

TRANSFORMING MUSIC TEACHING IN ART UNIVERSITIES: CURRICULUM DESIGN, INTEGRATION, AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Music education in art universities plays a crucial role in aesthetic development and creative competencies; however, it encounters challenges such as fragmented content, traditional pedagogical methods, and insufficient professional alignment. This study synthesizes recent studies to propose an integrated curriculum and pedagogical model for music education in art university contexts. The research identifies a three-tier structure consisting of foundational literacy, practical skills, and interdisciplinary components through systematic literature review and curriculum analysis. Evidence indicates that activity-based, student-centered pedagogies, when combined with polyartistic approaches, significantly improve engagement in comparison to traditional lecture methods. Digital technologies, such as virtual reality and multimedia platforms, enhance learning opportunities when integrated thoughtfully. Key findings indicate that curricula that include explicit integration mechanisms, competency-based instruction, and cultural elements result in increased student satisfaction and enhanced creative output. Successful implementation necessitates institutional commitment to faculty development, assessment reform, and collaborative teaching structures. Future research should utilize larger samples and longitudinal designs to examine long-term professional outcomes, thereby enhancing the evidence for effective music education practices in art universities.

Keyword: *music education, art universities, interdisciplinary curriculum, pedagogical innovation, competency-based learning, curriculum integration, aesthetic education*

1. INTRODUCTION

Music education holds an important place in the broader context of art and aesthetic education at universities, significantly enhancing students' holistic development and cultural literacy. In comprehensive art institutions, music functions not only as an independent discipline but also as a vital element of the aesthetic experience that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary understanding (Zhong, 2022; Wang, 2024). The development of musical competencies, including theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and artistic sensibility, aids students in fostering a deeper appreciation of artistic expression across various modalities (Rebrova, 2025). Music education in art universities is essential for developing the emotional intelligence and cultural awareness required for future professionals in creative industries, including artists, designers, educators, and cultural workers.

Music teaching in art universities, despite its recognized importance, currently encounters several persistent challenges that undermine its effectiveness and relevance. The course content frequently remains narrow and compartmentalized, primarily emphasizing technical training in music theory and performance skills, while overlooking the broader aesthetic and interdisciplinary aspects that would meaningfully connect music to visual arts, design, and other creative practices (Zhong, 2022; Jin et al., 2023). Secondly, pedagogical approaches remain predominantly dependent on traditional lecture-based instruction, which restricts student engagement and does not leverage modern active learning strategies that have been shown to effectively foster creative and critical thinking (Jiang et al., 2025). Third, numerous music curricula in art institutions exhibit inadequate alignment with labor market demands and professional competencies, resulting in graduates being insufficiently prepared for the integrative,

technology-mediated, and collaborative aspects of contemporary creative work (Jiang, 2024). The structural and methodological limitations lead to reduced student motivation, superficial learning outcomes, and lost opportunities for synergistic integration between music and other artistic disciplines.

This article presents a comprehensive model for teaching music in art universities, focusing on curriculum integration, competency-based pedagogical strategies, and relevant connections to professional practice. Based on recent scholarship in music education, art pedagogy, and interdisciplinary curriculum design (Zhong, 2022; Wang et al., 2024; Jin et al., 2023; Wang, 2024; Nan, 2025), this discussion presents key principles for restructuring music curricula to achieve a balance between foundational musical literacy, polyartistic integration, and digital innovation. The article analyzes the integration of music into visual arts and design education using activity-based, student-centered teaching methods that utilize contemporary technologies while upholding pedagogical standards.

This investigation is guided by the central research question:

1. How can music curricula in art universities be redesigned to enhance interdisciplinary integration and student engagement?
2. Which pedagogical strategies most effectively cultivate musical competencies and transferable creative skills?
3. What strategies can be implemented in curriculum design to enhance the alignment of music education with the professional demands and core competencies necessary in today's creative industries?

This article addresses these questions to provide actionable guidance for curriculum designers, instructors, and administrators aiming to enhance the quality, relevance, and impact of music education in art university contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Foundational principles of music education in art universities

Music education in comprehensive art universities fulfills different objectives than traditional

conservatory training. Zhong (2022) identifies three essential components: foundational music theory, which includes solfeggio and harmony; practical performance skills acquired through instrumental or vocal training; and quality education that fosters aesthetic judgment and cultural literacy. This framework positions music as essential to comprehensive artistic development rather than as isolated technical training. Rebrova (2025) asserts that the formation of musical culture should be systematic, enhancing students' listening skills, theoretical knowledge, and ability to incorporate musical experience into wider creative practices. Musical competencies for art students enhance rhythm sensitivity, structural awareness, and emotional expressiveness, which transfer to visual and spatial arts. Lazm (2021) demonstrates that music appreciation courses tailored for art education departments can cultivate analytical and listening skills, even with limited performance training. This establishes that musical literacy functions both as an independent outcome and as a means to enhance broader artistic capacities.

2.2. Models for interdisciplinary integration

Recent research has examined different frameworks for the integration of music into art education. Wang et al. (2024) identify three effective integration mechanisms: utilizing music to create an emotional atmosphere during visual arts creation, analyzing structural parallels between musical form and visual composition, and designing collaborative projects that translate concepts between auditory and visual modalities. Their empirical research shows significant improvements in student engagement and creative output when integration is based on intentional pedagogical design. Jin et al. (2023) propose a polyartistic approach that engages students with various art forms simultaneously, promoting the recognition of structural and expressive parallels across disciplines. The study indicates that polyartistic methods improve students' capacity to produce innovative solutions and participate in cross-disciplinary critique.

Art-pedagogy is presented as an integrative framework that combines music, visual arts, and language arts through dialogic interaction and activity-based learning. This approach cultivates both technical skills and aesthetic values, as well as artistic identity.

Huminska (2024) delineates implementation strategies that encompass the creation of emotionally rich learning environments, the guidance of students in discovering connections between musical and visual elements, and the promotion of imaginative engagement. Zavadska and Bagele (2024) illustrate how musical examples from relevant historical periods enhance the understanding of aesthetic movements in art history instruction, positioning music as primary evidence that uncovers period-specific values rather than serving as mere illustration. The models exhibit shared principles: integration should be intentional rather than superficial, each discipline must preserve its integrity while contributing to cohesive learning experiences, and pedagogical design must clearly highlight meaningful connections among artistic modalities.

2.3. Core competencies and professional alignment

Current study increasingly positions music education within competency-based frameworks that align with professional requirements. Wang (2024) advocates for the restructuring of music education to focus on authentic creative tasks that cultivate transferable competencies such as creativity, aesthetic judgment, collaboration, and cultural understanding. This shifts the focus from content coverage to the development of capacities that enhance professional adaptability. Nan (2025) advocates for curriculum optimization that emphasizes independent musical thinking and self-directed learning over passive content transmission. The author argues that effective reform necessitates concurrent attention to instructional delivery, assessment methods, and the design of the learning environment.

Jiang (2024) identifies a significant gap: general music courses frequently do not engage meaningfully with students' primary artistic interests, leading to diminished motivation. The study recommends explicitly addressing the ways in which musical understanding enhances practice in visual arts and design to establish clear relevance. Liu (2023) asserts that music education method courses should exemplify active, student-centered, and integrative approaches that future teachers will employ, ensuring that preparation encompasses not only musical content but also pedagogical strategies and curriculum design.

Jiang et al. (2025) investigate the influence of music educators on students' engagement in learning music theory, revealing that teaching methods significantly affect levels of involvement. Their research advocates for activity-based, student-centered methods that promote active participation instead of passive reception.

2.4. Digital technologies and pedagogical innovation

Technology presents considerable, yet often overlooked, opportunities for music education in art universities. Xiao (2022) shows that digital multimedia and virtual reality enhance learning with immersive experiences, interactive environments, and diverse resources, but adoption is hindered by infrastructure and faculty preparation. Bezemchuk et al. (2023) analyze online course delivery for music pedagogy students, highlighting both flexible, resource-rich learning opportunities and challenges in engagement and remote practical skill development. Liang et al. (2024) show that multimodal teaching boosts student engagement when pedagogical design matches learning objectives, employing interactive sentiment analysis to assess effectiveness. Tkach et al. (2024) discuss the interdisciplinary elements of teaching professional disciplines in art education, highlighting the need for clear guidelines for course development, faculty collaboration, and assessment frameworks that reflect cross-disciplinary outcomes. The research highlights discrepancies between the theoretical support for technology integration and its actual implementation.

Despite progress, notable gaps remain. Curricula are fragmented, lacking connections between music courses and students' main artistic disciplines (Xiao, 2022; Tkach et al., 2024). Students find it difficult to apply musical learning to visual arts, design, or other creative fields, highlighting curriculum issues and the challenge of helping them see cross-disciplinary links. Integration is supported in theory, but effective implementation models and assessment frameworks are still lacking.

Much existing evidence derives from small-scale studies or single institutions, limiting generalizability (Wang et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2025). Research often emphasizes isolated reform aspects instead of comprehensive approaches that

tackle curriculum structure, pedagogy, technology, and institutional implementation at the same time. Future research needs rigorous methodologies, larger samples, and longitudinal designs to establish strong evidence for effective practices. Comparative studies across different institutions and cultures would identify the most effective strategies in various conditions. Research on long-term outcomes, such as professional success, ongoing artistic engagement, and transferable skill application, is limited, leaving key questions about lasting impact unanswered.

3. METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining literature synthesis, curriculum analysis, and examination of empirical evidence to develop a comprehensive teaching model for music education in art universities.

A systematic review of scholarly literature published between 2021 and 2025 was conducted, focusing on music education in art universities, interdisciplinary curriculum design, and pedagogical innovation. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns, effective practices, and persistent challenges across educational contexts. Key themes included curriculum structure, integration strategies, pedagogical approaches, technology utilization, and competency frameworks (Wang et al., 2024; Tkach et al., 2024).

Existing music curricula from comprehensive art universities were examined to identify common components, sequencing patterns, and integration points with visual arts and design programs. Course offerings were categorized into foundational theory, practical performance, music literacy, and interdisciplinary components. This structural mapping revealed gaps in cross-disciplinary connections and integration opportunities (Zhong, 2022; Jin et al., 2023; Wang, 2024).

Findings from recent implementation studies employing surveys, teaching experiments, and student assessments were synthesized to evaluate pedagogical effectiveness. Data included quantitative measures of teaching effectiveness, qualitative student feedback, and comparative analysis of traditional versus innovative methods (Wang et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2025). Clustering analysis identified pedagogical strategies and

curriculum features consistently associated with positive outcomes (Liang et al., 2024).

This approach enabled development of an evidence-based model grounded in theoretical principles and documented practice, while acknowledging limitations inherent in synthesizing research from diverse institutional contexts with varying sample sizes and methodological rigor (Bezemchuk et al., 2023).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Building a three-tier curriculum to overcome fragmented content

Analysis reveals an effective music education structure for art universities comprising three interconnected tiers that address narrow, compartmentalized content. The foundational tier includes solfeggio, basic music theory, listening training, and music appreciation, establishing essential musical literacy and providing conceptual vocabulary for understanding musical structure and expression (Zhong, 2022; Rebrova, 2025; Tkach et al., 2024). The practical tier encompasses instrumental training, vocal instruction, and ensemble participation, developing performance competencies and embodied musical understanding critical for art students, as direct music-making enhances aesthetic sensitivity transferable to visual and spatial arts (Zhong, 2022; Lazm, 2021).

The integration tier features general music literacy courses for non-majors and interdisciplinary components systematically connecting music with visual arts, design, art history, and performance projects (Jin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Jiang, 2024). This structure counters content monotony by balancing skill development with diverse applications rather than offering isolated courses disconnected from students' primary interests. Wang et al. (2024) document that curricula with explicit integration mechanisms demonstrate measurably higher engagement and creative output compared to parallel but disconnected sequences.

Incorporating traditional cultural elements - opera, folk music, or local traditions - enhances cultural awareness and motivation (Nan, 2025). Alignment with core competencies including creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and employability addresses the gap between academic training and creative industry demands

(Wang, 2024; Liu, 2023; Jiang et al., 2025), ensuring graduates possess transferable capacities required in contemporary professional contexts.

4.2. Transforming student engagement

Activity-based, dialogic, student-centered, and competency-based pedagogical approaches significantly increase engagement and learning outcomes compared to traditional lecture methods, directly addressing low participation problems (Jiang et al., 2025; Huminska, 2024; Nan, 2025). Jiang et al. (2025) demonstrate that interactive teaching methods achieve substantially higher student involvement in music theory learning than passive content delivery. Active pedagogies increase cognitive engagement by requiring concept application rather than mere reception, foster collaborative learning communities, and provide immediate feedback accelerating skill development.

By positioning students as active creators rather than passive recipients, these approaches leverage intrinsic motivation and foster deeper cognitive processing (Jiang, 2024). Art-pedagogy combines music with visual arts and language through dialogic interaction, treating learning as co-constructed understanding rather than transmitted knowledge (Jin et al., 2023). Students exposed to art-pedagogical methods demonstrate enhanced ability to articulate aesthetic judgments, recognize cross-modal connections, and engage with creative complexity - outcomes transcending conventional musical proficiency measures.

Specific strategies prove particularly effective: creating emotionally rich teaching situations, guiding discovery of conceptual connections between art and music through comparative analysis, and fostering imagination through direct aesthetic experiences (Wang et al., 2024; Rebrova, 2025). Wang et al. (2024) identify that optimal integration balances affective engagement through emotionally resonant selections, cognitive challenge through structural analysis, and creative application through generative cross-disciplinary projects. These strategies transform passive reception into active meaning-making, deepening both musical understanding and broader artistic capacities.

4.3. Improving digital tools to expand access and enhance learning

Digital technologies address resource constraints and access limitations in art universities where music often receives less infrastructure investment than visual arts programs. Virtual reality environments, multimedia platforms, digital audio workstations, and interactive online resources substantially increase engagement and effectiveness when aligned with learning objectives (Xiao, 2022; Tkach et al., 2024; Bezemchuk et al., 2023). Xiao (2022) documents that VR enables immersive musical experiences previously impossible in traditional classrooms, allowing students to explore virtual concert halls, manipulate three-dimensional musical structures, and engage with interactive simulations. Liang et al. (2024) demonstrate that technology-enhanced instruction increases positive sentiment and engagement when tools serve clear pedagogical purposes rather than superficial technological overlay.

Virtual instruments, online music libraries, interactive tutorials, and collaborative platforms expand learning opportunities without extensive physical resources while facilitating personalized pathways accommodating diverse skill levels characteristic of art student populations with varying musical backgrounds (Bezemchuk et al., 2023). However, effective integration requires careful pedagogical design; tools must serve learning objectives rather than function as mere novelty.

4.4. Balancing musical depth with interdisciplinary breadth

Implementation requires navigating tensions between disciplinary depth in music and interdisciplinary breadth in art education. Music possesses substantial technical content and theoretical complexity demanding sustained study, while art education increasingly emphasizes cross-disciplinary fluency and conceptual flexibility (Wang et al., 2024; Zavadska & Bagele, 2024). Conservatory-level musical training proves neither feasible nor appropriate given art students' primary commitments to visual arts or design.

The proposed model resolves this through strategic prioritization: foundational musical literacy and aesthetic understanding receive emphasis over advanced technical performance,

while integration activities focus on conceptual connections rather than comprehensive disciplinary coverage. Art students need sufficient musical competency for meaningful interdisciplinary engagement without requiring music major expertise. Wang et al. (2024) argue that effectiveness lies in students' capacity to apply musical understanding within their primary artistic practice, suggesting integrated application constitutes legitimate depth rather than superficial breadth. Zavadzka and Bagele (2024) demonstrate that historical and contextual approaches provide intellectual depth without demanding extensive performance skills, as students analyze musical compositions as cultural artifacts at sophisticated conceptual levels accessible regardless of performance ability.

4.5. Remaining gaps and recommendations

Studies employing diverse assessment methods converge on key findings. Student involvement increases substantially when music instruction employs active, integrative, and technology-enhanced pedagogies compared to traditional approaches (Jiang et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Musical literacy develops effectively through structured foundational courses supplemented by integrative applications (Zhong, 2022; Jiang, 2024). Creative output shows marked improvement through polyartistic and interdisciplinary assignments (Jin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Wang et al. (2024) report significantly higher teaching effectiveness scores for integrated music-art instruction, with students valuing opportunities to apply musical concepts within their primary artistic practice.

Implementation cases provide concrete evidence: music appreciation courses emphasizing visual arts connections successfully develop analytical listening skills (Lazm, 2021); integrated music-painting projects demonstrate enhanced creative thinking and cross-modal translation abilities (Wang et al., 2024; Zavadzka & Bagele, 2024); and online courses maintain engagement through interactive elements and collaborative tasks (Bezemchuk et al., 2023). However, most evidence derives from small samples within single institutions, limiting generalizability; assessment methods vary substantially; and long-term outcomes remain undocumented (Wang et al., 2024; Xiao, 2022; Jiang et al., 2025).

Successful implementation requires institutional commitment beyond individual course redesign, encompassing faculty development, infrastructure investment, assessment reform, and organizational culture change. Faculty need preparation in interdisciplinary pedagogy, technology integration, and competency-based assessment - areas often underemphasized in traditional music education programs (Tkach et al., 2024; Liu, 2023). Professional development supporting collaborative course design and cross-departmental partnerships proves essential.

Assessment reform represents the most critical challenge. Traditional examination through written tests and solo performances inadequately captures interdisciplinary synthesis, collaborative creativity, aesthetic judgment, and professional competencies (Nan, 2025; Wang, 2024). Effective assessment requires portfolio methods, project evaluations, reflective writing, and authentic tasks aligned with learning objectives. Institutional reward structures must recognize and value interdisciplinary teaching contributions to incentivize faculty participation in integrated approaches.

5. CONCLUSION

Music education in art universities faces critical challenges including content fragmentation, traditional pedagogical approaches, and weak alignment with professional demands. This study proposes a comprehensive model addressing these issues through integrated curriculum design, innovative teaching strategies, and strategic technology adoption.

Evidence demonstrates that effective music teaching requires a three-tier curriculum structure balancing foundational literacy, practical skills, and interdisciplinary integration. Successful approaches systematically connect musical learning with visual arts, design, and creative practices through deliberate pedagogical design (Wang et al., 2024; Jin et al., 2023). Activity-based, student-centered methods significantly enhance engagement compared to traditional lectures, while digital technologies expand access and enable personalized learning when thoughtfully implemented (Jiang et al., 2025; Xiao, 2022).

Key recommendations include designing explicit integration mechanisms, adopting dialogic pedagogies positioning students as creative collaborators, and aligning curricula with

professional competencies (Wang, 2024). Institutional success requires commitment to faculty development, infrastructure investment, assessment reform, and organizational culture valuing interdisciplinary innovation (Tkach et al., 2024; Liu, 2023).

Future research should employ comparative studies across diverse contexts, larger samples, and longitudinal designs examining professional outcomes. Despite evidence limitations, the integrated competency-based approach shows substantial promise for transforming music education from isolated technical training into vital comprehensive artistic development. By embracing systematic integration, active learning, and strategic technology use, art universities can better prepare creative professionals for collaborative, technology-mediated contemporary practice while fostering aesthetic understanding and cultural literacy essential for meaningful artistic engagement.

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