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## **MEDICAL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS MUSIC EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH IN NINGXIA**

**Zhikai Wang<sup>1</sup>, Boo Ho Voon<sup>2\*</sup>, Yusman Yacob<sup>3</sup> & Ying Lang<sup>4</sup>**

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### ABSTRACT

Music education is useful for medical students especially in meeting their psychological needs and reducing stress amidst their busy medical training. A medical student-oriented music education system, as one part of arts, most probably could help to develop an entire medical knowledgeable system, which is strongly associated with education, medicine and life. Hence, the medical students' knowledge of music and attitudes towards music education need to be understood for strategic and more balanced medical education development. This research aims to explore the medical students' perception of music and music education, and understand the importance of the integration of music into medical education. Besides, it also hopes to provide a basis for high-quality development of education and its realization. An online questionnaire was done in Ningxia. A total of 1,232 medical students participated in the online survey consisted of more than 20 questions. The findings indicated that the medical students had a positive perceptions of music education. Recommendations are provided for music education in medical universities to benefit the students and the universities.

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### **1. Introduction**

As an art, music plays an important role in the cultivation of students' musical accomplishment and moral quality. Therefore, enough attention must be given to music teaching. However, in the current stage of college music teaching, the concept of music teaching is still

relatively backward, and the concept of quality education has not been implemented into specific practice, making music teaching either a mere formality or the study of theoretical knowledge, and students' enthusiasm for music learning is not high (Chen, 2017). With the continuous development of China's education and teaching reform, the current people are generally required to carry out quality education, and music education occupies the core position in quality education. In the ordinary colleges of higher learning music education has been widely recognized, but in universities music education is still in the stage of development, and the theoretical research is still not rich (Ou, 2017). Therefore, in the case of the vigorous development of quality higher education, music education is essential as it can help the students to improve their ability to cope with pressure as well as improve their comprehensive quality (Cheng,2014).

Medicine is the life guarantee and its progresses abundantly implies biomedical advances not only as natural science but art. In this discipline which is closely related to life and even determines life, how medical students view life, understand life and save life is particularly important; a medical student-oriented music education system, as one part of arts, could help to develop entire medical knowledgeable system, which is strongly associated with education, medicine and life. Goethe famously said: "The tree of life is always green, and theories are often gray." This reveals an unbreakable truth, that is, if any theory, including aesthetic theory, is only satisfied with system changes can only be gray.

In China's journey towards modernization, human modernization is as important as the modernization of material life, in which aesthetic education is an essential link to promote this modernization. As early as 1904s, Wang Guowei published "Confucius' aesthetic education", which used Schiller's aesthetic education views to explain Confucius' thoughts; Cai Yuanpei positioned the purpose of aesthetics as moral education, believing that "cultivating virtue is better than advocating aesthetic education", and put forward the theory of "replacing religion with aesthetic education". Indeed, aesthetic education is both sentiment and spiritual education. It can not only improve people's aesthetic quality, but also affect people's emotions, interests, temperament and mind, stimulating people's spirit, warming people's mind, and imperceptibly promoting people's all-round development.

According to statistics, there are more than 280 ordinary colleges and universities with medical majors in China. Ningxia Medical University is the only institution of higher medical education in Ningxia, which shoulders the important task of training medical talents for Ningxia. With more than 60 years of schooling experience, Ningxia Medical University has attached unprecedented importance to music education in recent years. Due to the heavy academic burden of medical students in medical universities, aesthetic education for medical students is often ignored. In the late 1990s, China formally incorporated aesthetic education into the educational policy, making it an important wing of cultivating new socialist people with all-round development. However, in medical universities, aesthetic education is often a foil and appendage compared with moral education, intellectual education and sports. It is an optional, more or less, light or heavy "soft task".

## **2. The Role of Music Education for Medical Students**

Cultivation effect of music education in medical universities, music education plays an irreplaceable important role in improving the whole quality of the people, improve people's quality of life, cultivate innovative talents, innovation ability and shaping perfect personality, enhance people's ideological and moral cultivation, promote people's physical and mental health and social relations(Wang, 2020). In order to better realize people's development, we must strengthen art education in the medical universities and colleges though it could be challenging due to the large number of professional courses, need to adjust measures to suit the local conditions. Undoubtedly, the medical students have to excel in their professional course learning, but as a

person, the physical and mental health require the appropriate art education and art practice to complement.

The existence of music activities in the medical universities is essential. Appropriate integration of music education for rational thinking, professionalism will most probably equip the medical students (Wang, 2020). Relevant music can heal. The wounded and/or dying patients need the relevant art work to relax, be respected, accepted, be care for through this kind of positive energy transfer. As medical college students, in the course of heavy workload at times, they can transfer power through appropriate music activities. In art activities, every team cooperation, every concerted effort, under the pressure of no strict examination of the course, every heart- moving and beautiful pictures brought by music will achieve the goal of cultivating the benevolence of medical student and/or workers.

## **2.1 Supplementary role of art education in medical school curriculum**

Traditional Chinese medicine has long been said as 'Five tones and five elements.' The Huangdi Neijing records that the heaven has five tones, people have five viscera, heaven has six laws, and people have six viscera. For instance, the angle is the wood sound to the liver, the palace is the earth sound to the spleen, and the feather is the water sound to the kidney. The tones can play a role on the corresponding five viscera. This shows that the traditional medicine in China is holding a positive attitude towards using music to treat diseases (Su & Zhang, 2011).

In addition to the important fundamental medical courses, the art education courses are potentially important in the medical universities. However, because of the limitation of course time, rigorous medical courses, the integration of the relevant art education curriculum becomes very challenging and could be a potential conflict. But, if the institutions do not accept the integration of art education, the useful roles of emotional education, spiritual education, caring education, and empathy education will not be recognized accordingly too. It is undeniable that in the medical education, the emotional education, spiritual education, caring education, and empathy education are necessary.

Yin Bo (2007) put forward in the 'Study of Chinese modern art education thought' that the improvement of art education in the sense of emotional education is prominently reflected in the role of art education in emotion and spirit (Yin. 2007). It not only aims at the promotion of interest, the improvement of hobbies, the cultivation of spirit and the cultivation of sentiment, but also emphasizes the emotional role of art education to wash people's hearts and improve national character; and starts from the modern complete educational concepts and the educational ideals of the comprehensive construction of modern personality knowledge, emotion and meaning, establishing the significance and status of art education, avoiding the limitations of "subjective knowledge" education, and coordinating emotional education to promote the all-round development of cognition and morality. How to simultaneously improve the civilization of the public, especially how to promote the all-round development and healthy growth of medical students in medical universities, has increasingly become a major issue of common concern to the whole society.

## **3. Exploring the Students' Perceptions of Music Education**

Knowledge, Attitude/Belief, and Practice (KAP) is a commonly used model used to explain how personal knowledge and beliefs affect changes in healthy behaviour, proposed by the British Kirst in the 1960s. The theory divides the change of human behavior into three continuous processes of acquiring knowledge, generating belief and forming behavior.

Among them, Knowledge is the understanding of relevant knowledge, "letter" is the correct belief and positive attitude, "line" is action. There is a dialectical relationship between the three elements of this theory, knowledge is the basis of behavior change, belief and attitude are the driving force of behavior change. Only when people acquire knowledge and think positively about it, with a strong sense of responsibility, can they gradually form beliefs, and knowledge can only be changed in a positive manner if it rises to belief (Wang, 2014).

Strengthening music education and improving music curriculum, acquiring knowledge from learning, and gaining emotional and positive attitudes from medical students, can enable them to establish good values for future career development and doctor-patient relationships, and influence future behavior.

### **3.1 The Medical Student's Perception of Music Education**

In the face of medical students, music education is to transfer the ability to appreciate music and the wonderful charm of music to the hearts of medical students. (Wang, 2020). The implementation of music education in medical colleges and universities is to ease the study pressure of medical students, and to build a harmonious coexistence with themselves, with the team, with teachers, with future patients and every life (Ma, 2000).

When the doctors are healing the patients and saving the lives, the suitable music is potentially nourishing and/or healing the doctors directly or indirectly. What kind of life awe today's medical students will show in tomorrow's medical work depends on whether today's medical students' life construction is healthy or not. A healthy life can have music education into it as life is ideally balanced; with the good mix of physical, emotional and spiritual elements. The right music can bring people the desirable benefits such as comfort and encouragement All the related wonderful functions are needed by medical students. Even though medical schools do not offer music education courses, it is believed that most medical students will enjoy their favorite music to accompany themselves when permitted.

In the company of music, medical students' schoolwork pressure and other difficulties will be relieved more or less. This relief, of course, starts from the individual's mind. We cannot deny that when people's mind gets the greatest rest and quiet, the state of study or work will be better. The freedom of the heart is most probably not without the participation of musics. Only when the mental adjustment of medical students achieves the right position, can they ensure the right position in their learning and future medical work performance. Besides, music also has the greatest effect of resolving conflicts, first of all, resolving the contradictions between oneself and oneself, and then resolving the contradictions around. Listen to your favorite songs and/or musics, whether when one is alone or with a group of people, that moment is normally soft and gentle. As a medical student, soft heart and gentle conscience are essentials towards molding a life-saving doctor.

## **4. Methodology**

This research aims to explore the medical students' perception of music and music education, and understand the realization of the integration of music into medical education. Besides, it also hopes to provide a basis for high-quality development of education and its realization. A total of 1,232 medical students participated in this online survey in Ningxia, China. The samples of this study are selected at different levels: i) the undergraduate students of medical university; ii) the graduates of this school were drawn from the staff of the affiliated hospitals of the first-category school. The scope of the study is limited to the northwestern region of China, which presents certain characteristics of regional education.

The questionnaire was designed to explore the suitability on the integration of music education into the medical student training system, it was decided to conduct a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire consisted of 24 specific questions in four areas. One is the basic personal information; the other is to reflect your understanding of basic music knowledge; the third is to reflect your understanding of music education; the fourth is to reflect the integration of music education into the curriculum.

The questionnaire survey used an online questionnaire system. In order to better understand the real situation, the various medical students of Ningxia Medical University (i.e., including the clinical medicine, pediatrics, imaging, anesthesiology, laboratory medicine, rehabilitation therapy, traditional Chinese medicine, Acupuncture and Tuina, Chinese and Western medicine clinical science, public health, nursing and other majors), covering the first-year, second-year, and third-year trainees as well as the the fourth-year interns were included. In the stage of setting up the questionnaire, students of different majors and different grades in the school were also invited to participate in the design. After the first draft of the questionnaire was drafted, the lead-author (Mr. Wang) conducted a small-scale pilot survey interview to test the questionnaire's text expression, topic order, question format and length Whether there are any improprieties or not. Some modifications were made based on the respondents' suggestions. In the questionnaire distribution process, the teachers in different colleges who managed the students used the class WeChat group, QQ group, for their students to scan the QR code and answered the questionnaire. At the same time, the lead-author also used personal WeChat, QQ, Weibo and other effective media to distribute the questionnaire. The students voluntarily participated in the survey.

## 5. Results

From the 1,232 respondents, 29.5% (363) are male and 70.5% (869) female students. In terms of the location, about 72% of them came from rural areas and about 28% from the cities. The students' year of study (grade) and their majoring areas are shown in the Figure 1 and 2.

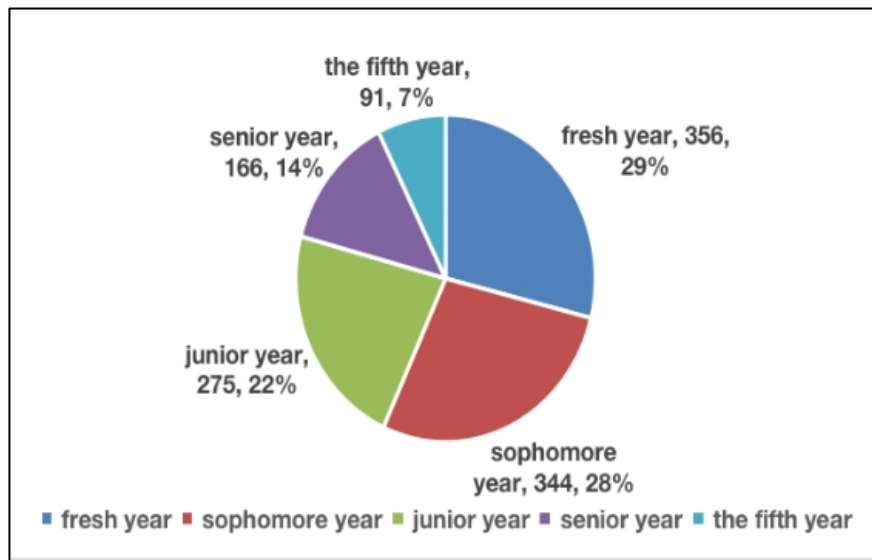


Figure 1: The Students' Year of Study (Grade)

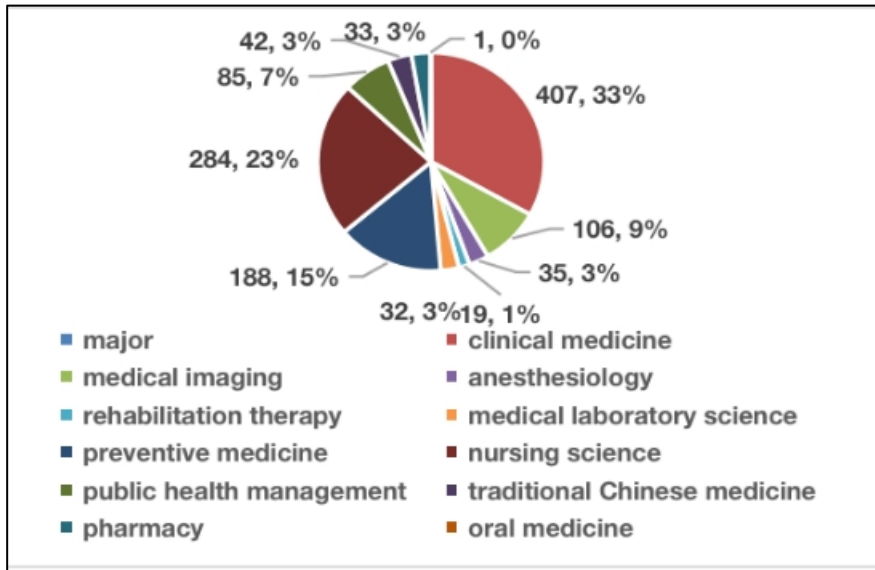


Figure 2: The Students' Majoring Areas

The questionnaire survey found that 69% of the students have never been exposed to musical instruments and pay more attention to pop music (Figure 3), while other types of music pay less attention. In the music course, 35% of the students said they could not accept the content of music professional knowledge, but in the third part, it can be seen that students have an urgent need for music education. In terms of music setting, most music courses can cover the basic knowledge of music, but the output effect is not great.

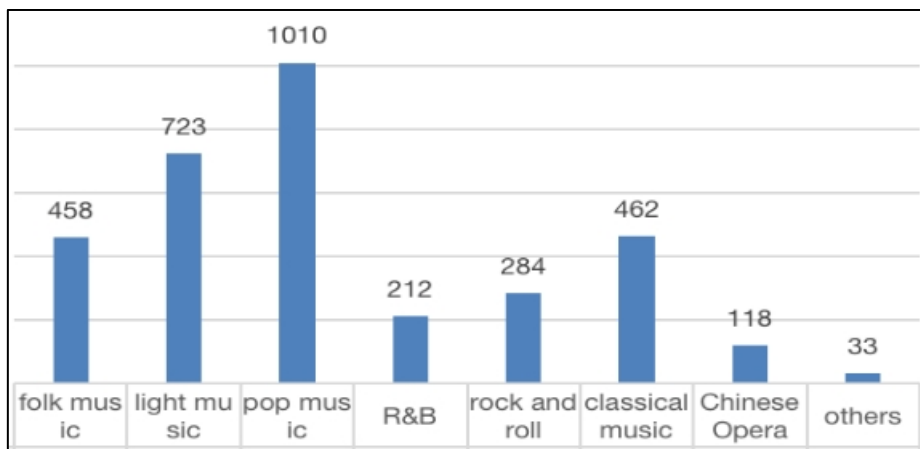


Figure 3: Kind of Music You Usually Choose to Enjoy

Figure 4 shows that 634 students believed that they received music education through music appreciation in medical schools, and 367 students believed that they received music education through music practice such as choral singing.



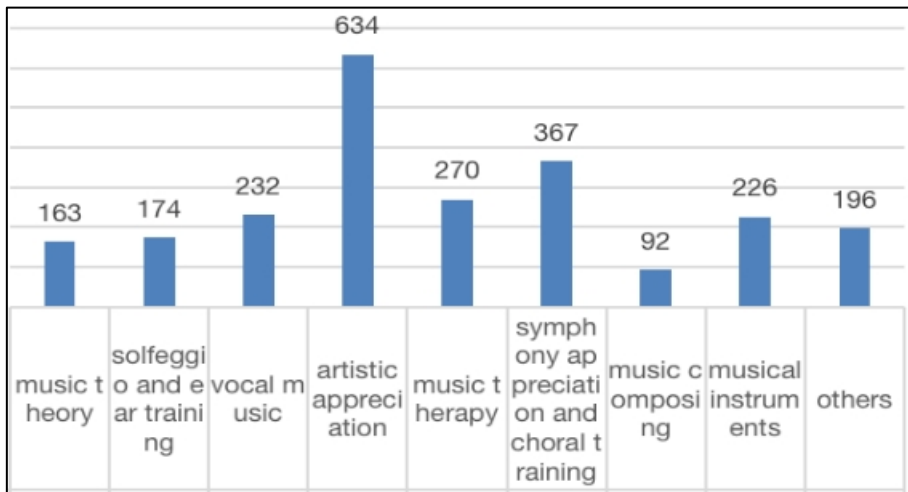


Figure 4: Music Courses Available in the University

Figure 5 shows the students' expectations of what music courses the university should provide. It is learned that more medical students want music education in medical schools in the form of music therapy (623), and music instruments (595), and music appreciation (547). These types of music education were the ways to reflect a student-oriented music education.

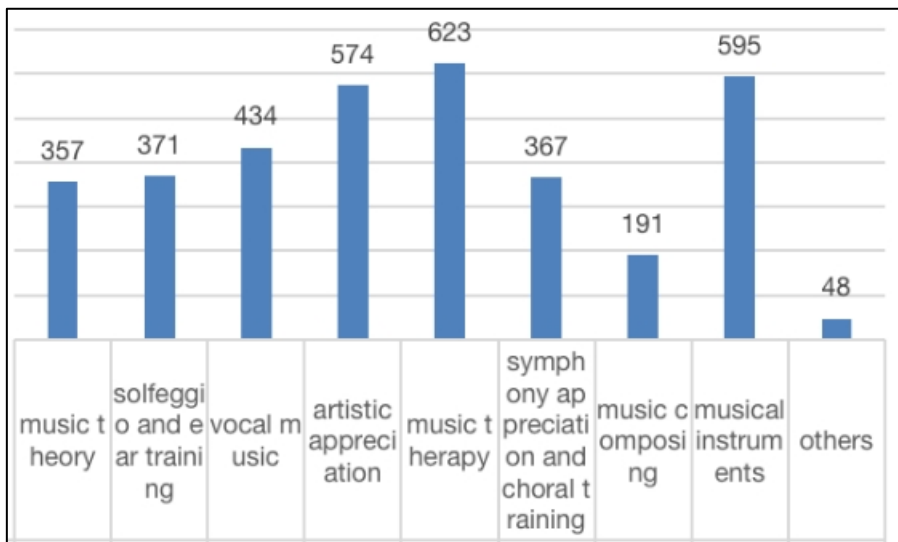


Figure 5: Music Courses that the University Should Provide

Figure 6 shows the students' perceptions of the impact of music education on them. The most frequently chosen answers are that the music 'can relieve mood and stress' (1058), followed by 'improve quality and culture' (875) and 'cultivate aesthetic ability' (855). These findings hinted that appropriate music can be very useful for medical students who are commonly busy and stressful at times due to their relatively heavy workload.

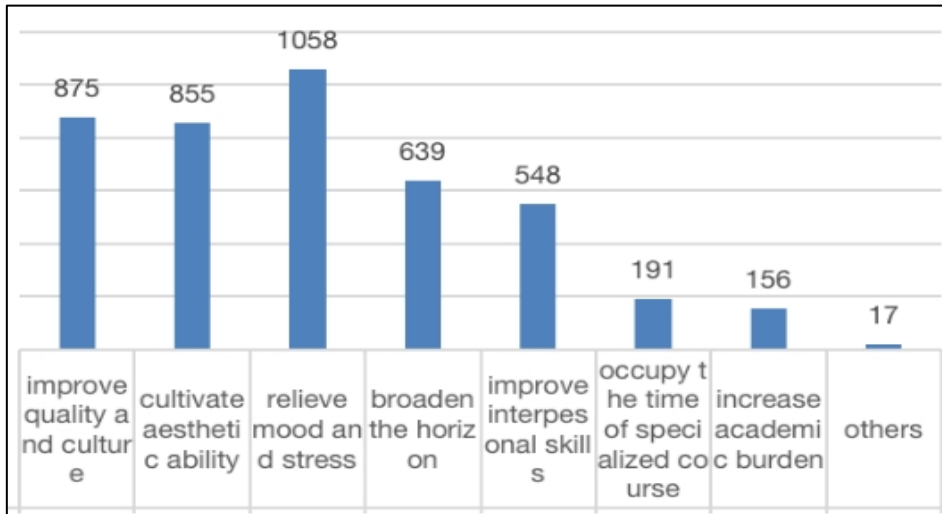


Figure 6: Perceived-impact of Music Curriculum

Table 1 shows the results of the respondents' basic knowledge and attitudes of music. The results reflect the awareness and attitude of Ningxia Medical University students toward music education. It is found that about 80% of the participating students liked or loved music and 76.8% thought that music education could improve the aesthetic quality and moral sentiment of medical students.

Table 1  
The Respondents' Knowledge and Attitudes on Music

Options Questions	A	B	C	D
1. Do you like music?	Love 33.2%	Like 47.0%	Not bad 18.5%	Dislike 1.3%
2. Do you know any world's famous musicians?	Very well 3.4%	Know some of them 29.2%	Not bad 51.3%	No 16.1%
3. Have you ever learned musical instruments?	More than two 16%	More than one 15%	Never 69%	-
4. What do you pay more attention to in the music?	Lyrics (758)	Rhythm (1051)	Emotions (834)	Others (7)
5. Have you learned anything about music in the previous music courses?	Much 12.9%	A bit 51.7%	None 35.4%	-
6. Do you understand the basic elements/composition of music?	Very well 8.8%	Yes 23.7%	A bit 33.8%	No 33.7%
7. Do you know the common nouns, meanings and symbols?	very well 4.8%	Yes 19.4%	A bit 36.4%	No 39.4%
8. Have you received training on music or had a certain understanding of music?	In-depth 5.5%	A bit 34.8%	Never 59.7%	-

9. Do you think medical university need to set up corresponding music courses?	Yes 55.4%	Not essential 30.6%	No 14%	-
10. Which type are the music courses provided?	Compulsory 6.8%	Optional 93.2%	-	-
11. Are you actively taking music courses?	Yes 28.6%	Seldom 53.2%	No 18.2%	-
12. Why do you take music courses?	Pleasure 68%	Beneficial to study 13.8%	Official requests 13.9%	Others 4.3%
13. Do you think music education can improve the aesthetic quality and moral sentiment of medical students?	Yes 76.8%	No 5%	Not clear 18.2%	-
14. Can music education promote the cultivation of great medical ethics of the students?	Yes 70.7%	No 6.7%	Not clear 22.6%	-
15. Can music education develop students' creativity?	Yes 70.4%	No 6.1%	Not clear 23.5%	-
16. Can music education improve the psychological quality of medical students?	Yes 75.1%	No 4.9%	Not clear 20.0%	-

About 69% of the surveyed students have never learned any musical instrument and about 60% of them have never received any training in music. However, about 52% of the students have learned a bit about music in the previous music courses.

Interestingly, a total of 68% took music due to pleasure. The students tend to pay attention to the aspect of Rhythm (1050), followed by Emotions (834) and Lyrics (758).

## 6. Discussion

The following section discusses several recommendations for music education in the medical universities to benefit the medical students.

### i. Establish the concept of discipline integration

This article tries to strengthen the integration of music education and professional education, fully exploring and applying the beauty of spirit, ceremony, language, behavior, science, order and health, and reflecting the spirit and national aesthetic characteristics of Chinese aesthetic education. Organically integrate the contents of aesthetic education in relevant disciplines to promote the in-depth integration of curriculum teaching, social practice and campus culture construction, and vigorously carry out interdisciplinary education and extracurricular practical activities with aesthetic education as the theme. Ningxia Medical University has made great efforts in aesthetic education in recent years. First, open enough elective courses and gather all aesthetic education teachers in the whole school to carry out aesthetic education for students in the form of elective courses. The second is to promote curriculum reform and bring art education into the category of compulsory courses since 2021 to ensure the fundamental implementation of the curriculum.

**ii. Scientific orientation of curriculum objectives**

This article tries to build an aesthetic education curriculum system that is suitable for medical education, to classify the aesthetic education curriculum objectives of medical colleges, to integrate art education into the curriculum system, strengthen the artistic practice of medical students, cultivate high-quality technical talents with aesthetic cultivation, guide students to improve personality cultivation, enhance cultural innovation consciousness, and cultivate high-quality talents with lofty aesthetic pursuit and noble personality cultivation.

**iii. Enrich artistic practice activities**

Establish a standardized art practice mechanism for all students, and vigorously promote group dance, chorus, ensemble and art practice to benefit all students. Medical students have less spare time because of the heavy curriculum. (Wang, 2020) In order to enable more students to receive music education, seven art teachers of Ningxia Medical University set up chorus rehearsal, military band rehearsal, dance rehearsal, music appreciation and drama rehearsal in their spare time and weekends, participating in provincial and national competitions on behalf of our university every year. While all medical students received art education, we were glad to see that most of the students were admitted to graduate schools, and some students got the opportunity to be recommended to other top universities.

**iv. Accelerate the innovation and development of art discipline**

Establish a cooperative school running mechanism, integrating the resources of aesthetic education, art, pedagogy and other disciplines, and strengthening the construction of aesthetic education. For medical education, we should be determined to cultivate medical leading talents who can serve the healthy China strategy and improve national health and well-being (Wang, 2014). We should practice the purpose of "serving the people" in the training of medical students, and cultivate medical students with excellent soul with moral education; to cultivate medical students with intelligence and morality to master the future; medical students who strive with sports morality; medical students with humanistic feelings by aesthetic education. "Don't indulge in fantasy, don't concentrate on empty voice"(Wang, 2020) Trying to have the courage to play and act, carrying forward the humanistic spirit of medicine, reflecting the temperature of the times of medicine, and be worthy of the national mission and this great era.

**7. Conclusion**

Music is composed of a series of music through a certain combination, so as to form the music with melody, rhythm and other characteristics of the combination. This combination requires more to instilling human thoughts and emotions. Soothing and beautiful music can let people relax and eliminate fatigue, while impassioned music can make people excited and full of power. Music education is important for medical students amidst their busy schedule in their daily medical trainings. The online questionnaire survey which was participated by more than one thousand medical students in Ningxia (China) found that music and music education were perceived to be useful for them psychologically and hence most probably can help to improve their performance, personally and professional. As such, several recommendations were put forward for strategic and continual development of music education in the medical universities.

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