilities. An environment based on trust and respect encourages learners to express their ideas more boldly, experiment, participate more actively in musical activities, and have more confidence in their abilities. There is still a lack of research that would show how different educational environments contribute to the development of learners' creativity, motivation, and musical abilities.

Research shows that a conducive educational environment leads to greater student satisfaction with school, reduces stress levels, and improves academic performance (Barrett et al., 2015; Pianta et al., 2008). Involvement in music education is determined not only by the school but also by other important factors – family support, teacher attitude and learners' own emotional state. For example, when parents attend concerts or musical events with their children, this strengthens their connection to musical activities and helps to develop a positive attitude towards music (Upitis et al., 2017). Both physical and emotional aspects of the learning environment are closely related to learners' motivation, emotional well-being, and educational achievement. This is particularly relevant in the context of music education, as a supportive atmosphere, trusting relationships, and a safe learning space are important for creative expression and the development of musical abilities (Liu, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Only through cooperation can an environment be created in which music learning becomes full-fledged and accessible to all students. However, existing research rarely compares these factors in different contexts, and there is also a lack of research that would show how the educational environment is directly related to changes in the musical abilities of learners.

Most previous studies have analysed individual aspects such as educational policies, the role of teachers, material resources, or family involvement, but there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that show how these factors interact with each other in developing learners' musical abilities according to the new Chinese curriculum. This gap that justifies the relevance of this study.

Methodology

Data Collection and Procedure

This study used a qualitative research approach based on semi-structured interviews, which allows us to reveal the impact of the educational environment on the development of musical abilities through teachers' experiences (Creswell, 2014; Schwandt, 2003). A qualitative analysis of research data was selected because the study aimed to explore music teachers' subjective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding the implementation of the new curriculum and the educational environment. Such experiences cannot be sufficiently captured through quantitative measurement alone. This method allows us to delve into the experiences of the research participant while maintaining the researcher's flexibility and discovering new aspects that arise during the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A semi-structured interview was prepared with pre-formulated questions that reflected the following main areas: changes in the curriculum, the influence of the educational environment on musical achievements, and opportunities for improving music education. These questions covered aspects of both program and material, and social conditions. They were developed specifically for this study, based on an analysis of relevant scientific literature, to highlight the main aspects of the importance of the educational environment in developing learners' musical abilities according to the new Chinese curriculum assessment.

Research Sample

The study involved 16 music teachers working in public primary and secondary schools in Luoyang city and the surrounding rural areas of Henan province, China. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct experience in implementing the 2022 music curriculum reform. Participants represented both urban (n = 10) and rural (n = 6) schools, allowing for a comparison of different educational environments. Teaching experience ranged from 4 to 22 years. Participants taught learners aged approximately 7 to 15 years. Inclusion criteria required participants to: currently teach music education in compulsory schools, and have experience in implementing the new curriculum standards in practice. This sampling strategy ensured that participants could provide comprehensive and relevant insights into the research problem.

Data Analysis

The qualitative content analysis method was applied to the data analysis (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). This method allows for the systematic processing of textual data, identification of significant themes and classification of them into

categories. All collected data were systematized and substantiated by defining categories, assigning subcategories and substantiating the answers with the respondents' statements. In qualitative research, it is particularly important to respect the research participants: every effort is made to disturb them as little as possible and to take into account the thoughts they express (Creswell, 2014). The aim was not only to understand how the environment affects music learning, but also how teachers create and adapt it according to the new Chinese curriculum. The entire process of qualitative content analysis took place in three stages: preparation, organization and data presentation. This data analysis structure allowed us to reveal not only individual observations of teachers, but also more general trends related to the development of the educational environment for music education in the context of the education system. To ensure research trustworthiness, several strategies were applied. Credibility was strengthened through the use of semi-structured interviews and direct quotations from participants. The researcher repeatedly reviewed interview transcripts during the coding process in order to ensure consistency of interpretation. Dependability was supported through systematic qualitative content analysis procedures following Elo and Kyngäs (2008). In addition, categories and subcategories were developed inductively from the data and continuously compared with the original interview material. Confirmability was maintained by avoiding personal interpretation not grounded in participant responses.

Ethical Aspects

The study participants were informed about the objectives of the study, and data confidentiality was ensured. The study followed the ethical principles outlined in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2023). Anonymity was ensured – the names, surnames, or other personally identifying information of the respondents were not collected or recorded. The data were analyzed only in a summarized form. The following essential ethical principles characteristic of qualitative research were adhered to during the study (Bitinas et al., 2008): respect for personal dignity, the right not to be violated, confidentiality, and privacy.

Results

The research interviewed sixteen music teachers from Luoyang city and Luoyang rural areas. Their responses helped to understand how the new curriculum standards have affected music education, the importance of the educational environment, and the challenges teachers face in developing learners' musical abilities. The analysis revealed three main themes: the impact of the new curriculum on music education, the impact of the educational environment on the development of musical abilities, and possible directions for improvement.

Most teachers indicated that the new curriculum has changed not only the content of teaching but also the approach to the educational process itself. In cities, a more positive change is noticeable: "the new curriculum standards have changed the course content and increased the difficulty of learning", and "lessons become more richer than before". These responses suggest that teachers perceive music lessons as becoming more diverse and include more complex content, which encourages learners to participate more actively in the learning process. Teachers emphasised that now more emphasis is placed on learners' individual abilities: "active participation and exploration are encouraged", "more attention is paid to learners' individualization". Music teachers described music education not only as teaching singing or theoretical knowledge but also as a means of developing creativity, independence, and cultural awareness. Teachers also highlighted that teaching "has changed from one-way knowledge transfer to literacy development". The findings suggest that teachers perceive the reform as encouraging learner engagement, exploration, and individualized learning experiences. At the same time, the results show that teachers increasingly view music education as a process connected with cultural awareness and practical musical activities rather than only technical ability development. Teachers also increasingly described music education as a process connected with cultural awareness and practical music activities.

Table 1

Curriculum Changes: Challenges and Opportunities

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Changes in the educational program	Content and Methods	T1 (urban school): "The new curriculum standards have changed the music content and increased the difficulty of learning."
		T2 (urban): "Lessons become more richer than before."
		T5 (urban): "More emphasis is placed on learners' subjectivity and encourages students to actively participate and actively explore."
		T9 (urban): "The teaching methods and focus have changed, from one-way knowledge output to literacy cultivation, and the Education Bureau attaches more importance to it."
		T10 (urban): "More emphasis is placed on learners' personalized development."
		T12 (urban): "Strengthened students' understanding of culture."
		T14 (urban): „The biggest change in the new curriculum standards: large-unit teaching practice (such as "Chinese Music Kaleidoscope" integrates folk music)."
		T6 (urban): "No significant changes."

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Changes in the educational program	Supervision	T7 (urban): "The biggest change is that the supervision of the course is stronger, and the Ministry of Education appoints specialists to conduct irregular inspections."
		T3 (rural): "More emphasis is placed on student participation, and music classes are more active."
	Participation and Practice	T4 (rural): "Try to incorporate practical activities (traditional Chinese percussion) into teaching."
		T15 (rural): "The biggest change in the new curriculum: trying project-based learning (such as the task of "spreading Peking Opera mask culture")."
	Game-Based Learning	T8 (rural): "In the lower grades, the focus is mainly on game-based learning, but there is no textbook to help with systematic teaching."
		T16 (rural): "Grades 1-2 focus on game-based learning, but there is no textbook to support the systematic teaching."
	Assessment	T11 (rural): "Academic quality evaluation is required, but there is no way to assess students, because the teaching methods have changed, and textbooks are not just knowledge output."
	Integration	T13 (rural): "The biggest change in the new curriculum standard requires "disciplinary integration", but the operation is easy to become a formality (such as the poor effect of the "Mathematical Rhythm" course)."

Meanwhile, other aspects are also revealed in rural schools. Teachers stated that "more attention is paid to learner participation, lessons are more active", and they are trying to include "traditional Chinese percussion instruments" in lessons. However, teachers of lower grades noted that "game-based teaching in grades 1–2 takes place without systematic textbooks". These accounts suggest that teachers support new teaching methods, but do not always have sufficient resources to implement them properly. Teachers were critical of interdisciplinary activities: "the integration of subjects often becomes a formality", and the "Mathematical Rhythm" course was ineffective.

Overall, teachers described the new curriculum as associated with more active, creative, and student-centred music lessons. Teachers increasingly associate music education not only with the development of technical skills but also with cultural awareness, creativity, and emotional expression. At the same time, teachers suggested that the implementation of the reform is influenced by factors such as school environment, available resources, and teacher training. Especially in rural schools, a lack of tools, clear assessment criteria, and methodological support was highlighted, which complicates the application of new educational ideas in practice.

Table 2 reflects how teachers assess the influence of the educational environment (physical, social, emotional, cultural, and technological factors) on learners' musical abilities.

Teachers' statements showed that the educational environment is very diverse. Urban teachers are more likely to evaluate it favorably: "the learning environment and atmosphere are very good", "yes, the environment is favorable". Such responses suggest that teachers perceive urban schools as more likely to create a safe and motivating environment that encourages learners' self-expression, more active participation, and self-confidence. Teachers singled out multimedia technologies that "improve interactivity", but at the same time noted that "the pressure for academic results weakens continuing education". This suggests that some teachers still perceive music as less important than academic achievement in some schools. However, many rural teachers emphasized shortcomings. Teachers drew attention to the fact that "there are many abandoned children", and "the flute becomes an emotional support", because "one teacher has to serve 6 classes". There was also a direct answer – "no, the environment is unfavorable". Others noted that "teachers are motivated, but the resources are uneven", and another rural teacher emphasized that "motivations are there, but educational resources are insufficient". Specific factors hindering progress were also identified: "the school does not provide much support, parents are not interested, students are inactive", "learners do not listen to lessons – there is no progress". A rural teacher noted a creative solution: "learners encounter the piano for the first time, so they use jumping jacks to memorize notes". These responses suggest that teachers perceive learners' musical development as being related not only to classroom instruction but also to broader social factors – family attitude, emotional support, and school community involvement.

Table 2

The Role of the Educational Environment in Developing Musical Abilities

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Influence of the educational environment	Motivation	T3 (rural school): "The teaching environment and atmosphere are very good, and students' musical abilities can be better developed than before." T4 (rural): "Traditional cultural practice stimulates students' interest and is more conducive to the development of students' musical abilities." T8 (rural): "Better than before, but more help is needed." T15 (rural): "Teachers are highly motivated, but educational resources are uneven (international department vs. ordinary class)."
	Favour	T1 (urban): "Yes." T10 (urban): "Yes, the environment is conducive to developing musical skills." T2 (urban): "The teaching environment and atmosphere are very good, and students' musical abilities can be better developed than before." T5 (urban): "Helps."

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Influence of the educational environment	Disfavour	T6 (urban): "Learners don't listen to classes much, and there is no development or improvement."
		T7 (urban): "The school does not provide much support, parents don't care, and students are not proactive."
		T11 (rural): "No, the environment is unfavourable."
		T13 (rural): "There are many left-behind children, and the recorder has become an emotional sustenance; there is only one music teacher in the whole school covering 6 grades."
		T12 (urban): "Learners can simply sing some operas."
		T9 (urban): "Classroom interest is high, but families focus on academic performance."
	Technology	T14 (urban): "Multimedia technology improves interactivity, but the pressure of further study weakens continuous cultivation."
	Experience	T16 (rural): "Students are exposed to five-line notation for the first time, and use skipping ropes to arrange notes to assist memory."
	Emotional environment	T8 (rural): "The environment is better than before, but more support is still needed."

The findings suggest that teachers view the educational environment as an important factor in learners' musical development. Teachers also reported that creative teaching methods, the use of technology and culturally meaningful activities may help support musical education. However, this requires greater support from schools, families, and local institutions, as well as more equal educational opportunities.

Table 3 summarises teachers' insights into possible ways to improve music education – from content updates to resources and methodological support. During the survey, teachers provided specific suggestions on how to improve the quality of music education.

Teachers suggested "enriching the course with traditional, contemporary, world and everyday music" and "removing old songs and adding current ones". These suggestions indicate that teachers seek to make music education more accessible and relevant to learners. The respondents' answers suggest that learners may become more engaged when the educational content is related to their daily lives, cultural background, and personal interests. One rural teacher proposed an original interdisciplinary project – "Map of Luoyang Sounds", integrating geography and music. Other suggestions included practical tasks, such as "using bowls and sticks to teach rhythm through a banquet etiquette game" or "organizing class concerts so that learners have more opportunities to perform". These ideas illustrate how music teachers seek to make music education

more lively, creative, and connected to learners' real-life experiences. Teachers from rural areas often emphasized that "professional help is needed, along with more external teachers and resources". One rural teacher mentioned that he urgently "needs percussion sets", while another "needs resources for creating a library and sharing methodological materials". These responses suggest that teachers perceive a lack of professional support and cooperation. Several initiatives were related to community support. The rural teacher emphasised "support from the family, school, municipality and government is needed", while the urban teacher called for "clearer definition of standards for assessing musical literacy so that activities do not turn into mere performances".

Table 3

Directions for Improving Music Education: Practical Needs and Systemic Recommendations

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Improving music education	Content Development	T1 (urban school): "Can enrich the content of the course by adding some traditional music, modern music, music from different countries and ethnic groups, and music that is close to daily life according to students' interests."
		T12 (urban): "The development of activity-based teaching in music courses needs to be more enriched."
		T7 (urban): "Add new musical activities."
		T9 (urban): "More practical activities."
		T4 (urban): "The course should be closer to learners' lives and guide learners' interests."
		T5 (urban): "Delete some old and outdated songs and replace them with songs that are in line with the trend of the times."
		T16 (rural): "Incorporate folk songs about the 24 solar terms into solar term-themed activities."
	Method Innovation	T13 (rural): "Make banquet etiquette into a rhythm game and use bowls and chopsticks to teach percussion."
		T14 (rural): "Open the "Luoyang Sound Map" project to integrate geography and music interdisciplinary learning."
		T15 (rural): "Refer to the Xiamen model to open a "class concert" to release students' desire to perform."

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from teachers (T) responses
Improving music education	Support and Resources	T3 (urban): "Hope to introduce more professional guidance and assistance."
		T8 (urban): "The school will increase financial support for music."
		T16 (rural): "Urgent need for percussion sets."
		T4 (urban): "More is needed external teachers, resources, professional training."
		T1, T2, T11 (urban), (rural): "Support from family, school, municipality and government is needed."
	Other	T2, T10 (urban): "I think nothing needs to change."
		T12 (urban): "Teaching materials need to be updated."
		T13 (urban): "Equipment management needs to be optimized; registration system needs to be created."
		T14 (urban): "Clearer standards for music literacy assessment are needed so that activities do not turn into just performances."
		T15 (urban): "Methodological materials need to be shared; a resource library needs to be created."

In summary, findings suggest that teachers perceive the improvement of music education as a complex process that requires not only new teaching methods, but also stronger institutional support, better resources and more modern educational content. The findings suggest that teachers strive to create music education that is closer to learners, more creative and more culturally meaningful. Teachers highlighted the need for equal opportunities between urban and rural schools, greater methodological support and more active cooperation between schools, families and local institutions.

The findings suggest that teachers consider the quality of the educational environment and the development of learners' musical abilities to be closely related. These, along with the content and methodology, indicate an area for improvement. A teacher's attempt to meet new standards may be impossible to realize if there is not sufficient support, resources, or conducive circumstances needed. Urban and rural teachers' attitudes toward their respective surroundings and the need for advancement in education change are deeply explored in this research. In urban areas, there is a greater focus on comprehensive content, differentiation, and innovations in teaching techniques, whereas rural areas focus on resource scarcity, practical activities, and the social and emotional dimensions. In all these areas, there is a need to pay more attention and provide support, to look for new, creative educational methods and to strengthen close cooperation between family and school.

Discussion

The new curriculum and standards in China in 2022 revealed that music education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge but also focuses on cultivating learners' creativity, promoting active participation, and developing cultural competence (Wei, 2021; MOE, 2022). The study findings suggest that teachers perceive that although the curriculum itself is oriented towards a more modern, student-centered approach, in reality its implementation depends greatly on the educational environment – both physical, emotional and social.

Teachers participating in the study noted that the new curriculum encourages more active learner engagement, playful learning in younger grades, and the integration of cultural activities (e.g., traditional opera, folk music, project-based learning tasks). These elements correspond to the principles of Gordon's (1997) theory of contemporary music learning, which emphasizes a structured sequence of musical thinking, starting from listening, perception, reflection and finally creation. In practice, this means that students do not only listen to music or reproduce it but also create it, interpret it, and relate it to culture and the environment. It is encouraging to see that some schools are already applying innovative solutions, for example, creating a "Luoyang Sound Map" or teaching rhythm using traditional dishes and spoons. These examples suggest that music teachers are actively looking for ways to creatively implement the new curriculum. However, some teachers note that changes in educational content do not always have a practical basis: methodological materials, textbooks, and teaching evaluation criteria are lacking. This is in line with Schwab's (2013) criticism that educational changes often stall when a gap appears between the "theoretical level" and real implementation. The findings suggest that teachers described professional preparation, along with curriculum content, as an important factor in implementing music education reform.

In the case of Luoyang, the disparity in educational environments between urban and rural schools was particularly striking. This difference can be examined through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development, which divides the factors influencing human development into micro, meso, and macro levels. This theory can help interpret music teachers' responses, which indicate that challenges at one level can create barriers to learners' opportunities for musical development. Compared to rural schools, urban school teachers in this study generally reported better infrastructure, physical resources, and a higher proportion of qualified music teachers. The microsystems in rural schools in Luoyang often face problems such as having only one teacher for six classes, a lack of teaching equipment, and limited family support. Other studies (Kaijie, 2024; Chan, 2024) also suggest that differences between urban and rural schools are not only due to financial opportunities but also to unequal conditions in the education system. The conditions under which learners in different regions and with different circumstances have opportunities to develop

their musical abilities vary. These findings suggest that teachers perceive that learners' musical development depends on the interaction of multiple factors: family attitudes, school infrastructure, community cultural life, and national education policy. Teachers' accounts suggest that if at least one of these systems does not function properly, the learners' creative possibilities become limited.

Interviews with sixteen teachers also highlighted the importance of the physical learning environment. This interpretation is consistent with research by Barrett et al. (2015), who reported that classroom design, lighting, acoustics, and furniture arrangement have a significant impact on student progress. Several teachers directly indicated that "there are too many students in the classroom and the desks are crowded together – learners talk to each other and do not listen" or "there is not enough space for activities". These narratives indicate that teachers consider physical space to be an important component not only of comfort but also of the quality of music education.

The findings suggest that teachers perceive that parents' attitudes towards music education are related to learners' motivation. Most teachers indicated that, given China's exam-oriented education system, parents often prioritize academic subjects over music education unless their children are aiming for art colleges. In rural areas, music has been described as an impractical means of relieving scholars from their academic burden. Teachers described that many learners face difficulties when trying to participate in different musical activities. Similar ideas are discussed by Luo and Guan (2024) and Upitis et al. (2017), who emphasize the important role of family support in strengthening learners' motivation and engagement in music learning. Teachers participating in this study also described the home environment as an important factor influencing opportunities for musical learning and participation. As one teacher explained, "learners want to learn, but family conditions do not permit it." Although this statement is brief, it reflects an important issue: learners do not always have equal opportunities to continue developing their musical interests and abilities outside the school environment. In a similar way, Yu (2022) notes that "all-round student development" is becoming an increasingly important priority in Chinese education policy. Yet, community commitment is needed as well as programmatic declarations to realize this goal.

The development of creativity and emotional expression was one of the most important aspects of the study. Teachers reported that playful methods, cultural projects, and musical performances appeared to stimulate learners' creativity and sense of identity. These findings are consistent with Hallam's (2010) discussion about the positive role of music on children's intellectual, social, and emotional development. Teachers in this study especially highlighted activities connected to local culture, such as the "Luoyang Sound Map" or songs inspired by the "Peony Festival," as particularly engaging and meaningful for learners. Such activities were seen as helping learners feel more connected to both music and their cultural identity. The findings of this study, together

with previous research (Wang & Jiang, 2022; Tian, 2024), suggest that a conducive educational environment in music education may involve much more than having musical instruments or well-equipped classrooms. An important role is also played by creative and supportive teachers, encouragement from families, positive attitudes toward the arts, and meaningful cultural content included in the learning process.

This study allows us to view China's music education reform not only as a process of programmatic change but also as a complex social and cultural transformation. The Luoyang case suggests that teachers view a conducive educational environment as an important condition for the realistic realization of the goals of educational reform. The findings further suggest that participants perceive the quality of music education depends not only on the content of new programs but also on the extent to which the education system can create an environment in which students can act creatively, feel emotionally safe, and see music as a meaningful part of their identity.

Conclusion

The literature review in this study suggests that a conducive educational environment is not just a physical space or the availability of instruments – it is a set of factors that include the professionalism of the teacher, the family's attitude, the school's support, the cultural context, and the meaningfulness of the learning content. Only an integrated combination of all these components allows developing learners' musical abilities in a comprehensive way.

The findings of this study suggest that the new music curriculum standards fundamentally change the direction of teaching, especially emphasizing learners' creativity, active participation, cultural awareness, and practical activities. Most teachers in Luoyang city viewed these changes as a positive direction, but representatives of rural schools more often emphasized the shortcomings related to the lack of teaching aids and insufficient methodological preparation.

The teachers' accounts indicate that the educational environment – both physical and emotional and social – is closely related to learners' musical abilities. In cities, favourable infrastructure, multimedia tools, and active music activities are more common, while in rural schools, a lack of resources, lone teachers, and limited creative opportunities dominate. These differences were often discussed by participants as influencing factors.

A particularly important role is played by the creativity and intrinsic motivation of teachers. Many teachers, even when faced with resource constraints, have found alternative and innovative solutions ‑ from percussion games to project activities related to local culture. These examples suggest that music teachers view pedagogical flexibility as one of the main elements that allow the successful implementation of music educational goals.

Many teachers reported that they find it difficult to develop appropriate student assessments as a result of changes in curriculum and teaching methods, moving towards creative, process-based, and/or interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches. Participants suggested that this may create challenges as activities become formalities rather than real learning.

The study revealed that teachers perceive family and community support as important factors shaping learners' attitudes towards music learning. In rural areas, indifference or even hostility to music as a "significantly beneficial" subject is more common, while in cities, there is more talk about concert activities and cultural participation.

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Palankios edukacinės aplinkos svarba ugdant mokinių muzikinius gebėjimus pagal naują Kinijos ugdymo programą: Luojango miesto atvejo analizė

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Santrauka

Šiame tyrime buvo nagrinėjama, kaip mokytojai suvokia edukacinės aplinkos vaidmenį ugdant mokinių muzikinius gebėjimus pagal atnaujintą 2022 metų Kinijos ugdymo programą. Atliekant tyrimą buvo apklausta 16 muzikos mokytojų iš Luojango miesto ir jo regiono vietovių. Mokytojų atsakymuose išryškėjo trys pagrindinės temos: naujos ugdymo programos sąsajos su muzikos mokymu, edukacinės aplinkos vaidmuo ugdant muzikinius gebėjimus bei galimos muzikinio ugdymo tobulinimo kryptys. Tyrime dalyvavę mokytojai teigė, kad nauja programa, jų nuomone, skatina aktyvesnį mokinių įsitraukimą, žaidybinį mokymą jaunesnėse klasėse, liaudies dainų ir kultūrinių veiklų integravimą. Luojango miesto mokytojai dažnai akcentavo skirtumą tarp miesto ir regiono mokyklų. Mokytojų teigimu, miesto mokyklos dažniau pasižymi geresne infrastruktūra, technologijomis ir kvalifikuotais mokytojais, t. y. palankesne edukacine aplinka, kurioje ugdomi vaikų muzikiniai gebėjimai. Muzikos mokytojai mokinių susidomėjimą muzika dažnai siejo su tėvų įsitraukimu ir palaikymu. Mokytojai nurodė, kad klasėse per daug mokinių ir suolų, mokiniai kalbasi tarpusavyje, nesiklauso, nėra pažangos, netobulėjama, trūksta vietos muzikinėms veikloms. Šio tyrimo rezultatai leidžia geriau suprasti, kaip muzikos mokytojai Luojango mieste ir jo apylinkėse suvokia muzikinio ugdymo pokyčius, susijusius su naująja Kinijos ugdymo programa, bei kaip apibūdina šių pokyčių įgyvendinimą praktiškai.

Esminiai žodžiai: *ugdymo aplinka, ugdymo programos standartai, muzikiniai gebėjimai.*

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