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ENHANCING MUSIC PERFORMANCE SKILLS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS THROUGH PRACTICAL LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

Developing music performance skills is essential for Primary Education students, as it contributes directly to their future teaching competence. However, many students still lack confidence in singing, face challenges in instrumental accompaniment, and have limited experience integrating movement and performance elements. This study investigates the current state of music performance skills among 132 students majoring in Primary Education through a structured questionnaire, and also examines the content of relevant music course syllabi. Findings reveal a need for increased practical experience and targeted skill development. In response, the paper proposes a set of pedagogical solutions: incorporating more hands-on practice in class, organizing semester-end performance events, implementing personalized weekly practice plans, and providing timely and constructive feedback from instructors. These approaches aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, enhance students' confidence and expressive ability, and better prepare them for leading music activities in primary schools. The results highlight the critical role of practice-oriented learning in fostering professional readiness and underscore the importance of redesigning music education curricula to meet the evolving demands of general education.

KEYWORDS: performance skills, music, students, primary education, practice.

INTRODUCTION

Music plays a special role in primary education as a tool for nurturing the soul, developing aesthetic appreciation, and supporting other learning competencies of students. For students majoring in Primary Education - the future teaching workforce - practicing musical skills, especially performance skills, is essential for organizing effective, lively, and inspiring lessons in the primary school environment.

However, in reality, many students majoring in Primary Education still have limited music performance skills. Common manifestations include a lack of confidence when presenting in front of an audience, inadequate proficiency in using simple instruments, or hesitation when combining singing with illustrative movements. One reason for this lies in the training programs, which are still heavily theoretical, while practical content and formats are not yet sufficient to comprehensively develop performance skills.

In the context of educational reform toward developing competencies and qualities, primary school teachers are now expected to be flexible, creative, and capable of organizing diverse and engaging musical activities for students. To fulfill this role effectively, students need to be thoroughly trained in performance skills right from their time at university, through well-designed, practice-based lessons closely connected to real teaching contexts.

Based on these needs and realities, this article focuses on clarifying the role of practical music lessons in enhancing music performance skills for Primary Education students, and proposes some directions and solutions to improve training quality following a career-oriented and practical approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on music teaching methods began in the mid-20th century, with the strong development of creative teaching methods such as the Orff and Kodály approaches. According to Frazee and Kreuter (1987), the Orff method helps students (and university students) learn music through instrument playing and movement activities, promoting both physical and intellectual development. These methods are considered highly effective in helping Primary Education students not only learn theory but also develop practical performance skills that can be applied in teaching music to primary school children.

The study by Le Thi Thuy Trang (2021) pointed out that improving music performance skills for Primary Education students cannot be separated from practical training. Practice is a key factor in helping students improve skills such as singing, playing instruments, and group performance. Trang (2021) argued that practical time should be increased in music training programs, as performance skills cannot be acquired through theory alone but require real practice and performance experience.

Lecturer feedback is also a critical factor in improving students' performance skills. Recent studies, such as that of Whitehead and Thomas (2015), show that specific feedback from instructors helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, thus making appropriate adjustments. This research also emphasized the importance of building individual practice plans to help students improve their skills systematically and scientifically.

Recent studies also show that providing opportunities for students to perform in public is a key factor in enhancing performance skills. Hansen and Madsen (2019) found that participating in performances helps students develop the ability to handle real-life situations, reduce performance anxiety, and strengthen their self-confidence.

In addition, musical exchange activities, talent contests, and music events are ideal environments for students to practice performance and public communication skills. Research by Đỗ Hồng Sơn (2018) also confirmed that contests and performance events help Primary Education students improve their ability to perform and express emotions through music.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses two main research methods: theoretical research and field survey.

- Theoretical research – The syllabus of the Music module for Primary Education majors was analyzed. This method aimed to study theoretical documents on music teaching in the training program for Primary Education students, thereby identifying the theoretical foundation of music teaching methods and the importance of musical practice in developing performance skills.
- Field survey – A random survey was conducted with 132 Primary Education students through a questionnaire to collect real-world data about their music performance skills and the factors affecting their learning, especially during practical lessons. Additionally, mathematical statistics, data analysis, and descriptive statistics were used to identify factors affecting music performance skills and to determine limitations in current music teaching and learning methods.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Theoretical foundations

4.1.1. Musical performance skills in primary teacher training

Musical performance skills are a crucial component of the professional competencies of primary school teachers. According to Nguyen Thi Minh Huong (2020), these skills include accurate pitch and duration in singing; proficient use of simple instruments such as electronic keyboards and percussion; the ability to incorporate illustrative movements; and the ability to express emotions appropriate to the musical content. These skills not only help teachers organize effective artistic activities but also contribute to shaping positive emotions and attitudes in students.

In the 2018 General Education Curriculum of Vietnam, music is identified as a subject that develops aesthetic competence and humanistic qualities in primary students (Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2018). Therefore, teachers must possess strong performance skills to serve as vivid artistic role models, inspiring students and enhancing the effectiveness of learning.

4.1.2. The role of performance skills in teaching music at the primary level

Teachers' performance skills are a key factor that determines the appeal and quality of a music lesson. Tran Thi Thanh Xuan (2018) affirms that when teachers effectively perform their roles as performers, students are more engaged, participate actively, and develop their artistic appreciation. Music performance is not merely a form of personal artistic expression but also a means of communication, generating emotional learning experiences and contributing to a friendly classroom environment.

Teaching practice also shows that lessons that include clear performance demonstrations by teachers tend to be more engaging and help students retain musical content better than lessons that rely heavily on theory or passive listening.

4.1.3. Practical teaching – an effective method for developing performance skills

Practical teaching plays a particularly important role in the formation and development of music performance skills. According to Frazee and Kreuter (1987), in Carl Orff's music education model, the integration of singing, body movement, and instrument use helps learners develop performance skills holistically, while enhancing self-confidence, teamwork, and creativity. This method is especially suitable for pedagogical environments, particularly for students in Primary Education – who require hands-on experiences closely aligned with teaching practice.

In addition, Le Thi Thuy Trang (2021) argues that well-organized practice lessons in various forms such as microteaching, group performances, and classroom simulations help students overcome lack of confidence, practice handling pedagogical situations in music, and prepare effectively for future teaching.

4.2. Current Situation of Musical Performance Skills among Primary Education Students

4.2.1. Survey of Music Course Outlines in Primary Education Training Programs

In the 2022 training program for the Primary Education major, music-related courses play a vital role in equipping students with musical and pedagogical skills. There are three music-related courses totaling 6 credits: Music 1 (VD2.1.139.2), Music 2 (VD2.1.140.2), and Organizing Extracurricular Music Activities (VD2.1.141.2).

Music 1 (VD2.1.139.2 – 2 credits) is taught in the seventh semester. This is the introductory course in the series of music education courses. It includes basic theoretical knowledge such as pitch, duration, intervals, modes and keys, and chords. This foundation enables students to progress to courses such as tonic sol-fa, singing learning, and organizing extracurricular music activities in primary schools.

Music 2 (VD2.1.140.2 – 2 credits) is offered in the eighth semester and requires Music 1 as a prerequisite. The course focuses on applying basic skills such as tonic sol-fa with lyrics for simple songs in 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures written in major and minor keys, accompanied by rhythmic percussion; applying singing techniques in combination with accompaniment and illustrative movement for songs in the primary curriculum; and methods for teaching music components in primary education.

Organizing Extracurricular Music Activities (VD2.1.141.2 – 2 credits) is also taught in the eighth semester and requires Music 2 as a prerequisite. This course provides basic knowledge on organizing and directing extracurricular music activities, various singing styles, and music-related activities used in staging performances for school events or holidays in primary schools.

These three courses blend theory and practice harmoniously, significantly contributing to the development of musical competence and music teaching skills for Primary Education students.

4.2.2. Survey on the Current State of Music Performance Skills among Primary Education Students

To assess the current state of music performance skills among Primary Education students, the research team conducted a survey involving 132 third- and fourth-year students who were enrolled in music courses at Tan Trao University during the 2024–2025 academic year. The methods used included questionnaires and observations of practical class sessions. The results are presented below:

Table 1: Survey Results on the Current State of Music Performance Skills among Primary Education Students

No.	Survey Content	Assessment Level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Are you confident when performing a song in front of the class?	Very confident	12	9.1%
		Relatively confident	48	36.4%
		Lacking confidence	54	40.9%
		Very unconfident	18	13.6%
2	How proficient are you at performing a song with illustrative movements?	Proficient	20	15.2%
		Adequate	60	45.5%
		Not proficient	52	39.3%
3	What is your skill level in instrument accompaniment (keyboard or guitar) for music performances?	Basic accompaniment skills	28	21.2%
		Understand theory but weak in practice	46	34.8%
		Difficulty in performing	58	43.9%
4	Can you design a complete musical performance (including singing, movement, and instruments)?	Can do well independently	16	12.1%
		With assistance	70	53.0%
		Unable to perform	46	34.9%
5		Very interested	40	30,3%

No.	Survey Content	Assessment Level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	How interested are you in developing music performance skills during your training?	Moderately interested	64	48.5%
		Slightly interested	28	21.2%

From the data table, the following findings can be observed:

The survey results indicate that students' confidence in performing music in front of the class remains quite limited. Only 9.1% of students felt very confident, while 40.9% reported lacking confidence and 13.6% felt very unconfident. This reflects a sense of anxiety and shyness when standing before a group, especially in a music performance setting - a context that requires initiative and emotional expression.

When asked about their proficiency in performing songs with accompanying movements, only 15.2% of students believed they were proficient, while nearly 40% admitted they were not yet proficient. This suggests that the skill of coordinating singing with illustrative movements - a familiar requirement in elementary music education - has not been fully mastered by many students.

Regarding instrumental accompaniment skills (organ or guitar) to support musical performance, the survey further highlighted limitations: 43.9% of students experienced difficulties in practice, 34.8% understood the theory but were not good at practical application, and only 21.2% could perform basic accompaniment. This clearly points to a lack of practice time as well as insufficient equipment to support musical training during their course of study.

In terms of the ability to create a complete musical performance that combines singing, movement, and instrumental accompaniment, only 12.1% of students stated they could do it well, while 53% needed support, and 34.9% did not know how to do it. The capacity for organizing and creatively staging a performance - an essential requirement in teaching and extracurricular activities - has yet to be clearly developed among many students.

However, the survey results also show a positive sign: up to 30.3% of students expressed strong interest in developing music performance skills, and 48.5% were moderately interested. Only 21.2% indicated little interest. This is a favorable foundation for the university to develop suitable training programs aimed at improving students' music performance abilities.

From the survey results, several advantages can be identified: the majority of students have a positive attitude and are interested in developing their performance skills; some already possess basic performance abilities and can use musical instruments. However, the main challenges lie in the lack of confidence, insufficient practical skills (in movement illustration, accompaniment, and performance

organization), and limited creativity. Possible causes of this situation include the training program's insufficient focus on practical activities, limited real-life performance opportunities for students, inadequate learning facilities, and a portion of students not taking the initiative in self-training.

Given this reality, improving the quality of training in music performance skills is essential so that students in the Primary Education program can meet the professional demands of their future careers.

4.3. Solutions to Improve Music Performance Skills Through Practical Lessons

4.3.1. Increasing the Time and Quality of Practical Lessons

This measure aims to: increase practice time to help students effectively develop music performance skills, especially singing, playing instruments, and group performances.

Implementation content: Allocate time in music courses so that at least 50% of the class time is dedicated to practice. Each lesson should combine theory and practice, enabling students to both understand music theory and apply it in real situations.

Implementation method: Lecturers should regularly organize practical classes such as singing, accompaniment, instrumental performance, and movement illustration. Students should also be encouraged to practice not only during class but also at home and in small groups.

Example: A practical lesson may include: the lecturer selects a familiar children's song like "I Love My School" or "The Baby Bird", then guides students to sing correctly in terms of melody, lyrics, and expression. Next, students are instructed to accompany the song (using organ or guitar), while practicing simple movements such as clapping, swaying, or using props (like paper flowers or scarves) to enhance liveliness. During the practice, student groups will perform in front of the class and receive direct feedback from the lecturer on their singing, accompaniment, and coordination between music and movement. Through this process, students have the opportunity to adjust and improve their skills concretely and visually within the lesson itself.

4.3.2. Applying Creative Teaching Methods

Creative teaching methods help students develop music performance skills comprehensively, including singing, playing instruments, and movement illustration.

Utilize innovative methods such as the Orff method, Kodály method, and play-based learning. These approaches integrate music with movement, enabling students to understand and express music naturally, joyfully, and effectively.

Lecturers should incorporate these methods into lessons, encouraging students to participate in music games, practice with instruments, and move their bodies rhythmically.

Example: In an Orff-based lesson, the lecturer might have students play simple instruments (like drums or maracas) and sing along to rhythms, combined with illustrative dance movements. This helps students develop both musical and physical skills.

4.3.3. Creating Opportunities for Public Performance

This measure aims to provide students with real performance opportunities, increasing their confidence and developing their ability to handle real-life situations.

Organize music playgrounds, student exchanges, or performance competitions so students can showcase their talents and receive audience feedback.

Regular performances should be held, such as music exchange sessions, student music festivals, or talent shows. These allow students to apply what they've learned in real environments and receive evaluations from lecturers, peers, and audiences.

Example: At the end of each semester, students may participate in a music showcase organized by the faculty. In this event, student groups perform pre-prepared pieces such as solos, duets, choirs with instrumental accompaniment (organ, guitar), or dance routines illustrating children's songs or songs used in primary school. Each performance is presented before the entire faculty and student body. After each piece, lecturers give direct feedback on vocal technique, group coordination, performance style, and program construction. These professional comments help students identify strengths and areas for improvement, thereby enhancing their performance skills and gaining experience for future music teaching.

4.3.4. Providing feedback and developing individual practice plans

This solution aims to quickly deliver feedback from lecturers to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby developing specific plans to improve their performance skills.

Lecturers should provide detailed feedback and help students build individual practice plans, allowing them to improve each skill systematically and scientifically.

After each practical lesson, lecturers should evaluate each student and provide direct feedback. At the same time, students should be encouraged to develop their own practice plans, focusing on weak areas.

Example: After performing a children's song like "I Love My School", the lecturer might give feedback such as: "You need to pay more attention to breathing technique, especially in long phrases—take deeper breaths to maintain an even and clear voice." For accompaniment, the lecturer may note that the student struggles with chord transitions, e.g., between C and G7, and needs more focused practice to maintain a steady rhythm. Following the feedback, the lecturer guides the student to create a weekly practice plan: daily 20-minute vocal exercises based on learned materials, and at least 15 minutes of accompaniment practice using simple songs like "The Baby Bird", "Our United Class", to build finger reflexes and improve coordination between singing and accompaniment. This combination of evaluation, feedback, and plan adjustment helps students progress significantly after each practical lesson.

5. CONCLUSION

Music performance skills are a crucial component in developing teaching competence in music for students majoring in Primary Education. The survey results reveal that many students lack confidence and have limitations in song performance techniques, accompaniment skills, and the ability to organize complete musical programs. Practical lessons play an essential role in allowing students to practice, experience, and enhance their performance abilities through specific activities such as illustrated singing, accompaniment, group performance, and receiving lecturer feedback. To improve teaching effectiveness, lecturers need to design concrete measures suited to students' levels and needs, while flexibly combining theory and practice. Organizing regular evaluations, guiding personal practice plans, and creating performance opportunities at events are also practical solutions that contribute to improving these skills. The research findings not only provide a clear view of the current state of music performance training but also suggest directions for adjusting programs and teaching methods in line with today's educational innovation requirements.

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