Factors Affecting Student Engagement in Vocal Education: The Role of Flow Experience and Learning Motivation in Music Pedagogy

Jiayin Kong[1]

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Abstract

This study examines the role of flow experience in enhancing learning motivation and engagement within music education, particularly from the perspective of vocal training. Acknowledging a gap between traditional teaching methods and contemporary learners' needs, it aims to bridge this through innovative teaching designs that promote flow experiences. The research identifies critical teaching design elements that foster flow, aiming to enhance teaching efficacy and student satisfaction. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how flow experience can be integrated into music education to meet diverse student needs, significantly improving learning motivation and engagement. This work fills a research gap by offering concrete analysis and practical recommendations for applying flow theory in vocal education, highlighting the importance of modern technology and methodologies in revitalizing music education practices.

Keywords: Music Education, Learning Motivation, Student Engagement, Flow Experience, Vocal Education

[1] Pathum Thani University, Email: jiayin_kong@yahoo.com

Introduction

In music education, particularly vocal education practices, enhancing students' motivation and engagement has become a significant challenge for educators. This challenge partly arises from the mismatch between traditional teaching methods and the contemporary needs of students. With advancements in technology and updates in educational philosophy, educators and researchers have started seeking new methods to inspire students' enthusiasm for learning and engagement. Flow experience, as one potential approach, has garnered widespread attention. Within this context, flow experience, a psychological state of complete immersion in an activity, is considered a practical approach to enhancing learning efficiency and the quality of experience. Research indicates that when students experience flow during the learning process, they are more likely to demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, effectively introducing and utilizing flow experience in music education, primarily through instructional design to facilitate its occurrence, is a complex process that requires in-depth exploration and research.

This study aims to explore the application of flow experience in music education, particularly how it influences students' motivation and engagement, as well as how instructional design can effectively promote the occurrence of flow experience. This includes analyzing which instructional design factors can effectively promote the occurrence of flow experience and how teachers can apply these findings in music education practices to enhance teaching effectiveness. Additionally, this study will

investigate how flow experience helps students overcome challenges in learning, thus improving their learning efficiency and satisfaction.

Despite the widespread recognition of the importance of flow experience in the field of education, existing research primarily focuses on theoretical discussions, lacking in-depth analysis regarding the specific implementation and optimization of flow experience in music education. For instance, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) emphasized the role of flow experience in enhancing learning and work efficiency, yet there is little research exploring how flow theory can be specifically applied to instructional design in vocal education. Furthermore, there is still considerable exploration in music education regarding integrating modern technology and teaching methods to inspire students' creativity and expressive abilities (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010).

Therefore, this study aims to bridge this research gap by explicitly analyzing the impact of flow experience on vocal students' learning motivation and engagement, identifying effective instructional design principles, and proposing concrete teaching strategies and recommendations. This will include exploring the design of teaching environments, innovating teaching methods, and leveraging digital technology to facilitate the occurrence of flow experience. Through these studies, we aim to provide new insights and practical guidance for music education to better meet students’ diverse needs and enhance their learning motivation and engagement.

In summary, this research not only focuses on theoretical discussions but also strives to find practical teaching strategies to promote students' flow experience in music education, thereby enhancing learning motivation and engagement. Through in-depth research and practice, we

hope to provide some reference ideas for addressing the current challenges in music education.

Literature Review

2.1 Flow Experience

The theory of flow experience was proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the 1970s, making it an essential and influential psychological theory due to his research on human behavior and psychological states. One of the central concepts in the theory of flow experience is the experience of "flow" itself. Flow experience is a unique psychological state typically occurring when individuals engage in an activity. In the state of flow, individuals often perceive time as standing still, experience a diminished sense of self-awareness, exhibit high levels of concentration, and perceive a balance between challenge and skill. This state is often accompanied by a profound sense of satisfaction and positive emotional experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Elements of flow experience include clear goals, immediate feedback, high levels of concentration, and a perceived balance between challenge and skill. These elements interact to form the foundation of the flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

2.2 Application of Flow Experience Theory in the Field of Music Education

Flow experience is not limited to specific domains; it can occur in various activities, including sports, music performance, creative activities, learning, and work. The key is that individuals must feel that they are capable of mastering the task at hand and have an interest in the task

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In the field of music education, researchers have been delving deeper into the exploration of flow experience to investigate the psychological states of students during music learning and performance processes (Antonini Philippe et al., 2022). Studies have found that flow experience during music performance is closely related to factors such as students' skill levels, the selection of challenging repertoire, and performance environments. For instance, research by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) suggests that musicians are more likely to enter a state of flow when performing challenging pieces, possibly because such challenging repertoire can stimulate their interest and engagement. On the other hand, music composition is also an important pathway to trigger flow experience. For example, music students often experience flow states during composition activities, particularly when they encounter challenges and successfully overcome them during the creative process (Stambaugh, 2011). Additionally, music appreciation activities have been found to induce a flow experience. Research by Chirico et al. (2015) found that when students immerse themselves in musical works, focusing on the aesthetic features and emotional expressions of music, they are more likely to enter a state of flow.

2.3 The Application Purposes and Objectives of Flow Experience Theory

In the context of this study, which aims to explore the factors driving student engagement in vocal education at universities, the application purposes and objectives of flow experience theory are particularly crucial. In the context of vocal education, flow experience theory is applied to understand and promote the optimal psychological state of students during learning and performing vocal music. The primary purpose of applying flow experience theory is to enhance students' engagement and

learning effectiveness in vocal learning processes. When students enter a state of flow in vocal learning, they are more likely to experience the joy of learning, overcome obstacles in learning, and make significant progress in artistic expression. Flow experience not only enhances students' technical skills and musical performance but also enhances their self-efficacy and creativity, as students often transcend self-imposed limitations and explore new possibilities in a state of flow.

Furthermore, the application objectives of flow experience theory in this study also include cultivating students' self-motivation and self-directed learning abilities. By creating conditions and environments that promote the occurrence of flow experience, teachers can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation, making them more active and spontaneous in the learning process. This self-directed learning approach is crucial for students' long-term musical development, as it helps them establish enduring interests in music learning and attitudes towards lifelong learning.

2.4 Learning Motivation, Student Engagement, and Flow Experience

In music education, students' ability to enter a state of flow is influenced by both learning motivation and student engagement. Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory provides a framework for understanding this relationship, emphasizing the importance of individuals' intrinsic motivation and autonomy in activities. In music learning, students' interest in music, setting personal goals, and self-motivation in the learning process all affect their learning motivation. When students feel intrinsically motivated to engage in music learning, they are more likely to enter a state of flow because this intrinsic motivation focuses their attention on the activity itself rather than external rewards or punishments.

Moreover, student engagement plays a crucial role in shaping flow in music education, especially in the field of vocal education. It directly affects students' learning outcomes and technical development and has profound implications for their personal growth and social skills. Increasing student engagement not only helps students master technical skills, such as vocal techniques and music theory but also contributes to their personal growth and artistic expression. For example, highly engaged students may be more willing to explore different vocal styles, discover their artistic expressions, and demonstrate higher levels of confidence and emotional depth in performances (Chen & O'Neill, 2020). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) emphasized the balance between task challenge and individual skill level in flow experience. In music education, student engagement reflects their level of investment in learning activities, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement. When students demonstrate high levels of engagement and concentration in musical activities, they are more likely to enter a state of flow because their interaction with music becomes deeper, self-awareness gradually diminishes, and mental energy becomes fully focused on the activity itself. As found in the study by McPherson and Davidson (2006), students are more likely to experience flow when they exhibit higher levels of engagement during music practice.

Therefore, in music education, teachers can promote students' flow experience by stimulating their learning motivation and increasing their engagement. For example, teachers can enhance students' learning motivation by providing personalized learning goals, creating challenging yet feasible learning tasks, and offering timely feedback and support. At the same time, teachers can increase student engagement by designing inspiring and meaningful learning activities and creating supportive learning

environments, thereby increasing the likelihood of students entering a state of flow.

In summary, learning motivation and student engagement are important factors affecting flow experience in music education. They provide theoretical foundations and guiding principles to help teachers effectively promote students' flow experience, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sense of achievement in music learning.

Research Methodology

In this study, we have chosen philosophical speculation and case studies as research methods to delve into the interrelationships and influences of flow experience, learning motivation, and student engagement in music education.

Firstly, we will utilize philosophical speculation to deeply analyze relevant philosophical theories and concepts to explore the roles of flow experience, learning motivation, and student engagement in music education. Philosophical speculation will discuss the theoretical background, examine the flow of students' learning experiences from a philosophical perspective, and explore the interrelationships and influences of learning motivation and student engagement in music education. We will delve into core concepts of flow experience theory, such as concentration, challenge-skill balance, and their applications in the educational field. Additionally, we will explore how flow experience interacts with students' learning motivation and engagement and how it manifests and is applied in specific contexts of music education. The use of philosophical speculation will provide us with profound theoretical insights, thus offering a solid theoretical foundation and framework for the research.

Secondly, we have chosen case studies as one of the research methods to further illustrate the practical impact of flow experience in music education. Case studies will provide concrete examples to help us understand how flow experience manifests in actual teaching environments and influences learning motivation and student engagement. We will select relevant cases for in-depth analysis, focusing on key factors such as instructional design and classroom interactions, and examine how these factors promote or hinder flow experience. Through case studies, we can gain a more specific understanding of the role of flow experience in music education from a practical perspective, thus providing feasible recommendations and guidance for teaching practices.

In summary, combining philosophical speculation and case studies, we will delve into the roles and influences of flow experience, learning motivation, and student engagement in music education from theoretical and practical perspectives. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of flow experience phenomena in music education and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for teaching practices.

University Music Education Practice and Speculation

1 Situation Analysis: Challenges and Opportunities in University Music Education

When exploring the current status of university music education, we find its development faces a series of intertwined challenges and opportunities. The changing social environment provides a new stage for music education. However, to establish its position in the field of higher education, we need to engage in in-depth discussions and reforms on multiple levels. We can further explore how to enhance society's awareness and acceptance of higher vocational music education through

policy guidance, media promotion, and other means, thus creating a more favorable external environment for its development.

Practice One: Classroom Teaching Design

In university music education, classroom teaching design is one of the key factors in shaping students' flow experience. Teachers should design music tasks that are both challenging and capable of stimulating students' interest. These tasks should consider students' skill levels and provide sufficient challenge to evoke pleasure without causing excessive anxiety. For example, in vocal classes, teachers can choose songs that are challenging but within students' skill range, allowing them to feel excited and engaged in the learning process. Additionally, timely feedback and guidance are crucial. Teachers can provide individual guidance or group discussions to help students identify and correct errors, providing affirmation and encouragement to enhance their confidence and motivation.

Practice Two: Personalized Learning Support

Personalized learning support is another important way to promote students' flow experience in music education. Teachers should design personalized learning tasks and resources based on students' learning characteristics and needs. This includes considering students' learning styles, interests, and abilities, and providing them with suitable learning materials and activities. For example, more theoretical course content, such as music analysis and composition techniques, can be designed for students interested in music theory. For students who prioritize practical experience, more opportunities for performance and playing can be arranged. Through personalized learning support, teachers can better

stimulate students' learning motivation and engagement, helping them enter the state of flow more easily.

Practice Three: Reflection and Speculation: The Role of Teaching Design

In the practice of university music education, the role of teaching design is to provide learning content and activities and to guide students into a state of flow, thereby enhancing their learning motivation and engagement. Therefore, teachers need to continuously reflect on their teaching philosophy and methods. By delving into the role of flow experience in music education and integrating it into teaching design, teachers can better stimulate students' interest and engagement in learning, thus improving their learning effectiveness and sense of achievement. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to students' emotional care and psychological support, creating a positive learning atmosphere where students feel safe and confident, making it easier for them to enter the state of flow.

2 Philosophical Analysis: Speculating on the Challenges and Opportunities in University Music Education

When delving into the current status of university music education, we inevitably encounter a series of challenges and opportunities. Behind these phenomena lie rich philosophical meanings and values. For instance, from an existentialist perspective, we can understand individual differences and the pursuit of self-realization in music education. Music education is not only about imparting skills but also about transmitting culture and values. The values here include the aesthetic value of music art and the spiritual pursuit and social responsibility reflected in music creation and performance. For example, music works often reflect the

worldview and values of the creators, and the process of music education is a process of unifying knowledge, emotion, faith, intention, and action, guiding students to understand these values and form their independent judgments and thoughts. At this level, the challenges of university music education are not only reflected in how to improve teaching quality and cultivate music technical talents that meet the needs of modern society but also in how to convey correct value cognition and guide students to form correct values and beliefs through music education.

From a philosophical perspective, the value of music education is reflected in the cultivation of individual skills and the shaping of individual spiritual worlds. Music, as a language without borders, can transcend culture and national boundaries and reach directly into humans' souls. In this process, music education is about imparting skills, inheriting culture, and shaping values. This requires us to focus on skill cultivation, value guidance, and cultural inheritance when conducting music education.

In university music education, a significant challenge is finding a balance between skill cultivation and value guidance. This is not only a problem of educational methodology but also of educational philosophy. We need to consider how to cultivate students' music skills while guiding them to form the correct values and worldviews. This requires us to pay attention to students' skill development, humanistic literacy, and spiritual growth in educational practice.

On the other hand, we also need to recognize that university music education faces challenges from various aspects such as society, economy, and culture. In the current social environment, music education is often overly utilitarianized, with excessive emphasis on skill cultivation, neglecting its role in cultural inheritance and value guidance. This requires

us to have a clear value orientation when conducting music education and to clarify our ultimate goal. We need to consider how to adhere to the value orientation of music education in the current social environment and guide students to form correct values and worldviews while cultivating their music skills.

In this process, we also need to pay attention to the relationship between music education and various aspects of society, culture, and economy. We need to consider how to integrate music education into the development of social culture better and how to make music education a significant force driving the progress of social culture. This requires us to have a macro perspective when conducting music education, focusing on the relationship between music education and the development of social culture and economic development, as well as the role and status of music education in the development of social culture.

Through such speculative analysis, we can more deeply understand higher vocational music education's current situation and problems and provide more targeted suggestions and directions for its future development. This is an exploration and attempt at educational practice and an innovation and expansion of educational philosophy and methods.

3 Literature Case Study

In their case study, Sitwat Saeed and David Zyngier (2012) explored the application of innovative teaching methods in music education, including collaborative learning, project-based learning, and technology integration, to enhance students' flow experiences. By encouraging students to collaborate in groups to create music pieces, these methods not only sparked their interest in music learning but also strengthened social interactions, deepening their understanding and appreciation of

music. The researchers particularly emphasized the consideration of diversity and individual differences in instructional design, employing diverse teaching strategies including differentiated instruction and student-centered learning activities, and utilizing digital technology to enhance opportunities for music creation and performance. For example, by offering selective music projects, students' intrinsic motivation was stimulated, prompting them to actively engage in the learning process.

Saeed and Zyngier further emphasized that to foster flow experiences, instructional design needs to set appropriate challenge levels matching students' skill levels. Through personalized feedback and positive encouragement, students were assisted in setting and achieving goals, enhancing confidence and a sense of achievement in the learning process. The instructional design also included elements to promote cooperation and communication among students, such as group collaborative projects and collective performances. These enabled students to practice collaborative skills and helped to build social connections and enhance social belonging.

Through these meticulous teaching strategies, Saeed and Zyngier demonstrated how music education significantly improves students' learning motivation and engagement, promoting their experience of flow. This educational approach emphasizes the importance of personalized learning and the value of recognizing and supporting the uniqueness of each student in the educational process. The research indicates that a teaching environment that promotes flow experiences requires teachers' professional knowledge and innovative teaching methods and necessitates a profound understanding and respect for students' personalities, interests, and ability levels, emphasizing the importance of achieving flow experiences in music education.

Discussion

1 Comprehensive Analysis of the Case Study Results

In this study, we explored the role of flow experience in music education, particularly its influence on learning motivation and student engagement, through philosophical speculation and case studies. Philosophical speculation allowed us to understand the intrinsic connection between flow experience, learning motivation, and student engagement from a broader perspective. By examining the philosophical foundations of these concepts, we recognize that music education is not just about imparting skills but also about transmitting culture and values, where flow experience connects students' individual differences, self-realization pursuit, and the deeper values of music education. From an existentialist perspective, the application of flow experience in music education emphasizes the importance of individual subjectivity, stimulates students' intrinsic motivation, and promotes their deep involvement and self-transcendence in music learning, thus achieving individual self-realization and spiritual growth.

From a deeper theoretical perspective, the core value of flow experience in music education lies in its significant enhancement of student's learning motivation and engagement and in its promotion of individual differences and self-realization in the music learning process. As a profound human expression, music provides a unique avenue for exploring and expressing one's inner world. In this process, flow experience, as a state of high concentration and complete immersion, enhances students' interest and participation in music activities and promotes their personal growth and self-transcendence. By guiding and promoting the occurrence of flow experience in music education, students

can reach a state of deep connection with music, thus experiencing the intrinsic value and aesthetic significance of music more profoundly.

Furthermore, flow experience is also related to enhancing students' self-efficacy in music learning. When students experience flow states in musical activities, they often feel a sense of accomplishment and control, enhancing their enthusiasm for music learning and promoting their confidence and motivation in other areas. Therefore, promoting flow experience in music education can be regarded as a practice of holistic education, not only imparting skills or knowledge but also discovering and cultivating individual abilities and potentials.

In the case study analysis, Sitwat Saeed and David Zyngier's research provided concrete examples of promoting flow experience in practice. By adopting innovative teaching methods such as collaborative learning, project-based learning, and technology integration, students' flow experience was enhanced, and their interest and participation in music learning increased. The successful practice of these methods emphasizes the importance of considering individual differences among students in music education and the necessity of creating a supportive and challenging learning environment. Through such instructional design, it can be observed how teachers effectively stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and promote their learning engagement and social interaction through personalized teaching strategies and positive feedback mechanisms, which contribute to developing students' skills but also foster their emotional growth and social adaptability.

By integrating the findings of philosophical speculation and case studies, we can conclude that the promotion of flow experience in music education not only requires innovative teaching methods and professional

knowledge from teachers but also a profound understanding and respect for students' personalities, interests, and ability levels. By providing students with a learning environment that is both supportive and challenging, music education can more effectively stimulate students' learning motivation and engagement and promote the occurrence of a flow experience. Such educational practices are not only crucial for the development of students' technical skills but also have profound effects on their personal growth and spiritual development. Therefore, we call for music educators to pay more attention to and implement these concepts and strategies to fully explore the potential of flow experience in music education and provide students with richer and more profound learning experiences.

2 Answering the Research Questions

2.1 How does flow experience affect learning motivation and engagement in music education?

The core role of flow experience in music education lies in its significant impact on learning motivation and engagement. Flow state, characterized by complete immersion in an activity, notably enhances students' learning motivation in music education. When students experience flow in music learning, their high levels of concentration and interest turn the learning process into an enjoyable experience. In this state, students' engagement in music learning is driven by external requirements, internal motivation, and interest, naturally boosting their learning motivation. Moreover, the flow experience enhances student engagement by providing timely feedback, clear goals, and a perceived balance between challenges and skills. This encourages students to be more actively involved in the learning process.

2.2 How can instructional design effectively promote the occurrence of flow experience?

Effective instructional design is crucial for promoting the occurrence of flow experience. Firstly, instructional design should provide adequate challenges matched to students' skill levels, neither too easy to bore them nor too difficult to frustrate them. Secondly, instructional design should include clear goals and timely feedback mechanisms to help students recognize their progress and achievements, thereby enhancing their confidence and learning motivation. Additionally, innovative teaching methods such as collaborative learning and project-based learning can effectively stimulate intrinsic motivation and promote the occurrence of flow experience by encouraging student participation, collaboration, and creativity. Through these strategies, instructional design can create a supportive yet challenging learning environment conducive to students entering a state of flow.

3. How does music education utilize flow experience to promote students' personal growth?

The application of flow experience in music education improves learning outcomes and promotes students' personal growth. Through flow experience, students can achieve deeper self-exploration and expression in the music learning process. The high levels of concentration and immersion in the flow state enable students to gain deeper insights into the meaning of music and express the emotions it conveys, thereby promoting their emotional intelligence. Additionally, flow experience enhances students' self-efficacy; successful experiences in music activities lead to a sense of achievement and satisfaction, further motivating

students to challenge themselves and explore new possibilities, thereby fostering personal growth in music learning and beyond.

In summary, applying flow experience in music education has significant theoretical and practical implications for improving students' learning motivation and engagement and promoting personal growth. By deeply understanding the characteristics and conditions of flow experience and effectively promoting its occurrence in instructional design, music educators can provide students with more prosperous and profound learning experiences, fostering comprehensive development in technical skills, emotional intelligence, and personal growth.

Recommendations

This study aimed to explore the role of flow experience in music education, mainly focusing on its impact on learning motivation, student engagement, and personal growth. Through in-depth analysis of the theoretical foundations of flow experience and its application in vocal education, this study employed innovative teaching methods, including technology integration, interactive teaching models, reflection-reiteration mechanisms, and deepening of artistic perception and expression, to enhance student's learning experiences and skill levels.

The findings revealed that innovative expansion of instructional content, particularly the integration of psychological experience theory with modern educational technology, significantly improved students' learning motivation and engagement. These teaching methods facilitated students' practical exercises in simulated performance environments and deepened their understanding of music theory and vocal techniques. Additionally, encouraging role-switching and peer learning among students

promoted knowledge sharing and skills enhancement, increasing their confidence and teaching abilities in vocal education.

Furthermore, regular recall, reflection, and reiteration effectively facilitated students' deep thinking and self-expression, aiding in constructing a profound understanding of vocal artistry. By combining vocal performance, music theory, and cultural background teaching, this study deepened students' artistic perception and expression capabilities, enhancing their vocal skills and promoting a comprehensive understanding and emotional involvement in music.

In conclusion, this study effectively promoted the occurrence of flow experience in vocal education through a series of innovative teaching strategies, significantly enhancing students' learning motivation, engagement, and personal growth. Thus, it provided new theoretical insights and practical guidance for the field of music education. Future research could further explore the application of flow experience in other musical domains and examine how teaching methods can be localized and personalized in different cultural and educational contexts.

Implications

1. Educational Practice Implications:

Importance of Personalized Learning: Educational practices should focus on individual differences among students and employ personalized teaching strategies to meet diverse learning needs. Through technology integration, such as digital music production tools and virtual reality technology, teachers can provide customized learning experiences to enhance students' learning efficiency and engagement.

Promoting Interaction and Collaboration among Students: Encouraging role-switching and peer learning among students enhances

knowledge sharing and skills enhancement and improves their social skills and teamwork abilities. Educators should design more activities to promote interaction among students to establish a positive learning community.

Application of Reflection and Reiteration Mechanisms: Regular recall, reflection, and reiteration help deepen students' learning understanding and enhance their self-expression abilities. Educational practices should include these mechanisms, encouraging students to share their learning experiences and insights regularly to promote deep learning.

Deepening Artistic Perception and Expression: Combining vocal performance, music theory, and cultural background teaching can help students gain a deeper understanding of the artistic and cultural significance behind music works, thereby enhancing their artistic perception and expression abilities. Educators should seek ways to integrate these elements into teaching.

2. Future Research Directions:

Exploration of Interdisciplinary Teaching Methods: Future research could explore how to combine music education with other disciplines, such as technology, history, literature, etc., to develop interdisciplinary teaching strategies that provide more comprehensive and in-depth learning experiences.

Innovative Application of Teaching Technology: With the continuous development of new technologies, exploring their application in music education will be an important direction for future research. Particularly, how to effectively utilize technologies like artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality to create more immersive and interactive learning environments for students.

Quantitative Research on Flow Experience: Future studies could explore the development of quantitative methods to measure flow experience, assessing the effects of different teaching strategies on students' flow experience to provide more specific guidance for educational practice.

Consideration of Cultural Diversity: Exploring the application of flow experience in music education practices in different cultural backgrounds, understanding how cultural differences affect the occurrence of flow experience and learning motivation, and how to localize teaching content and methods in multicultural teaching environments.

Long-term Impact Tracking Studies: Conduct long-term tracking studies to assess the long-term effects of innovative teaching strategies on students' learning outcomes, personal growth, and career development, providing data support for continuous improvement in music education.

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