

Research on the Choir's System of Music Education from the Perspective of Communication --Based on 6 amateur elderly choirs

Pengcheng Su¹, Kovit Kantasiri²

¹Ph.D, Candidate, School of Liberal Arts, Shinawatra University,
pengcheng_su@yahoo.com

²Assistant Professor, Shinawatra University School of Liberal Arts,
kovit.k@siu.ac.th

Abstract

Under the background of the new era, chorus, as one of the central projects of social activities, has accomplished the diversification of the participating groups, in particular the founding of the social choir with the elderly group as its core. Singing, as one of the forms of communication, can not only obtain entertainment, but also improve the experienter's health. The choir acts as a comprehensive group of musical activities. To achieve a balance between "entertainment" and "healthy aging," the quality of choir music education must be enhanced, and a scientific music education system must be established.

Consequently, this paper investigates six amateur choirs in Heilongjiang Province through a questionnaire survey, investigates and analyzes the current situation of music education for amateur choirs in Heilongjiang Province, and offers practical recommendations for the construction of a choral art education system. It is discovered that a comprehensive and scientific system of music education can be created by constructing teaching and research departments, curriculum, and instructional personnel.

Key words: Choir, the elderly, Experience, music education system.

1. Introduction

Population aging is the most significant medical and socio-demographic dilemma in the globe. However, China is one of the world's fastest-aging nations (Hao et al., 2019). The Communique on the Development of the National Cause for Aging in 2020 was issued by the Department of Aging

Health of the National Health Commission of China on October 15, 2021 (hereinafter referred to as the Communiqué).

According to the “Communiqué”, as of midnight on November 1, 2020, the elderly population in China aged 60 or older accounted for 18.70% of the total population, while the elderly population aged 65 or older accounted for 13.50% of the total population. From 2010 to 2020, the percentage of individuals aged 60 and older increased by 5.44%, while the percentage of those aged 65 and older increased by 4.63%.

The World Health Organization has advocated for healthful active aging. Nonetheless, “the social and emotional quality of life of the elderly has been affected by age-related degradation of physiological functions” (WHO, 2020), and age-related changes in cognition and living conditions substantially diminish the well-being of the elderly (Pentikainen et al., 2022). Aging is also associated with a decline in social networks and an increase in loneliness, which can have devastating effects on both mental and physical health (Rourke, Collins, & Sidani, 2018). Physical and mental health problems have had a significant impact on the overall quality of life of the elderly.

In the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee, the new proposition “building a harmonious socialist society” was presented for the first time. Social integration is a crucial aspect of sound aging because it implies social cohesion among a large population. As one of the primary components of society, the elderly have a direct impact on the development of a harmonious society.

A large number of studies have demonstrated that music is an effective method to stimulate the brain in multiple dimensions during the aging process, as well as an important source of enjoyment, learning, and pleasure (Sarkamo & Sihvonen, 2018). Music training can enhance cognitive performance and induce a transfer effect on executive function, attention, and memory at the physiological level (Benz et al., 2016; Moreno & Bidelman, 2014).

Choruses as the most active and popular music group in society, which are characterized by their diverse and less restrictive musical styles (Ucan, 2001, p.13). Based on the communal nature of chorus activities, the elderly quickly become the largest group of participants. Nevertheless, the current state of choral music training in China requires improvement. There are still issues, such as a disparity between music education and the teaching of other disciplines, and the participants in experiential learning have not been able to receive comprehensive development. Possible causes include system construction, policy support, and local consideration. Against the backdrop of the new era, it is necessary to implement a set of scientific and reasonable music teaching methods in order to promote quality-oriented education comprehensively. A scientific and reasonable music education system

will fuel the growth of Chinese choral art. Therefore, from the perspective of communication, this study examines the current state of music education for the elderly choirs in Heilongjiang through field research and proposes a set of reasonable choral music education system in the hope that the findings of this paper will serve as a reference for other choirs.

2. The importance of music courses in Choirs

Music is much more than a single note. It comprises the spiritually rich culture of humanity. It can shape the souls of people and encourage them to be positive and attractive (Zhang Lanfang, 2018). The elderly has the ability to express their emotions through music, which is a vibrant form of aesthetic education. Not only can music express human emotions such as love, family, and friendship, but it can also vanquish the repulsive. Not only can offering music courses in chorus have a positive pedagogical influence on the elderly, but it can also promote the development of art and culture as well as the transmission of traditional red culture.

Music performs a positive function in educating people (Chen Peng, 2019). In the process of music education, teachers always combine choral works with red culture so that the elderly can increase their patriotism while appreciating music, thereby stimulating the participants' patriotic behavior. As a form of art, music can embellish sentiment, purify the mind, and even have the effect of eliminating extravagance; music can convey the courageous beauty of characters and the vigorous growth of society. Therefore, music can stimulate creative thought in participants. Especially the elderly, as a vulnerable group in the social structure, are confronting increasing pressure due to the increasing degree of aging, such as the degree of social integration, emotional pressure, and interpersonal pressure, as social competition increases. Numerous elderly people favor music, which can alleviate their stress, remove their psychological barriers, help them improve their personality, boost their spiritual fortitude, and figure out the right values, thereby promoting healthy aging.

In conclusion, offering music courses for choir serves an essential purpose and is crucial. Moreover, it is necessary to design music courses rationally in order to maximize the effect of music on healthy aging.

3. Present situation of Music Course education of Chorus in Heilongjiang Province

3.1 Interview and survey

The Elderly Art Troupe Choir, the Sun Island Choir, the Dam Choir, the Stars Choir, the Old Zhiqing Choir, and the Sunset Sound Chorus are examined in depth in order to determine the current status of music course education for the elderly choir in Heilongjiang Province, China. The survey is divided into two sections, interview survey and questionnaire survey, in order to be representative. Ten chorus instructors and ten choir representatives were visited. Other chorus members were sent online questionnaires, and 571 valid responses were collected. This survey's interview and questionnaire data were collected exhaustively, and the survey's results were exhaustive and effective.

3.2 Survey Results

According to the investigation, numerous choirs in Heilongjiang Province have incorporated music courses into choral music instruction in the form of required fundamental courses and have, on average, obtained remarkable results. However, the curriculum falls far short of the requirements of professional choirs. Some choirs do not designate music classes as limited electives and lack scientific and systematic instructional planning. In addition, many ensembles lack fundamental music courses.

3.2.1 Interview outcome

Choral administration and resource allocation. The Elderly Art Troupe Choir, the Sun Island Choir, and the Sunset Sound Chorus have not implemented fundamental solfege and aural training music courses. Although other choirs have established some fundamental courses, they have not effectively carried out their instructional responsibilities. The interview reveals that the choir in Heilongjiang Province requires improvements to its music education instruments, particularly classroom layout. Only three of the six choirs have actual spaces for choral activities. Even though 1 and the choruses are outfitted, they have been in disrepair for years and have lost their utility. The other two choirs have no set locations.

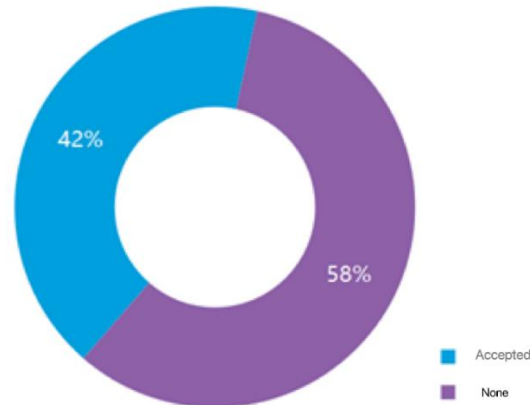
Curriculum and instructional materials. According to the interview, only three choirs offer a music appreciation course as a limited elective, while the rest of the choirs only offer this type of course as part of the school's overall sex quality education or as an optional course. As for the number of classes, the majority are significantly fewer than the number of professional choirs. In addition, there is no set textbook for chorus teachers to use, and the course content is largely determined by the teachers, demonstrating a lack of systematicity and science.

Situation regarding teacher staffing and instruction. The choir of the senior Art Troupe has approximately 100 members, three music teachers, one conductor, and one instructor in charge of teaching fundamental music courses. Sun Island Choir has approximately 100 members, two music instructors, and one conductor, whereas Dam Choir has approximately 700 members, two music teachers, one conductor, and one attendance. The Old Zhiqing Choir has over 130 members and three full-time music instructors, whereas the Stars Choir only has a music teacher and a conductor for its over 80 elderly members. The Sunset Sound Chorus has over 500 members, but only two full-time music instructors. Among them, the Sun Island Choir and Stars Choir instructors have the most opportunities for training, but none for participation in public music courses.

3.2.2 Questionnaire outcomes

This questionnaire is intended for participants of the amateur geriatric choir. According to the statistics, 86% of the elderly say they enjoy music, while only 2% say they detest learning music. The remaining members do not dislike learning music. Figure 1 depicts the circumstance of survey respondents who have received music instruction. More than half of the respondents indicated that they had not received choral music training.

Figure 1 Receiving music training and learning



According to the survey, 82% of chorus members believe that offering fundamental music courses in chorus is necessary, while 14% of participants disagree and the remaining participants are neutral. As for the choir music course that has been offered thus far, Figure 2 depicts the experiential satisfaction. It can be seen that a large number of choir members are dissatisfied with the content of the course, indicating that the provision of music courses for each choir has a great deal of space for improvement.

Figure 2 Attitude towards the current music courses offered by the Choir



After investigation, it is found that the preferences of the elderly for music genres and their demands for courses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Survey results of experiencers' music genre preference and course opening demand

Items	Types	Proportion (%)
What kind of music do you like?	Red songs	86
	Pop music	71
	Art song	13
	Folk song	8
	Traditional opera	5
The music course I want to choose most?	Vocal music class	62
	Practice your ears by solfeggio	52
	Music theory	50
	Folk music appreciation	40
	Body training	10
	Stage performance	6

As shown in Table 1, the music and course categories preferred by chorus members can be added to the chorus based on members' preferences. In addition, the training of instructors who instruct unpopular courses should be improved so that they can make the courses more engaging and guide chorus members to increase their enthusiasm for the chorus experience.

Each instructor has his or her own methods and personality. The survey reveals that only 23% of chorus members are extremely satisfied with the instructor's teaching methods, while 19% are not satisfied and the remainder are satisfied. Regarding instructional strategies, there are primarily the appreciation analysis method, the art practice method, and the discussion method, among others. In this survey, 78%, 79%, 68%, and 5% of respondents indicated that teachers have implemented corresponding instructional strategies. It indicates that teachers

primarily employ the appreciation analysis method, the art practice method, and the discussion method. According to the majority of students, course instruction is dull; therefore, it is preferable to employ a variety of instructional strategies.

The venue satisfaction survey revealed that more than sixty percent of members were dissatisfied, only eighteen percent were satisfied, and the remainder were indifferent.

4. Problem analysis

According to the findings of an investigation of six elderly amateur choirs in Heilongjiang Province regarding the current state of music education, there are issues with the curriculum, members' music literacy, teachers, and education mechanism.

4.1 Existing issues with music curriculum planning

According to the survey results of six choirs in Heilongjiang Province, the emphasis placed on music courses varies significantly between choirs. Groups that value the curriculum will include music education in their talent development plans and designate music courses as limited electives. Groups that place little value on music courses offer only one or two related courses symbolically, with a high degree of randomization and no apparent teaching plan. Some chorales do not even require Vocal Music, much fewer fundamental courses such as Solfeggio, Music Theory, and Music Appreciation. This demonstrates that choral groups' music lesson planning is not scientific and exhaustive, and the opening is more arbitrary. It is imperative to implement a scientific curriculum system to reverse the trend of disorganized, sluggish, and disorganized classes. In the context of the new era, the backward music education of these chorus groups is not an isolated incident, and can be interpreted as a reflection of the exceedingly unbalanced development of choir music education in China. In order to resolve these issues, talent, policies, and financial resources must be enhanced.

4.2 Problems exist in the musical literacy of chorus members

According to the survey results, most of the participants like music and hope to improve their artistic accomplishment through music. However, according to the statistical results in Table 1, the elderly prefers red songs, followed by pop songs, art songs and folk songs, and finally traditional opera. It can be seen from these rankings that Chinese choirs' understanding of traditional music and elegant music needs to be improved. This may have a lot to do with the way the music is transmitted. The elderly has experienced the revolutionary era and have a special historical memory for the red revolutionary songs.

In addition, pop music is easy to understand and can be seen everywhere on new media in the new era. It is easy to resonate with experiencers and attract their attention. But traditional music is difficult to understand, and sophisticated music requires systematic training to empathize with, which can easily turn participants off. Therefore, educators need to assume the responsibility and obligation of spreading traditional culture, actively create a good classroom teaching environment, and make members more interested in learning about traditional culture.

4.3 There are problems with music education teachers

The number of elderly people participating in the choir is increasing rapidly (European Choral Association, 2015), and the number of choir members is also on the rise, but the number of music teachers cannot keep pace with the increase of the number of members. And based on the results of the survey so far, no choir can make the grade. This may be an important reason for the current lack of music courses in China. It is worth noting that the high professional quality of the teachers leads to unsatisfactory results in the opening of music courses. The researchers believe that the reason may be that the teachers are too professional and the expression of knowledge is relatively professional. The elderly will lose interest in learning if they do not understand. In addition, highly qualified teachers are reluctant to teach non-professional choir members. Thus, it can be seen that strictly dividing the types of music teachers may be of great help to music education.

4.4 Problems exist in music education

After investigation, it is found that many choirs pay more attention to music education than in previous years, but there are still some chorus groups have not set up corresponding music courses. The basic course of music is an important basis to guarantee the efficiency of chorus teaching and the quality of old people's experience. At present, some choirs have not established corresponding compulsory courses, which will hinder the development of choral music education to a large extent. If choir leaders attach importance to it, the corresponding music education system can be improved, and the backward status quo of music education can be reversed, so as to ensure the quality of chorus experience for the elderly.

5. Recommendations for the development of a choir music education system

Choral participation contributes significantly to a healthful and active aging process. The diverse combination of brain processes associated with singing (multisensory, linguistic, cognitive, and affective, etc.), social interaction (group singing), and goal-oriented learning factors

make choral activities a comprehensive social musical medium, according to a large body of research. It promotes mental health in the elderly (Clift et al., 2010; Cohen, Manarino, & Staron, 2006; Bailey & Davidson, 2005), physical health (Beck et al., 2000; Clark & Harding, 2012), and social well-being (Hilliard, 2002). Based on this circumstance, it is beneficial to refine the choir's music education system in order to increase the experiential sense of pleasure. In light of the existing problems in choir music education, it is necessary to construct a reasonable music education system, a curriculum system, to change teaching ideas, to update educational concepts, and to adjust teaching methods so as to increase the enthusiasm and intent of participants to engage in chorus activities.

5.1 Improve the setting of choir music courses

The curriculum positioning of choir music must be reasonable, and different courses must be both interrelated and independent, so that participants can select courses corresponding to their own levels (Liang Qingdong, Wenting Liang, 2018). According to the results of the survey on choral groups in Heilongjiang Province, the choir can continue to maintain the existing music courses, and set up more types of basic courses based on the needs and training objectives of students, in order to achieve a course system that combines online and offline, in-class and extracurricular, ability and interest, and to improve the participants' aesthetic appreciation while improving their musical literacy.

The establishment of music knowledge and cultivation courses, such as music general courses, music development and cultivation courses, and music critical thinking courses. Among them, music general education courses guide students in comprehending the nature of music, establishing music aesthetics, etc. The material is simple to comprehend and serves as an introduction for novices. Popular classes include "Fun Music Theory", "Music Appreciation", and "Popular Music Appreciation". As the name suggests, music cultivation and development courses are intended to stimulate students' perceptions of spiritual and natural beauty from a variety of perspectives in order to enhance their music cultivation. Included in the standard curriculum are History of Chinese Music, Choral Culture, Opera Appreciation, and Symphony Appreciation. On the other hand, music critical thinking courses teach students to analyze various types and eras of music in order to broaden their horizons. These are courses based on music development and cultivation. Common courses include "Appreciation of Enchant", "Oratorio", and "Appreciation and Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Famous Music".

Additionally, courses in practical skills, including popular and practical courses, should be developed. Popular ones include Vocal Skills, Choral Conducting, solfeggio, and Ear Training, among others. Stage art performance and solo art performance are practical courses (Ding Feifei,

2019). These courses are highly interactive and practical, extremely popular with participants, and have a positive educational impact on students.

MOOCs and extracurricular music practice opportunities online. The Internet's prominence has given rise to MOOCs, which are founded on student interests and have no enrollment limit. Therefore, choir directors should prioritize the benefits of online MOOCs for music education and use them to address problems such as lack of venues, scarcity of instructors, and lack of funds. In addition, educators should pay attention to extracurricular practice activities, as not only do they come in a variety of forms, but they are also popular among chorus members. We should instruct students to conduct extracurricular music practice in a planned, purposeful, and organized manner. Such as chorus competitions and art exhibitions.

5.2 Enhance the personnel of music education instructors

Building a professional and effective staff of music educators is a necessary condition for assuring the quality of music instruction (Dong Dahan, 2018). The majority of choir music teachers are university graduates with firm professional skills and fundamental musical knowledge, according to the survey. However, there is no rational and comprehensive method for instructing music. Numerous elective choir music courses are taught directly by conductors. Due to the fact that these conductors lack pertinent teaching training, they use only traditional teaching methods, making it difficult for non-professional chorus members to comprehend the difficult teaching content. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce or train a group of teachers who are proficient in choral art and familiar with non-professional music teaching methods, and let these teachers be responsible for the research and opening of basic music courses for the group, so as to improve the quality of music education comprehensively. Since music education is universal, it is necessary to have instructors who can effectively instruct non-music public students in music. For public music lessons, it is sufficient to enhance the musical literacy of students rather than their vocal music techniques. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate educators with a broad range of humanistic qualities. Through diverse training and lectures, teachers' overall quality and humanistic achievements can be enhanced.

The instructional methods employed by educators must also be improved. Courses should be designed in accordance with the fundamental circumstances and interests of the members. In the meantime, instructors should devise their own instructional strategies based on the characteristics of the diverse dissemination of contemporary knowledge. This research concludes that teaching methods can be categorized as general class, intensive class, network class, and practice class. Faced with students with a shaky musical

foundation, teachers should employ the extensive lecture method, construct a relatively complete fundamental music knowledge system for them quickly, and set the groundwork for their self-study. Faced with students who have a certain foundation in music, teachers can choose the teaching method of attentive listening, allow students to appreciate various musical themes, and ask them to express their emotions. Let the choir members increase their capacity for independent learning, be able to articulate their own comprehension of the music, and foster the development of specific musical thought. Teachers can also assist students in learning online courses, but they must choose and interpret teaching materials sensibly so that online courses can provide students with a quality education and alleviate the stress of school teaching. Practical class is the preferable technique of instruction among students. If conditions permit, teachers should enhance interaction with students and allow them to immerse themselves in the musical experience through hands-on activities.

5.3 Establish the instruction and research department for choral music

The interview reveals that choirs whose directors place a high value on choral work will generally establish choral instruction and research departments, and the music courses of these choirs are relatively robust. It demonstrates that the educational philosophy of senior leaders significantly influences the development of music curricula. Consequently, if various choirs wish to give full play to music education, enhance the quality of chorus activities, and actively promote the healthy aging process, senior leaders must change their perspectives and organize the establishment of corresponding choral teaching and research departments responsible for the investigation, opening of music courses, and organization of related activities. The teaching and research responsibilities of the music department should be crystal obvious. It should be responsible for the research, design, and evaluation of the respective music courses, as well as the design of relevant instructional materials, funding requests, venue requests, and teacher training.

6. Conclusion

Choral activity is a social group founded in the arts that promotes physical and mental health through an organic combination of social interaction, music listening, and group singing (Clift & Morrison, 2011). However, many choral ensembles are affiliated with non-profit social organizations. The unbalanced growth of choral art results from the lack of effective management in these organizations' development processes. As a result, chorus education is in dire need of a perfect and scientific education system and administration in order to promote the growth of chorus art. This paper investigates the status quo of music

education among six various categories of choirs in Heilongjiang by means of a questionnaire survey, and concludes that the music education system of the majority of choral groups is not ideal, and that music education is given little importance. It has been discovered that these organizations typically face issues such as an unreasonable music curriculum, low musical literacy among members, a lack of music instructors, and the absence of education departments. Therefore, it is suggested that choirs in the Heilongjiang region and the rest of the nation should better their internal music curriculum, optimize their team of music education teachers, and establish choral teaching and research departments based on their actual requirements.

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