



Writing Guzheng Teaching Manual for Preschool Students in Sanming City, Fujian Province

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Abstract

Background and Aims: The purpose of this qualitative pilot study is to explore developmentally appropriate guzheng teaching for preschool children in Sanming City in Fujian Province, China. The study had two objectives: (1) to learn about expert informants' ideas about appropriate teaching strategies through in-depth interviews, and (2) to develop a prototype for a guzheng teaching manual for preschool children.

Methodology: Three experts who have extensive teaching experience (30 years or above) in teaching the guzheng to preschool children were selected purposefully. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and then analyzed through content analysis. The results of this analysis were used to design the prototype teaching manual. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained.

Results: It was determined that the teaching of the guzheng to preschool children should have the characteristics of play, imitation, story reading, picture seeing, and repertoire study. This prototype teaching manual for the guzheng in preschool includes age-appropriate and culturally relevant ways to combine listening to music with learning an instrument.

Conclusion: This guzheng manual prototype in preschool is a valuable resource that is informed by the knowledge of experts, early childhood music education pedagogy, and cultural values. The manual could be used as a basis for piloting and future evaluation in the classroom.

Keywords: Guzheng; Chinese Music Education; Preschool; Teaching Manual

Introduction

The Guzheng is a traditional Chinese plucked string instrument with over 2,000 years of history and is an indispensable part of Chinese culture (Lau, 2019). It has been used for solo and ensemble performances, known for its expressive sound and versatility in traditional Chinese music. The trend of incorporating traditional instruments into early childhood music education has emerged in the past decades for better cultural transmission and all-around development (Ho & Law, 2020). However, there is a lack of suitable Guzheng instructional materials for the age of preschool students, as most of the existing publications focus on children of elementary school





age or adults. Preschool education follows the principles of age-appropriateness, play-based, and exploratory learning, which accommodate the cognitive, social, and motor development of children in this age group (Berk, 2021). In the context of early childhood education, research in music education has revealed the need to adapt the music curriculum to young children through simplified musical activities, storytelling, and sensory experiences (Gordon, 2012). In the absence of an existing Guzheng teaching manual for preschool learners, it is difficult for students to grasp abstract concepts such as musical notation, tonality, and finger techniques. Therefore, the creation of a Guzheng manual that is playful and child-friendly yet systematic can offer a bridge between the pedagogy of this traditional instrument and the principles of early childhood education.

The Guzheng teaching manual, if well designed and implemented, could make a significant contribution to the research and practice of music pedagogy and cultural transmission. By employing simplified music notation, colorful illustrations, and engaging exercises, educators can align the teaching of Guzheng with the learning needs and characteristics of preschool children (Chen, 2018). This could also benefit teachers with a limited Guzheng background to facilitate their efforts in introducing the instrument in the classroom. Additionally, early childhood exposure to the Guzheng can help to lay a strong foundation for music skills and abilities while also promoting creativity, fine motor skills, and listening skills in children (Koops, 2017). Beyond the pedagogical and learning outcomes, a Guzheng teaching manual for preschool students could also have important cultural implications. In terms of cultural education and transmission, exposing young children to a traditional instrument like the Guzheng at an early age can nurture their cultural identity, pride, and intercultural understanding (Tan, 2015). In the context of multicultural education, the Guzheng, as an entry point to traditional Chinese music, could be introduced in preschools to facilitate cultural exchange and intercultural awareness among young students. Furthermore, this could also help support and sustain cultural preservation in the context of education.

Thus, the creation of a Guzheng teaching manual for preschool students is both timely and meaningful. It addresses the gap between traditional music teaching and early childhood education, while also serving the needs of all-around development in young children and cultural transmission in education. As a pedagogical innovation in music education, the preschool Guzheng manual has the potential to impact both music learning and the preservation and transmission of Chinese culture.

The guzheng is a traditional Chinese musical instrument with a history spanning more than 2,500 years, valued for its unique timbre and cultural significance. While widely recognized in higher levels of music education, guzheng instruction at the preschool level remains





underdeveloped in many regions of China, including Sanming City, Fujian Province. Early childhood education research has emphasized that exposure to music enhances cognitive, social, and emotional development (NAEYC, 2020; OECD, 2019). However, little attention has been paid to systematic approaches for teaching instrumental techniques—such as guzheng—to young learners.

Although Chinese scholarship has highlighted the aesthetic and cultural importance of music, the specific pedagogical approaches to introducing traditional instruments in early childhood settings are rarely addressed. This creates a gap between the cultural preservation of guzheng music and its accessibility to young learners. Developing a teaching manual for preschool guzheng instruction may bridge this gap by providing teachers with structured, developmentally appropriate, and culturally embedded strategies. This study, therefore, seeks to identify effective guzheng teaching methods for young children and to design a manual suitable for preschool classrooms in Sanming City, contributing both to early childhood pedagogy and to cultural preservation in music education.

The Purposes

1. To analyze expert perspectives on guzheng teaching methods appropriate for preschool children in Sanming City.
2. To design and develop a prototype guzheng teaching manual for preschool students, based on expert input and pedagogical principles.

Literary Review

The literature on guzheng highlights its historical development as a prominent Chinese instrument with rich cultural and musical traditions. While historical context provides cultural grounding, recent scholarship has shifted towards pedagogical applications of traditional music in early education. Studies emphasize that young learners benefit from play-based, developmentally appropriate approaches to instrumental instruction

Ma, (2024). However, few studies have directly explored curriculum development for guzheng in preschool contexts. Existing works on curriculum design (ADDIE, backward design) suggest that integrating expert knowledge with structured pedagogical frameworks improves usability and relevance. The omission of such frameworks in guzheng education represents a gap that this study aims to address.

Fu Qinli, 1983. In the early stage of development, as a folk musical instrument of the Qin state, the guzheng in the Warring States period was widely spread in the marketplace and became a part of people's entertainment life. With the passage of time, in the Han and Wei dynasties, the



spread of Guzheng was further expanded, and gradually entered the life of the court and literati from the folk. During this period, the musical performance of the zither was more abundant. It can be found from many poems and songs in the Han and Wei dynasties that the zither was often mentioned, such as Cao Zhi's Konghou introduction, "how generous is the Qin zither? It is harmonious and soft". Through the verses, we can feel the style and appeal of the zither performance at that time, and its position in social and cultural life has become increasingly prominent.

The Guzheng is an ancient instrument that has been modified over time. Tang Huiyao wrote in History that the Tang Dynasty was the golden age of Guzheng music. With the prosperity of the Silk Road and cultural exchanges with foreign countries, the Guzheng gradually entered the court ensemble and became an indispensable part of elegant music at banquets (Zhonghua Book Company, 1987). This laid a solid foundation for the Guzheng to evolve from a regional folk instrument to a representative of elegant court music.

Guzheng music in the Song Dynasty had developed to a higher level of diversity, with structural forms and performance methods becoming more diverse. As recorded by Sima Qian in Mengxi Bitan, a 12-string Guzheng and a 13-string Guzheng coexisted during the same period, and they used this change to express their musical ideas (Sima, 1962). At this time, the interaction between the Guzheng and Chinese opera, such as Kunqu Opera and Southern Opera, was becoming more prominent, and the Guzheng's role as an accompaniment instrument on stage was gradually fixed. On the one hand, the improvement of the instrumental form provided greater support for the development of Chinese opera; on the other hand, the Guzheng benefited from the change of performance method and increased development opportunities.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Three guzheng experts with over 30 years of teaching experience were purposively sampled. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants.

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Coding was conducted inductively, with emergent categories verified through inter-rater reliability checks. Triangulation was achieved by comparing interview data with observational notes.

Research Model

Phase 1: Study and Analysis of Teaching Methods

Objective: To explore the methods and techniques used in guzheng instruction for young children through interviews with key informants.





Process Selection of three key informants who are experts in guzheng education with more than 30 years of teaching experience.

Data collection through in-depth interviews.

Analysis using content analysis techniques to identify effective strategies for early childhood guzheng instruction.

Phase 2: Development of the Guzheng Teaching Manual

Objective: To develop a practical guzheng teaching manual tailored to the developmental needs of kindergarten students in Sanming City.

Process: Synthesize data from Phase 1 to design lesson structures, teaching techniques, musical pieces, and visual aids.

Draft the teaching manual based on pedagogical principles suitable for young learners.

Conceptual Framework Components

Component	Description
Input	Expert knowledge and insights on guzheng teaching methods (from interviews).
Process	Data analysis, synthesis of teaching strategies, and manual design.
Output	Guzheng teaching manual for kindergarten students.
Outcome (<i>Optional</i>)	Validation results indicating the appropriateness and usability of the manual.

Research Tools

The researcher constructed an interview form to understand the teaching methods of Guzheng to young preschool students.

The three key informants were invited to give the information by answering the questions.

The items of questions consisted of three parts:

Questions about guzheng techniques,

Problems in the practice of Guzheng teaching for young preschool students

Questions for Guzheng teaching methods

1. In the Guzheng teaching for preschool children, how can we guide children to transform their perception of the Guzheng's timbre into an improvement in their aesthetic appreciation and emotional expression of music works through teaching methods?

2. According to the physical and mental development characteristics of preschool children, which skill training model do you think can enhance their performance ability while promoting the simultaneous development of their music aesthetic literacy?





3. What kind of interesting teaching strategies do you think can effectively stimulate preschool children to actively explore the timbre of the Guzheng, thereby enhancing their aesthetic perception of music?

4. When improving the Guzheng playing skills of preschool children, how can we design interesting activities to enable children to understand the emotions contained in music works during happy learning and enhance their aesthetic experience?

5. What specific music games or interactive sessions are suitable for the cognitive level of preschool children and can help them improve their music aesthetic and emotional expression abilities through Guzheng learning?

6. When selecting Guzheng teaching repertoire, what criteria should be followed to ensure that it not only conforms to the aesthetic preferences of preschool children but also helps to cultivate their musical emotions and aesthetic abilities?

7. In your opinion, how can elements such as stories and children's songs be integrated into Guzheng teaching to guide preschool children to improve their aesthetic understanding and emotional perception of music during interesting learning?

8. In the process of cultivating the music aesthetic and emotional expression of preschool children, how can we use the form of group cooperative learning to enable them to learn from each other and make progress together?

9. From your professional perspective, in the Guzheng teaching for preschool children, how can we balance the relationship among skill training, interesting teaching, and aesthetic and emotional cultivation to achieve the best teaching results?

10. Regarding the improvement of preschool children's aesthetic appreciation and emotional expression of Guzheng music, besides the conventional teaching methods, what innovative approaches do you think can be attempted? Observation Form (1)Teaching method (2)Teaching materials (3)Teaching contents (4)Teaching technique (5)Teaching tools (6)Student's feedback

Tool verification

To verify the interview form and observation form, three experts were invited for an IOC (Item-Objective Congruence) check.

Both the interview form and observation form were evaluated by the above-mentioned experts. The assessment results were categorized into three levels: '+1' for agreement, '0' for uncertainty, and '-1' for disagreement. Questions with an average score below 0.6 were revised based on expert suggestions until they met the required standards.

After receiving approval from the experts, the researcher proceeded to the next stage

Conceptual Framework Components

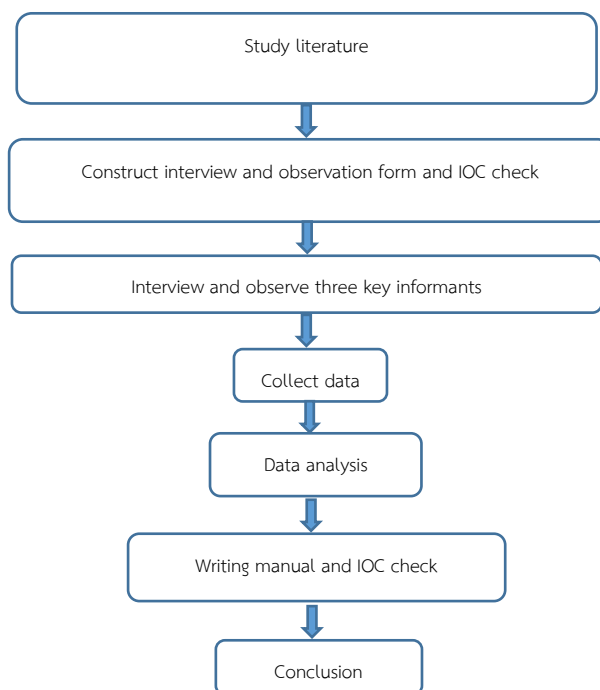


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Components

Research Tools

The researcher constructed an interview form to survey the Yiyang opera in Jiangxi Provincial Opera and Dance Theatre, Nanchang city, Jiangxi Province.

The primary tools were (1) an interview guide focusing on guzheng pedagogy for preschool children and (2) an observation form assessing teaching methods, materials, and student engagement. Both tools were validated using Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) with three experts. Items scoring below 0.6 were revised before data collection. The IOC results were documented in tabular form.

Results of Data Analysis

The data collected from in-depth interviews with three key informant experts in guzheng education with over 30 years of teaching experience were analyzed using content analysis. The results are summarized in the following thematic areas:

Teaching Strategies for Young Children. The experts emphasized the importance of using play-based and interactive learning methods when teaching guzheng to kindergarten students. Techniques such as imitation, repetition, and storytelling were found to be effective in maintaining attention and fostering musical engagement.



Curriculum and Content Design. It was recommended that the curriculum include simple, slow-tempo musical pieces, appropriate finger techniques, and a focus on basic posture and hand positioning. Lessons should be short, fun, and aligned with children's developmental stages.

Use of Teaching Materials and Media. All informants agreed on the value of using visual aids, such as colorful charts, real instruments, and animated videos, to help explain abstract musical concepts. Props and games were also encouraged to make learning more tangible and engaging.

Student-Centered Approach The teaching approach should adapt to each child's learning pace and interest. Individualized attention and encouragement were seen as key to building confidence and enjoyment in playing the guzheng.

Cultural Integration Experts noted that teaching guzheng to young children should not only focus on musical skills but also introduce cultural values. Songs rooted in Chinese traditions help foster a sense of identity and appreciation of heritage.

Conclusion of Data Analysis: The analysis confirms that effective guzheng instruction for kindergarten students requires a developmentally appropriate, playful, and culturally embedded approach. These findings directly informed the structure and content of the developed teaching manual, ensuring it is both practical and pedagogically sound for early childhood education.

Results

Content analysis revealed four major themes: (1) play-based and interactive learning strategies, (2) age-appropriate curriculum and repertoire, (3) multimedia and visual supports, and (4) cultural integration. Experts emphasized the importance of imitation, storytelling, and games to maintain engagement. Lesson designs focusing on slow-tempo songs and basic finger exercises were recommended. Visual aids and props were encouraged to bridge abstract concepts. The manual was developed to reflect these strategies.

1. Play-Based and Interactive Learning

The first theme, play-based and interactive learning, emerged from discussions on the content analysis. Early childhood education researchers consistently highlight the critical role of play in learning processes for young children, advocating for approaches that integrate play to promote active engagement, intrinsic motivation, and the development of both social and cognitive skills (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). In the context of Guzheng learning, several experts underlined the value of incorporating imitation techniques, storytelling, and interactive games to maintain children's interest and improve their retention. By leveraging playful learning experiences, children are more likely to approach Guzheng practice with curiosity and enthusiasm rather than perceiving it as a strict and structured task.



2. Age-Appropriate Curriculum and Repertoire

The second theme, age-appropriate curriculum and repertoire, centers on tailoring lesson content and materials to suit the developmental readiness of preschool children. Experts in the field recommended the design of curriculum materials that focus on slow-tempo songs and simplified finger exercises, which are better aligned with young learners' motor skills and attention spans (Koops, 2017). This is supported by research in early childhood music education, which underscores the importance of age-appropriate sequencing and scaffolding in helping children build confidence and foundational skills before gradually introducing more complex techniques (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019). Consequently, the manual features progressive steps that ensure the learning materials are accessible yet effectively promote skill development.

3. Multimedia and Visual Supports

The third theme, multimedia and visual supports, relates to the benefits of integrating multimedia tools and visual aids in preschool Guzheng teaching. Visual supports, such as colorful charts, props, and digital media, can significantly aid young learners in bridging the gap between abstract musical concepts and their concrete thinking patterns (Chen, 2018). In practical terms, these tools serve as effective scaffolds, facilitating the connection between symbols, sounds, and physical actions. Additionally, the use of multimedia, such as videos or interactive apps, can enrich the learning experience and cater to different learning styles, thereby enhancing both understanding and engagement.

4. Cultural Integration

The fourth theme, cultural integration, involves embedding Guzheng instruction within broader cultural narratives. Experts in the field emphasized the importance of using folk tales, traditional songs, and symbolic storytelling to provide context for learning. This approach not only conveys musical techniques but also fosters cultural pride and contributes to identity formation (Tan, 2015). In the case of preschoolers, cultural integration through storytelling and music creates an early appreciation of heritage and meaningful links between the instrument, historical context, and personal identity.

5. Reflection

The four identified themes informed the thoughtful design and development of the Guzheng teaching manual. The integration of play-based learning strategies, age-appropriate curriculum materials, visual scaffolds, and cultural narratives led to a comprehensive and balanced curriculum. This design ensures that the Guzheng teaching manual for preschoolers is not only pedagogically sound but also culturally enriching, aligning with the dual goals of early





childhood music education: building foundational skills and transmitting cultural values and traditions (Ho & Law, 2020).

Discussion

The development of the Guzheng teaching manual prototype was informed by a consultation with the masters. The integration of expert input into the research process lends authority to the manual. It allows the researcher to reflect on the actual practice of Guzheng and become familiar with the basic content of Guzheng teaching for preschool children in Sanming City, thus forming the basic framework of Guzheng teaching materials. In addition, the manual is also based on the theory of early childhood education. The creation of Guzheng teaching materials for preschool children in Sanming City is based on the application of relevant theories, making the curriculum content meet the needs of the developmental characteristics of preschool children at this stage (Berk, 2021).

The researcher uses the teaching guide to show the relationship between the Guzheng teaching method and preschool children. Play is the primary means by which children learn about their world. Play-based learning for young children is one of the most important educational strategies. The activities developed in the Guzheng teaching manual for preschool children in Sanming City can lead to children's enjoyment and interest in learning. Including musical fairy tales, imitating the Guzheng performance of the researcher, and imitating songs and games can help children's interest, let them learn the fingering skills, and maintain their attention (Koops, 2017). This fully demonstrates the value and necessity of using the play-based approach in preschool Guzheng learning.

Teaching content that is relevant to children's culture and environment is meaningful. The incorporation of traditional Chinese songs, local folk stories, and cultural symbolisms into the Guzheng lessons can enhance children's sense of cultural identity and instill an appreciation for cultural heritage from a young age. Some studies have found that music education in early childhood is also an important medium for learning self-identity and cultural diversity (Tan, 2015). The Guzheng teaching materials for preschool children in Sanming City are integrated with local cultural elements. Sanming is a city with strong local characteristics in China. The connection between traditional music and the residents has not yet been diluted by the large Internet industry. The Guzheng teaching manual for preschool children in Sanming City allows preschool children not only to learn music but also to inherit cultural resources.

The manual only exists in a prototype format at the time of this review and has not been piloted in a classroom setting. To validate the effectiveness of the proposed teaching manual and gather concrete feedback, it is essential to pilot test it in real-world preschool





environments. Observing children's interaction with the manual, teachers' implementation of the strategies, and collecting feedback from both educators and parents will provide valuable insights for refining the manual (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019). Without this critical step, the manual remains an untested and speculative resource, despite its potential. In addition, the feedback of more preschool teachers and parents needs to be consulted on whether the steps of the manual are simple and easy to understand, and whether the content has the characteristics of Sanming City, to improve the scope of the manual.

The manual research has educational significance for the systematic teaching of Guzheng to preschool children in Sanming City. In the future, a teaching experiment should be carried out on the basis of the integration of the Guzheng teaching manual for preschool children in Sanming City. First of all, it can be observed through longitudinal research whether the teaching manual has a positive significance for the acquisition of preschool children's Guzheng skills. Secondly, it is necessary to further explore whether the teaching manual can improve children's interest in learning and increase their understanding of cultural heritage. Moreover, through the optimization of the manual, this research can be carried out in other regions and cultural contexts. This study focused on Sanming City, but similar efforts can be made in other regions or countries to integrate traditional musical instruments into early childhood education curricula (Ho & Law, 2020).

Conclusion

This study developed a prototype guzheng teaching manual for preschool students in Sanming City, grounded in expert input and early childhood pedagogy. The manual emphasizes developmentally appropriate, play-based, and culturally responsive teaching strategies. While effective as a prototype, further piloting in real classrooms is needed to evaluate its impact on student engagement, skill acquisition, and cultural appreciation.

Recommendation

Development and Implementation Recommendation

It is recommended that the developed guzheng teaching manual be piloted and implemented in several kindergarten classrooms in Sanming City to evaluate its effectiveness in real teaching contexts. Feedback from both teachers and students will help refine the manual for broader use.

Teacher Training: Providing professional development workshops for kindergarten teachers on how to effectively use the guzheng teaching manual and incorporate play-based and culturally relevant techniques will enhance teaching quality and student engagement.



Multimedia Integration Future development of the manual could include more interactive multimedia resources, such as video demonstrations, audio samples, and digital games, to further stimulate young learners' interest and facilitate self-directed learning.

Parental Involvement: Encouraging parents to participate in children's guzheng learning at home through simplified activities or guided listening can strengthen learning outcomes and foster family appreciation of traditional music.

Further Research Recommendation

Further Research: Additional studies should explore the long-term impact of guzheng instruction on children's musical abilities, cognitive development, and cultural identity formation. Research involving larger and more diverse samples could provide more generalizable findings.

Curriculum Integration Educational authorities might consider integrating the guzheng teaching manual into formal early childhood music curricula, promoting cultural preservation and music education equity.

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