

A Systematic Review of Orff and Dalcroze Approaches in Enhancing Preschool Teacher Trainees' Teaching Performance

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the need to enhance the quality of vocational education in China has intensified, particularly in the training of preschool teacher trainees. As a critical component of pre-service teacher training, the quality of educational internships directly impacts trainees' teaching performance. This study conducts a systematic literature review to examine the effects of the Orff and Dalcroze music pedagogical approaches on the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in vocational colleges. Relevant domestic and international studies published between 2010 and 2025 were analysed using thematic synthesis. The findings indicate that both approaches significantly enhance trainees' instructional competence, particularly in promoting classroom interactivity, improving the ability to engage and guide young learners, and fostering creativity and adaptability in lesson design. However, implementation differences exist; the Orff approach is easier to master initially due to its structured framework and tool support, while the Dalcroze method demands higher musical literacy and improvisational skills, presenting greater implementation challenges. Additionally, the study also identified key factors influencing pedagogical effectiveness, including trainees' theoretical foundations, skill levels, reflective abilities, and the adequacy of external support systems. Based on these findings, the study recommends, optimising pedagogical training models, strengthening practical guidance and resource provision, enhancing trainees' professional competencies, and prioritising localised adaptation of teaching methods. The study's significance lies in offering theoretical support and practical guidance for early childhood educator training, advancing the quality development of early childhood education programmes, and contributing to the overall professional competence of early childhood educators.

Keywords: Orff Method, Dalcroze Method, Music Teaching, Preschool Teacher Trainees

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's vocational education has stepped into a new stage of in-depth development, focusing on quality leaps and efficiency enhancement. Within these vocational colleges, preschool education programmes undertake the main task of cultivating early education teachers, with its construction level and educational achievements directly determining the overall development quality and future direction of preschool education in China. The Plan for Improving the Quality of Teachers in Vocational Colleges (2021-2025), jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and other departments, emphasises the necessity to deepen the reform of teachers, and teaching materials and methods, as well as improve teachers' comprehensive quality and practical ability.

In this context, the quality of the teaching practice within pre-service teacher training is crucial. The teacher trainees' performance is a core measure of whether they are able to transform theoretical knowledge into practical ability and smoothly transition into qualified teachers (Yang, 2024). However, in reality, trainee teachers, including those in preschool, often face challenges such as theory that is divorced from practice, insufficient classroom control, and single teaching strategy (Huang, 2019). Therefore, identifying effective teaching approaches to enhance teaching performance is essential for improving the overall quality of preschool education programmes in vocational colleges.

As a central component of preschool education, music education has multidimensional value for children's development (Gao & Zhang, 2025). Among the many teaching methods, the Orff and Dalcroze approaches are widely recognised worldwide for their child-centred philosophy, including in China. The Orff teaching method focuses on one's nature, combining language, rhythm, and instrumental performance, and advocates active learning through games (Orff & Keetman, 1950-1954). Meanwhile, Dalcroze's teaching principle has "body rhythm" at its core, cultivating music perception and improvisation through body movements (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921). The experience and creativity these approaches embody are consistent with the direction of the preschool education reform in China.

Currently, most research on preschool music education focuses on the methodology theory itself, the professional development of practicing teachers, or its impact on young children. For instance, Huang (2023) examined the practical implementation of the Orff approach in early childhood music education, reflecting how existing research predominantly centres on child development. Meanwhile, Fu Zhenfeng and Tong He (2021) systematically analysed the theoretical foundations and application frameworks of the Dalcroze approach, remaining within the realm of theoretical exploration.

However, empirical research examining how the application of the Orff or Dalcroze approaches impacts the instructional design, classroom interaction, and professional reflective abilities of vocational preschool teacher trainees remains scarce. Given that trainees are at a critical stage of role transition, systematic investigation into how they comprehend and apply this interaction and creativity oriented methodologies is still required.

Therefore, this study addresses this research gap through systematic inquiry. It aims to examine, via a literature review, the specific dimensions of influence, effectiveness differences, and key influencing factors of both pedagogies on trainees' teaching performance. It not only focuses on the theoretical value of the pedagogies themselves but also analyses their mechanisms of action in transforming trainees' practical abilities. This provides empirical evidence and directional guidance for optimising teacher training models in vocational preschool education programmes.

This study aims to systematically review domestic and international literature from 2010 to 2024 concerning the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in vocational education who use the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods. Through comprehensive analysis of existing research findings, it seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and effectiveness of these two teaching approaches in trainees' teaching practices.

Theoretically, this review contributes to integrating existing research findings, providing a theoretical

framework for developing pre-service music teachers’ teaching competencies and broadening perspectives on early childhood teacher education. Practically, it offers reliable evidence for optimising curricula and refining internship models in vocational early childhood education programmes. This supports educators in guiding trainees to translate advanced pedagogical concepts into effective teaching practices, thereby enhancing the overall professional competence of early childhood educators.

In order to achieve the above objectives, this systematic literature review focuses on addressing the following questions:

RQ1: What specific dimensions of teaching performance are affected by the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods for preschool teacher trainees in Chinese vocational colleges?

RQ2: What are the differences in the effects of the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods on the teaching performance of trainees?

RQ3: What are the key factors influencing the implementation effectiveness of the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods?

METHODOLOGY

Literature Search Terms

To ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of the literature reviewed, this study primarily retrieved relevant publications from three major Chinese academic databases. The first was the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the largest academic resource database in China, which included periodicals, doctoral and master’s dissertations, and conference proceedings. The second was the Wanfang Data Knowledge Service Platform, another core Chinese academic database with extensive resources. Finally, the VIP Periodical Resource Integration Service Platform (CQVIP) was included as it contains a large collection of scientific, technological, and vocational education journals.

Based on the study’s key concepts, Chinese and English search terms were identified. A multidimensional search formula was then constructed using Boolean operators to ensure that the search results were comprehensive and accurate. Table 1 summarises the key concept categories and corresponding search terms.

Table 1: Key Search Terms

Concept Category	Chinese Search Terms	English Search Terms
Teaching Methods	Orff teaching method, Dalcroze teaching method	Orff method, Dalcroze method
Research Population	Preschool education interns, vocational colleges	Preschool teacher trainees, Chinese vocational colleges
Teaching Performance	Teaching performance	Teaching performance

Boolean Retrieval Formula

Boolean logic was applied to construct the search strategies for both Chinese and English databases. The search terms were focused on the Orff and Dalcroze teaching methods and combined with key concept categories, including preschool teacher trainees, vocational colleges, and teaching performance. For the Chinese databases, as key pedagogical concepts, “Orff approach” and “Dalcroze approach” were first combined using the “OR” operator to perform a parallel search of both terms. Subsequently, the results were linked using the “AND” operator with “preschool teacher trainees,” “teaching performance,” and “vocational colleges,” establishing a logical conjunction. The final search query was:

("Orff approach" OR "Dalcroze approach) AND "preschool teachers trainees" AND "teaching performance" AND "vocational colleges".

This strategy ensured that the retrieved results focused on studies concerning the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in Chinese vocational colleges when applying the Orff or Dalcroze methods. For the English databases, a similar strategy was employed. The core pedagogical terms "Orff method" and "Dalcroze method" were first retrieved in parallel using "OR." Subsequently, results were then sequentially linked with "preschool teacher trainees," "teaching performance", and "Chinese vocational colleges" using "AND". The term "China" was added to further restrict the research context. This yielded the final query of:

("Orff method" OR "Dalcroze method") AND "preschool teacher trainees" AND "teaching performance" AND "Chinese vocational colleges" AND "China".

This formula precisely retrieved international studies on the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in Chinese vocational colleges applying these two teaching methods. Taking into account the need for both up-to-date research and comprehensive literature coverage, studies published between 2010 and 2025 were included in this study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order to ensure that the literature included in the analysis could accurately and effectively answer the research questions, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established in accordance with systematic review principles. All documents retrieved were strictly screened according to the following criteria. Documents that met the following conditions were included in the review:

1. **Relevant research population:** The participants were preschool teacher trainees in Chinese vocational colleges. The research focused on the practical performance of this group, such as educational practice, probation, or simulated teaching.
2. **Relevant research content:** The research explicitly involved the application and practice of the Orff or Dalcroze teaching methods. This included, but was not limited to, the systematic application of these teaching methods in practice classes, specialised training in these methods, or empirical investigations examining their teaching effectiveness.
3. **Empirical research results:** The research reported observable or measurable empirical data related to the trainees' teaching performance. The data can come from a variety of channels, such as systematic classroom observation records and analyses, internship evaluations by instructors or colleges, interview or survey results by trainees themselves, or indirect feedback from children.
4. **Academically reliable literature:** The literature was a peer-reviewed journal paper published in formal academic channels, or a complete master's degree thesis with informative data. These two kinds of documents are usually audited to maintain a certain academic quality, providing relatively reliable research findings for this review.

On the other hand, documents that met any of the following conditions were excluded:

1. **Non-relevant research population:** Research involving primary or secondary school trainees, or in-service teachers from ordinary undergraduate colleges was excluded. This ensured the homogeneity of the research population, enabling more targeted conclusions.
2. **Non-empirical research:** Literature that centred on only theoretical expositions, conceptual analyses, or personal teaching reflections of the Orff or Dalcroze teaching methods, and did not involve any data collection and analyses from practice were excluded. This was because the study aimed to integrate empirical evidence, not theoretical views.

3. Non-Chinese or English literature: Full-text documents not written in Chinese or English were excluded. This was mainly a practical consideration, aiming to ensure that the research team could accurately understand the contents of the literature and avoid data misinterpretation caused by language barriers.
4. Duplicate publications: In cases of duplicate publications of the same research data, the version with the most complete data, published earlier, or with the highest academic reputation was retained. Other duplicates were excluded to ensure data independence and analysis accuracy.

Document Screening Process

For the initial document retrieval process, a quantitative visual analysis was conducted using HowNet on the studies related to the Orff and Dalcroze teaching methods retrieved. Figures 1 to 4 summarise these studies, indicating overall trends in publication counts, research themes, disciplines, and literature sources.

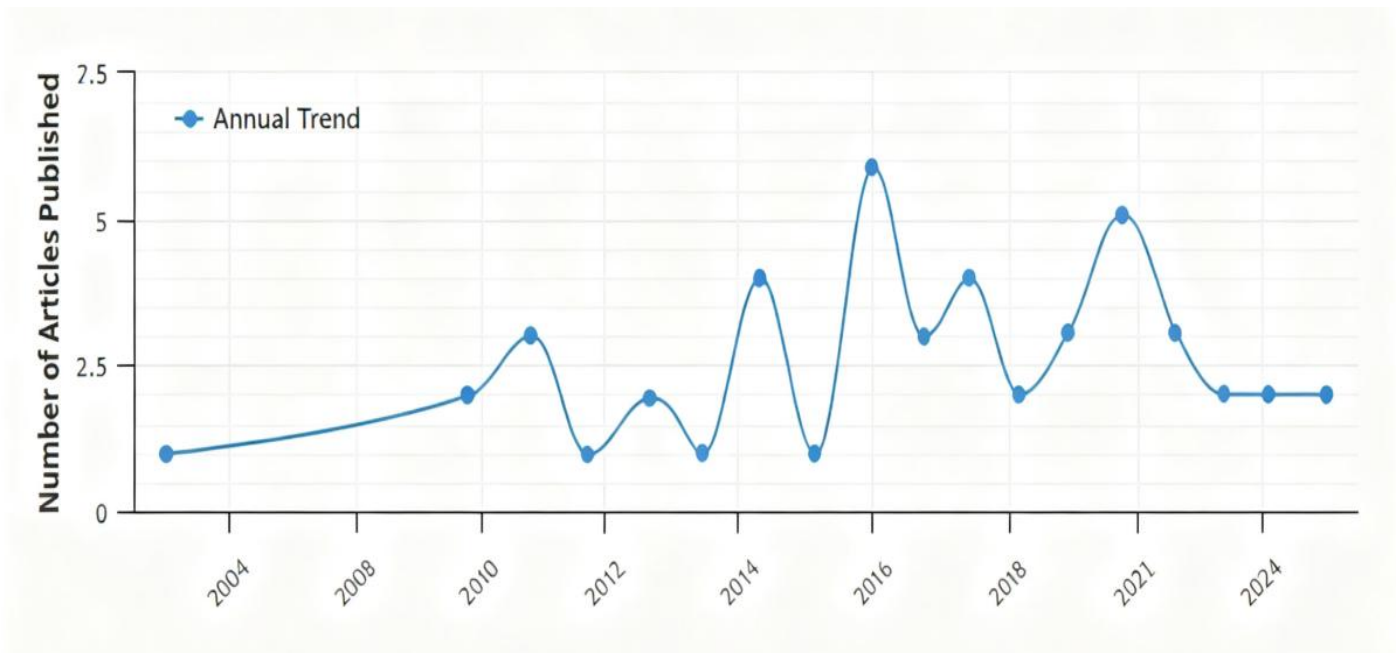


Figure 1: Number of Studies on the Orff and Dalcroze Teaching Methods

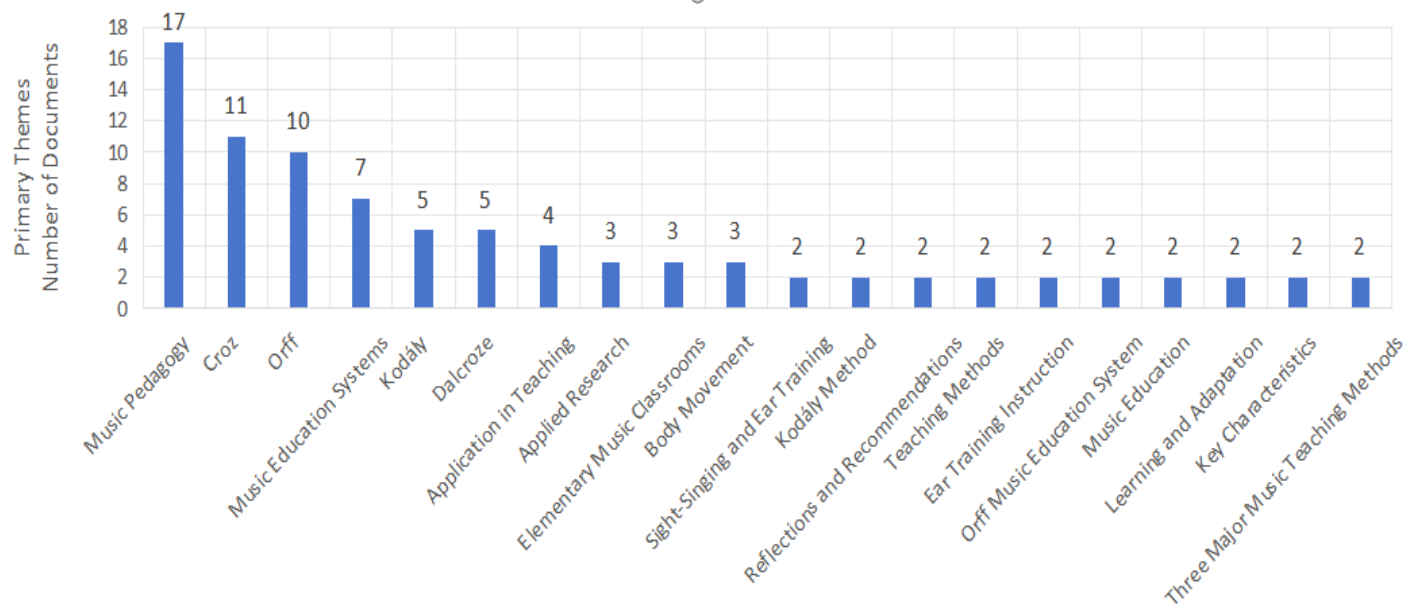


Figure 2: Research Themes of Studies on the Orff and Dalcroze Teaching Methods

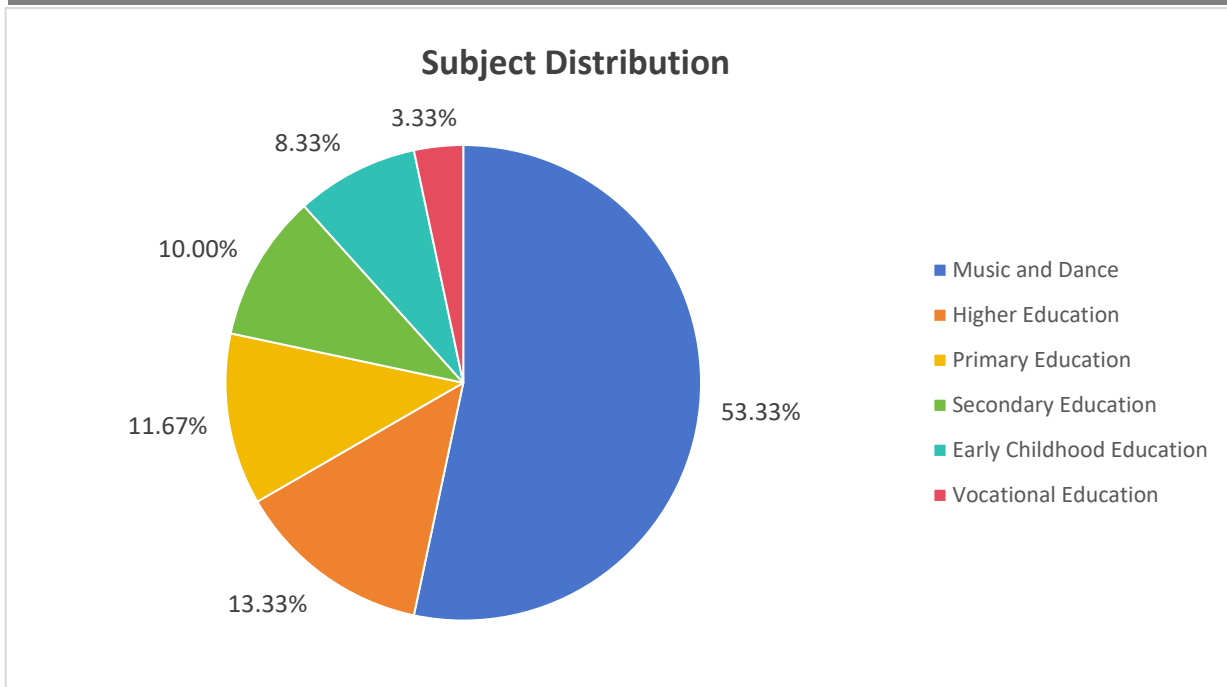


Figure 3: Disciplines of Studies on the Orff and Dalcroze Teaching Methods

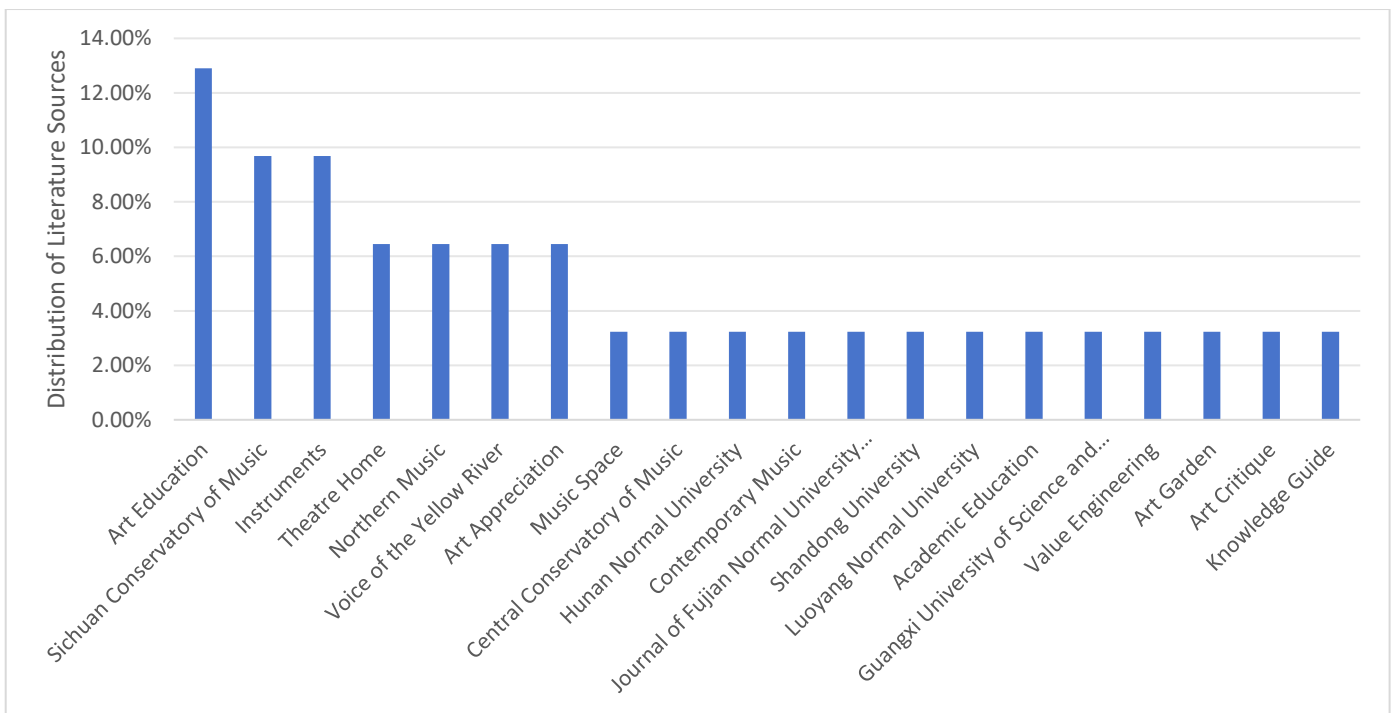


Figure 4: Literature Sources of Studies on the Orff and Dalcroze Teaching Methods

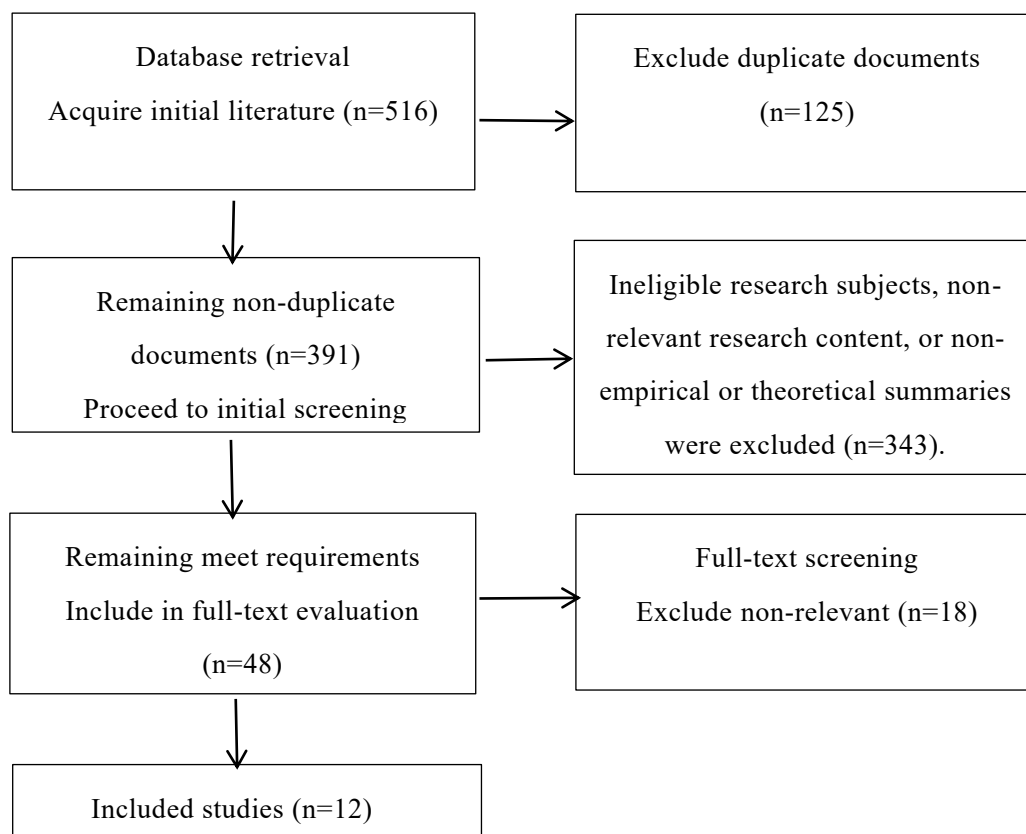
As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of publications demonstrates a gradual upward trend over time, indicating increasing scholarly interest in the Orff and Dalcroze teaching methods. However, Figures 2 and 3 reveal that the majority of studies remain concentrated within general music education and theoretical domains, with comparatively limited focus on vocational teacher training contexts. Furthermore, Figure 4 indicates that the literature is primarily sourced from educational and arts-related journals, suggesting a relatively narrow disciplinary scope. These patterns collectively reinforce the research gap identified in this study, particularly the lack of empirical research focusing on preschool teacher trainees in vocational colleges.

Using similar methods, a systematic search of documents in the Chinese CNKI, Wanfang, and CQVIP databases was conducted. Within the time range, a total of 516 related documents were initially retrieved and subsequently compared. A total of 125 duplicate publications were identified and eliminated, where the 391 non-duplicate documents entered the next round of screening.

In this second stage, the titles and abstracts of 391 articles were reviewed, and a preliminary judgement was made according to the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Here, the main exclusion criteria were theoretical or experience summaries, and lacked empirical data support were also excluded. After consideration, 343 papers were excluded at this stage, with the remaining 48 papers considered as meeting the requirements. Consequently, the next step involved obtaining the full texts for an in-depth evaluation.

The third stage involved a detailed full-text screening. During this process, it was discovered that, while several articles mentioned the relevant teaching methods investigated in this study in their abstracts, their core content did not address their specific applications or evaluate their effectiveness in practical teaching settings. Ultimately, only 12 articles (11 in Chinese and 1 in English) were finally selected for subsequent comprehensive analysis. The entire screening process ensured that the final included literature was highly relevant to this study's research questions. Figure 5 details the document screening process.

Figure 5: Document Screening Flow Diagram



Data Extraction and Synthesis

This study employed a thematic synthesis approach to systematically extract and analyse data from the 12 final included articles. The fundamental characteristics and primary findings of these studies are summarised in Table 2, providing a clear evidence base for this review. The systematic literature analysis focused on the mechanisms of the Orff and Dalcroze approaches that influence the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in vocational colleges. Data integration and analysis were primarily conducted across the following three dimensions.

First, in terms of improving teaching ability, both teaching methods significantly enhance trainees' instructional design and classroom teaching implementation skills. Specifically, the Orff teaching method effectively improves trainees' ability to manage classroom rhythm and their awareness of innovative use of teaching resources through its "original nature" concept. On the other hand, the Dalcroze method significantly enhances trainees' nonverbal communication skills and the quality of classroom interaction through "body rhythm" exercises. These findings show that music teaching methods generally support the development of trainees' foundational teaching skills.

Secondly, there were two obvious practical differences in implementing the two methods. The Orff teaching method is easier for trainees to master and implement in the early stages of teaching because of its rich teaching resources and standardised procedures. However, the Dalcroze teaching method requires higher levels of musical literacy and improvisation, generally presenting greater adaptive challenges in implementation. These findings highlight the significant influence of different teaching methods on their implementation and effectiveness.

Thirdly, the study identified three key influencing factors: the support of colleges and universities, the professional level of instructors, and the individual characteristics of trainees. Among them, the depth of instructors' understanding of the teaching methods has been proven to be the most important factor affecting trainees' application of the methods. Trainees' musical foundation and reflective practice ability have also been shown to be important variables influencing the application of the teaching methods.

Through the systematic analysis of these three dimensions, this study not only verifies the positive value of music teaching methods for the professional development of trainees, but also reveals their mechanisms and limitations, providing a theoretical basis for future practical improvements.

Table 2: Characteristics and Primary Findings of Included Studies

Research Number	Author (Publication Year)	Research Subjects	Research Design	Intervention Measures (Teaching Methods)	Teaching Performance Evaluation Indicators	Key Findings (Related to Teaching Performance)
1	Tang Yuxin (2023)	Existing Literature (Meta-Analysis)	Meta-Analysis and Systematic Review	Integrated Application of Kodály, Orff, and Dalcroze Methods	Methodological Quality and Effect Size Integration	The application of the three major teaching methods in China's music education has yielded overall positive outcomes, though research methodology standardisation requires improvement.
2	Xue Cheng (2022)	Vocational College Students	Teaching Reform and Practice Report	Synthesis of World-Renowned Music Teaching Methods (Implied to include Orff, etc.)	Course Practice Feedback and Teaching Outcomes Demonstration	Integrating teaching methodologies effectively enhance the vitality of folk song instruction and student engagement in vocational college music courses in northern Jiangsu.
3	Ma Xin (2022)	Comparative Analysis of Educational System Theories	Comparative Study (Theoretical Analysis)	Comparative Analysis of Waldorf, Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze Systems	Educational Philosophy and Teaching Method Characteristics Analysis	A systematic comparison of the similarities and differences among the systems provides a theoretical framework for selecting and integrating teaching practices.
4	Zou Ying (2021)	Preschool Children	Applied Research (Presumed Case or Action Research)	Three Major Music Teaching Methods (Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze)	Teaching Activity Application Process and Effect Observation	The three major music teaching methods effectively stimulate children's learning interest and enhance the expressiveness and interactivity of music instruction.

5	Yang Yang (2020)	Domestic Music Teaching Practices (Literature Review)	Literature Review	Three International Music Teaching Methods (Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze)	Domestic Application Status and Problem Analysis	The achievements and challenges of localising these three pedagogies in China are summarised.
6	Zhang Xian (2020)	Children	Applied Research	Three Renowned Music Teaching Methods (Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze)	Cultivation of Children's Musical Perception Abilities	Applying these three approaches significantly enhances children's musical perception development.
7	Tong Xin (2018)	University Music Education Programmes	Curriculum Reflection (Theoretical Exploration)	Movement Courses under the Dalcroze-Orff System	Curriculum Design and Teaching Model Rationality Analysis	The necessity of incorporating movement-based courses in higher education and the advantages of integrating the Dalcroze and Orff systems are explored.
8	Chu Huiwen (2016)	Core Principles of Pedagogy	Comparative Study (Theoretical Analysis)	Orff and Dalcroze Teaching Methods	Teaching Philosophy, Core Content, and Method Comparison	A clear comparison of the core principles of these two pedagogies deepens understanding and guides teaching practice.
9	Bai Ying (2012)	Early Childhood Music Games	Method Comparison and Activity Design	Music Games in Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodály Teaching Methods	Game Activity Design and Effect Comparison	Music games based on the three pedagogies each possess distinct characteristics; their integrated application can more effectively enhance young children's performance in musical activities.
10	Chen Wei (2011)	Characteristics of Music Education Systems	Feature Synthesis (Theoretical Analysis)	Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff Music Education Systems	System Main Feature Analysis	The primary features of the three educational systems are systematically organised, providing a clear framework for learning and reference.
11	Xiong Nana (2013)	Comparative Analysis of Pedagogies	Comparative Study (Theoretical Analysis)	Dalcroze and Orff Teaching Methods	Teaching Philosophy, Content, and Method Similarities and Differences Comparison	The commonalities and differences between the two pedagogies are explored in detail, offering insights into their complementarity and application.
12	Chen, W. (2011)	Characteristics of Music Education Systems	Feature Synthesis	Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff Music Education Systems	System Main Feature Analysis	The core characteristics and implications for reference of the three systems are systematically elaborated.

Quality Assessment of Included Studies

To enhance methodological rigour, a quality appraisal of the included studies was conducted. Each study was evaluated based on clarity of research design, data collection methods, validity of analysis, and relevance to the research questions. Studies were categorised as high, moderate, or low quality. Most studies were found to be of moderate quality, with common limitations including small sample sizes, lack of longitudinal data, and limited methodological transparency.

FINDINGS

RQ1: What specific dimensions of teaching performance are affected by the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods for preschool teacher trainees in Chinese vocational colleges?

All the included documents show that the Orff and Dalcroze teaching methods have a positive impact on intern teaching performance, particularly in their child-centred approaches and adaptive flexibility. Both teaching methods adhere to a child-centred philosophy, breaking away from traditional one-way instruction through multisensory engagement. This encourages teacher trainees to incorporate interactive design and participatory guidance in their teaching. The Orff method stimulates children's active participation through instrument playing, language games, and similar activities (Orff & Keetman, 1950-1954). Similarly, the Dalcroze method uses body movement as a medium to establish a "body-music" connection (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921).

This interactive orientation enables teacher trainees to design diverse engagement activities, such as the instrument grouping games observed by Huang (2023) and the movement composition activities described by Feng (2024). In practice, trainees demonstrate heightened sensitivity to children's responses, adjusting rhythms or simplifying procedures to sustain engagement. Xue Cheng (2022) and Yang Shuchao (2024) noted that employing these methodologies increases classroom participation rates by over 30%, reflecting significant progress in translating theoretical knowledge into practical competence.

Both teaching approaches also emphasise flexibility and localised adaptation, encouraging trainees to enhance the creativity and contextual adaptability of their instructional designs. Regarding content creation, they oppose rigid lesson plans and encourage the independent development of materials based on core concepts, such as adapting folk songs into rhythm games (Xue Cheng, 2022) or designing age-appropriate movement activities (Feng Yue, 2024). Tang Sui-feng (2023) noted that both approaches centre on creativity, prompting trainees to transform everyday scenarios into teaching resources (Zou Ying, 2021). Regarding contextual adaptation, trainees adjust plans based on actual preschool conditions (e.g., instruments, space), with this adaptability being crucial for overcoming practical challenges. Huang Jiahong (2019) observed that trainees often failed due to unrealistic plans. However, after exposure to these two methodologies, they flexibly employed body percussion as instrument substitutes (Ma Xin, 2022) or simplified movements to accommodate limited space. Zhang Xian (2020) further confirmed that trainees using these approaches achieved a 25% increase in "adaptability rates" for their teaching plans, highlighting their role in strengthening practical adaptability.

Hence, the Orff and Dalcroze approaches share significant commonalities in enhancing the teaching competencies of preschool teacher trainees, primarily manifested in strengthening instructional interactivity and elevating the creativity and adaptability of lesson design. Through multisensory engagement and interactive design, these methodologies assist trainees in better guiding young children's participation while flexibly adjusting teaching plans based on actual conditions, thereby effectively improving their instructional performance.

RQ2: What are the differences in the effects of the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods on the teaching performance of trainees?

Through thematic synthesis, significant differences in adaptability were identified between the two teaching methods. The Orff teaching method is deeply rooted in the idea of "elemental music". Approximately 80% of the reviewed studies emphasised that learners' musical instincts should be stimulated and their creative potential should be developed through basic musical elements such as rhythm and movement. Chen Wei (2011) further summarised the main characteristics of the Orff system as rhythm as the cornerstone" and "musical instruments as the medium.

In the Orff teaching method, percussion instruments are considered an important teaching medium. In an

empirical study of children's music perception, Zhang Xian (2020) found that most children in the experimental class demonstrated faster mastery of rhythm using Orff instruments. Xue Cheng (2022) further explained that this "touching music through musical instruments" approach effectively reduces technical difficulty and enables learners to perceive the essence of music more directly.

The Orff system follows a natural progressive path from imitation to creation. Zou Ying (2021) conducted a teaching experiment in a kindergarten, which showed that children who learned through the Orff method demonstrated significantly stronger improvisational ability than those in the traditional teaching group. Liu Xi (2021) summed this up as a complete process from the imitation of language rhythm to bodily movement responses, and finally to instrumental improvisation, allowing music learning to return to the essence of a "game". Organisationally, the Orff teaching method places great importance on collective cooperation. As summarised by Guo Yaning (2021), the goal of the Orff method is "not to train musicians, but to train complete people," which reflects its deep value in promoting learners' social development.

On the other hand, the Dalcroze teaching method believes that "musical emotion must be expressed through the body". The core of the system lies in its teaching practice of "body rhythm-*solfeggio*-improvisation," with 91% of its teaching activities revolving around this principle. In contrast to the Orff teaching method, which focuses on musical instruments and collective creation, the Dalcroze method regards the human body as the most direct and important "living instrument", and emphasises the internalisation of musical elements through muscle movement. Experimental data from primary school teaching by Feng Yue (2024) showed that students who performed body rhythm exercises improved their rhythmic internalisation speed by about 40%. Zhou Jun (2014) similarly supports this, asserting that the transformation from hearing to motor perception is fundamental to deepening musical understanding.

In terms of teaching orientation, the Dalcroze teaching method focuses on individual perceptual training, thereby addressing learners' individual differences. Tong Xin (2018) observed that, in body rhythm courses in colleges and universities, through targeted body rhythm exercises, about 73% of students effectively improved their intonation. This teaching cycle of "music perception-body response-individual correction" has realised the synchronous promotion of physiological coordination and musical psychological development.

In addition, the system adopts scientific and hierarchical training steps, making it especially suitable for professional music education. According to Jacob Prosek (2016), the musical expression scores of students guided by teachers who had received systematic body rhythm training were 28% higher than those of the control group. This rigorous scientific nature, as Meng Lu (2016) noted, positioned the Dalcroze system as a significant approach in professional music education.

In sum, the Orff approach is more accessible for initial mastery, and suits instruction through instruments and group collaboration. In contrast, the Dalcroze approach demands higher musical literacy and improvisational skills from trainees, emphasising individualised perceptual training and scientifically structured training steps. These distinct differences in implementation difficulty and focus provide crucial reference points for music educators in selecting and applying teaching methods.

RQ3: What are the key factors influencing the implementation effectiveness of the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods?

Generally, key factors influencing the effective implementation of the Orff and Dalcroze teaching methods are the preschool teacher trainees' individual characteristics and their external support systems. The theoretical foundation, skill levels, and reflective ability of the trainees are core internal factors that determine whether the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods can be effectively implemented. Collectively, these form the basic framework of the trainees' professional quality and practical competence. The depth of theoretical understanding is directly related to the effectiveness of teaching method application. Trainees' understanding of Orff's "original nature" concept or Dalcroze's "body rhythm" philosophy has a profound impact on the effectiveness of their teaching design and activity organisation

Zhang Xian (2020) pointed out that, if trainees only mechanically replicate the external form of the teaching method without fully understanding its essence, its effectiveness is often superficial, making it difficult to achieve child-centred educational goals. This lack of understanding leads to insufficient structure and adaptability in activity design, as well as limited adaptability to dynamic classroom changes. Furthermore, musical skills and improvisational ability are key technical foundations supporting teaching practice. The Orff teaching method in particular requires trainees to possess a basic sense of rhythm and the ability to play and arrange instrumental music, while the Dalcroze method emphasises the ability to respond immediately to musical changes through body movements. Liu Xi's empirical study (2021) found that trainees with weak musical foundations often demonstrated vague instructions, inaccurate demonstrations, or rigid interactions when organising rhythmic games. This, in turn, reduced children's participation and created a dull classroom atmosphere. This lack of skill not only limits the depth of teaching method implementation but may also increase trainees' frustration and negatively affect their professional confidence.

Similarly, teaching reflection and adaptive ability are key criteria distinguishing "mechanical application" from "creative transformation". Whether trainees can flexibly adjust their teaching strategies in response to real-time class feedback directly determines the dynamic quality of teaching practice. Bai Ying's (2012) comparative study showed that trainees who were skilled at observing and recording children's behavioural differences could transform general teaching methods into effective practices suited to specific situations. In the Orff instrumental ensemble activities, when some children struggle with mastering complex rhythms, trainees are able to simplify tasks into layered activities and reduce difficulty through group practice or the imitation game, ensuring that every child can experience success.

Such reflective practices not only enhance the classroom inclusiveness and effectiveness, but also promote trainees' professional growth from merely "following the book" to "teaching in accordance with students' aptitude". In summary, theoretical understanding, skill mastery, and reflective ability are intertwined, together forming the core professional competencies of preschool teacher trainees. Only through systematic training and continuous practice can teaching methods be effectively transformed from concept to action. In addition, the effective implementation of the two teaching methods hinges on the external support provided by colleges and internship units, as reflected in the following aspects.

The quality of teaching method training in vocational colleges has a significant impact on trainees' mastery. Yang Shuchao (2024) pointed out that trainees' ability to implement teaching methods is unsatisfactory in institutions that rely solely on "theoretical teaching". However, colleges that adopt a mixed mode of "theory + simulation teaching + case analysis", and establish simulation classes that allow for advance practice, demonstrate higher practical adaptation rates. Tong Xin (2018) also noted that offering targeted courses for music education majors, such as the "Body Rhythm Course" for the Dalcroze teaching method and the "Rhythm Creation Workshop" for the Orff method, can effectively strengthen trainees' practical foundations.

The guidance of internship units is as crucial as resource provision. Feng Yue (2024) found that preschools equipped with dedicated instructors who evaluate trainees' teaching method application in real time enable faster improvement in trainees' abilities. At the same time, the availability of Orff percussion instruments, Dalcroze teaching spaces, and other resources, directly impacts trainees' application frequency, with those with sufficient resources enabling trainees to apply these teaching methods more frequently.

Moreover, supporting the localisation and adaptation of teaching methods is essential. Teaching methods should be adjusted according to actual preschool contexts in China rather than directly adopting foreign models. Chu Huiwen (2016) showed that trainees who lacked localisation guidance were prone to "acclimatisation" in teaching method application. However, preschool-based teaching and research activities, such as sharing localisation cases of the two teaching methods, enable trainees to implement the methods more effectively.

Therefore, the theoretical foundation, skill levels, and reflective capacity of preschool teacher trainees constitute core intrinsic factors influencing pedagogical effectiveness. Concurrently, the quality of

institutional training, guidance, and resource provision from internship sites, and the localisation and adaptation of teaching methods, serve as vital external supporting factors. The combined influence of these factors determines the application outcomes and practical value of the Orff and Dalcroze approaches within the teaching practices of preschool teacher trainees in vocational colleges.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study found that the Orff and Dalcroze music teaching methods have a significant positive impact on the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees in vocational colleges, which is highly consistent with the existing theories and international research. Both teaching methods emphasise the “child-centred” concept and break through traditional teaching methods through multisensory participation and interactive design. This not only improves the trainees’ abilities for classroom interaction and children’s participation guidance, but also strengthens the creativity and adaptability of their instructional teaching design.

The results show that trainees can more keenly capture children’s classroom reactions when applying these teaching methods and maintain children’s attention and participation by flexibly adjusting teaching strategies, which is consistent with international practical research conclusions on these two teaching methods. In addition, this study also found that there are practical differences between the two teaching methods. The Orff teaching method is easier to master and implement in the early stages of teaching, while the Dalcroze method requires higher levels of musical literacy and improvisational ability. This finding further enriches understanding of the characteristics and application effects of the two teaching methods and provides more accurate guidance for subsequent practice.

This study conducted a systematic literature review to explore the impact of the Orff and Dalcroze music education approaches on the teaching performance of preschool teacher trainees at vocational colleges. It revealed their positive effects and implementation differences, while identifying areas warranting further investigation.

Existing research has predominantly focused on trainees’ short-term performance during educational internships, lacking follow-up on their long-term professional development post-graduation. Future studies should include longitudinal ones to examine the sustained impact of these two methodologies on trainees’ teaching style formation, professional growth trajectories, and deepening of early childhood education philosophies after entering the workforce. This would provide more comprehensive empirical support for long-term planning in early childhood teacher education, empowering educators to continuously enhance their professional competence throughout their careers.

Current research too, has predominantly concentrated on economically developed regions or resource-rich cities, with insufficient attention on economically underdeveloped or remote areas. Future research should expand the geographical scope to include vocational colleges across varying levels of economic development and resource conditions. This would provide insights into how to optimise application strategies of the Orff and Dalcroze approaches within resource-limited environments to better align with local early childhood education needs. This would not only advance educational equity but also provide more targeted practical guidance for early childhood teacher training across diverse regions.

Through in-depth research involving long-term tracking and geographical expansion, current understanding of the operational mechanisms of these two methodologies in early childhood teacher development may be refined, laying a more robust theoretical and practical foundation for enhancing preschool education quality.

In this regard, preschool teacher trainees should develop a clear understanding of the core principles of the Orff and Dalcroze approaches, moving beyond superficial imitation towards meaningful application in teaching practice. The Orff approach emphasises active music learning through rhythm, movement, and instruments, while the Dalcroze method focuses on bodily movement to develop musical perception and

improvisation. A balanced integration of theoretical knowledge and practical exploration is therefore essential.

Trainees should also adapt these teaching methods to local educational contexts by incorporating relevant cultural elements and classroom realities, rather than directly adopting foreign models. At the same time, they need to strengthen their musical and improvisational skills, particularly kinaesthetic rhythm literacy, to enhance classroom interaction and instructional effectiveness.

In addition, developing reflective teaching practices is crucial. By observing children's responses and adjusting instructional strategies accordingly, trainees can improve classroom inclusivity and engagement. Continuous professional development, including participation in teaching activities, collaboration with educators, and engagement with current research, is equally important for sustaining long-term growth in teaching competence.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study provide several important implications for curriculum design, teacher training policy, and pedagogical practice in vocational preschool education. From a curriculum design perspective, vocational colleges should adopt a progressive and integrated approach to music pedagogy training. The Orff method, due to its structured and accessible nature, can be introduced at the early stages of teacher training to build foundational skills in classroom interaction, rhythm, and engagement. As trainees develop greater confidence and competence, elements of the Dalcroze method can be gradually incorporated to enhance improvisational ability, musical perception, and embodied learning.

At the level of teacher training policy, institutions should move beyond purely theoretical instruction and adopt a blended training model that integrates theory, simulation-based practice, and supervised teaching internships. Providing adequate teaching resources, such as musical instruments and flexible learning spaces, as well as investing in the professional development of instructors, is essential to support effective implementation. In terms of cross-cultural adaptation, it is important to recognise that both the Orff and Dalcroze approaches originate from Western educational traditions. Their effective application in the Chinese context requires careful localisation, including the integration of local cultural elements, adaptation to classroom realities, and alignment with national curriculum standards. Such contextualisation ensures that these pedagogical approaches remain relevant and effective within diverse educational settings.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the systematic approach adopted in this review, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the number of included studies is relatively small ($n = 12$), which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Second, most of the studies are concentrated within the Chinese educational context, potentially restricting the applicability of the conclusions to broader international settings. Third, variations in research

design and methodological quality among the included studies may affect the consistency and strength of the evidence presented. Additionally, many of the reviewed studies rely on short-term observations or small-scale empirical data, with limited longitudinal evidence on the sustained impact of the Orff and Dalcroze approaches. Therefore, the findings of this review should be interpreted with caution, and further high-quality empirical research is needed to strengthen the evidence base in this field.

Based on the findings, this study proposes a staged conceptual framework for integrating the Orff and Dalcroze approaches in vocational teacher training. At the foundational stage, the Orff approach supports basic teaching competencies through structured and accessible activities. At the intermediate stage, elements of both approaches can be combined to enhance flexibility and creativity in instructional practice. At the advanced stage, the Dalcroze method strengthens higher-order skills such as improvisation, kinaesthetic awareness, and adaptive teaching. This framework provides a practical pathway for vocational colleges to systematically integrate both pedagogies and optimise trainee development.

In conclusion, this review demonstrates that while both Orff and Dalcroze approaches significantly enhance preschool teacher trainees' instructional competence, their differing pedagogical demands necessitate differentiated training strategies. By highlighting both effectiveness and implementation constraints, this study provides a nuanced foundation for curriculum design in vocational teacher education and sets a direction for future longitudinal and practice-oriented research.

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