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A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE TEACHING COMPETENCY OF FUTURE UNIVERSITY MUSIC TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The teaching competency of university music teachers (UMT) is a critical factor in the professional development of higher education music teachers (HEMT) and significantly impacts lifelong learning and effective music instruction for HEMT. This article aims to analyse and explore the essential teaching competencies that future UMTs should possess. The study employs three techniques: literature review, policy document analysis, and teacher interviews. Based on a competency model, we analysed 254 articles related to UMT teaching competency from 2019 to 2024. Additionally, we summarized and organized 57 policies on UMT teaching competency in China spanning 2012 to 2023. Qualitative research involved interviewing 20 music teachers from various universities in Guangxi, China. Through triangulation, we synthesized an element system of teacher competency, ensuring the rigor and validity of our research. Our findings suggest that research in this area began relatively late in China. According to the surveyed music teachers, future university music teachers' competencies should encompass six key aspects, providing valuable guidance for both UMT training and student teachers.

Keywords: Teaching Competency, Future University Music Teachers, Literature Review, Policy Documents, Interview

INTRODUCTION

International research on "competency" can be traced back to the exploration of Taylor, the "father of scientific management", in 1920 (Olson, 2015; Blake, & Moseley, 2011). In the 1870s, McClelland, a professor at Harvard University in the United States, pointed out the unreasonableness of abusing intelligence tests to judge personal abilities in his article "Testing for Competency Rather Than for Intelligence". It further explains that some personality, intelligence, values, and other factors that people subjectively believe can determine work performance do not show the expected effects in reality (Sternberg, 2004; Barrett & Depinet, 1991; McClelland, 1974; McClelland, 1973). The publication of this article set off an upsurge in research on "competency" from all walks of life (Tushman & Anderson, 2018; Lester, 2014; Reichow, & Volkmar, 2010). Preston (1995) believes that competency is the integration of personal characteristics to achieve a certain performance in a certain practical environment. Integration is not a combination or a simple superposition relationship. After integration, it becomes a whole and is inseparable.

The concept of competency can be regarded as the traits, values, motivations, professional knowledge, professional skills, and social competencies that a teacher possesses in a specific field (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) to complete specific tasks, responsibilities, or work requirements. These competencies are necessary to work effectively in specific positions and assist music teachers in achieving their tactical goals (Campion et al., 2011; Shippmann et al., 2000). Boyatizis (1982, 1994) defines competency as any trait that a person possesses and uses to produce successful performance in a certain life role. The underlying traits of this individual may be motivations, traits, skills, self-image, social roles or knowledge (Boyatizis, 1982, 1994).

Teaching abilities are the abilities that teachers must have to engage in their profession. They are teacher abilities related to the subjects that teachers want to teach or the subjects that students want to learn. From the perspective of the connotation of teaching ability, Berliner (2004) believes that teaching ability is a comprehensive personal characteristic that supports the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to meet effective teaching performance in various teaching environments. From the perspective of work content, Wang (1980) believes that teaching ability refers to teachers' ability to diagnose learning prerequisites related to course topics and guide the learning process based on continuous diagnosis; to be able to make course decisions in conjunction with learning objectives; and to formulate learning plans. Arrange, based on the analysis of learning prerequisites, individual learning processes, and learning goals, to mobilize students to actively participate in learning and carry out effective classroom management for the smooth progress of teaching and learning (P122–128).

Interest in developing competency-based education systems is growing rapidly around the world. To meet the challenge of improving competency-based learning programs, the United States established the National Skills Standards Board, the United Kingdom established the Learning Skills Board, and Australia proposed competency and skills standards (Voorhees,2001). In order to transform their education systems to be competency-based, many countries have established national qualifications frameworks to measure teaching competency in higher education.

A recent study shows that the teaching ability of university professors is a combination of the skills and knowledge required to complete teaching tasks. These competencies include mastery of subject content, teaching skills, and classroom management as determinants of teacher competence. Non-academic knowledge such as administrative knowledge, social knowledge and technical skills must also be considered. Kouwenhoven (2003) mentioned that knowledge, attitude and skills together constitute teaching ability. Hendriks, Luyten, Scheerens, Sleegers, and Steen (2010) believe that learning strategies, learning to learn, and reflecting are equally important as mastering subject knowledge. Similarly, Bhargava and Robinson (2011) coined that mere possession of knowledge and certification does not guarantee achievement of [teacher competency] goals. To this end, teachers are obliged to have an appropriate understanding of human nature, needs and principles of development in light of local and global urbanization, technological advancement and industrialization.

The teaching competency of university music teachers is crucial., as it significantly impacts educational quality, student development, the cultivation of high-quality talents, as well as the professional identity and career advancement of teachers in higher education (Sachs et al., 2020; Beijaard, 2019; Ballantyne et al., 2017; Wenet al., 2013). Teaching competency influences student achievement, educational quality, teachers' professional identity, and the quality of talent cultivation (Yuan er al., 2021; Sharma & Pandher, 2018; Lesjak, 2010). Many researchers contend that socioeconomic investments, educational policies, school leadership, and management support are vital factors influencing teaching competency of teachers (Duan, 2021; Wen, Manoharan & Xue, 2020; Bautista, Stanley & Candusso, 2020). However, researchers also contend that regardless of socioeconomic investments and shifts in educational policies, it is the teacher's individual professional identity, motivational choices, values, and teacher traits that are the most critical factors influencing teaching competency (Turunen, 2019; Mutlu, Polat & Alan, 2019; Karsh, 2018). Therefore, enhancing the teaching competency of teachers in higher education is not only a fundamental requirement for building a high-quality teaching workforce, ensuring effective instruction, and elevating educational

standards, but also a basic quality that higher education teachers should possess (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2021; Chen, 2019).

Although research has been conducted to develop competency theory for higher education teachers, most studies have chosen qualitative research methods, with interview samples focused on primary and secondary music teachers or teachers in other subjects, with very few studies on higher education music teachers (Engkus, 2023; Qi, Sun, & Carvalho, 2023; Castro & Tumibay, 2021; Ożadowicz, 2020). Especially with the current data, no guide has been found to guide the teaching competency of university music teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to explore, conceptualize, validate, and develop constructs as the core of this research's theoretical model. Further refining the research on the basis of existing studies and investigating what internal factors influence the teaching competence of higher education music teachers and what the correlation between these factors seems increasingly important (Engkus, 2023; Qi, Sun, & Carvalho, 2023; Corno, 2023; Alshumaimeri, 2023; Wang, 2022; Castro & Tumibay, 2021; Xian, 2021). In order to improve teachers' teaching competency, the National Institute of Education has developed an innovative teacher education program to produce qualified teachers. The program requires teachers to master subject content, teaching skills, and core values. This study aims to understand what teaching competencies future university music teachers should possess through literature analysis, policy documents analysis, and interviews. Based on the collected and summarized information, the various teaching abilities of university music teachers were sorted out to examine the effectiveness of the teacher training program implemented in Guangxi, China.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Overall, the purpose of this study is to explore what kind of teaching competency future university music teachers should possess for analysis and research. Can be an important guide for future university music teachers and student teacher training. Specifically, the following objectives and questions are:

1. Which competency of teaching higher education music teachers in each dimension has been obtained from the literature analysis and policy document analysis?
2. Which competency of higher education music teachers' teaching in each dimension were obtained from teacher interviews?
3. Which competency of teaching higher education music teachers in each dimension was obtained from the qualitative research?

METHODLOGY

This study seeks to identify the essential teaching competencies required for future university music teachers. To accomplish this, a qualitative approach was employed, unfolding through several stages, where this methodology commonly used in previous research (Arshad et al., 2022a; Arshad et al., 2022b, Sapriadi & Mazlan, 2021; Ramli et al, 2021; Hidayatullah & Mazlan, 2024; Mazlan et al., 2020; Mazlan et al, 2022; Mazlan et al., 2023; Mazlan et al., 2024; Pisali et al., 2024). Initially, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, analyzing 254 documents from the past five years. This review focused on research related to university teacher competencies, music teacher competencies, teaching competencies, and specific studies on university music teacher teaching competencies. Following this, the research turned to policy document analysis, examining 57 official documents issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Guangxi Provincial Department of Education between 2012 and 2023.

These policy documents were categorized into four distinct types: policies on higher education priorities, documents detailing the development and code of conduct for higher education teachers, systems and policies concerning music (aesthetic) teachers and music education, and documents related to teacher assessment and management systems developed by the universities where the interviewed teachers are employed. The next phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 music

teachers from three universities in Guangxi, China. The interviews were recorded and systematically organized for analysis. In the final stage, the data collected from the literature review, policy document analysis, and interviews were consolidated. A content analysis was performed to interpret the findings and derive conclusions regarding the teaching competencies necessary for future university music teachers.

Samples and Sampling Methods

The population is defined as a group of individuals with similar characteristics (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2009), the target population is a collection of individuals with similar characteristics. Due to the impracticality of including the entire population, given its large size (Fraenkel, Faggiano, & Valk, 2015), samples are selected as subsets of the population. Considering factors such as cost, time, and feasibility (Denscombe, 2014), this study classified higher education institutions into comprehensive universities, normal universities, and music specialized universities. Stratified sampling,snowball sampling and purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants with similar characteristics were represented across the population under study (Babbie, 2008).

Baker & Edwards (2012) stated that the number of interviews in qualitative research depends on the researcher's research purpose and research questions, which can simply be called "depending on the situation". This viewpoint aligns with the perspectives of Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson (2002), Cresswell (2013, 2016), Galvin (2015), Crocker et al. (2017), and Bekele & Ago (2022). Based on their finding's, previous related studies have employed interview samples ranging from 12 to 35 participants (As shown in Table 3.5). Considering the research questions and objectives of this study, and drawing on specialized knowledge in the field, the researchers chose a final sample of 20 participants for semi-structured interviews, taking into account the total number of teachers and the distribution across different types of higher education institutions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative results text analysis uses NVivo software for topic extraction. In this study, based on the competency dictionary proposed by Spencer (1993) in the onion model, it is finally summarized into a competency element. When making a summary based on the three established principles, the specific situation is as follows:

1. The elements are consistent with the competencies proposed in the Spencer Competency Dictionary (Spencer, 1993) and can be directly used as the vocabulary of the teaching competency elements of higher education music teachers**,** such as "Specialized Knowledge in Music Discipline', "Music Professional Skills," "Values," "Motivation".

2. Some elements are different from the words in the Spencer competency dictionary (Spencer, 1993), but the meanings are close or similar. This requires converting the words in the dictionary based on the words in the dictionary. If the words "cooperate", "collaboration ability", "cooperativeness" and "spirit of collaboration" have similar meanings, then the former will be included in the competency of "collaboration ability."

3. Although the above 165 elements are not included in the Spencer Competency Dictionary (Spencer, 1993), the meaning of this keyword fully reflects the teaching competency requirements of high education music teachers, and it is used frequently in the literature. Words can be regarded as separate competency elements (Pariafsai & Pariafsai, 2021; Bird, 2019). For example, the number of literatures in which "musical performance ability" is found is 33, and the frequency of occurrence is 287 times. It can be seen that experts and scholars believe that it is very important, and this study will include it as a competency factor.

After the interview, the professional version of iFlytek voice software was used to organize the recording. It is basically guaranteed that the interview records will be compiled on the same day and a preliminary text will be formed (Jain, 2021; O'Halloran et al., 2018). In this way, problems existing in the interview process can be discovered over time (Döringer, 2021; Tavory, 2020). After the interviews were sorted, the 20 interview texts used in this study were finally formed. From the perspectives of Patton (2014), a systematic synthesis method for empirical data is proposed. The first is the process of data registration, which is to break up the collected texts into many paragraphs and then give each paragraph a certain concept and meaning (Kutz,2024; Wiedemann, 2016). Then recombine these paragraphs in a new way (Harris, 2017). Multiple keywords can be extracted from them to provide the basis for integration. Lay the foundation for competency factors. Before implementing data registration, each interviewee must first be assigned a number according to the order of the interview to avoid confusion with subsequent numbers.

The 10 interviewed administrator of higher education music teaching were sorted according to the order of interviews. "PE1" is the number of the first interviewed teacher, "PE2" is the number of the second interviewed teacher, and so on, the tenth interviewed teacher is "PE10". Similarly, for the 10 higher education music teachers who were interviewed, according to the order of interviews, "TE1" was used as the number of the first teacher interviewed, "TE2" was used as the number of the second teacher interviewed, and so on, to guide the tenth interviewed teacher. Visiting teachers are designated as "TE10". The researchers are replaced by the number "RP". From this procedure, researcher logged in the interviews with 20 teachers through NVivo.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Literature Analysis Results

As mentioned in the research background section, the researcher conducted a literature search through CNKI, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Scopus. After preliminary verification, the duplication of papers caused by database cross-inclusion was deleted, and the competency of higher education music teachers from 2019 to 2024, literature related to higher education music teacher training, competency requirements, higher education music teacher education, teaching, etc. Then make statistics on the frequency of competency factors appearing in these articles and the number of documents that appear. By reading and browsing the contents of a large number of collected literatures and then using software processing techniques, this research method obtained a total of 165 elements, such as "professional knowledge" and "professional skills." With the help of NVivo application software, the final statistics of the frequency of occurrence of 165elements and the number of literatures were carried out, as well as the comprehensive statistics of the number of literatures using this word.

Following that, 165 elements related to the competency of higher education music teachers were retrieved from the literature. Some of the words have broad meanings and are representative. For example, the word "knowledge" can be directly used as a competency elements vocabulary according to the theoretical basis in this study. However, most words cannot be directly used as competency-factor vocabulary; they need to be disassembled and merged Wang, et al., 2021). Based on the competency dictionary proposed by Spencer in the onion model in this study (Spencer, 1993), it was finally summarized into a competency element (Wang, et al.,2023; Li, Cheng, & Pham, 2017; Richter, 2016). When making a summary based on the three established principles (Hayashiguchi et al., 2018; Kang, Kim, & Yoon, 2012; Spencer, 1993). Through the software theme definition, several keywords with similar meanings are summarized into one vocabulary (Eichstaedt et al., 2021; Zhang, Zhang, Yu, & Zhao, 2015; Kuckartz, 2014) and used as the competency elements of higher education music teachers. For example, "fundamentals of music, music pedagogy, and music theory knowledge" are unified and summarized into "Specialized Knowledge in Music Discipline." In summary, there are 113 elements. According to the above principles, 165 elements were analysed and sorted, and a total of 47 higher education music teacher competency elements and corresponding key vocabulary were summarized.

Policy Documentation Analysis Results

This step is the same as the steps of keyword extraction and frequency analysis in the literature (Miao, Wang, & Ding, 2021). It is still based on the theoretical basis of this study, relying on the competency dictionary proposed by Spencer (Niu, Ma, Chen, Zhu, & Luo, 2023; Richter, 2016; Spencer, 1993), based on the three established principles (Hayashiguchi et al., 2018; Kang, Kim, & Yoon, 2012; Spencer, 1993). This study analysed a total of 57 documents and extracted 79 keywords for the competency of higher education music teachers. Among these 79 keywords, some words may have similar meanings, repetitions, or partial overlap in semantics (Jones, Johns, & Recchia, 2012; Woltz, 2010). According to the various steps mentioned in the literature analysis, the 79 keywords were analysed, converted, disassembled, and classified through Nvivo software. In this way, 36 higher education music teacher competency elements were obtained.

The most frequently used word in each text is "specialized knowledge in music discipline", followed by "music professional skills," "teaching ability in music," "relevant knowledge in music discipline," "professional ethics," etc. Then these 36 keywords were sorted from high to low according to frequency of occurrence. Next, the 36 keywords are sorted in descending order of their frequency of occurrence. Following this, the frequency of the 36 extracted elements is arranged from highest to lowest, which facilitates an overall understanding of the importance of each competency element for music teachers.

Semi-structured Interviews

Twenty respondents were selected for this study. All selected interviewees had at least 10 years of practical experience delivering music teaching in higher education. Some of the interviewees are higher education music teaching administrators, and most of the interviewees have experience participating in or being mainly responsible for the design of training documents for music teacher team development and music teacher competency improvement. Some of the interviewees are members of the Chinese Musicians Association (the Chinese Musicians Association is a professional people's organization composed of musicians and music workers of all ethnic groups across the country led by the Chinese government) or the Guangxi Musicians Association (referred to as the Guangxi Musicians) association, or the Guangxi Music Association (formerly known as the Guangxi Branch of the Chinese Musicians Association) member and person in charge, who have participated in the decision-making of the development of higher education music teachers in China. The names of the interviewees will not be revealed, nor will the names of their respective institutions of employment, departments, and years of service be disclosed in this profile due to the nature of confidentiality and at the request of the interviewees.

The 20 university music teachers who participated in the study are all music professional teachers, including 10 music teaching managers and 10 music teachers, with work experience ranging from 10 to 30 years. More than half of the respondents have a doctorate degree. Including 6 professors, 5 associate professors and 7 lecturers. Aged between 37-55. In order to carry out the content analysis work, with reference to the content of the instrument in the previous stage(Wiedemann, 2016; Ingersoll, 2004; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001), the code numbers of all the interviewed teachers were interpreted, counted, summarized and organized, and finally the competency elements of higher education music teachers were formed. Next, by checking all codes against these elements, the frequency of occurrence of each element in the 20 texts can be obtained. After soliciting opinions in the early stages of the study, the 20 interviewed music teachers agreed that the interviewers could conduct on-site recordings. After statistics, the shortest transcribed interview was 3,764 words and the longest was 5,778 words, totalling 74,843 words. At this stage, through the use of semi-structured interview methods, 49 higher education music teacher competency elements, including "Specialized Knowledge in Music Discipline', "Relevant Knowledge in Music Discipline" were extracted. At this point, the extraction of the competency elements of higher education music teachers in the qualitative stage has been completed.

RESULTS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUMMARY

This study aimed to delineate the critical teaching competencies for higher education music teachers through a comprehensive analysis utilizing literature review, policy document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. By systematically integrating the findings from these three methodologies, the research distilled a set of 42 core competency elements essential for effective teaching in higher education music programs. The use of content analysis and NVivo software enabled a rigorous examination and synthesis of literature, policy documents, and interview data, ensuring that the competencies identified are well-supported by multiple sources. The alignment across these methods underscores the reliability and relevance of the identified competencies, which were systematically categorized and summarized based on a competency dictionary.

Despite these strengths, the study is not without limitations. The semi-structured interviews, involving only 20 respondents, may not fully capture the diverse perspectives within the field of higher education music teaching. As suggested by Hasson and Keeney (2011), expanding the size of the expert panel in future research could enhance the robustness of the findings. Including a broader range of stakeholders, such as policymakers and students, alongside a more extensive panel of experts, could provide a more comprehensive view and increase the depth of insights. The current focus on administrators and music teachers offers valuable perspectives but might benefit from the inclusion of policymakers, who play a pivotal role in shaping music education policies.

In summary, this research highlights six key elements of teaching competency for university music teachers: Personal Traits (PT), Personal Values (PV), Personal Motivation (PM), Professional Knowledge (PK), Professional Skills (PS), and Social Competencies (SC). These elements are crucial for evaluating and enhancing the teaching effectiveness of future educators in higher education music programs. The findings contribute significantly to the field by providing a framework for assessing teaching competencies and suggest avenues for future research to refine these elements or explore additional competencies that may further support the development of high-quality music educators.

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