

**Navigating Pedagogical Shifts between China and  
the UK: Chinese Instrument Teachers' Practices  
and Beliefs**

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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents,  
who have provided endless support for all my aspirations*

# Abstract

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Within academic music scholarship contexts, studies on Western instrumental musicians' educational pathways, their portfolio careers, and Western instrumental pedagogy informed by neuropsychology have increasingly emerged. However, amidst the globalisation of education, the characteristics of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical experiences and challenges, how CITs establish their teaching practices, and what underlies CITs' pedagogical understandings have remained largely unexplored. To fill this gap, this thesis investigates instrumental teaching beliefs and practices from the international perspectives of pre-service CITs undertaking instrumental/vocal pedagogical training at a UK university, as well as from the China-domiciled perspectives of pre- and in-service CITs in Chinese higher education and school contexts. Additionally, the investigation of cross-cultural pedagogical learning and practice experiences of those UK-trained pre-service CITs expands the scope of existing literature on Chinese international students in English-speaking countries, concerning their subject-specific pedagogical knowledge adaptation, transformation, and application across cultures.

This research consists of a survey study (104 pre/in-service CITs), a longitudinal study facilitated by the video-stimulated interview technique with three UK-trained pre-service CITs, and a multiple case study (three cases) through interviews: 1) seven China-domiciled pre-service CITs, 2) eight China-domiciled in-service CITs, and 3) 16 UK-trained pre-service CITs (including the three longitudinal-study participants). Findings concentrate on dissimilarities between music instrumental pedagogical cultures in China and the UK, distinct curricula and academic criteria within higher music (teacher) education, challenges in pedagogical practices as pre/in-service CITs, the impact of the UK instrumental pedagogical training, and cross-cultural identity dynamics of those international CITs. This research highlights socioculturally-contextualised instrumental teaching beliefs and practices and has implications for CITs/teacher educators/policy makers in China, as well as for stakeholders within (music) teacher education navigating cultural diversity.

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## List of Abbreviations and Terminologies

ABRSM	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music [UK]
AHEC	Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee [University of York, UK]
A-level	Advanced Level qualification
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CIT(s)	Chinese instrument teacher(s) [inclusion of Chinese-ethnic vocal]
CPD	Continuing professional development
CQ	Cultural intelligence
EAL	English as an Additional Language
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education [UK]
HE	Higher Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISM	International student mobility
IT(s)	In-service teacher(s)
IVT(s)	Instrumental/vocal teacher(s)
MA	Master of Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education [China]
NEEA	National Education Examinations Authority [China]
NTCE	National Teacher Certificate Examination [China]
PCK	Pedagogical content knowledge
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education [UK]
PT(s)	Pre-service teacher(s)
RQ(s)	Research question(s)
SAA	Study abroad agency
ST(s)	Student-teachers
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UoY	University of York
VSI	Video-stimulated interview

## Chinese Terminologies

Bianzhi [编制]	Tenured positions
Chuantong yinyue [传统音乐]	Traditional music
Gaokao [高考]	China National College Entrance Examination
Minjian pai [民间派]	Folk settings
Minzu yinyue [民族音乐]	National music
Music Fuzhong [音乐附中]	Conservatoire-affiliated music (secondary and high) school
Music Fuxiao [音乐附小]	Conservatoire-affiliated music (primary) school
Xueyuan pai [学院派]	Conservatoire settings
Yiben [一本]	The highest ranking universities in China
Yikao [艺考]	China National College Entrance Examination for Arts
Zhongkao [中考]	China National High School Entrance Examination

## Terminologies of Chinese instruments<sup>1</sup>

daji yueqi [打击乐器]	contemporary category of percussion instruments
dizi [笛子]	transverse bamboo flute
erhu [二胡]	two-stringed fiddle
guzheng [古筝]	zither with moveable bridges and 16 or 21 or more strings
pipa [琵琶]	four-stringed lute
qin [琴]	seven-stringed zither
ruan [阮]	lute with large round sound chamber
sheng [笙]	mouth-organ, traditionally with 17 pipes

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions are drawn from Thrasher, 2023, pp. 192-194. More information and pictures of the instruments are available in Whitener and Shu (2018).



yangqin [扬琴]                      trapezoidal dulcimer, with seven or more courses of metal strings

**Note on the text:** Throughout the thesis, the terms ‘instrument’ and ‘instrumental’ have a broad scope incorporating ‘voice’ and ‘vocal’ as an instrument.

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## Declaration

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. A version of Chapter 8 in this thesis is published as 'Pedagogical transformation and choice-making: A longitudinal study of Chinese pre-service guzheng teachers in the UK' co-authored with Haddon, E. in *Asia-Pacific Journal for Arts Education*, (2023), 22 (special issue), 1-33. A version of Chapter 7 is published as 'Developing instrumental teaching cross-culturally: International preservice teachers' pedagogical understanding with consideration of cultural intelligence' in E. Haddon (Ed.). *Instrumental music education* (2025) by Bloomsbury. All sources are acknowledged as references.

# Publications and Conference Papers

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## Peer-reviewed publications

- Zheng, X., & Li, H.** (2025). Developing instrumental teaching cross-culturally: International preservice teachers' pedagogical understanding with consideration of cultural intelligence. In E. Haddon (Ed.), *Instrumental music education*. Bloomsbury.
- Li, H. & **Zheng, X.** (2025). Understanding subject-specific language challenges for Music learners with English as an additional language (EAL): What are the impacts and how can teachers provide support? In E. Haddon (Ed.), *Instrumental music education*. Bloomsbury.
- Eskandar, A., & **Zheng, X.** (2025). Avenues for pedagogical training in music education in China and the UK: Aims, availability and implications. In E. Haddon (Ed.), *Instrumental music education*. Bloomsbury.
- Zheng, X., & Haddon, E.** (2023). Pedagogical transformation and choice-making: A longitudinal study of Chinese pre-service guzheng teachers in the UK. *Asia-Pacific Journal for Arts Education*, 22(special issue), 1-33.  
[https://www.ied.edu.hk/ccaproject/apjae/Vol22\\_No6.pdf](https://www.ied.edu.hk/ccaproject/apjae/Vol22_No6.pdf)

## Peer-reviewed conference papers

- Zheng, X., & Li, H.** (2024, August). *The sustainability of learner agency in Western higher music education: A cross-cultural perspective*. Roundtable paper co-authored and co-presented at the 36th International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference 2024, Helsinki, Finland.
- Zheng, X.** (2024, July). *Cross-cultural sustainability of UK-trained instrumental/vocal pedagogy in teaching Chinese traditional instruments: Cultural and pedagogical identities*. Paper presented at the 36th International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference 2024, Helsinki, Finland.
- Zheng, X.** (2023, October). *Learning music authentically: Perspectives of Chinese instrument teachers in China and the UK*. Paper presented at the 25th International CHIME Conference, Heidelberg, Germany.

- Zheng, X.** (2023, June). *Caught in the middle: Western or Chinese approaches for teaching a Chinese instrument?* Paper presented at the China in the Social Sciences: Emerging Research from the North of England Conference (ChiNESS), Sheffield, UK.
- Zheng, X.** (2023, June). *Communicating pedagogy: The perspectives of Chinese instrument teachers in China and the UK.* Paper presented at York Asia Research Network (YARN) ECR/PhD Conference 2023, York, UK.
- Zheng, X.** (2023, January). *A longitudinal study using video-stimulated interviews with Chinese preservice guzheng teachers in the UK: What influences their pedagogical transformation and choice-making in teaching?* Paper presented at the International Conference on Music Education Technology (ICMdT) 2023, Hong Kong, China.
- Zheng, X.** (2021, June). *Instrumental pedagogy across cultures: How do Chinese teachers teach guzheng inside and outside their original contexts?* Paper presented at the Transtraditional Istanbul (TTI) Conference: Transformation of Musical Creativity in the 21st Century, Istanbul, Turkey.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

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The Cambridge Dictionary defines pedagogy as ‘the study of the methods and activities of teaching’ (Pedagogy, 2023). This suggests that pedagogy consistently focuses on the actions of the teacher and the methods employed in informing both teaching and curriculum, encompassing ‘interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events’ (Child Australia, 2017, p. 1). Pedagogy is also shaped by a multitude of factors, including educational theories, research findings, political influences, practical experiences, reflections from both individuals and groups, the expertise and experiences of educators, and the expectations and needs of the community (Ibid.); this also includes cultural and social values that shape it significantly (Murphy, 2003). Accordingly, instrumental pedagogy could refer to the actions of the teacher and the methods employed in informing both instrumental teaching and curriculum-related components. Research on instrumental pedagogy would therefore incorporate those aspects, exploring activities, interactions and experiences within instrumental teaching and how the pedagogy might be influenced by theories, practices, reflections, people’s needs, political and sociocultural values.

## 1.1 The researcher and the research

My interest in exploring instrumental pedagogy across cultures arises from my cross-cultural pedagogical learning experience from China to the UK as a guzheng teacher. This opportunity was initially provided by the taught MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course at the University of York, UK, where I was able to engage with diverse learner-centred, creative teaching styles, strategies, pedagogical theories, and ways of thinking as an instrumental teacher. I became aware of distinct pedagogical differences between what I experienced in the Chinese context and on the MA course in the UK. This stimulated my reflections on my previously received guzheng lessons and my own teaching practices as a private guzheng teacher while I was an undergraduate music student at a university music department in China. Inspired by the UK MA course content, I realised that guzheng teaching could also be diverse and creative through not merely teaching traditional guzheng pieces and not solely focusing on enhancing pupils’ technical skills. I also became aware that this way of teaching was largely a continuation of how my previous guzheng

teachers taught me. These same feelings were shared with several other student-teachers on the UK MA course who also specialised in Chinese instruments. Based on this, I devised an interview study for my MA dissertation in 2020 concentrating on comparisons between three guzheng student-teachers' teaching practices before and during their UK MA study. This experience motivated my further exploration of this research topic concerning instrumental pedagogical learning and practices within and across cultures from the perspectives of Chinese instrument teachers (CITs), coupled with the impact of music/instrumental/vocal pedagogical training on CITs' professional development.

## **1.2 Contextualising the research and research objectives**

Instrumental teaching has traditionally been characterised by a master-apprentice model, a framework prevalent across various cultural contexts (Boyle, 2020; Schippers, 2009). This model embodies a personal and emotional teacher-student relationship beyond mere musical knowledge transmission (Burwell, 2013). Influenced by Confucian principles, the master-apprentice dynamic in China is marked by a hierarchical structure that reinforces the teacher's dominant role in the educational process (Di & McEwan, 2016). Within the teaching of Chinese instruments, this hierarchy may have significant implications for how students could engage with their learning. Moreover, musical and stylistic features inherently embedded in the Chinese instrument repertoire (e.g. Jones, 1995; Thrasher, 1989) may inevitably influence how the pieces and interpretations would be taught to Chinese instrument learners.

Studies on teaching Western instruments in the Chinese context (Lee & Leung, 2022; Lin, 2016; Zheng & Leung, 2021a, 2021b), professional identity of pre-service music teachers in China higher education (Qin & Tao, 2021; Yang, 2022), and practices of school music teachers in China (Yu & Leung, 2019) are increasingly available in the field of music (teacher) education. However, it is rare to find equivalent material on instrumental teachers particularly teaching Chinese instruments across their teaching contexts and at their different phases of professional development (e.g. pre- and in-service). As a result, there remains a gap in understanding regarding their pedagogical practices and beliefs, specific methods they employed in teaching, and what influences their teaching. These under-explored aspects underpin the objectives of this research as follows:

- a) To expand existing understanding of the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments by examining CITs' pedagogical practices within their specific educational contexts.
- b) To investigate CITs' educational pathways through formal music learning and their professional development within and across educational and cultural contexts (specific to the Chinese and the UK MA contexts in this study).
- c) To examine the impact of subject-specific (i.e. music/instrumental/vocal) pedagogical training on CITs' (trans)formation of their pedagogical beliefs and practices.
- d) To explore CITs' cross-cultural pedagogical learning, adaptation, and implementations.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 1 introduces the research, outlining the researcher's background and the context in which the study is situated. It sets the stage for understanding the research objectives and provides an overview of the thesis's structure.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review that contextualises the teaching of Chinese instruments. It delves into the master-apprenticeship model, exploring its characteristics, the teacher-student relationship, and the sociocultural impact. This chapter further examines the traditional musical features and the hierarchical nature of musical transmission, touching on aspects such as notation and semi-improvisation, regional diversity, and the predominant repertoire for learners. The chapter concludes with the emerging research questions that guide the inquiry.

In Chapter 3, the research framework and methodology are detailed. It discusses the research paradigm, particularly the social constructivist approach, and elaborates on the multi-method qualitative research design employed in the study. This chapter also highlights the significance of the cross-cultural perspective, including the researcher's positionality and



the languages used throughout the research. The various research methodologies, including case study and longitudinal study approaches, are outlined, along with data collection methods and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 focuses on the findings from the survey study, detailing the data collection process and the demographic data of the respondents. It analyses the experiences of Chinese instrument learning in China, the respondents' pathways through music education, and their perceptions of teacher training and qualification. This chapter provides a nuanced discussion of the challenges and experiences encountered within the context of Chinese higher music education.

In Chapter 5, the perspectives of China-domiciled pre-service Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) regarding their received training and professional development are explored. The chapter discusses their experiences in private settings, perceptions of higher music education programmes, and the challenges faced during their academic journeys. It emphasises the influences of pedagogical culture and curricula on their learning experiences.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus to China-domiciled in-service CITs, examining their teaching practices and the challenges they encounter within the profession. This chapter encompasses their experiences in private teaching, higher education contexts, music school environments, and state school settings. Each section sheds light on the nuances of teaching Chinese instruments and the various factors that influence their pedagogical choices.

In Chapter 7, the perspectives of UK MA student-teacher CITs on instrumental pedagogical education and practices across cultures are presented. This chapter investigates their prior teaching experiences, perceptions of cross-cultural learning, and the adaptations they made in response to the UK educational context. The challenges faced during this transitional phase are also addressed.

Chapter 8 focuses on the findings of the longitudinal study involving three UK MA guzheng student-teachers. It delves into their pedagogical choice-making processes, the impact of their previous teaching experiences, and the ongoing transformation in their teaching practices post-MA study.

Chapter 9 synthesises the cross-case findings, exploring CITs' perspectives on student-centredness, authentic teaching and learning, and the concepts of interpretation

and semi-improvisation in teaching Chinese instruments. This synthesis allows for a deeper understanding of the varied beliefs and practices among the CITs.

Chapter 10 presents a general discussion of the key findings, linking them back to the research questions and addressing the implications for practice and policy.

Chapter 11 concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings and discussing their implications and limitations. It reflects on the contributions made by the research and offers suggestions for future study, highlighting potential areas for further investigation.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

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## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises this research on pre- and in-service Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) through synthesis and discussion of the literature on specific aspects that have historically characterised the transmission of Chinese instruments (repertoire), including the teacher-student relationship and musical/cultural/societal/regional roots (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 details educational pathways to music learning, educational transition points, and music performance examinations for instrumental/vocal learners in the Chinese private/music school/higher education (HE) contexts. Section 2.4 examines the characteristics of the profession, qualification, and education of instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs) in general, and Section 2.5 details the impact of education received within and/or across cultures on teachers' (trans)formation of beliefs and practices.

## 2.2 Contextualising the teaching of Chinese instruments

### 2.2.1 Master-apprenticeship: Characteristics, the teacher-student relationship, and the sociocultural impact

Instrumental/vocal teaching has been predominantly and continuously characterised by a master-apprentice model (Boyle, 2020; Burwell, 2013; Gaunt, 2017; Hallam, 2018; Jørgensen, 2000; Jorgensen, 2011) across many cultural contexts (e.g. Jones, 1995; Lee & Leung, 2022; Schippers, 2009), where 'the master usually is looked at as a role model and a source of identification for the student' (Jørgensen, 2000, p. 68). In the Chinese music culture, the term 'master' historically represents a musician's honorific prestige, especially the elderly who pass down their musical knowledge, techniques, scores and score-reading to the younger generation of Chinese instrument learners, as well as supervise both their learning and performance (Jones, 1995). This master-apprentice model of instrumental/vocal teaching is legitimate as, for example, 'Because many components of the vocal [and musical] mechanism could not be seen, teaching relied on expert practitioners conveying experiential knowledge to students through demonstration and description of the results to be achieved and of the accompanying sensations' (Callaghan, 1998, p. 25).

The model simultaneously represents a relationship between a student and their teacher that is both personal and emotional, in which the level of authority or power manifested by the teacher can considerably influence the student's personal and professional identity (Burwell, 2013; Nielsen, 2006). This comprises the student's 'personality, aesthetic attitudes, life philosophy, professional standards and attitudes toward his or her own artistic and professional activity and the role of musician in contemporary society' (Manturzewska, 1990, p. 135); this is supported by empirical evidence on how teacher-student relationships and interactions impact both the teacher and student's (neuro)psychological outcomes (e.g. satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy) within instrumental/vocal teaching contexts (Creech, 2009, 2010; Creech & Gaunt, 2018; Creech & Hallam, 2010). The model is therefore challenged by the power dynamics within the relationship concerning whether the student is granted ownership of their legitimate initiative in their instrumental/vocal learning by the teacher (e.g. Burwell, 2013; Gaunt, 2017; Jørgensen, 2000).

Whilst the master-apprentice model may be interpreted differently depending on teaching contexts, individual perceptions, and the learning of music genres, permeated with more or less power of the teacher (Burwell, 2013), the model featuring the teacher-student relationship in the Chinese context is historically weighted towards the authority of the teacher, originating from traditional Chinese philosophies (Di & McEwan, 2016; Lee & Leung, 2022) – the cultural roots that impact how Chinese people think, make sense of the world, and act (Wang, 2019). Confucianism is evident to be one of the major influences on music education in China, emphasising the attainment of 'harmony between body, mind and spirit' (Yang, 2024, p. 8), as well as 'the importance of loyalty, virtues, social harmony, and moral righteousness' (Ho, 2018, p. 122) through learning music that advocates 'a harmonious world between China and other nations, between the Chinese state and ethnic minority groups, and between the Chinese state and individual families', which fosters a Chinese cultural identity (Ibid., p. 132). This individual and social harmony is also achieved by promoting the ideology of hierarchy in Confucianism between the relationship of social roles of humans (Ho, 2018), 'the ruler and the ruled' (Hung, 2019, p. 1077), and between the teacher and student (Di & McEwan, 2016; Staats, 2011). Underpinned by this hierarchy, the teacher-dominant apprenticeship prevails in various instrumental/vocal teaching contexts such as conservatoire, music studios, and other private settings in China (Lee & Leung,

2022); specific examples of this are given in the following sections, combined with other relevant musical/cultural dimensions.

## **2.2.2 Master-apprenticeship: The traditional musical features, hierarchy, and transmission**

### **2.2.2.1 Notation and semi-improvisation**

Chinese music retains ‘many aspects of its early history’ (Jones, 1995, p. 8), including the retained notation systems, aesthetic beliefs, literary roots, and traditional repertoire through generations of inheritance (Yung, 2010). It is noteworthy that the scores used in the transmission of Chinese traditional instrumental/vocal music are more of ‘an aid to memory’ consisting of ‘skeletal notes’, namely ‘gugan yin [骨干音]’ (Jones, 1995, pp. 111-12) to show the ‘most important notes’ (Thrasher, 2008, p. xv) and the ‘architecture of a composition’ (Chow-Morris, 2010, p. 78). Additionally, the notation systems<sup>2</sup> vary across regions, music genres, instruments, and repertoire: e.g. the gongche notation is typically used in the Kunqu [昆曲] opera,<sup>3</sup> qin, and solo pipa repertoire (Jones, 1995).

Characteristics of this notation with only the basic yet important notes, the realisation of the notation in performance often includes ‘the addition of melodic filler, embellishments and other performance details which are changeable’ (Thrasher, 2008, p. xv); Witzleben (1995) refers to this realisation of the notation as ‘semi-improvisatory’ (p. 29), as ‘the scope of improvisation allowed in Chinese string and wind music is much narrower than in most small-group jazz’ where an improvised jazz solo is played (Witzleben, 2004, p. 149). This semi-improvisation includes ‘jiahua [加花]’ translated literally as ‘adding flowers’ – ‘the process of ornamenting and melodically or rhythmically’ enriching the skeletal notes, or alternatively ‘simplifying the melody’, which is called ‘jianzi [减字]’, and translated as ‘simplification’ (Chow-Morris, 2010, p. 73); other metrical, rhythmic, and tempo variations [‘bianzou’, 变奏] are also included (Jones, 1995; Thrasher, 2023). This

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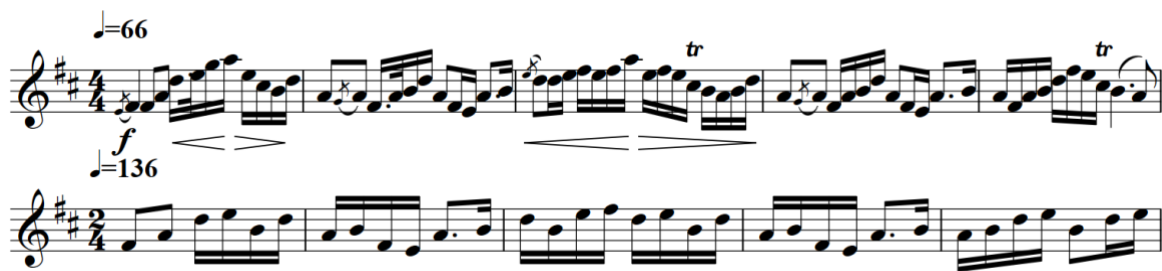
<sup>2</sup> The ancient ones include the gongche [工尺] and ‘2-4’ notations, used mostly in rural areas in China, while the widely used one in urban and conservatoire contexts is the cypher or ‘simplified’ notation [jianpu 简谱], including for publications on Chinese music (see Jones, 1995, pp. 119-123). As the current research focuses more on the pedagogical dimension, providing a comprehensive review of the literature on the notation is beyond the scope of the study.

<sup>3</sup> Genre of classical opera originated from Kunshan, Jiangsu province (Thrasher, 2023).

aligns with the semi-improvised techniques articulated in the Chinese literature,<sup>4</sup> described as the most representative feature of playing Chinese instruments (e.g. Fu, 2012; Fu et al., 2010; Yuan, 1983), from which two examples of the music scores are presented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below.



**Figure 2.1:** A segment of the music score of *Xiaofangniu* [小放牛, *Little Cowherds*]: the first line is the original melody, and the second line is semi-improvised (reproduced from Yuan, 1983, p. 34).



**Figure 2.2:** A segment of the music score of *Huanle Ge* [欢乐歌, *Song of Joy*]: the second line is the simplified melody, and the melody in the first line changes the beat, tempo, and rhythmic patterns while maintaining the important notes as with the second line (reproduced from Yuan, 1983, p. 39).

#### 2.2.2.2 Hierarchical and inheritance-oriented musical transmission

However, whilst ‘a certain degree of freedom and creativity in manipulating aspects of the musical material’ with personalised interpretations is offered to the learner by this ‘nonspecificity’ of the notation (Yung, 1987, pp. 84-85) and the semi-improvisation feature, ‘a voice’ of the learner themselves is only allowed by their teacher (Witzleben, 2004, p. 141) when the learner ‘has achieved a certain level of proficiency’ (Yung, 1987, p. 85). This is

<sup>4</sup> More extensive ways of semi-improvisation or variation through changing the scale, mode or key of a piece are detailed in the listed Chinese literature and in Jones’ (1995) work (pp. 141-48).

further substantiated by Witzleben's (2004) experience of learning erhu at a Chinese conservatoire:

my experiences playing popular music and jazz were useful preparation for [...] my readiness to play without notation, to improvise, or to make my way through difficult or unfamiliar repertory [...] However, my [erhu] teachers [...] expected me to thoroughly master their own versions of the pieces they taught me (which I actually was usually trying to do, although not always successfully) before I went on to develop a voice of my own. (p. 141)

Additionally, learning the notation by singing the score with the teacher before playing it on the instrument has been a notable aspect of the master-apprentice model of teaching in China (Jones, 1995), known as 'oral-aural transmission' (Yung, 1987, p. 85) or 'aural traditions where musical knowledge and repertoire are primarily embodied in living musicians' in Asian cultures (Schippers 2009, p. 68). Within this culture,

[the student] learns a composition phrase by phrase by imitating [their] teacher's performance. A common form of learning is for the teacher and student to play the same composition together in unison, thereby insuring that the student inherits the nuances of the music, especially its rhythm and phrasing, from the teacher. The notation, which the student copies from his teacher and keeps, plays a secondary role in the learning process... (Yung, 1987, p. 85)

This reproduction of the inherited interpretation from the teacher appears to authenticate the student's playing (Chow-Morris, 2010). Nevertheless, the reproduction-focused way of teaching diminishes a student's legitimacy as 'a co-creator of the work' and shapes their dependence on the teacher's detailed instructions instead of on their own independent thinking, thereby hindering the student's musical creativity and personal expression (Zheng & Leung, 2021a, p. 596).

Aside from the inheritance of the teacher-interpreted version of the piece, Chow-Morris (2010) identifies the influence of the Confucian social hierarchy on the actual practice of semi-improvisation on the piece: 'famous musicians [...] tend to be socially permitted to jiahua more than the other musicians' (p. 74). As 'the score has never told the whole story' (Jones, 1995, p. 126), the re-interpretation of the historically preserved repertoire (Yung, 1987) and the density of adding ornaments in interpretations is

controversial throughout the historical practices of the music (Jones, 1995). Tensions could be seen between the space for personalised interpretations provided inherently by the notation and the teacher or master-interpreted version of the notation based on their authority and ‘perceived past’ of the music (Yung, 1987, p. 82) as ‘gatekeepers’ and ‘instances of symbolic power’ (Burnard & Haddon, 2015, p. 9). This appears to reinforce the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students associated with their social status while creating ongoing challenges for students to take ownership of their instrumental/vocal learning embedded in Chinese society and culture.

### ***2.2.2.3 Conservatoire and folk contexts***

Contemporary Chinese musicology distinguishes between the ‘xueyuan pai’ [学院派, academic or conservatoire settings] and the ‘minjian pai’ [民间派, folk settings],<sup>5</sup> a division indicating the inherent tensions between the introduction of Western music education systems and the localisation of traditional music in China (Chai, 2011; Jin, 2005). The ‘xueyuan pai’ is typically associated with institutionalised teaching in conservatoire settings, relying on Western music theory, such as harmony and staff notation, to ‘scientify’ traditional music (Jin, 2005) via standardised textbooks and a grading system that emphasises technical mastery (Chai, 2011). In contrast, the ‘minjian pai’ represents a mode of transmission rooted in local communities, where oral tradition and tacit knowledge prevail (Ibid.), and the evaluative criteria are determined by local cultural contexts (Jin, 2005; Sun, 2010). Similarly, Jones (1995) identifies that students usually learn strictly following a music score in the conservatoire, which is in contrast with a flexible context-dependent realisation of the music in village and folk ensemble settings in China (Hughes, 2004).

Ethnomusicologists argue that this division is essentially a struggle over cultural power (e.g. Jin, 2005; Xiao, 2006). The ‘xueyuan pai’ often decontextualises folk music, transforming it into an analysable musical text – for example, adapting the improvised Hebei Chuige [吹歌, wind music] into fixed notation (Zhao, 2017) or reshaping erhu tonal quality to meet Western acoustic standards (Ni, 2021). This process of ‘scientification’ has been criticised for stripping folk music of its cultural and expressive significance (Jin, 2005). While

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<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, the ‘yuansheng tai’ [原生态, original settings] (Jin, 2005).



academic discourse has moved beyond a binary opposition between these two approaches, discussing the protection and sustainability of folk music (e.g. Yang, 2006), debates have emerged over the fundamental aesthetic differences and the legitimacy of the folk music traditions (Jin, 2005), revealing conflict concerning who holds the discursive authority to shape the current state and future of Chinese culture during the period of social transition in China (Ibid.).

#### ***2.2.2.4 Regionality, stylistic diversity, and the predominant repertoire for learners***

Regional diversity has historically been a salient dimension of Chinese instrumental/vocal music: regional styles in the music (e.g. the heptatonic Northern melody and the pentatonic Southern melody),<sup>6</sup> musical forms, local folk songs and operas across the Northern and Southern regions (e.g. Hebei Bangzi [河北梆子]<sup>7</sup> and Nanqu [南曲]),<sup>8</sup> regional ensemble music (e.g. Xi'an Guyue [西安鼓乐]<sup>9</sup> and Jiangnan Sizhu [江南丝竹])<sup>10</sup> – the origin of the pieces of many Chinese instruments (Jones, 1995), as well as the application of different semi-improvisation techniques or variations, ensemble instrumentation, and inherited repertoire across regions (Jones, 1995; Thrasher, 1989). These therefore contribute to the musical stylistic diversity in the inherited instrumental/vocal repertoire concerning, for example, the 'Wen [文, civil]' and 'Wu [武, martial]' pieces, often seen in the pipa repertoire (Jones, 1995; Wu, 2023). Civil pieces are more elegant and played 'at lower tempos with soft dynamics' while martial pieces are more 'powerful and mighty, played at faster tempos with louder dynamics' (Wu, 2023, p. 330). Secondly, the 'Daqu [大曲, large pieces]' and 'Xiaoqu [小曲, small pieces]' indicating the length of the pipa pieces (Wu, 2023) or the tunes of Chinese folk songs (Jones, 1995) can be found, and thirdly, diversity exists in the 'Cuyue [粗乐, coarse music]' and 'Xiyue [细乐, fine/elegant music]' indicating instrumental timbres (Jones, 1995, pp. 93-94).

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<sup>6</sup> A traditional viewpoint in China which needs to be refined in practice considering population and music mobility (Jones, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> An opera genre in the Northern China, Hebei province (Thrasher, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Literally translated as 'southern tunes' (Dujunco, 2023, p. 222).

<sup>9</sup> Traditional wind-and-percussion ensemble music in the Northern China (Thrasher, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Also known as Jiangnan silk-and-bamboo: string-and-wind ensemble music originated from the 'south of the Yangtze' area (Jones, 1995, p. 246).

Inherently these regional and stylistic features appear to permeate the Chinese instrument repertoire due to the cultural continuity and inheritance (e.g. Jones, 1995; Wu, 2023). These inherited pieces, sometimes with re-composed versions (Wu, 2023; Yung, 1987; also see Section 2.2.3 concerning the adapted repertoire), appear to constitute predominantly the repertoire in the Chinese instrument repertoire or tuition books used by learners (e.g. Wang & Chen, 2006; Yan, 2006; Yuan, 2011), as well as the performance examination<sup>11</sup> repertoire (e.g. Erhu graded-exam repertoire, n.d.; Pipa graded-exam repertoire, n.d.). These learning/teaching materials can ‘have the power to profoundly shape our understanding of musical craft’ and instrumental practices (Powell et al., 2025). Nevertheless, it could be challenging for a Chinese instrument learner to navigate their learning amidst those regional and stylistic features embedded in the specific repertoire they learn, coupled with their experiences of learning the instrument and their (un)familiarity with the music genre and style. Those features also appear to challenge how the teacher could engage the student in, for example, ‘play[ing] the “right” notes, rhythms, articulations, and dynamics as prescribed by a composer in stylistically informed ways’ (Cutler, 2023, p. 8) and as prescribed by the historically constructed interpretations; therefore, this research examines how teaching and learning a Chinese instrument (repertoire) could remain rooted in its musical and cultural features.

### **2.2.3 Conceptualisation of Chinese traditional music (chuantong yinyue)**

Over the past century, the development of Chinese musical traditions has been marked by significant conceptual and historical shifts. In the early twentieth century, Chinese ‘national music’ [国乐, guoyue] arose as a concept to counter ‘Western music’, referring specifically to musical practices embodying ‘Chineseness’, with traditional instrumental music (especially Han music,<sup>12</sup> e.g. Jiangnan Sizhu [江南丝竹] and qin pieces) at its core (Liu, 2019). After 1949, ‘minzu yinyue’ [民族音乐] replaced ‘guoyue’ [国乐] as a terminological shift,<sup>13</sup> focusing on ethnic minority traditions (e.g. Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uighur) and

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<sup>11</sup> See Section 2.3.2.1 on the graded performance examination in China.

<sup>12</sup> ‘汉族音乐’ in Mandarin.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase ‘minzu’ [民族] can mean both ‘ethnic’ and ‘national’ in Chinese. Some scholars view ‘guoyue’ as a narrower historical phenomenon tied to twentieth-century nation-building, while ‘minzu yinyue’ is broader, covering both old and new music from China’s various ethnic communities (Duan, 2011).

unified national identity, which becomes a symbol of ‘the people’s’<sup>14</sup> ideological consciousness in China (Duan, 2011). The boundaries of Chinese ‘national music’ [minzu yinyue] expanded to include ethnic minority music and hybrid compositions (Liu, 2019), including new music influenced by the West to serve national representation, e.g. *Chunjiang Hua Yueye* [春江花月夜], a folk tune rearranged for a modern Chinese orchestra (Lin, 2002), while concentrating on the study of Chinese ethnic culture and social structures through music as a vehicle (Zheng, 2024). The concept of ‘minzu yinyue’ then began to incorporate a broader array of musical forms, including folk, religious, and new music, while simultaneously reflecting the state’s ideological priorities (Duan, 2011; Liu, 2022).

Nevertheless, the subsequent rebranding to Chinese ‘traditional music’ [传统音乐, chuantong yinyue] signalled not only an expanded theoretical framework – covering court, religious, folk, and literati music (Wang, 2022) – but also a deliberate move towards embracing a more culturally centred and historically rooted understanding of music (Liu, 2019). As noted by Liu (2019), the evolution from ‘guoyue’ to ‘minzu yinyue’ and eventually to ‘chuantong yinyue’ should not be seen merely as a renaming process but rather as a profound re-articulation of the music’s intrinsic elements in response to changing socio-political and cultural contexts.

In this case, Chinese ‘traditional music’ [chuantong yinyue] may appear broader in the sense that it includes a longer historical timeline and a large diversity of music genres. Contrastingly, Chinese ‘national music’ [minzu yinyue] integrates diverse ethnic musical elements or Western musical structures, going beyond the historical repertoire alongside nation-building efforts (Liu, 2019). Yet, both categories share substantial common ground, including instrumentation and specific tune/repertoire (Ibid.). By the twenty-first century, Chinese ‘traditional music’ [chuantong yinyue], thanks to its broader cultural inclusivity, had become the mainstream academic term, whereas ‘minzu yinyue’ increasingly points toward a methodological framework such as ethnomusicology (Wang, 2022). The way of framing the terminology may suggest different perspectives on how Chinese music (repertoire) might be understood (especially scholarly), preserved, and performed in different historical and political contexts. However, in practice, individuals might use these terms interchangeably, when overlaps occur under the umbrella of ‘traditional’ [传统, chuantong].

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<sup>14</sup> ‘人民性’ in Mandarin.

For instance, in contemporary music education, what instrumental learners refer to as ‘Chinese traditional music repertoire’ might fall into two categories: first, classic works documented in historical records (e.g. the qin piece *Guangling San* [广陵散] or the pipa piece *Shimian Maifu* [十面埋伏]), and second, folk ensemble pieces arranged since the twentieth century. Moreover, as the concept of Chinese traditional music [chuantong yinyue] is often studied with an emphasis on cultural continuity, history, and stylistic inheritance (Wang, 2022), this term is adopted throughout the thesis for consistency and inclusivity.

#### **2.2.4 The emerging research question 1**

Section 2.2 reviewed the research (most of which is ethnomusicological-oriented) on Chinese instruments concerning the traditional mode of transmission within the teacher-dominant apprenticeship; this appears to be influenced by the traditional musical features (e.g. notation, semi-improvisation, regionality, stylistic distinctions, and the inherited repertoire), the Chinese philosophy underpinning sociocultural hierarchy, and the inheritance-oriented ideology. However, those studies were not primarily concentrated on the pedagogical dimension within the tuition of Chinese instruments at the present time, concerning what specific content (not exclusive to the repertoire) was taught, how the teacher taught, and why the teacher taught in specific ways, especially across different educational settings in China. This pedagogical exploration might initiate awareness and reflection of stakeholders on their previous or concurrent experiences of learning and/or teaching a Chinese instrument in different contexts, in light of which the first research question (RQ) has been formulated:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/music school/higher education settings in China?

### **2.3 Educational pathways, transition points, and Yikao for music students in China**

In China, it appears that the established, ‘regimented’ system of formal education significantly influences students’ motivations and choices (Bai, 2021, p. 514) concerning

their future educational and professional paths (Yang, 2022); this includes six compulsory years of primary school, three compulsory years of non-vocational or vocational secondary school, and three non-compulsory years of non-vocational or vocational high school education prior to entering HE (Wang & Guo, 2019; Sun, 2010). Within this schooling system, music schools (typically affiliated with conservatories in China) are an additional option for students and their parents to consider, namely entering the pre-professional track as a music student: while their school curriculum comprises both music and general academic components,<sup>15</sup> the priority lies in the development of musicianship skills of the students (Bai, 2021; Borel, 2019, see Section 2.3.2.2).

In general, two transition points including Zhongkao [中考, China National High School Entrance Examination]<sup>16</sup> at the end of secondary school education and Gaokao [高考, China National College Entrance Examination]<sup>17</sup> at the end of high school education, determine whether a student could enter a high school and HE in China, depending completely on their academic exam results (e.g. Bai, 2021; Heger, 2017). However, Bai (2021) draws attention to the situation where secondary music school students could seamlessly progress to the associated music high school without a competitive entry process, especially academically, compared to non-music school students who would experience intense competition in the Zhongkao for a highly rated academic high school in China. Students with initial access to those highly regarded schools are more inclined to progress to elite universities, as disparities in educational resources persist across institutions and the regions in which they are located (Chen, 2016; Heger, 2017, see Section 2.3.1). Notwithstanding the potential privilege as a music school student, most students and their parents in China choose to follow the prevalent routes into education by general academic learning, considering the high costs of music learning, a sense of insecurity, and broader career possibilities (Bai, 2021; Xie & Leung, 2011).

‘Young musicians [... are] in a separate category’ in China (Borel, 2019, p. 30). Students who aim to take a Music Bachelors’ degree course in Chinese HE are required by the HE admission policy to sit the Yikao [艺考, China National College Entrance Examination

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<sup>15</sup> Academic subjects include Chinese, mathematics, English and science subjects (Bai, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> By way of comparison, this would be similar to the GCSE exams in the UK.

<sup>17</sup> By way of comparison, this would be similar to the A-level examinations in the UK.

for Arts]<sup>18</sup> prior to the Gaokao (Lin & Weatherly, 2024): scores obtained in the Yikao by the candidates help with ‘the early-admission’ of higher education institutions (HEIs, e.g. conservatories, Zhu, 2020, p. 101), which will then be combined with academic results after the Gaokao for final admission (Borel, 2019). Whilst the Gaokao is ‘a nationwide unified exam’ in China (Zhu, 2020, p. 102), the Yikao is unified and provided by Admission Committees of HEIs in provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities (MOE, 2021).

Typically, the Yikao comprises tests for music theory, sight-reading and aural skills, as well as instrumental/vocal performance, in which HEIs may develop their own exam syllabi (e.g. Guangdong Province Undergraduate Admissions of Arts Programmes, 2024). Moreover, Yuan (2015) identifies that students with weaker academic results in the Gaokao are still able to gain admittance to reputable HEIs in China on the basis of their specialist achievements in the Yikao; however, there would still be considerable consequences if the student failed either the Yikao or the Gaokao, leading to their loss of access to both prestige higher music institutions and universities in China. As with the Zhongkao and the Gaokao, which are known to be high-stakes (e.g. Guan et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022), the Yikao may have inherently added another layer of risks for Chinese students who wish to pursue a path in music.

### **2.3.1 Educational resources across cities and institutions in China**

Research on educational (in)equality across regions in China has been long-standing and focuses on, for example, rural-urban school education (Hannum, 1999; Zhang, 2017), cross-city migrant families for educational resources (Li & Zhang, 2023; Wu & Zhang, 2010), and the influences of regional socio-economic development (Chen et al., 2023; Tsang, 1996). As emphasised by Hong et al. (2013), it is necessary to consider the size, scale and history of China when investigating the educational system and policy-making within the country, which ‘creates huge challenges in delivering high-quality [...] education and research’ across regions and institutions (p. 184). Apart from local/regional variations in marketisation and economy in China, Xiao and Liu (2014) suggest that local (governmental) responsiveness and opportunities are collectively affected by their capacities in allocating resources, existing infrastructure projects, and geographic factors such as unchangeable ‘geo-exogenous

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<sup>18</sup> The full name of Yikao in Mandarin is ‘艺术专业高考’.

features' (p. 262), as well as the regional residential policy,<sup>19</sup> allocated educational budget, and policy incentives (Hannum & Wang, 2006; Zhang, 2017). These shape the 'regional socio-economic structure' and a 'core-periphery relationship' within the country (Xiao & Liu, 2014, p. 262).

Cities in China are hierarchically classified from the first, the new first, to the fifth tier (hence six tiers in total)<sup>20</sup> by the measurement of their socio-economic development, combined with indicators such as infrastructure, population, resident income levels, consumer behaviour, and lifestyle diversity (Hong, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Research by Chen et al. (2023) shows that superior educational resources are mostly located in eastern (especially coastal), north-eastern and central China, where all first-tier, most new first-and second-tier cities are located (Wang et al., 2021). Consistent with this inter-regional imbalances, superior institutional resources in the eastern, north-eastern and central regions appear also to be evident (Chen et al., 2023), including those government-funded '211 project' and '985 project' universities which are 'at the top of the pyramid of China's higher education system' (Wang & Jones, 2021, p. 51).<sup>21</sup> Additionally, HEIs in China are hierarchically categorised as Yiben [一本, the highest ranking universities, including those '211/985 project' universities], Erben [二本, the second-ranking universities] and Sanben [三本, the third-ranking universities], resulting in disparities in funding, sources of funds and exam results of students (Heger, 2017; Hu & Vargas, 2015), while music conservatories and arts colleges in China are separately ranked from universities (Bai, 2021). Consequently, research by Hu and Vargas (2015) reveals that Chinese people, especially employers, attribute the quality of education and competencies of students/graduates to the location and ranking of the institutions.

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<sup>19</sup> This is also known as the Hukou [户口] system for household registration in China (see Wang et al., 2021); however, this is beyond the scope of the current research.

<sup>20</sup> The first-tier cities include Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, and the new first-tier cities are those 'with the best development performance after the four first-tier cities' such as Xi'an, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Nanjing, Suzhou and Changsha (Zhang et al., 2022, p. 7).

<sup>21</sup> More information is available at the China admissions website: <https://www.china-admissions.com/china-university-ranking/>.

## **2.3.2 Pathways to amateur and (pre-)professional music learning in China**

### ***2.3.2.1 Instrumental/vocal private tuition and the graded performance exams***

Consistent with the growing opportunities for musical participation and instrumental learning from amateurs to professional levels in Western societies (Hallam, 2018), private instrumental/vocal tuition outside school settings – especially for very young pupils (e.g. beginning in primary school, see Bai, 2021) – is also prevalent in the Chinese context (Haddon, 2024; Ho, 2003; Kong, 2021). A variety of instruments including Western classical and Chinese traditional instruments are available for learners to choose from (e.g. Ho, 2003; Kong, 2021). This extra-curricular, private, fee-charging tuition, known as *shadow education* in the literature concerns the marketisation, performativity and family investment in education, as well as an intensified social/educational competition in Chinese society (e.g. Wu, 2013; Zhang, 2014); this is underpinned by the long-established exam-oriented ‘personnel selection and [...] a mechanism for upward mobility of lower-class families’ in China (Zhang & Bray, 2017, p. 66). As it is deeply intertwined with these sociocultural values emphasising ‘performance metrics, high-stakes testing, market metrics and monetization’ (Haddon, 2024, p. 160), instrumental/vocal tuition in China is typically featured by a ‘results-driven hierarchical pedagogy’, which escalates competition between stakeholders while constraining the space for pedagogical reflections (Ibid., p. 168, also see the following music school contexts in China, Section 2.3.2.2).

Studies disclose that taking instrumental/vocal graded examinations is integral to the motivation of many amateur instrumental learners and their parents in China (e.g. Bai, 2021; Kong, 2021), influenced by the competitive educational environment and coupled with some parents’ motives such as skills acquisition, enjoyment, and interests of their child (Bai, 2021; Liu et al., 2015). Pupils in China who learn a Western classical instrument can take the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) performance examinations in Beijing and Shanghai (ABRSM, 2024) with test components including pieces, scales and arpeggios, sight-reading, and aural skills, and with specific marking criteria provided (e.g. Piano Syllabus, 2023 & 2024). Alternatively, many Chinese pupils sit the Chinese graded music exams, offered by ‘different music authorities and associations’ in China for different instruments (Bai, 2021, p. 524); this includes the exam boards for



Chinese traditional instruments (e.g. CCOM exam syllabi, 2024)<sup>22</sup> provided by government-affiliated associations or arts-related institutions such as conservatories with the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT, 2017).

Nevertheless, in the CCOM exam syllabi (2024) sight-reading and aural tests for Western classical instruments appear to be absent, while for Chinese traditional instruments, the exam solely includes one etude and one performance piece,<sup>23</sup> and notably, no marking criteria are available in their syllabus (Ibid.) or elsewhere, which may lead to the opacity of certification criteria. This inexplicit exam criteria and missing test components tend to be validated by two Chinese piano-teacher-participants in Haddon's (2024) study who indicated their re-consideration of the credibility and professionalism of the Chinese graded exams, in which they (or their pupils) experienced playing being quickly stopped by examiners and no feedback obtained but only a mark. These less-than-satisfactory experiences, coupled with reasons such as a narrow range of exam-piece selection and 'endless' preparation (revealed by a parent-participant in Bai, 2021) seem to diminish teacher/pupil/parents' aspirations for the Chinese graded music exams (e.g. Bai, 2021; Haddon, 2024), which may suggest critical attention from those exam boards, supervisory authority, and music educators in China. Therefore, the exploration of these graded-exam-related experiences as teachers and learners is integrated into the current research (see Section 2.3.3).

### ***2.3.2.2 Conservatoire-affiliated music schools: Music Fuxiao/Fuzhong***

A music primary or secondary and high school affiliated with a conservatoire in China is known as 'Music Fuxiao [音乐附小]' or 'Music Fuzhong [音乐附中]' in Chinese, although it appears that only several conservatories have the Music Fuxiao while most of the conservatories have the Music Fuzhong (see Lin, 2016). Bai (2021) discloses several motivations for Chinese school-age students being 'early-decision' music learners, which include their passion for music, expectations for future income, parents' suggestions, and more importantly, 'escaping the considerable pressure' of the highly competitive secondary-level academic school education (p. 519). Compared to non-music secondary students'

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<sup>22</sup> Formulated by the Standard Grade Examination Committee of the Central Conservatory of Music.

<sup>23</sup> Randomly selected by the examiner(s) from the two etudes and performance pieces prepared by the candidates in the exam (EMPE, 2024).

intense all-day concentration on improving their academic scores through assessments, ‘a heavy homework load’, and ‘compromise on sleep’, the Music Fuzhong students tend to have a more flexible daily schedule for both their music and academic subjects study, which allows them to spend more time on practising their instruments (Ibid., p. 519).

However, being a music school student does not seem any less stressful than being a non-music student. As revealed by Lin’s (2016) research, a ten-year-old Music Fuxiao student spent their afternoons and evenings daily practising their instrument from five to ten hours in line with the rest of their music school peers due to the intensity of their instrumental lessons delivered by the affiliated-conservatoire teachers, during which they were expected to be ‘wholly focused, ready to respond and to adjust [their playing] as necessary’ (p. 62). For example, one of the piano lessons that this ten-year-old participated in, observed by Lin (2016), focused on technical issues of their repertoire playing,<sup>24</sup> including the teacher’s high demands on the student’s sensitivity of pedalling, their active listening, dynamics and articulation, phrasing, use of body, and their musical understanding.

This high-intensity instrumental practising and learning is likely to be ongoing when the student progresses to the Music Fuzhong. Borel’s (2019) fieldwork at one Music Fuzhong in China uncovers the focus of training ‘internationally recognised’ soloists at both the Music Fuzhong and the affiliated conservatoire for international performance competitions and institutional globalisation (p. 31); this is embodied in the Music Fuzhong/conservatoire teachers’ authoritarian stance in deciding what repertoire to teach, and their demands on perfectionism (e.g. ‘faultless’ was mentioned by a student-participant, Borel, 2019, p. 31), rigid memorisation and repetition (Ibid.). Whilst similarities to this master-apprentice,<sup>25</sup> conservatoire-style instrumental training are identifiable in the literature on the teaching of Western instruments in the Chinese context (e.g. Lee & Leung, 2022; Lin, 2016; Xu, 2018; Zheng & Leung, 2021a, 2021b), no research to date has investigated the specific teaching scenarios of Chinese traditional instruments at a music school or private contexts in China. This contributes to the second research question concerning Chinese instrument learners’ (pre-)professional pathways to music (see Section 2.3.3).

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<sup>24</sup> Moritz Moszkowski’s Etude No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 72 and Beethoven’s Sonata in F Minor, Op. 2 No. 1 (see Lin, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> See Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 on the master-apprenticeship.

### ***2.3.2.3 Higher music education context: Challenges***

Successful music examinees with the Yikao and the Gaokao results that meet the admission criteria would start their undergraduate study at a conservatoire or university music department in China; within these HEIs, musicology, music education, and music performance programmes accommodate most instrumental/vocal music students (e.g. CCOM<sup>26</sup> report, 2023; Programme report,<sup>27</sup> 2021; SHCM<sup>28</sup> report, 2023; ZJCM<sup>29</sup> report, 2023). The rhetoric of developing students with comprehensive musicianship, advanced performance ability, expressiveness, creativity, adaptability, music literacy, and internationalism pervades the Chinese conservatoire undergraduate programme curricula (e.g. HCM<sup>30</sup> report, 2021; SHCM curricula, 2019; ZJCM guidance, 2021). However, there appear to be some dichotomies between the reality and those objectives, between forms of practice and scholarly knowledge in the field of higher music education: for instance, the SYCM<sup>31</sup> report (2023) identifies an insufficient awareness and understanding of the set educational objectives and the emerging arts-specific pedagogical principles by faculty members and, a lack of exploratory and innovation in the routinised teaching and administration concerning curriculum, teaching mode, content, approach, assessment, structure and regulation. As a remaining and challenging issue to be addressed, the improvement of monitoring mechanisms for teaching and learning evaluation of different specialities in music is suggested by the HCM report (2021).

Higher music education and institutions have been increasingly urged to redefine and rethink their approaches and how they interact with students in evolving and diverse social contexts (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2022). Critical re-examination therefore may be warranted concerning the habitual/routinised, personal-experience-based approach to teaching music specialities (e.g. instrumental/vocal lessons), embodied in, for example, conservatoire instrumental/vocal teachers' (IVTs) dominant role in teaching and their over-emphasis on memorisation, repetition, techniques, as well as students' peer-competition

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<sup>26</sup> Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing.

<sup>27</sup> Hainan Normal University, Hainan.

<sup>28</sup> Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai.

<sup>29</sup> Zhejiang Conservatory of Music, Hangzhou.

<sup>30</sup> Harbin Conservatory of Music, Harbin.

<sup>31</sup> Shenyang Conservatory of Music, Shenyang.

(e.g. Borel, 2019; Lin, 2016; Xu, 2018); this is described as the ‘teaching mechanism and method in the professor’s mind’ yet lacking textualised scrutiny (Wang, 2020, cited in the CCM<sup>32</sup> report, 2021, p. 17) and research-based evidence for validation of these teaching approaches (see Section 2.4.3.1).

Within this context, Johnson (2010) identifies that conservatoire students in China are more competent in techniques than interpretation. ‘Being allowed to develop “a personality” [in interpretation] – which was only supposed to come much later’ is uncovered by Borel (2019) through their conversation with a Chinese conservatoire student (p. 31). This appears to be identical to Chinese instrument learners’ development of personalised semi-improvisation and interpretations, allowed only after the accurate reproduction of the interpretation taught by the teacher (Section 2.2.2.2). This may potentially shape students’ perception of needing a thorough reproduction of the technique-supremacy performance with little consideration of creativity or independence for themselves as the performer/interpreter (Zheng & Leung, 2021a), and perhaps also for their future pupils when they become teachers.

This is recognised as the ‘pitfall’ of such skills-centred professional music training in Chinese HE by Zhang (2015), which forms music students’ understanding of so-called ‘professionalism’ in their specialist area, yet limited in scope. Based on this perception, narrowed by the training they received, Zhang (2015) becomes aware from fieldwork in music studios in China that music graduates often duplicate their experienced ‘professional’ priority, such as solely emphasising hand posture and techniques, in teaching children who are at an early stage, which goes against how children develop physically and psychologically (e.g. Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory and Bandura’s social learning theory, see Cherry, 2025). This therefore reinforces that a teacher’s expertise has to go ‘beyond mere knowledge of content [e.g. musical skills] ... but should also include knowledge of learners and learning’: learners’ characteristics, existing knowledge, (meta)cognition, and motivation (Guerriero, 2017, p. 103). However, Lee and Leung (2022) acknowledge the fact that both pre-service and/or in-service instrumental/vocal pedagogical degree courses and/or training are currently absent in Chinese higher music education and institutions, which raises concerns about the regulation and qualification of

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<sup>32</sup> China Conservatory of Music, Beijing.

IVTs in China relating to their pedagogical skills and capabilities instead of merely performing techniques (see Section 2.4).

### **2.3.3 The emerging research question 2**

The review of the literature in Section 2.3 unfolds the educational pathways, transition points, academic and arts-related examinations (i.e. the Gaokao, Yikao, graded exams), the related exam syllabi, and the teaching and practising contexts as a Music Fuxiao or Fuzhong pre-professional student and as conservatoire students in China, although the empirical studies investigate solely the tuition of Western instruments, including pathways to piano learning and to being a Western-instrument teacher in the Chinese context. Routes to becoming a Chinese instrument learner and then stepping into the teaching profession remain un-researched, which simulates the formation of the second question:

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

## **2.4 Instrumental/vocal teacher (IVT): Profession, qualification, and education**

### **2.4.1 The profession**

The versatility of an IVT has been widely discussed in the literature. This includes the multiple intertwined roles undertaken by IVTs (e.g. performer/artistic role model, planner/organisier, communicator, pedagogue, reflective practitioner, and networker, see Polifonia, 2010); and the portfolio careers in which they may create, perform and facilitate music communities/activities/workshops, aside from teaching (e.g. Barton, 2019; Bennett, 2008; Bennett, 2016; Boyle, 2020; Creech & Gaunt, 2018; Hallam & Bautista, 2018; Latukefu & Ginsborg, 2019). These require a set of professional competencies combining 'skills, knowledge and professional and personal attitudes and values' (Polifonia, 2010, p. 47).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See the detailed competencies that are essential for musicians as teachers, recognised by the European Association of Conservatoires (EAC) in Polifonia (2010).

This versatility, however, can be demanding for IVTs, especially those who are in their early-career phase: for example, nearly a third of conservatoire graduates in Shaw's (2021) study who deliver one-to-one/group instrumental lessons found it challenging to maintain their pupils' motivation, to use appropriate teaching strategies, to interact with their pupils' parents, and to manage their pupils' lesson behaviours. Within the challenges perceived by those graduates, the administrative tasks, including 'timetabling, managing own time, recruiting pupils, claiming payment, taking registers, writing reports and doing tax returns' are reported as needing more support in their pre-service stage than other types of tasks (Shaw, 2021, p. 21). Based on the report of the Independent Society for Musicians, 'a large amount of "invisible" [and unpaid] work' (p. 17) facing IVTs is highlighted due to the increasing casualisation of the music workforce in both private and institutional settings (Underhill, 2022).

The contributory factors to this situation might concern a typical one-to-one, 'autonomous nature of practice' in instrumental/vocal teaching (Boyle, 2020, p. 109) 'behind closed doors' (Haddon, 2012, p. 34), and views that the professionalism in the music field 'has been less visible and structured for the music professions compared with for example medicine and law' (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2022, p. xv). These indicate difficulties in evaluating and researching instrumental/vocal teaching (Boyle, 2020; Haddon, 2012) and in formulating the contemporary benchmarks for the occupational status (Carr, 2014) of IVTs, while leaving both the instrumental/vocal teaching and the IVT profession unmonitored and unregulated (Boyle, 2020; Lee & Leung, 2022).

### **2.4.2 IVT qualification**

Notwithstanding those difficulties, the research-informed perspectives support how formal instrumental/vocal pedagogical education could help legitimise the IVT profession: offering a pathway to engaging with the necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills, staying current with evolving practices and methodologies, contributing to the broader discourse on instrumental/vocal teaching and professional development (e.g. Casas-Mas & López-Íñiguez, 2022; Haddon, 2009; Miller & Baker, 2007; Polifonia, 2010; Shaw, 2022), and more importantly, facilitating 'a shift in thinking from past experiences as students to the perspectives of teachers' (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2016, p. 1072).

However, it has been recognised as a pressing yet continuing issue that many instrumental/vocal musicians with performing expertise are untrained formally in pedagogical aspects while working as teachers (Barton, 2019; Boyle, 2020, 2024; Casas-Mas & López-Íñiguez, 2022; Eskandar & Zheng, 2025; Haddon, 2009; Lee & Leung, 2022; Mills, 2004, 2007; Norton et al., 2019; Shaw, 2022; Stakelum, 2024). In the Chinese context, Lee and Leung (2022) disclose that private IVTs could start their teaching careers without having formally studied music at a conservatoire or university, and/or without having received pedagogical training, relying solely on graded performance exam certificates as their ‘qualification’. Worryingly, lacking unitisation concerning distinct exam boards and syllabi with incomprehensive test components and inexplicit certification criteria in the Chinese context (Section 2.3.2.1, also see Haddon, 2024; Eskandar & Zheng, 2025) could challenge both the musical and pedagogical skills of an IVT who, for example, only holds the performance exam certificate. Whilst the Chinese National Education Examinations Authority (NEEA, 2023) requires school music teachers to be qualified by the National Teacher Certificate Examination (NTCE, including both written and teaching tests) with a minimum degree requirement, there is not yet a parallel teacher certification process for IVTs nor a minimum degree or qualification requirement in China, especially in private settings (Eskandar & Zheng, 2025).

As a result, IVTs often learn to teach ‘on the job’, and may value being qualified in performance more than in teaching (Lee & Leung, 2022; Norton et al., 2019; Shaw, 2023a). Student instrumental/vocal musicians learn informally to teach by following the ways they were taught by their former teachers (Boyle, 2024; Mills, 2007; Haddon, 2009; Liu & Haddon, 2025; Scott & Watkins, 2012): e.g. duplicating teacher-dominated lessons they received, being unaware of pupils’ psychological needs (Zhang, 2015), and using the exam repertoire as their sole curriculum in teaching (Haddon, 2024). As identified by Burrridge (2018), this reproduction of familiar teaching practices forms a routine or habit of teaching relied on by teachers, due to ‘a sense of predictability’ and ‘ontological security’ (p. 146); however, to ‘critique established routines becomes challenging as unintended consequences can become hidden in the stability of the practice’, thereby engaging little discursive awareness or critical reflections (Ibid., p. 145). This discursive awareness refers to ‘the level of consciousness that deals with new or unusual situations’ that can be enabled by a communicative and cognitive space as well as, time, to ‘step outside’ the habitual

practices of teaching, which teacher training programmes and interdisciplinary collaborations among educators can support (Ibid., pp. 148-49).

### **2.4.3 IVT education**

#### ***2.4.3.1 Evolving practices and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) acquisition***

Shifts in approaches to instrumental/vocal teaching have been promoted by research on private instrumental/vocal lessons (Barton, 2019; Boyle, 2020; Creech, 2010; Haddon, 2012), teacher-student relationships (Burwell, 2013; Gaunt, 2011, 2017; Jørgensen, 2000), students' (meta)cognitive engagement in instrumental/vocal learning and practising (Concina, 2019; Hart Jr, 2014; Power & Powell, 2018), and students' musical development across their lifespan (Bugos, 2016; Creech et al., 2020). Supported by (neuro)psychological evidence informing the teaching and learning of music (Creech et al., 2021; Hallam et al., 2009; Hallam & Himonides, 2022; Lehmann et al., 2007; McClellan, 2023), the pedagogical developments towards student-centredness within instrumental/vocal teaching are endorsed by the music scholarly education community: such as promoting student empowerment and independence (Coutts, 2019; Gaunt, 2017), students' autonomy and enjoyment (Kupers et al., 2017; Meissner et al., 2021), dialogic student-teacher interactions (Meissner, 2021; Poole & Norton, 2023), students' creative interpretations/music-making (Hargreaves et al., 2011; Zheng & Leung, 2021a, 2021b), students' self-efficacy (Bersh, 2022; Juntunen, 2014), and students' self-regulated learning and practising (McPherson et al., 2019; McPherson & Renwick, 2011).

These evolving, research-informed pedagogical and psychological dimensions of knowledge go 'beyond knowledge of subject matter per se [i.e. content knowledge, CK] to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching', namely pedagogical content knowledge (PCK, Shulman, 1986, 2013, p. 6) – a combination of subject-specific (e.g. instrumental/vocal) expertise and the knowledge of when, how and why to teach it (Bauer, 2020; Shaw, 2022; Shulman, 1986, 2013). While teaching-related knowledge may have been acquired, not deliberately, at different phases of education by individuals through, for example, 'the apprenticeship-of-observation' (Lortie, 1975, p. 67), the development of both subject-specific CK and PCK requires intentional learning and practices of individuals who have 'the explicit objective of acquiring knowledge and skills' (Kleickmann et al., 2013, p.



91). Formal pedagogical learning opportunities, e.g. teacher education programmes, combined with both instructional and reflective practices can play a constructive role in developing individuals' PCK (Evens et al., 2018; Kleickmann et al., 2013; Shaw, 2023a).

#### ***2.4.3.2 Provision of formal teacher education for instrumental/vocal musicians***

Whilst teaching is the most typical work undertaken by instrumental/vocal musicians (Bennett, 2008), research has acknowledged that higher music education curricula specific to instrumental/vocal teaching and pedagogy are largely lacking or inconsistent (Bennett, 2008; Eskandar & Zheng, 2025; Haddon, 2009; Lee & Leung, 2022; Norton et al., 2019; Shaw, 2022); as a result, curricula can sometimes fail to provide effective sources of subject-specific PCK for instrumental student musicians working as teachers (Haston & Leon-Guerrero, 2008), hindering the development of students' professional identity and employability (Haning, 2021). With no mention of any specialist instrumental/vocal pedagogy in the Chinese higher music education context (Eskandar & Zheng, 2025; Lee & Leung, 2022) – although pre-service music students may have access to school music education modules (Yang, 2022) – music literacy, piano and/or vocal performance, piano accompaniment skills, and choral conducting are the priorities in training, with little consideration of the diversity of instruments that students specialise in (e.g. HNU<sup>34</sup> MA curricula, 2021; NWNNU<sup>35</sup> BA curricula, 2021; SHCM curricula, 2019).

This curriculum focus indicates an educational exclusion concerning those who specialise in an instrument exclusive to the piano or voice (e.g. Chinese traditional instruments) and those who teach their specialised instruments privately as part-time student-teachers. This private teaching has been identified as a common situation where university/conservatoire music students give instrumental/vocal lessons for pragmatic reasons, e.g. income, while they are studying (Haddon, 2009; Boyle, 2024; Mills, 2004, 2007; Shaw, 2022, 2023a, 2024). Nevertheless, researchers have noted a performer-prioritised professional identity possessed by many student musicians over a teacher identity due to their received performance-focused curricula (Haning 2020; Lee & Leung, 2022; López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021; Miller & Baker, 2007; Norton et al., 2019; Yang 2022). This is

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<sup>34</sup> Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou.

<sup>35</sup> Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou.

evident in Yang's (2022) study in the Chinese HE, where many music students consider stepping into the teaching profession to be a compromised option, which, as self-perceived by those students, may imply their insufficient performing abilities compared to their peer students who could continue working as a performer; a hierarchical view of music careers, in which renowned solo performers are regarded as the ultimate symbol of success by many musicians (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020; Miller & Baker, 2007; Lee & Leung, 2022; Shaw, 2023b).

Beliefs and professional identity also impact musicians' views of the value and necessity of having qualification and pedagogical training, influencing their practices as IVTs (Boyle, 2020; Mills, 2004; Norton, 2016; Norton et al., 2019). The study of Norton et al. (2019) involving 496 IVTs indicates that many considered performance experiences and musical skills more desirable attributes for their teaching career, of whom some saw a qualification as 'unnecessary barriers' (p. 571). However, the unawareness of the evolving pedagogical approaches of many IVTs (Lee & Leung, 2022) and teaching relying on habits as reviewed in the previous sections 'with little formal endorsement or appraisal' (Haddon, 2012, p. 36) could limit opportunities for IVTs to effectively reflect on and diversify their teaching practices that might be covered up by a routine in music education (Allsup, 2015, p. 17). As highlighted by Conway et al. (2019), the facilitation of developing 'an agentic, forward-thinking teacher identity' should constitute the purpose of teacher education, reinforcing the necessity of evolving expertise of teachers in music education (p. 914).

In order to provide more sufficient support for instrumental/vocal musicians who often need to navigate their 'dual identity' as a performer and a teacher, refinement of the curriculum is necessary (Lennon & Reed, 2012, p. 300). However, research on the effectiveness of the curriculum from the perspectives of Chinese instrument student at a conservatoire/university in China, concerning their professional development and practices (e.g. private Chinese instrument teaching, if they have had any) is lacking, hence catalysing the emergence of the third research question below.

#### **2.4.4 The emerging research question 3**

Section 2.4 reviewed the literature on the profession, qualification, and education of IVTs; there appear to be both opportunities and challenges within the qualification and regulation

of the IVT profession: concerning the contemporary benchmarks for the occupational status at a macro level, the development of professional identity and professional understanding of individual IVTs at a micro level, as well as the formal provision of IVT education that would be constructive at both the macro and micro levels.

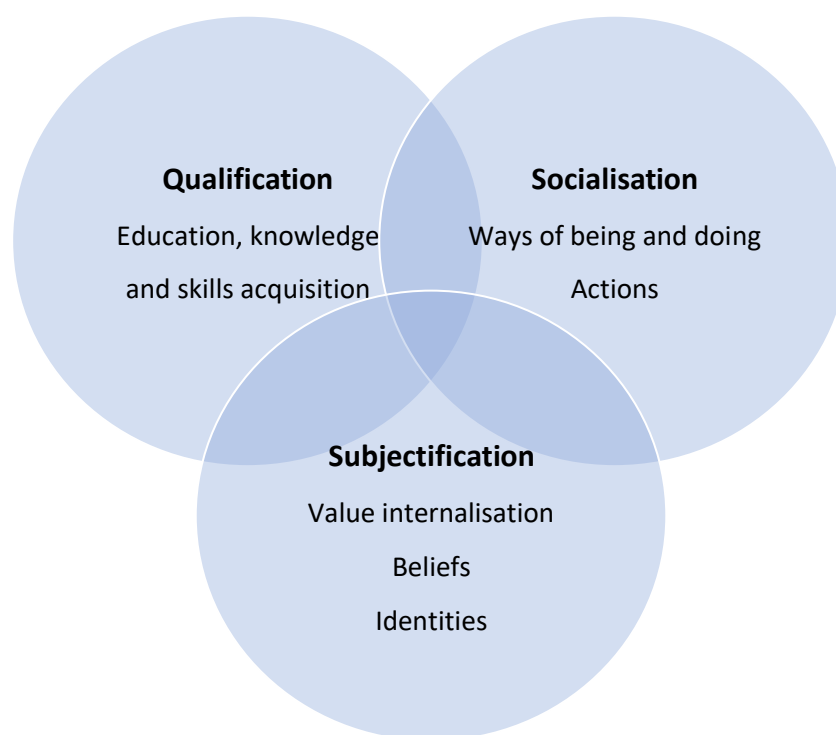
However, no empirical investigation to date has focused on Chinese instrument students in the Chinese HE context who may teach a Chinese instrument privately; this could limit understanding of the effectiveness of the programme curricula they have received, their professional understanding and development, and what may characterise their private teaching at their present stage of education. In order to have implications for the provision of formal educational support for instrumental/vocal musicians as teachers more broadly in the Chinese context, the following RQ3 is formulated:

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

## **2.5 Impact of education within and across cultures**

### **2.5.1 Educational pathways influencing beliefs and practices**

As reviewed in Sections 2.3.2.3, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3.2, the impact of the teacher teaching and music education received by instrumental/vocal student musicians on their professional understanding, identity, and practices appears to be salient. This could be explained by Biesta's (2015) theoretical model, in which the domain of *qualification* (education, knowledge and skills acquisition) is deeply interconnected with the domains of *subjectification* (value internalisation, beliefs, identities) and *socialisation* (actions), socio-culturally-embedded 'ways of being and doing' (p. 77). These three domains are 'synergistic rather than hierarchical in nature' (Tucker & Powell, p. 27) and do not only indicate roles of education (things that education does) but also represent different purposes that education serves (Biesta, 2015, see Figure 2.3).



**Figure 2.3:** The roles of education and the domains of purposes that education serves (derived and re-created from Biesta, 2015, p. 78).

As articulated by Biesta (2015), when a teacher passes knowledge or skill on to their student, they are also conveying the idea that this knowledge or skill is valuable or ‘true’, which reflects and reinforces cultural and societal values, influencing how the student sees themselves and acts. This appears to be applicable to the instrumental/vocal teaching contexts in China, where advancing technical skills, ‘faultless’ performance relying on memorisation, and thorough reproduction of the teacher-interpreted version of the piece are historically seen as more valuable or ‘true’ than enabling a student’s voice of their own (autonomy) and student-personalised interpretation, reinforcing the Chinese cultural and societal values prioritising authority and hierarchy (Sections 2.2.2.2 and 2.3.2.2/3).

Based on Biesta’s (2015) theoretical model, it appears that a CIT’s pedagogical beliefs and practices would be influenced by the synergistic relationship between their received music education, their value internalisation, and socialisation; however, as mentioned in Sections 2.2.3, 2.3.3, and 2.4.3.2 that research on the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments (RQ1), educational pathways of CITs (RQ2), and professional

development of CITs (RQ3) is absent, specific aspects that may constitute and impact a CIT's teaching beliefs and practices within the Chinese educational context therefore are left unexamined and warranted investigation (see RQ4 in Section 2.5.5). Furthermore, a CIT's beliefs and practices may also be influenced by the education they may receive outside of the Chinese context when they become a music student studying abroad (Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3.1).

## **2.5.2 Chinese music students studying abroad**

An increasing plurality of international music students, predominantly Chinese, is evident within Western higher music education (Cortesi, 2023; Ford, 2021; Haddon, 2019, 2024; Jiang, 2022). This international student flow, known as international student mobility (ISM) from one educational context to another out of their country of origin, is typically explicated by a push-pull effect (Wells, 2014): push factors within the home context including intranational competition, programme availability, family impact, and pull factors from abroad concerning institution prestige, resources, individual internationalisation, and affordable expenses (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Li & Bray, 2007). The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2023) reports that the total number of non-UK students in the UK HE from China mainland was 151,690 in the academic year 2021/22, of whom 78,265 (approx. 52%) are postgraduate taught students.

Within this context, student musicians from China have continued their professional development by taking taught masters music programmes in the UK, due to few parallel courses in China coupled with the appeal of the UK one-year masters duration and cross-cultural experiences (Haddon, 2019). This includes those who specialise in a Western classical or Chinese traditional instrument who seek to develop their instrumental/vocal pedagogical knowledge and skills by embarking on the MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course at the University of York, UK (Haddon, 2024); in the current research, this IVT education context was deliberately selected to examine in relation to the group of Chinese instrument student-teachers on the MA course. The course curriculum is detailed in Section 2.5.3.1.

Whilst existing studies on current Chinese student musicians studying abroad have focused on, for example, their instrumental practising routine and strategies (Liu, 2023),

their motivations and pedagogical adaptation (Haddon, 2019, 2024; Liu & Haddon, 2025), their employability as Chinese returnees (Haddon, 2024), no research has particularly explored the impact of formal IVT education in the UK on Chinese international student-teachers who teach a Chinese traditional instrument. In this case, the un-researched dimensions include: what might be the differences between the teaching of a Chinese instrument (e.g. their experiences as a Chinese instrument learner/teacher in China prior to the UK study) and the pedagogical approaches/values/aspirations they had received as cross-cultural IVT-trainees; what would they think of the UK-trained instrumental/vocal pedagogy, combined with their interactions with the UK-domiciled higher music (teacher) educators and the UK educational environment; and how would the UK-trained instrumental/vocal pedagogy influence or transform their concurrent teaching of Chinese traditional instruments (see Section 2.5.5 for the formulation of the research questions 4 and 5).

### **2.5.3 Cultural and pedagogical differences**

Cultural and pedagogical differences may reside in what counts as musical learning attainments (Ford, 2020) and learning music authentically (Johnson, 2000; Koops, 2010), and perhaps ‘more fundamentally, being musical’ (Ford, 2021, p. 184). However, answers to these aspects could be debatable (e.g. Ford, 2020, 2021; Koops, 2010; Parkinson & Smith, 2015) across cultures and individuals, due to ‘transformations of legitimacy’ and empowerment between *self* and *other* (Bendix, 1997, p. 11). For instance, teachers who emphasise the preservation of musical traditions in playing traditional instruments are less likely to legitimise students’ personal experiences and understandings of their practice rather than historically-constructed practices (Koops, 2010). Similar to this, as reviewed in Sections 2.2/3, there appears to be a robust control of the teacher-centred preservation/reproduction-focused pedagogy in the teaching of Chinese traditional instruments, assumed by the socially hierarchical and cultural inheritance ideologies; the students’ personal understandings of the music and their personality/creativity therefore are largely overlooked by IVTs in the Chinese context (Borel, 2019; Lin, 2016; Zheng & Leung, 2021a, 2021b), shaping passive music learners (Haddon, 2024; Lee & Leung, 2020).

In contrast to the preservation-focused approach, teachers who value students' engagement empower students to have 'personal meaning-making' within their practice, 'not worrying about technique or cultural context' but aiming to make music and 'build student motivation' (Koops, 2010, p. 26). This aligns with those instrumental/vocal teaching practices in Western contexts (e.g. the UK, the US, Australia, and Nordic countries) that have been influenced by the research-informed pedagogical shifts towards student-centredness, students' autonomy and independence, and creative practices (Section 2.4.3.1): e.g. positive outcomes concerning students' enjoyment, proactivity, and confidence by prioritising students' psychological wellbeing (e.g. emotions), detailed in Coutts (2019) and Meissner et al. (2021) and by enabling students to make their own choices/decisions concerning their steps of learning (McPherson et al., 2012; McPherson & Renwick, 2011; Renwick & McPherson, 2012). This research-informed pedagogy also underpins the UK MA IVT training programme curriculum at the University of York, UK.

### ***2.5.3.1 The MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching, University of York, UK***

This taught MA programme is designed to equip IVTs with PCK<sup>36</sup> based on educational and psychological research for practical application, integrating both academic and practical components (Haddon, 2024); the pedagogical implementation includes assessed one-to-one instrumental/vocal lessons at a beginning/intermediate/advanced level, combined with literature-based commentary writing on the assessed lessons.<sup>37</sup> The curriculum covers a range of topics, including the dynamics of teacher-student relationships, parental involvement, strategies for motivating both teachers and learners, musicians' physical and mental health, understanding diverse learning needs and teaching settings (both group and one-to-one contexts), as well as inclusive teaching practices (Haddon, 2024). It also promotes the support for specific instrumental/vocal practices (e.g. how to facilitate pupils' sight-reading and practising skills) with a diversity of instruments and musical genres, and developing essential pedagogical skills such as self-evaluation, critical reflection, communication skills, dialogic teaching, creative teaching, selection of teaching materials,

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<sup>36</sup> Pedagogical content knowledge, Section 2.4.3.1.

<sup>37</sup> See 'Teaching and assessment' on the official programme website:

[https://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/courses/ma-music-education/#teaching\\_assessment](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/courses/ma-music-education/#teaching_assessment)

preparing pupils for performance/examinations, and working with learners of different ages.<sup>38</sup>

Many programmes in music education – such as those offered by the Royal College of Music (MMusEd Teaching Musician, 2024), the University of West London (MA Music and Performing Arts Education, 2024), and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (PGCert Performance Teaching, 2024) – tend to adopt a broad approach to music education, focusing on general pedagogical theories, curriculum design, and institutional management. The MA programme at UoY distinguishes itself within the UK by offering a uniquely focused approach to instrumental and vocal pedagogy with hands-on practical teaching. This programme’s targeted orientation appears attractive to prospective instrumental teachers specialising in Chinese instruments. As a result, the MA programme at UoY is particularly relevant for examining the transformative effects of formal pedagogical training on CITs studying in the UK – a core aim of this research. Further details regarding the MA programme at UoY as the study setting, along with a discussion of the researcher’s positionality, are presented in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1.

Adhering to the impact of education on people’s beliefs and practices (Section 2.5.1), it would be of pedagogical value to explore how might Chinese international student-teachers’ teaching beliefs and practices be influenced by this formal IVT education. As highlighted by Luguetti et al. (2019), the transition of pedagogical identities/beliefs of teachers in cross-cultural settings ‘dynamically encompasses multiple perspectives’: their past experiences, educational/professional pathways as learners/teachers, new pedagogical inspirations, and home sociocultural values (p. 864). However, aspects concerning Chinese international student-teachers’ cross-cultural and pedagogical transformation in Western HE contexts may require further consideration from a more culturally sensitive perspective,<sup>39</sup> as suggested by Ford (2020) and articulated in the following sections.

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<sup>38</sup> More specific information about the MA curriculum, assessments, and learning outcomes is on the university’s official website: <https://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/courses/ma-music-education/#overview>.

<sup>39</sup> Culturally sensitive perspectives would be applicable to international students from diverse cultural backgrounds who study outside of their home cultural context; the focus of this research on Chinese international students leads to the Chinese-culture-focused perspective.



### ***2.5.3.2 Pedagogical adaptation across cultures***

Literature on Chinese students studying abroad highlights pedagogical adaptations they experienced due to distinct educational and sociocultural values between their home and the host contexts (Barnes et al., 2018; Haddon, 2019, 2024; Hu, 2024; Wu, 2015; Zhu, 2016; Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2022). For example, adapting from a pedagogical culture of obedience to one of proactive participation (Zhu, 2016; Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2022) and from a teacher-student hierarchy to a mentor-friend relationship in the UK higher music education context (Haddon, 2019, 2024; Liu & Haddon, 2025). In conjunction with this 'pedagogical shock' (Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2022, p. 279), Chinese international students also encounter academic challenges as English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL) learners in English-speaking countries (Heng, 2016; Li & Han, 2023; Zhang & Beck, 2017). This concerns their confident use of terminologies in English and critical thinking: these are trained by Western-centric pedagogy but can be alienating for those international students who retain their outsider identity (Singh & Doherty, 2004); in particular, concerning music subject-specific terminology challenges facing EAL music students (Li & Zheng, 2025).

Due to the juxtaposition of unfamiliar pedagogical methods and language challenges in the UK HE, Zhu and O'Sullivan (2022) acknowledge Chinese students' metacognitive adaptation in 'thinking about how to learn and how to perform [behave]' (p. 280), yet some students' appearance of adaptive quietness is preconceived as passive learning. Similar views were held by German lecturers on Chinese students due to their 'Unquestioning respect for authority' with no critical questions asked and being quiet during classes (Zhu, 2016, p. 163). Nevertheless, within international study contexts, Wu (2015) emphasises the evolving cognition, motivation, and learning behaviours of Chinese students alongside their cognitive, psychological and behavioural adjustments. This may suggest that a more nuanced understanding of individuals in cross-cultural contexts is needed to move beyond 'the stereotyping of people' in a culturally-diverse educational environment (Ford, 2020, p. 4); the following section explains how these nuances could be explored.

### 2.5.4 Cultural intelligence (CQ): A theoretical lens

The CQ<sup>40</sup> theory has been applied by studies on cross-cultural individuals and details how cognition (existing knowledge), metacognition (self-understanding), motivation (self-determination), and behaviour (actions) of individuals engage with culturally-diverse environments (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Earley & Ang, 2003). This theory therefore provides an overarching framework that covers the specific cognitive, psychological and behavioural dimensions of adaptation of international students (as revealed by Wu, 2015; Zhu, 2016; Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2022). Enlightened by this, the CQ theoretical framework is applied in the present research design to explore potential aspects of adaptations and adjustments in pedagogical implementations of Chinese instrument student-teachers on the UK MA course, alongside their cross-cultural pedagogical learning (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.4/5 for the research methodology and design).<sup>41</sup>

Specifically, the four CQ adaptable aspects contribute to individuals' cross-cultural psychological and performance outcomes (Hong et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2014). For example, a positive correlation has been identified between international students' motivation and their cross-cultural happiness and self-efficacy (Peng et al., 2015); alternatively, international students' metacognitive adjustment and action-taking significantly influence their cross-cultural collaborative behaviours (Chua et al., 2012). Whilst metacognitive processes help individuals be aware of cultural differences and be flexible with the existing cultural knowledge they have in cognition (Ibid.), motivations play a key role in determining whether an individual directs their efforts – and to what extent – to engage with culturally-diverse contexts and other individuals (Leung et al., 2014; Yang, 2023).

These research findings provide an account of how the overarching four areas underlie the cross-cultural experiences of individuals and, in turn, practically inform organisers, leaders, and individual members who participate and interact in international environments (e.g. Ang et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2009). Importantly, the individual-dependent nature of CQ supports the complexity of international students' cross-cultural adaptation,

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<sup>40</sup> 'CQ' stands for 'cultural quotient'.

<sup>41</sup> It should be stressed here that this research has no CQ-related or any measurement of individuals based on the qualitative research paradigm (Chapter 3, Section 3.2), whilst the scales for measurement are available in the relevant literature.

emphasising the diversity and individuality of those students from the same cultural background. Building upon Ford's (2020) suggestion of unfolding culturally-specific knowledge to break down cultural stereotypes, cross-cultural psychological knowledge would benefit the comprehension of interrelationships between culturally-contextualised mindsets and behaviours (Berry et al. 2011) of individual international students. However, despite a wide range of research on international students and their CQ adaptations, understanding the cross-cultural pedagogical learning of international instrumental/vocal pre-service teachers (specialising in Chinese instruments in this research) through the underlying CQ aspects is lacking.

### **2.5.5 The emerging research questions 4 and 5**

Section 2.5 reviewed the literature on the influences of education within and across cultures on individuals' (e.g. teachers) beliefs and ongoing practices. Within the Chinese educational context, the roles of education in pre-or in-service CITs' pedagogical beliefs and practices are un-researched (Section 2.5.1). For those pre-service CITs who have experienced higher music education across cultures coupled with cultural and pedagogical differences and adaptations (Section 2.5.3), there might be aspects impacting or transforming their pedagogical beliefs and practices in the cross-cultural educational setting. Therefore, the research questions 4 and 5 emerge:

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

## **2.6 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments alongside the inherent musical, historical, regional, and sociocultural characteristics, and on the educational pathways to both amateur and professional

instrumental/vocal learning in Chinese private/music school/HE contexts, with music performance and/or academic examinations integrated. Within these instrumental/vocal teaching and learning contexts, challenges and areas of pedagogical research have been noted, particularly concerning the establishment of pedagogical practices of Chinese traditional instruments across private/music school/HE contexts.

Literature on the profession, qualification, and formal education of IVTs has been discussed, highlighting the evolving PCK in teaching instrumental/vocal students, informed by empirical (neuro)psychological research in music and music education; however, challenges have also been identified within higher music education concerning the formation of IVTs' professional identities, their understanding of professional development, and the provision of formal IVT education. The investigation of these aspects in the Chinese higher music education contexts from the perspectives of pre- and in-service CITs is absent. Lastly, the cross-cultural pedagogical learning of Chinese music students including those who specialise in Chinese instruments in the UK context has been acknowledged, although specific aspects regarding their pedagogical adaptation and potential transformation have yet been investigated.

In light of the existing research gap relating to CITs, their practices, and their music-related educational experiences within and/or across cultures, the following research questions emerge:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

Through answering these questions, this research aims to expand the existing understanding of the teaching and learning of Chinese traditional instruments by investigating the educational pathways and professional development of pre- and in-service CITs within and/or across educational and cultural contexts. The exploration of cross-cultural pedagogical learning of Chinese instrument student-teachers in the UK higher music education would expand the existing understanding of Chinese international students in English-speaking countries regarding their subject-specific pedagogical knowledge adaptation, transformation, and application across cultures.

## Chapter 3: Research Framework and Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodology and data collection techniques utilised in this research. It begins by outlining the theoretical framework that supports the research, clarifying the philosophical perspective and paradigm that inform the research design. It articulates the rationale behind the selected methodological approach by analysing decisions in light of the research objectives and research questions. Following this, a comprehensive overview of the research methodology and data collection methods is presented, taking into account the constraints imposed by COVID-19. The chapter also includes a discussion on data analysis and addresses key issues related to research rigour, reflexivity, and ethics.

### 3.2 Research paradigm

Paradigms are ‘universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ (Kuhn, 1996, p. x), the rationality of empirical inquiry and practice (Schwandt, 2014). Paradigms provide ‘ways of looking at the world, different assumptions about what the world is like and how we can understand or know about it’ (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8), which go beyond the domain of methodology (Hammersley, 2013). In other words, paradigms inform researchers concerning what aspects are significant, what is considered valid, and what is regarded as reasonable, and ultimately make research practicable (Patton, 1999).

As articulated by Sarantakos (2013), a paradigm consists of philosophical assumptions in relation to the nature of the world and reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be known (epistemology), as well as specific approaches to that knowledge (methodology and methods); within this, ‘ontology constructs the logic of epistemology, epistemology structures the nature of methodology, and methodology prescribes the appropriate types of research methods, designs and instruments’ (Ibid., p. 28). A paradigm by which researchers are guided therefore influences the formulation of inquiries (e.g. research goals and questions), the selection of theoretical frameworks, and the methodological approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Importantly, diversity in

philosophical assumptions on which paradigms are based provides distinct lenses through which researchers view and interpret the world differently, shaping their approaches to understanding natural and social phenomena (Cohen et al., 2018; Ormston et al., 2014).

The paradigm of positivism has predominantly informed the practice of research. Positivism constitutes a realist ontology, an objectivist epistemology, which informs a quantitative experimental methodology (Lincoln et al., 2013; Sarantakos, 2013). The realist ontology asserts that there exists a reality outside of individuals' perceptions as it truly is (Greenfield & Ribbins, 2005) and that the social world exists with solidity and tangibility comparable to that of the natural world (Burrell & Morgan, 2019), 'governed by universal, casual laws' (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 6). This positivist position believes that knowledge is 'hard, objective and tangible' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 5); therefore, researchers who take a positivist stance strive to uncover the general laws of society and human actions within it (Greenfield & Ribbins, 2005) – a 'nomothetic' approach that emphasises 'the process of testing hypotheses' (Burrell & Morgan, 2019, p. 16) and measurement (Sarantakos, 2013) by using, for example, mathematical models (Greenfield & Ribbins, 2005). Deductive reasoning is also frequently taken by positivists, using a 'top-down approach to knowledge' where hypotheses are formulated from a theory to be verified or rejected by quantitative evidence (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 7).

However, positivism is challenged by philosophical debates surrounding human nature (Burrell & Morgan, 2019) and the standpoint that supports people's 'own actions with free will and creativity' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 5). This paradigm has also been countered by those who argue that 'reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings' (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 16) and that the world is subject to individual interpretations (Ormston et al., 2014); researchers who disapprove the assumption regarding fixed law-like principles that govern the social world and human behaviour endorse this ontological stance, which underlies many paradigms that are opposed to positivism (Ibid.).

### **3.2.1 Social constructivism**

Social constructivism has been one of the influential paradigms in the field of educational research (Schwandt, 2014). This paradigm comprises a relativist ontology, and a subjective

interpretivist epistemology, informing a qualitative methodology (Lincoln et al., 2013). The relativist ontology endorses that reality is meaning- and context-dependent and that there are no universal truths about the world (Schwandt, 2014). Accordingly, the interpretivist epistemology stresses the discovery of 'connections between the social, cultural and historical aspects of people's lives and to see the context in which particular actions take place' based on people's interpretations (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 7); this originates from the philosophical tradition of '*verstehen*' (understanding) in native German (Ibid.).

The social constructivist position therefore believes that both knowledge and realities are socially constructed through people's interactions and people's sense-making of the world (Sarantakos, 2013), and through 'historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives' (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24). Researchers who take a social constructivist stance focus on 'the specific contexts in which people live and work', 'the complexity of views' and 'subjective meanings [that] are negotiated socially' and contextually, instead of seeking a universal theory (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24). Burrell and Morgan (2019) refer to this as an 'ideographic' approach, by which 'the subjective accounts which one generates by "getting inside" situations' are engaged (p. 16). Inductive reasoning is often employed by constructivists through a 'bottom-up' process, where patterns and themes emerge from people's interpretations of the world (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ormston et al., 2014).

In particular, these socially constructed realities based on *sense-making* and *understanding* exist within the interactions between the researcher and the research participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017), often through communication and dialogue (Sarantakos, 2013), whereby researchers interpret and represent participants' meanings in their research (Ormston et al., 2014). This reinforces the interpretivist epistemology approaching the nature of knowledge through 'human interpretation of the social world and the significance of both participants' and the investigator's interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied' (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 11). From this stance, researchers make a point to acknowledge the impact of their own background and experiences on their interpretations of what they have engaged in the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2017), which ensures the rigour of the research (Cohen et al., 2018); this researcher's positionality is detailed in Section 3.3.1 and reflexivity in Section 3.7.

My philosophical standpoint is consistent with the relativist ontology and the interpretivist epistemology, placing my research well within the social constructivism



paradigm; I believe that realities are multiple, which is knowable through people's socially constructed perceptions and interpretations. This informs the adoption of a qualitative research methodology focusing on 'word-based data', employing methods such as interviews and qualitative surveys (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 475) to collect participants' personal narratives, subjective experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and social positioning (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

### **3.2.2 A multi-method qualitative research**

As Cohen et al. (2018) suggest, the 'fitness for purpose' of the research is the overriding principle in considering the research paradigm, methodology, and method (p. 1). The purpose of my research was to explore perceptions and interpretations of pre- and in-service CITs concerning their instrumental learning/teaching and professional development within their specific cultural and educational contexts in China and/or the UK; this inherently includes the exploration of their diverse learning experiences, teaching practices, pedagogical beliefs, and professional development within and/or across cultures. To obtain these multi-faceted perspectives from participants of this research within the social constructivism paradigm, multi-method qualitative research was designed, covering more than one methodology in conducting the research (Mik-Meyer, 2020).

Specifically, these diverse yet bounded backgrounds of pre- and in-service CITs initiate a division of cases of participants based on their context-defined boundaries (e.g. pre-or in-service CITs, China-domiciled or UK-trained CITs), which is in line with a case study methodology (Section 3.4.1) for an in-depth context-based exploration (Gerring, 2017). This research also aims to explore UK-trained CITs concerning their I/V pedagogical learning and professional development as student-teacher CITs across cultures, capturing the depth and progression of their experiences (e.g. pedagogical development) during their UK study over time. As a result, a longitudinal study methodology (Section 3.4.2) is suitable for this research purpose, studying 'continuity and change' (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 269) within student-teacher CITs' cross-cultural pedagogical learning.

Furthermore, this multi-method approach also enables the employment of multiple data collection methods, namely multiple sources of data, to enhance the reliability and triangulation of the qualitative research (Fusch et al., 2018; Stavros & Westberg, 2009, also

see Section 3.6). Consequently, the methods of interviews (Section 3.5.1) and a qualitative survey (Section 3.5.3) were adopted for data collection in this research. In summary, the theoretical construction of this current research within the social constructivism paradigm is shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1:** The paradigm of this research, adapted from Sarantakos (2013) and Creswell and Poth (2017).

Research paradigm	Social constructivism	
<b>Ontology</b>	What is the nature of reality? (Relativism)	Multiple realities exist and are socially constructed meanings through people's interactions
	<b><i>What does this research focus on?</i></b>	<i>Context-dependent interpretations and meanings of CITs' beliefs and practices</i>
<b>Epistemology</b>	What is the nature of knowledge and how is it known? (Interpretivism)	Perceptions and meanings are known through interpretations of research participants and the researcher
	<b><i>What kind of knowledge is this research looking for?</i></b>	<i>Socially constructed perceptions, interpretations, and meanings of the research participants' experiences, and the researcher's interpretation of these</i>
<b>Methodology</b>	The nature of research design and methods	Qualitative, inductive, and multi-method
	<b><i>How is this research conducted?</i></b>	<i>A multiple case study using interviews, a qualitative survey, and a longitudinal study using interviews</i>

### 3.2.3 Research design: Flexibility

This research employs a qualitative methodology characterised by its inherent flexibility (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019), allowing for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of the research participants. Due to this flexible nature, 'adaptable methods [...] that are sensitive to the social context of the study' are typically used for data collection in qualitative research (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 4) that is not necessarily 'a "step-by-step" course or a "layer-by-layer" peeling activity' (Saliya, 2023, p. 1). This flexibility is achieved by 'reconsidering, revising, and revisiting' the research design alongside the research process,

addressing emerging insights as they arise (Ibid., P. 1). Additionally, as contextual factors significantly influence teaching and learning dynamics (Borko, 2004), this responsiveness would be crucial in education-related research.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational environments where my research was planned and conducted also determined adaptive modifications throughout the research process. The pandemic led to social distancing, online and/or blended teaching during the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, as well as a period of the closure of campuses in 2020, which affected my research: for instance, many students had to study remotely in an off-campus context, and a number of Chinese international students chose to complete their studies remotely in China within the scope permitted by the university policy.<sup>42</sup> This challenged my accessibility to participants of this research and influenced the ways participants could engage with the research process: e.g. changing the planned in-person face-to-face interviews to online ones with a possibility that participants might wish to turn off their camera (also see ethical considerations in Section 3.8). Therefore, flexibility was required in relation to both the nature of this research and the external real-world environment where this research was conducted.

### **3.3 Cross-cultural perspective**

#### **3.3.1 The researcher's positionality**

The paradigm of this research places value and emphasis on the human character, meanings, and interpretations of both the research participants and the researcher within the research process, as well as the researcher's own background shaping their interpretations (Ormston et al., 2014). Accordingly, Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest that constructivist researchers “‘position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences’ (p. 24). This is particularly relevant to my years of guzheng learning experience in different educational settings in China, including private music studios, a conservatoire guzheng teacher's home, and a university music department in China, as well as my private one-to-

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<sup>42</sup> See ‘One year on: Supporting students through a year of Covid-19’ on the official university website, UoY: <https://features.york.ac.uk/one-year-on/>.

one guzheng teaching experiences, which had legitimised my internal position as a Chinese instrument learner and teacher in China.

As Taber (2007) identifies, the institutional and teaching context which a researcher has engaged with often becomes the research context and focus for inquiry in the field of education, delving into specific aspects of their interactions and practices within the research site. My experience as a former student-teacher CIT on the MA course (2019/20) at UoY enabled me to access a wide range of I/V pedagogical approaches and theories that differ from the Chinese instrument teaching I had experienced in China. This motivated my further exploration of I/V pedagogy and IVT training in the Chinese and UK contexts from CITs' perspectives as a PhD student, starting in October 2020. This specific environment of the MA course at a particular university Music Department in the UK, therefore, shaped the context of my research concerning the case of student-teacher CITs on the MA course.<sup>43</sup>

Another position relating to this research should also be noted: I worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) on the MA course for three years, facilitating student-teachers' course content learning, academic writing tutorials, and assessments' marking. This provided me with an extended opportunity to experience and support the processes of pedagogical learning and adaptation of student-teachers, particularly those who were from China and specialised in Chinese instruments. These experiences and my engagement within the MA course community appear to have granted my position as an insider researcher within this unique research context concerning the MA course. An insider researcher in qualitative research is defined as those who conduct research involving communities and identity groups to which they also belong (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

This internal position in the specific learning/teaching contexts as mentioned above in both China and the UK has advantages in conducting research. For example, insider researchers have prior knowledge of how things work within a particular context and may have already established relationships with potential research participants, which could move the research process forward more promptly (Asselin, 2003). Often a shared background such as the common identity, language, and experiences between the insider researcher and their research participants can serve as a strong foundation for fostering the researcher-participant relationship (Asselin, 2003) that increases the willingness of research

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<sup>43</sup> More details about the MA course are presented in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1.

participants to share their experiences (Chammas, 2020). Familiarity with the research context also enables the researcher to develop a more comprehensive and focused guide for their research (Chammas, 2020).

However, this insider perspective could also be perceived as a disadvantage or weakness concerning potential 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and biases due to the familiarity with the research context (Asselin, 2003), although these biases can only be mitigated instead of being completely eliminated (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) due to the subjective nature of qualitative research (Flick, 2014). Unluer (2012) mentions that the disadvantages of an insider researcher could reside in the aspects such as the role duality as an instructor and researcher (this is especially concerned with my role duality as both the GTA and researcher on the MA course) and presuming to know the participants' experiences, and participants might in turn assume that the researcher is already aware of certain details due to their shared background (Ibid.). In this context, self-awareness is the key to helping maintain a more neutral stance of the researcher (e.g. Unluer, 2012) through thoroughly reflecting on the research process with 'a close awareness of one's own personal biases and perspectives' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59). This is related to reflexivity, detailed in Section 3.7.

### **3.3.2 Languages used in this research**

The cross-cultural background of both the researcher and the research topic necessitates the use of Mandarin (both the researcher's and participants' mother tongue) and English (second language), which influences the formation of this thesis. As Lee (2020) highlights, 'language is a *showing* that allows things to appear or disappear. It reveals the world in a particular way and, by giving a view of the world, draws us into a certain way of thinking' (p. 1242). In cross-cultural educational research, Robinson-Pant (2005) noted that the choice of language is not merely a technical decision but involves considerations related to identity and relationship dynamics between the researcher and research participants. In this research, Mandarin was used as the primary language for collecting the data, with English as the other option for participants to choose from, enabling participants who are native Mandarin speakers to provide more detailed and nuanced responses in their first language. This adheres to the practice of inviting participants to choose the language medium of, for

example, interviews, and the use of a linguistic strategy – code-switching – for native (e.g. Chinese) researchers drawing on their insider identity as with their (e.g. Chinese) participants, to gain deeper insights than those shared with an outsider using English (Robinson-Pant, 2005).

The complexity of Mandarin, a pictorial language, creates challenges for Chinese speakers when trying to master alphabetic foreign languages such as English, and similarly for non-native speakers to master Chinese (Hong et al., 2013). This linguistic difference influences how knowledge is conceptualised and expressed, particularly when translating ideas between languages (Robinson-Pant, 2005). Moreover, when attempting to convey cultural nuances, the act of translation extends beyond word-for-word conversion, where meaning is adapted across languages while maintaining the integrity of the original discourse (Ibid.). Reinterpretation processes therefore are inherent in translation, including both literal (word-for-word) and liberal (contextual and more idiomatic) translation (Newmark, 2009). Nevertheless, the act of interpreting empirical data can also be seen as a kind of translation, metaphorically, as essentially researchers are ‘translating’ and transcribing observations and oral interviews into the written form of the research text (Robinson-Pant, 2005). Therefore, participants’ validation of the Mandarin transcripts (i.e. member checking) was included in the research process (see Section 3.5.5). After this validation, the Mandarin transcripts were translated into English by the researcher, during which the online platforms DeepL Translate and Google Translate were used to facilitate the translation process, especially for particular terminologies, phrases, and idioms.

### **3.4 Research methodologies**

#### **3.4.1 Case study methodology**

The case study method, which follows its unique logic in designing and conducting research (Yin, 2018), is utilised in this present study to explore the perceptions of pre- and in-service CITs regarding their learning and teaching practices in China and the UK. Yin (2018) defines a case study as ‘an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context’ (p. 15). Gerring (2017) argues that the term ‘phenomenon’, as well as ‘instance’ or ‘example’, however, has more than one interpretation that may not explicitly illustrate a bounded situation within a case study.

Alternatively, he supports that 'A case may be created out of any phenomenon so long as it has identifiable boundaries and comprises the primary object of an inference' (Ibid., p. 19).

Simons (2009) views a case study as an approach to gaining an in-depth understanding of specific subjects (e.g. a system, programme, or policy) from different perspectives, which helps with illuminating professional practice and community action. Likewise, in the context of music education research, case studies are 'well-suited to examine central questions of music teaching and learning' due to the complexity and interactivity between various aspects of music education (Barrett, 2014, p. 130):

Aspects of the lived experience of music teaching and learning are often too nuanced, contextualized, and interdependent to be reduced to discrete variables. The dynamic intersections of subject matter, learners, teacher, and educational milieu are vital to our professional understanding; case study reports can aptly convey the multifaceted ecologies of life in music classrooms. (Ibid., p. 114)

Case study research typically includes a single case or multiple case design, depending on the research objectives (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explains that a single case study contains a case that is 'critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal' (p. 49). In contrast, a multiple case study consists of multiple entities, in which subgroups of cases are involved, demonstrating different types of conditions based on the research questions (Ibid.). For example, public and private hospitals can be seen as two subgroups in a multiple-case study, where each hospital should be examined individually as a single entity to generate findings across individual cases – this study design requires replications (Yin, 2018); this comprises 'literal' and 'theoretical' replication, which aims to reveal similar or contrasting findings among cases (Ibid., also see the next section). Moreover, the primary rationale for selecting multiple cases is to present a comprehensive understanding of the researched issue by drawing on diverse perspectives, providing detailed descriptions for the contextualisation of each case, and obtaining implications that emerge from investigating the cases (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

#### ***3.4.1.1 Designing the multiple case study***

As suggested by Yin (2018), essential elements in case study design include clearly defined study questions, purposes, and boundaries; the boundaries can be spatial, temporal, and

explicit (Ibid.). This study employed a multiple case design, focusing on different phases of professional development among CITs (i.e. pre- and in-service) within and across cultural contexts; the research questions are framed around understanding how these CITs perceive their Chinese instrument learning experiences in China, their pedagogical learning-related experiences, and the underpinnings of their teaching practices. The boundaries for this study were set based on the professional development phases of participants and their specific learning context in China and/or the UK, categorising them as 1) Case one: China-domiciled pre-service CITs (learning at a conservatoire or university music department in China), 2) Case two: China-domiciled in-service CITs (teaching at school or HE settings in China), and 3) Case three: student-teacher CITs on the UK MA course, UoY. It should be noted that these explicit boundaries were not pre-established at the outset of this research but emerged during the research process.

As mentioned above, the replication approach and logic are integral to the multiple case study design (Yin, 2014, 2018). In their framework, Yin distinguishes between literal replication and theoretical replication: literal replication occurs when researchers predict that similar results will emerge from cases that are essentially identical in context or conditions, while theoretical replication anticipates that different cases will yield contrasting results based on differing contexts or underlying assumptions (Yin, 2018). In the context of this research involving three distinct cases of CITs within their specific contexts in relation to their phases of professional development (i.e. pre- and in-service) and cultural contexts (i.e. China-domiciled and studying in the UK), the replication logic allows for nuanced understandings and perceptions of their different pedagogical experiences within and/or across cultures.

Given the varied phases of professional development represented in these cases, understandings of the profession, teaching approaches, pedagogical concepts, and professional training might be perceived differently based on individual demographics, teaching contexts, and personal experiences; this inspired the design of interviews and survey questions, whereby several pedagogical and Chinese instrument teaching related concepts/notions such as 'student-centredness', 'learning/teaching Chinese instrument (repertoire) authentically' and 'semi-improvisation' were asked across the cases of CITs for the purpose of the literal and theoretical replication, identifying potential similar and



contrasting views (see Sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.3). These concepts/notions were chosen based on the literature review.

### **3.4.2 Longitudinal study methodology**

A longitudinal study refers to an investigation of a group of people over a period of time (Thomas, 2017), 'emphasizing the study of change' (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010, p. 97). Pettigrew (1990) elaborates that longitudinal studies 'look for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the role of contexts and structures, and processes of structuring' (p. 269). Pettigrew (1990) also underscores the reciprocal relationship between context and action, and cautions against seeking singular, linear causation in favour of recognising the complex, holistic nature of change.

Change, however, is not guaranteed to take place in a longitudinal study (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). According to Lewis (2007), four types of change could occur in the longitudinal data: narrative change, change in participants' reinterpretation, change in the researcher's reinterpretation, and absence of change. More specifically, narrative change reveals the development of individual stories relating to interactions, feelings, hopes, reactions, and plans over a period (Ibid.). When participants retell or reinterpret their experiences or feelings that they have described earlier, change may arise (Lewis, 2007). These aspects informed the use of interviews to collect the data through participants' narratives and interpretations of their experiences and feelings. Change also takes place when the researcher tries to understand the participant's behaviour or stance from different angles (Ibid.); this inspired the integration of the use of the video-stimulated interview (VSI) technique to explore participants' pedagogical beliefs and actions (see Section 3.6.2). Finally, the absence of change could be examined in an alternative way to think about the stability of the unchanged aspects in relation to their consistency and maturity (Lewis, 2007).

In the context of this study, the longitudinal methodology is particularly suited to exploring the potential aspects reflecting change or the absence of change within the pedagogical learning process of student-teacher CITs enrolled in the one-year UK MA course at UoY, examining their experiences influenced by cross-cultural educational contexts through interviews.

### ***3.4.2.1 Designing the longitudinal study***

Following the principles outlined by Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010) and Thomas (2017), the study involved repeated data collection from the same participants at strategic intervals to capture changes in their pedagogical perspectives and practices. The intervals for data collection were carefully planned to coincide with stages of the MA course and to purposefully avoid the assessment submission dates/periods: they were midway through the second term of the course in March 2021 (the first round), the beginning of the third term in July 2021 (the second round), and at the end of the 12-month period in October 2021 (the third round). However, the issue of attrition, namely ‘the loss of members from the group being studied’ is common to see in longitudinal studies due to this repeated data collection process (Thomas, 2017, p. 178), which might also discourage participants from the outset. Therefore, this longitudinal study was intentionally designed to focus on student-teacher CITs on the MA course who specialised in guzheng, considering that my guzheng teacher identity might help with encouraging guzheng student-teachers on the course to participate. My familiarity with this instrument also facilitated the VSI process in this study concerning the use of interview materials (Section 3.6.2).

Moreover, Pettigrew’s (1990) contextualist approach was integral to this study’s design: recognising the embeddedness of the participants within multiple contexts, i.e. their prior educational experiences in different learning settings in China, the new learning environment in the UK higher music education, and the broader cultural and institutional frameworks, which concerns interconnected levels (Ibid.) that might influence their pedagogical transformations. Additionally, temporal interconnectedness (Ibid.) was addressed by situating student-teacher CITs’ experiences within a continuum that considered their past teaching practices, present learning experiences, and future professional aspirations. These aspects were reflected in the design of interview questions and the VSI procedure as presented in the following sections.

## **3.5 Data collection methods and data analysis**

### **3.5.1 Interview**

Interviews are a fundamental method in qualitative research, widely employed to explore participants' perspectives in depth (Cohen et al., 2018). They facilitate the elicitation of rich, detailed information regarding individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and values (Berg, 2007). The interactive nature of interviews is particularly beneficial when researching nuanced topics with individuals, such as specific culturally contextualised aspects, mindsets and influences in education (Robinson-Pant, 2005) and cross-cultural practices in this research. Moreover, interviews can accommodate the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of participants, which is essential in cross-cultural research contexts (Ibid.). In this study, therefore, interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method to explore the perceptions and experiences of pre- and in-service CITs. One-to-one online interviews were conducted with all participating interviewees in China using VooV meeting software. Similarly, during the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, interviews were conducted online with student-teacher CITs on the MA using Zoom, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Face-to-face in-person interviews were conducted with student-teacher CITs within the academic year 2022/23. Audio recording was utilised throughout the interviews when permission was granted by the interviewees.

To balance the need for consistency across interviews with the flexibility to explore individual views, semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. This interview format involves a prepared guide with predetermined questions and topics but allows the interviewer to adjust the sequence, omit questions as appropriate, and ask additional probing questions based on the interviewee's responses (Thomas, 2022). This approach is particularly suitable when the researcher has a clear focus but also anticipates that participants may introduce new perspectives or expand on their answers (Gray, 2021).

In designing the semi-structured interviews for this study, an interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and themes identified in the literature review; this included six thematic aspects: 1) demographic enquiry; 2) Chinese instrument learning experiences; 3) educational pathways; 4) Chinese instrument teaching experiences; 5) views on professional development within received education/training within and/or across cultures; 6) perceptions of challenges encountered across different educational/professional

development stages (and across cultural contexts for the case of the UK MA student-teacher CITs). Within these themes, the interview questions were carefully developed based on the research aims, literature review, and theoretical framework underpinning the study (see Appendix B).

In particular, the interview questions for the UK MA student-teacher CITs were informed by the cultural intelligence (CQ) theoretical framework (Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4), exploring the four overarching dimensions concerning cognition, metacognition, motivation and behaviour by integrating questions in relation to feelings, beliefs and understandings as student-teacher CITs studying on the MA course; no rationale for this CQ theory was explained to the participants in advance in order to keep spontaneity and coherency of their responses (Cohen et al., 2018). Open-ended questions were crafted to avoid limiting any possible types of answers that might be provided by researcher participants (Hartas, 2015) and to encourage detailed responses about participants' learning experiences, teaching philosophies, pedagogical practices, and experiences with cross-cultural education. The specific data collection processes with the three cases of participants are detailed in the data collection sections in the following chapters on the findings (e.g. Chapter 4, Section 4.2; Chapter 5, Section 5.2) for the purpose of contextualising the findings.

### **3.5.2 Video-stimulated interview (VSI) technique**

As articulated in Section 3.4.2.1, in the longitudinal study exploring guzheng student-teachers' pedagogical learning on the MA course, a technology-assisted research method – video-stimulated interview (VSI) – was adopted to facilitate the interviewees' self-reveal cognitive process, including a *reflective* and *interpretive* process (Van Braak et al., 2018). Gazdag et al. (2019) recognise the benefits of applying this approach within teacher training, aiding understanding of patterns between pre-service teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actions. Specifically, in both types of VSI process, the researcher plays the role of an inquirer to use video prompts and asks questions in relation to focused aspects (Moyle et al., 2002). The video prompts used in the reflective VSI are usually the recorded behavioural and cognitive activities of the interviewee, which helps people recall their 'concurrent cognitive activity' by watching videotaped materials of their behaviours and interactions (Lyle, 2003, p. 861). Janusz and Peräkylä (2021) claim that the intangible dimensions such as people's

cognition and emotion underlying an interaction are unable to be observed by an outsider (e.g. an interviewer) unless they reveal their thinking process through responding to video prompts. In contrast, the interpretive VSI refers to the process of interviewees interpreting specifically focused aspects in the video prompts being watched (Van Braak et al., 2018), which reflects their understandings and beliefs.

This research, therefore, utilised recordings of the MA guzheng student-teachers' one-to-one guzheng lessons (recorded by themselves) to explore their teaching actions via the *reflective* VSI (e.g. asking *why* they applied specific approaches at certain points in their teaching), whilst using online videos of guzheng performances to gain their espoused teaching beliefs through the *interpretive* VSI (e.g. asking *how* they would teach the guzheng music piece that was being performed) as CITs with cross-cultural pedagogical learning experiences. The interview questions, in an open-ended manner, were designed based on the video clips selected by the researcher from the recorded guzheng lessons; this approach allowed for a focused exploration of particular teaching strategies and pedagogical moments relevant to the research objectives. By pre-selecting the video clips as the VSI prompts, the six thematic directions of the investigation (mentioned in the previous section) were maintained and addressed during the interviews.

### **3.5.3 Qualitative online survey**

Surveys are a widely utilised method for data collection in research, as they offer a pragmatic approach to gathering information from a relatively large number of participants (Cohen et al., 2018). One of the primary advantages of using online surveys is their cost-effectiveness and efficiency, enabling researchers to reach a broad audience without the constraints of geographical limitations while also ensuring anonymity (Ibid.). This is particularly beneficial in this study, where the aim was to gather Chinese instrument learning/teaching experiences and educational pathways from pre- and in-service CITs across different educational settings in China and from student-teacher CITs studying at UoY. However, despite these advantages, surveys are not without their drawbacks: for example, the potential for low response rate or lack of depth in responses (Gray, 2021). Missing data and incomplete responses are additional challenges inherent in survey research (Cohen et al., 2018), where respondents might skip questions or provide

ambiguous answers (e.g. one or two words), leading to gaps in the data that could complicate analysis and interpretation. This issue underscores the importance of meticulous survey design and a pilot test of the survey (Fowler, 2014); therefore, I familiarised myself with the purposes of different types of questions frequently used in surveys during the process of the survey design on the online platform Qualtrics.

Following the stages in a survey design suggested by Cohen et al. (2018), this survey constituted 1) clarification of the objectives of the survey based on the research questions, 2) introduction to the purpose of research with an ethical approval clarified and a list of consent questions, 3) inclusive and exclusive criteria for the targeted population, 4) identification of appropriate types of questions and potential answers, 5) creating the survey, 6) pilot testing and revision, and 7) finalising the survey and distribution. To answer the research questions, this survey purposefully asked for respondents' demographic information to understand their educational and working contexts and was exclusive to the population who had engaged in Chinese instrument learning and/or teaching. According to the varied functions of types of questions articulated by Cohen et al. (2017), in this survey, a) closed questions with both word-based choices and open-text boxes were provided aimed at getting focused and word-based data, b) rating scales were used for attitude-oriented *ordinal* data for qualitative descriptions and interpretations rather than for statistical purposes, and c) open-ended questions with text boxes were included for more personal comments. Additionally, the survey included both Mandarin and English versions for respondents to choose from.

### **3.5.4 Sampling**

This study employed two typical sampling techniques: purposive sampling and snowball sampling for recruiting participants for this research. Purposive sampling involves intentionally choosing individuals based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the study (Robinson, 2014). This approach allows the researcher to focus on individuals who possess particular knowledge, experiences, or perspectives that are deemed significant for the research questions (Etikan et al., 2016b). This sampling strategy relies inevitably on the researcher's judgment to identify individual participants, which means a level of subjectivity, while it also allows for an in-depth exploration of the research questions with the most

relevant participants (Robinson, 2014). As highlighted by Ritchie et al. (2014), qualitative sampling should 'typify a circumstance or hold a characteristic that is expected or known to have salience to the subject matter under study' (p. 116). In this research, therefore, the criteria for recruiting interviewees were that they should either be pre-service music students specialising in Chinese instruments at a conservatoire/university music department in China, in-service CITs who taught Chinese instruments in China, or student-teachers on the UK MA specialising in Chinese instruments. Additionally, the sample size in purposive sampling is typically small, which is suitable for qualitative research where the emphasis is on depth rather than breadth of information or generalisation (Cohen et al., 2018).

Snowball sampling, also known as chain-referral sampling, is useful for accessing hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This technique facilitated access to a diverse cohort of participants by leveraging social networks, which begins with a small group of initial participants who then refer others within their network who also fit the study criteria, allowing the sample to expand progressively (Etikan et al., 2016a). This technique also helped with recruiting pre- and in-service CITs in China, through the social networks of some participating interviewees in this study. However, snowball sampling carries the risk of bias, as participants may recruit others who share similar characteristics or viewpoints (Ibid.). To mitigate this, it is crucial for the researcher to ensure that the initial participants are sufficiently varied to capture a wide range of perspectives (Ibid.). Therefore, for respondent recruitment, individual pre- and in-service CITs, student-teacher CITs on the UK MA music courses at York, tutors working at conservatoire or a university music department in China, and members of a conservatoire-based Chinese traditional music community were contacted by the researcher via WeChat – a mainstream Chinese social media application that is widely used by Chinese people in both home and overseas contexts (Carolan, 2022; Tencent, 2024) and/or email and were asked to pass on the survey information and link to their peers/course mates, conservatoire/university students, and colleagues who learn and/or teach a Chinese instrument.

By combining these two techniques, the study balanced the need for both diversity and specificity. However, it should be noted that whilst the snowball technique expanded the survey reach through referrals, the sample size is still small considering the large population of pre- and in-service CITs in China, from which definitive conclusions cannot be drawn.

### 3.5.5 Data transcription and analysis

The interview data was transcribed firstly in Mandarin by the researcher through repeated listening to the audio recordings, utilising the 'Dictate' function in Word. This tool allowed the spoken words to be automatically transcribed into text as the recordings were played. However, frequent pauses and manual adjustments were necessary to ensure each transcription's accuracy and maintain the integrity of the participants' responses. The Mandarin transcripts were then sent back to each interviewee for member checking (Gray, 2021), which aimed to prevent misinterpretations of the participants' voices and provided them with the opportunity to clarify or expand on any points they wished to further elaborate. After the participants' validation, the Mandarin transcripts were then translated into English by the researcher.

Data analysis in this research was conducted using thematic analysis (TA), adhering to the six-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). This includes 1) revisiting the data as many times as needed for familiarisation; 2) initial coding and a second-round coding for verifying the codes; 3) generating initial themes; 4) reviewing themes and codes; 5) defining themes; 6) writing up the analysis. To facilitate the coding and analysis process, the software MAXQDA was utilised, in which different types of data can be analysed including but not limited to texts, audio, and video recordings (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). I imported the interview data (i.e. the English transcripts in separate Word documents) into MAXQDA, separated by three document folders named 'The case of China-domiciled pre-service CITs', 'The case of China-domiciled in-service CITs', and 'The case of UK MA student-teacher CITs'. Within the folder of the case of UK MA student-teacher CITs, a sub-folder was created for the data generated by the three rounds of interviews in the longitudinal study with guzheng student-teachers on the MA.

In the coding process, both '*in vivo* codes' (i.e. utilising the actual words of the participants) and researcher-assigned codes that can convey the meaning of the chosen segment of the data were used (Creswell, 2013, p. 268). The flexibility of 'adjusting the sequence and hierarchical structure of codes' in MAXQDA (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019, p. 69) helped to avoid the pitfalls in thematic analysis recognised by Braun and Clarke (2006): generating overlapped or inconsistent themes and potential mismatches between the data



and codes. The coding was conducted within the three individual cases, from which thematic patterns can be recognised (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) also suggests that when carrying out case study research, researchers should ‘think upward conceptually, rather than downward into the domain of individual variables’, which particularly concerns a cross-case synthesis for multiple case studies (p. 197); based on this, patterns across cases could emerge, being either literal or theoretical (i.e. similar or contrasting, Ibid.).

Analysis of the survey data in this study followed the ideas elaborated by Thomas (2017) concerning the data which includes both words and numbers; this was collected by the closed multiple-choice, text-open, and rating-scale questions in the survey, as illustrated above. The analytic steps derived from Thomas (2017) comprise 1) seeing what the data are ‘saying’, 2) identification of number types: whether they are numbers that describe or indicate any relationships for interpretation, and 3) using Microsoft Excel to work with the data exported from Qualtrics and generate charts that are suitable for result presentation. Additionally, the built-in data analysis and result dashboard in Qualtrics facilitated the initial organisation and visualisation of the survey data (*Data & analysis basic overview*, 2023; *Results-reports basic overview*, 2023); cross-category comparisons between respondent groups (i.e. the breakouts function in Qualtrics) were applied to understand how people from different demographics responded to the same question (Ibid.). Open-text responses were analysed thematically in line with the above six-phase approach summarised by Braun and Clarke (2012). Moreover, in the presentation of the findings, verbatim quotations from research participants were presented indented (40 words or more) or within the body of a paragraph (less than 40 words) throughout this thesis. Within graphs, charts and in the text, percentages are rounded to an integer number where rounding is necessary.

### **3.6 Research validity, reliability and triangulation**

In qualitative research, validity is often associated with the credibility of the data and interpretations (Gray, 2021); multiple approaches were undertaken in this research to strengthen this. Internal validity was addressed by enabling member checking and by communicating participants’ views honestly. Representativeness was ensured through careful sampling strategies such as the use of purposive sampling; this aligns with the idea that participants should typify circumstances pertinent to the subject matter (Ritchie et al.,

2014). Using quotations also ensured that participants' voices remained represented in the analysis. Additionally, by documenting all research processes and decisions, transparency was maintained (Cohen et al., 2018). This also supports the integrity of the research and would help others understand the context and rationale behind methodological approaches.

Reliability in qualitative research pertains to the consistency and dependability of the research procedures and findings, which also concerns providing an authentic representation of real-life contexts of research participants (Cohen et al., 2018). This was achieved by capturing the nuances of participants' educational environments and cultural influences within the real-life contexts of CITs in China and/or the UK. In this research, reliability was also addressed through consistent data collection and analysis methods. This enabled recognising the differences among institutions and educational-cultural settings, and the research refrained from generalisation, focusing instead on rich, contextualised descriptions and interpretations.

Furthermore, the diversified ways of collecting data facilitate triangulation of data sources (Swanborn, 2010), i.e. multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018) in the research from different groups of CITs across their phases of professional development and across cultural contexts. By combining the survey and interview methods, methodological triangulation was also achieved (Fusch et al., 2018). Additionally, theoretical triangulation was employed by interpreting the findings through varied theoretical lenses, including the theoretical framework of CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003) and pedagogical theories in the field of music education. By illustrating these aspects, this study aimed to produce credible and meaningful insights into the professional development and pedagogical beliefs and practices of CITs within and across specific educational and cultural contexts.

### **3.7 Reflexivity**

As May and Perry (2014) highlight, reflexivity involves a conscious turning into oneself to examine how the researcher's own background, assumptions, and social positioning influence the process of research. Acknowledging that researchers cannot be entirely detached from the social world they investigate (Cohen et al., 2018; Ritchie et al., 2014), I remained vigilant about how my interactions and perspectives might shape the research outcomes. In the context of this study on pre- and in-service CITs, reflexivity was particularly

important due to my dual role as both researcher and practitioner with personal experience in guzheng learning and teaching in China and cross-cultural pedagogical learning in the UK.

Throughout this study, I was conscious of my dual role as both a GTA on the MA programme and the 'investigator' collecting data for my doctoral research. This position placed me as an insider researcher (see Section 3.3.1), potentially influencing how participants perceived me and thus how openly they shared their experiences. Acknowledging that my background could influence my perceptions and potentially introduce bias, I took deliberate steps to mitigate this impact. For example, I employed open-ended questions in both interviews and the survey with open-text boxes, enabling participants to express their perspectives freely without being influenced by my assumptions. Before each interview, I informed participants that I would refrain from sharing my personal opinions to avoid any undue influence on their responses. This consideration proved crucial when dealing with possible power imbalances, given that some student-teachers might have viewed me as an authority figure within the MA programme. By underscoring the confidentiality of their contributions and clarifying that my GTA duties were separate from the research, I aimed to reduce any perceived pressure to respond in ways that matched my presumed expectations.

Simultaneously, I engaged in ongoing reflexive practice by discussing my interpretations and potential assumptions with my supervisor and peer PhD students, as well as presenting my research and preliminary findings in the Music Education Forum at the Music Department, UoY. My reflexive practice also extended beyond data collection, informing the broader research design. I received detailed feedback reports on my thesis progress during six-monthly Thesis Advisory Panel meetings, aligning with the university's policy, where panel members asked me to reflect on my research journey, my insider status and its potential influence on methodology, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. These dialogues helped me to critically assess my interpretations and remain open to alternative perspectives as helpfully provided by people who possess their critical friend identity (see Stolle & Frambaugh-Kritzer, 2022) to my research.

Furthermore, guided by Taylor's (2009) insights, I engaged thoughtfully with participants to build trust and ensure they felt safe and comfortable sharing their personal experiences and perceptions. I was however careful to maintain professional boundaries, adhering to Taylor's (2009) reminder that my primary role was that of a researcher rather

than a friend. This balance helped in fostering open communication while preserving the objectivity necessary for rigorous research. Embracing reflexivity also allowed me to critically evaluate the research methodology, from participant recruitment to data analysis. It enabled me to recognise the cultural nuances and complexities inherent in cross-cultural research with the participants.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The current research adhered to the six essential principles of ethical research, promoted by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2021): maximising benefits and minimising harm; respecting rights; voluntary and informed participation; researching with integrity and transparency; responsibility; and maintaining the independence of research. These are articulated in the following sections. As emphasised by Thomas (2017), ethical concerns should be articulated explicitly and examined systematically to obtain institutional approval ahead of starting the project. Therefore, the full AHEC submission form was submitted to the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee (AHEC) at the UoY on 8 February 2021; permission for the research was received in compliance with the university's ethical standards.

#### **3.8.1 Maximising benefits and minimising harm**

Enhancing real-world practices for people and communities is what qualitative research aims to achieve; however, for researchers, it is unlikely to maximise the benefits by only floating on the methodological level without engaging with participants and the reflective process (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). The present research desired to create a safe space for participants, namely CITs, to talk about their experiences, feelings, and perceptions of instrumental teaching and learning without any expectations or judgement. It is worth noting that those who had taken part in this research scarcely viewed their involvement as being negative. Conversely, they expressed their positive feelings about having an opportunity to articulate their thoughts on teaching as a CIT within their specific contexts, as they were rarely invited to do so in the past. Some of the China-domiciled participants also showed interest in I/V pedagogical training as they were not aware of this before participating in this research. Consequently, this research could potentially benefit

participants through the experience of being listened to regarding their learning and teaching experiences, and it could be also valuable to a wider population of CITs who may see parallels from those participants' thoughts and experiences.

However, risks may arise at any stage of the research process, not only during data collection; researchers should have sensitivity and be aware of participants' needs (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Starting from contacting participants, Thomas (2017) suggests carefully thinking about the use of language when explaining the research to the participants, in which straightforward and daily used terms are recommended. The participants in this research were contacted via email and/or WeChat. All the key information presented in the information sheet and consent form was explained to the participants individually, including the use of Mandarin, which could help them effectively understand the research aims and procedures. To minimise potential harm in interactions with participants, such as them being 'fearful of disclosing', I followed the suggestion to put myself in the participants' shoes, offering support and creating 'respectful relationships without stereotyping and [without] using labels that participants do not embrace' (Weis & Fine, 2000, cited in Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 54).

The research itself could contain sensitive elements that might be psychologically or physically harmful to both the researcher and the participant who engages in it (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008). As the current research encourages participants to unfold their instrumental learning and teaching experiences, there could be issues that distress them. For instance, the participant may recall an unpleasant conversation with a pupil's parents or someone such as the employer. Thomas (2017) states that if researchers 'trigger a response which is clearly painful' for the participant, information about supportive services should be recommended to the participant if they feel they need it (p. 50). Ahead of each interview, the participant was informed that if anything discomforting came up, they could avoid responding to the question/topic; also, they were encouraged to discuss their perceptions with another person (e.g. a friend/mentor/teacher). Uncovering participants' negative experiences, however, may remind the researcher of similar feelings if they have any. Emerald and Carpenter (2015) point out that researchers' vulnerability and personal risks relating to the research are underestimated. For example, contacting an unfamiliar person (Thomas, 2017), preparing for research, and transcribing sensitive data (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008) can all be stress-inducing. Nevertheless, participation in supervision with academic

supervisors, talking to friends/families, and informal peer support are effective ways of managing risks for researchers (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

Finally, it is crucial to maintain participants' confidentiality and anonymity all the time (Thomas, 2017). To ensure that the information given by the participants is confidential, code numbers and gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. they/them/their) were used to replace any identifiable information in transcribing and analysis. Although some of the names of institutions were collected, general designations (e.g. conservatoires and universities) were used when analysing the data and writing up chapters on the findings.

### **3.8.2 Respecting rights and voluntarily informed participation**

'The rights of individuals, groups and communities should be respected. This will entail respect of values (some of which might be culturally specific), preservation of dignity and a commitment to respecting and maximizing autonomy' (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018, p. 39). This research respects the autonomy and dignity of every participant. Participants were given the right to ask any questions about the research, choose specific interview dates and times, check their transcript and make corrections, and withdraw their participation/data at any point. They were assured of their right to stay unidentifiable throughout the research process and the means by which this would be achieved by the researcher.

All participants voluntarily engaged in this research. All relevant information was detailed in the research information sheet (including the research aims, ethical approval, data protection actions, participants' rights, interview procedure and language, and how the data will be used) and consent form, which was sent to each participant ahead of arranging interviews. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions if there was anything unclear in the materials. They were informed of the approximate duration and structure of the interview and how their responses would be used. They understood that follow-up questions would be asked during the interview and their responses would be anonymised.

## **3.9 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter examined the research paradigm, research design, data collection and data analysis methods, as well as dimensions relating to research rigour, reflexivity and ethics. Qualitative data were collected through a multiple case study using interviews with three

cases of participants (i.e. China-domiciled pre-service CITs, China-domiciled in-service CITs, and student-teacher CITs on the UK MA course) and a longitudinal study with several participants who belonged to one of the cases (i.e. guzheng student-teachers on the UK MA course). The next chapter will present findings of the survey study examining learning/teaching experiences and educational pathways of pre- and in-service CITs.

## Chapter 4: Findings of the Survey Study

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from an online survey involving 107 respondents who had Chinese instrument learning and teaching experiences in different settings in China; of those, many had completed or were enrolled in BA/MA music programmes in Chinese higher education (HE), and some continued their professional development by taking the MA music programmes at the University of York in the UK HE. This study explores the largely un-researched aspects as articulated in Chapter 2, Sections 2.3/4, concerning Chinese instrument learners' educational pathways to music, their received professional training across their phases of education and cultural contexts, and their practices and challenges as Chinese instrument teachers (CITs). The data collection process including the structure of the survey is detailed in Section 4.2.

Findings are organised into three main themes with multiple subsections that emerged from the data analysis: respondents' demographic data and their experiences as Chinese instrument learners, especially concentrating on their learning of the regional stylistic features and semi-improvisation skills (Section 4.3, discussed in Section 4.3.3); their teacher training related experiences and qualifications (Section 4.4, discussed in Section 4.4.6); and their teaching experiences (Section 4.5, discussed in Section 4.5.4). This chapter addresses the following research questions:

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?



## 4.2 Data collection process

This qualitative survey was designed by the researcher using the online platform Qualtrics, which enabled a technology-assisted way to build and refine a survey, as well as to manage, analyse and present the data (*Learn the XM platform*, 2023). Specifically, 35 questions were included in the survey which contained 28 multiple-choice questions, two slider rating scale questions for respondents to indicate a self-identified value of listed elements, and five open-ended text boxes. Both multiple-choice and slider-rating questions allowed text entry when a participant needed to select an option that was not given, or for expansion on the option selected. As noted in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3, data from these questions used in this survey would include both words and numbers, while numbers were for qualitative descriptions and not for statistical purposes.

The questions were thematically structured within six section blocks with conditions attached to particular answer options for branching into sub-questions, asking for detailed aspects of respondents' received instrumental and pedagogical training concerning their professional development in China and/or the UK. For example, one of the questions in Block 3 asked, 'Have you taken school music or instrumental/vocal pedagogy relevant module(s) in your undergraduate study?', if a respondent selected the option indicating they had taken neither of the modules then the sub-question asking for their experience of training would be automatically skipped by the survey system, given that they did not meet the condition attached to the answers of either having a school music or instrumental/vocal pedagogical module. The final free-text questions in Block 6 asked respondents to add any comments if they would like to and encouraged them to leave their contact details (accessible to the researcher only) for further communication or an interview.

**Table 4.1:** An overview summary of the thematic blocks in the survey.

Block number	Question numbers	Question types	Themes
Block 1	Q1-4	Multiple choice with text entry	Survey information, informed consent, and demographic enquiry: age, sex, and the Yikao <sup>44</sup> experience
Block 2	Q5-12	Multiple choice with text entry	Chinese instrument learning experiences: years of learning, learning contexts, and

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1 for the Yikao in China.

			awareness of regional styles and semi-improvised techniques
<b>Block 3</b>	Q13-25	Multiple choice, open-text boxes, and slider rating scales	Educational pathways: undergraduate and/or postgraduate studies in China and/or the UK, pedagogical training, and teacher qualification
<b>Block 4</b>	Q26-32	Multiple choice with text entry	Teaching experiences: years of teaching, teaching contexts, pupils' age groups and learning objectives
<b>Block 5</b>	Q33	Multiple choice with text entry	Professional self-identity
<b>Block 6</b>	Q34-35	Open-text boxes	Follow-up and interview invitation

A pilot test of the survey was conducted with three respondents (one from each category of possible respondent group) in February 2023. The survey was then revised based on the initial result and suggestions given by the respondents concerning the question terminology, articulation, sequence, and English-Chinese translation. The refined survey was formally distributed online in March 2023 and ended in May 2023 based on the snowball sampling procedure (Chapter 3, Section 3.5.4).

### 4.3 Respondents' demographic data

The online survey recorded 107 respondents' responses; three responses were excluded from the ongoing data-set for analysis given that their learning/teaching instrument was not a Chinese instrument. The sub-questions were generally answered by fewer respondents due to the branching conditions as explained above. 99 respondents disclosed their sex: females (87%, n=88), males (11%, n=11), while five preferred not to indicate their sex. Most of the 104 respondents were aged between 18-24 years (57%, n=59) and 25-34 (40%, 42), and one was 35-44, two were 45-54; three preferred not to disclose their age. The learning and/or teaching Chinese instruments reported by 104 respondents were guzheng (54), erhu (13), pipa (12), bamboo flute (6), yangqin (5), guqin (3), sheng (2), Chinese percussion (2), ruan (4) and Chinese vocal (2).<sup>45</sup> The main classification groups of the respondents were China-domiciled pre-service students specialising in a Chinese instrument on a degree music programme in China (n=29), in-service CITs working in China (n=48) and students

<sup>45</sup> One respondent who chose 'Other' did not provide their teaching instrument in text.

specialising in a Chinese instrument on the MA courses at the University of York, UK (n=27; of these, 25 were enrolled on the MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course).<sup>46</sup> Each respondent was assigned a unique code number to reference their responses and maintain confidentiality: e.g. R1\_MA1, R6\_IN1, R8\_PRE1; R1/2/3 = respondent number, MA1/2/3 = UK MA Chinese instrument students, PRE1/2/3 = China-domiciled conservatoire/university Chinese instrument students.

### 4.3.1 Yikao experiences and educational pathways

101 respondents reported that they participated in the Yikao in China, of whom 87 (86% of 101) either had gained the degree of Bachelor of Arts (BA) or were enrolled in BA Music programmes in the Chinese HE: most of them graduated from BA with Music Performance (31%, n=27 of 87), Musicology (35%, n=31 of 87), or Music Education (18%, n=16 of 87). 55 respondents were taking or had taken MA Music programmes in China or the UK: most were studying or had taken an MA in Music Education (n=26), Music Performance (n=12) or Musicology (n=8), and three of the respondents who chose 'Other' specified their answers in the text box, which were 'MA in Community Music' (R13\_MA8), 'Part-time MA in Musicology' (R55\_IN18), and 'MA in Music Production' (R61\_PRE16).

### 4.3.2 Chinese instrument learning in China

Most respondents had learned a Chinese instrument for 10 to 20 years; Table 4.2 exhibits the years of learning a Chinese instrument of the respondents (N=94). 97 respondents disclosed their learning contexts with their Chinese instrument teachers: the number of those who learned one-to-one (93%) was greater than those who learned in group lessons (46%), and the overlapping indicates that some of them experienced both.

**Table 4.2:** Respondents' (N=94) years of learning a Chinese instrument.

Years of learning	Percentage	Respondents
Less than a year	1%	1
1-3 years	3%	3
4-6 years	11%	10

<sup>46</sup> The course curriculum is detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1.

7-10 years	19%	18
10-15 years	37%	35
16-20 years	24%	23
21-30 years	3%	3
More than 30 years	1%	1
Total	100%	94

When asked about regional stylistic features in Chinese instrumental repertoire and performance, 75 respondents reported that they were aware of and understood this knowledge as a Chinese instrument learner, while 13 indicated limited awareness of this. The respondents' ( $N=86$ ) ways of learning this regional stylistic knowledge (this question allowed more than one answer) included learning from their teachers' demonstrations and verbal instructions (98%,  $n=84$ ), and 40% ( $n=34$ ) reported that they also learned this by themselves, including searching for videos/audios of performances or tutorials online (e.g. R65\_IN23; R94\_IN38),<sup>47</sup> attending concerts and masterclasses (R72\_PRE25), and consulting relevant Chinese literature (e.g. R37\_PRE9; R43\_MA18). One mentioned their 'fieldwork' experience of learning the knowledge: 'I followed my teacher to visit the places where the music belongs and talked to old-generation performers and folk artists about the music' (R33\_IN11).

86 respondents also reported their awareness of semi-improvisation skills applied in Chinese instrument performances: 57 were aware of this and understood how to employ semi-improvised techniques in their playing, while 28 did not know much about applying the specific semi-improvised techniques though they were aware of these aspects, and one indicated that they first encountered the concept of 'semi-improvisation' through this survey question. The respondents' ( $N=83$ ) ways of learning semi-improvised techniques (this question allowed more than one answer) included learning from their teachers' demonstrations (89%,  $n=74$ ) and online sources (67%,  $n=56$ ) such as trialling by themselves based on their understanding of the music (R65\_IN23), imitating the teacher's or other musicians' performances (R55\_IN18; R81\_PRE28), and repeated practice (R47\_MA20).

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<sup>47</sup> The digital platforms mentioned by the respondents were Bilibili (a video-sharing platform: <https://www.bilibili.tv/en>), Xiao Hong Shu (小红书, 'Rednote' software), and the official WeChat account of Zhong Guo Guzheng Wang (Chinese guzheng website).

### **4.3.3 Discussion: Educational pathways and Chinese instrument learning experiences**

The findings illuminate the educational trajectories and experiences of individuals engaged in Chinese instrument learning, reflecting potential broader trends in music instrumental education within China. A substantial majority of respondents were young adults, predominantly female, engaged in a variety of Chinese traditional instruments (guzheng learners account for the majority). The predominance of one-to-one instruction (93%) over group lessons may reinforce the value placed on the personalised learning needs of instrumental students (e.g. Kong, 2021); this approach might be particularly relevant in the context of the Yikao examination, which serves as a vital gateway to higher music education in China (Lin & Weatherly, 2024). This trend appears also consistent with the findings of Bai (2021) in China, who notes that early private instruction prepares students for rigorous pursuits in music. Additionally, the educational backgrounds of the respondents, with a majority holding or pursuing degrees in Music Performance, Musicology, or Music Education, may reflect the structured pathways available within Chinese higher education institutions.

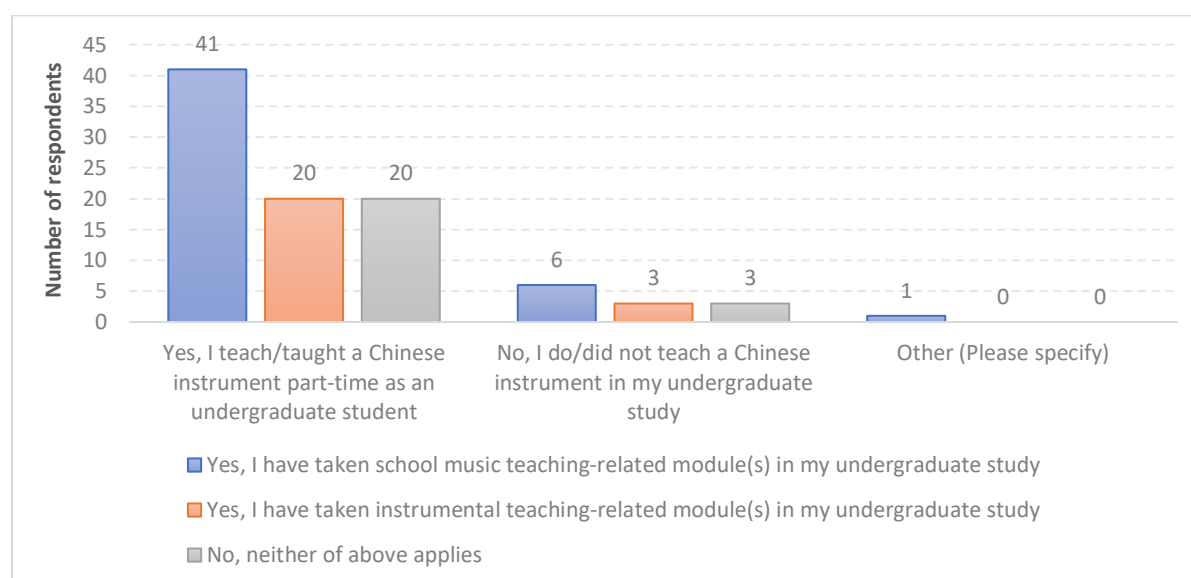
The respondents' awareness of regional stylistic features and semi-improvisation techniques indicates a consciousness of inherited cultural elements in their instrumental practices. However, the reliance on teacher demonstrations (98% for stylistic knowledge; 89% for semi-improvisation) disclosed the typical approach adopted by CITs in China in preserving and transmitting those traditional musical features. The integration of self-directed learning through online resources might showcase a shift towards more flexible and diverse learning modalities, suggesting that contemporary Chinese instrument learners would blend traditional and modern learning strategies; this aligns with an increasing employment of technology-assisted music learning and teaching as identified by Bauer (2020), which raises considerations about pedagogy of the appropriate use of technology.

## 4.4 Teacher training and qualification

### 4.4.1 Pre-service teacher training related experiences

Out of 85 respondents who participated in a BA Music programme in China, 53 of them (62%) received training on teaching music in school classrooms, while 23 of them (27%) had taken instrumental or vocal teaching related modules. Interestingly, 25 respondents (29%) did not receive training in either of these pedagogical modules, and 14 respondents (16%) received training in both school music and instrumental/vocal teaching. Specific aspects relating to school music teacher preparation that were learned in their BA Music programmes in China are detailed in Section 4.4.3.

Notably, 68 of 81 respondents (84%) reported their work as a part-time CIT during their undergraduate studies in China in private settings. However, out of these part-time CITs, 20 did not receive any formal pedagogical training, while 41 only received school music teacher training, as shown in Figure 4.1 below.



**Figure 4.1:** Pedagogical training and part-time teaching experience of BA Music students in China.

79 respondents disclosed their received pedagogical training in MA Music programmes: 13 had school-music-teaching modules, while 22 had specialist instrumental/vocal teaching training in their MA Music programmes. Out of those 22, 18 (82%) were enrolled in the MA Music Education course at York, UK. 48 respondents chose 'Not applicable', given that they either had not taken an MA course yet or had majored in

Music Performance which focused on how to perform rather than how to teach an instrument.

#### **4.4.2 China school music teacher qualification**

In total, 36 respondents (73% of 49 who answered this question) had obtained the national music teacher qualification by taking the National Teacher Certificate Examination (NTCE) in China, while 10 had not; three chose 'Not applicable' and explained in the text box that they had not signed up for the exam yet. As detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2, this qualification would be useful if music students in China wished to seek employment at school. Out of 36 respondents who obtained the teacher qualification, 75% (n=27) had received school music teaching related training in their BA Music programmes in China, while out of 10 respondents who did not get the teacher qualification, eight had not had such training. This may indicate a possibility that pedagogical training concerning school music teaching would influence music students' participation or even success in the NTCE in China.

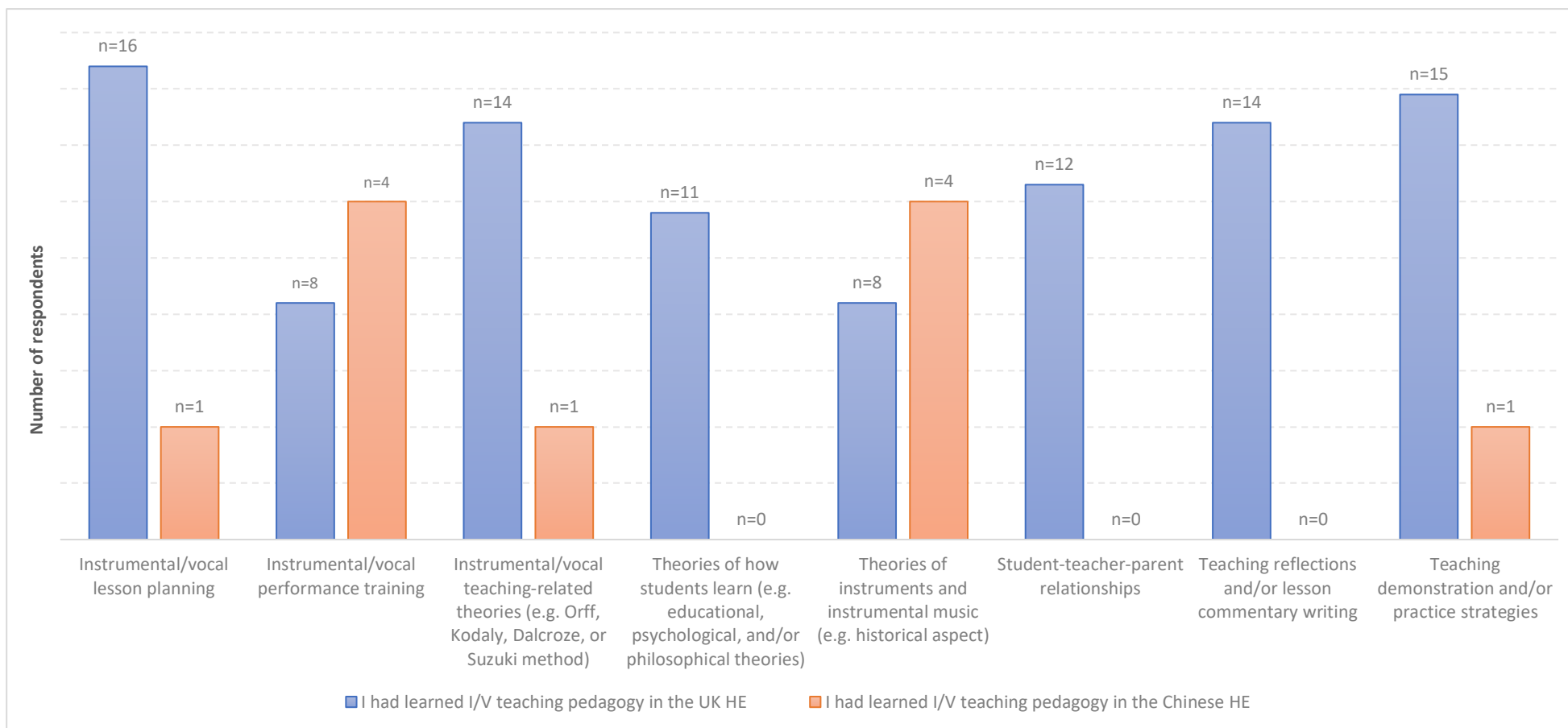
#### **4.4.3 Received school music teacher preparation in China BA Music programmes**

50 respondents revealed specific aspects of their received modules concerning school music teaching in their enrolled BA Music programmes in China. It appeared that most respondents learned classroom music teaching planning (84%, n=42), music performance and/or piano accompaniment (74%, n=37), and experienced teaching demonstration and/or internships at school (70%, n=35). Contrastingly, fewer of them learned about student-teacher-parent relationships (26%, n=13), classroom management (30%, n=15), and school music education policies relating to school music curriculum in China (36%, n=18). Interestingly, more than half of them (56%) had received support in the modules that helped them prepare for the NTCE to get the school music teacher qualification in China. This may indicate that the course curriculum aimed to prepare them for future employment opportunities as school music teachers.

#### **4.4.4 Comparing specific trained aspects within I/V pedagogical learning in China and the UK**

Respondents who reported having had I/V pedagogical learning experiences within their enrolled BA/MA programmes in China and the UK disclosed the specific trained aspects relating to I/V teaching. Of the respondents who answered this question ( $N=36$ ), 19 were from the UK MA Music Education programme and 17 respondents were enrolled in BA/MA in Music Education ( $n=6$ ), Music Performance ( $n=6$ ), and Musicology ( $n=5$ ) in China. The data indicated that I/V lesson planning, specialist pedagogical theories, and teaching demonstration and/or practice strategies were covered in the I/V teacher training within the UK MA programme, while I/V performance training and theories of instruments and instrumental music (e.g. historical aspects) were presented in I/V teaching related modules in China. Interestingly, the data showed that no respondent in their China BA/MA studies learned about theories of how students learn, student-teacher-parent relationships, and teaching reflections and/or lesson commentary writing, but these aspects were included within the UK MA programme (see Figure 4.2 below).





**Figure 4.2:** Comparisons between specific trained aspects within instrumental/vocal pedagogical learning in the Chinese and the UK higher education.

#### 4.4.5 Envisaged specialist I/V teacher training

In a slider rating-scale question, respondents were asked to rate 10 elements provided by the researcher from 0 to 10 to show how valuable those elements were perceived by them against their expected specialist I/V teacher training (see Table 4.3 below). An 'Other' open-text option was available for respondents to supplement and rate additional aspects that could have been included in the training.

**Table 4.3:** Aspects to be trained formally for instrumental/vocal teaching

No.	Elements
1	Musical skills (e.g. aural, technical, notational)
2	Communication and collaboration skills
3	Lesson design, implementation, and evaluation
4	Group teaching strategies
5	One-to-one teaching strategies
6	Pupil-teacher-parent relationships
7	Creativity and creative teaching
8	Pedagogical theories
9	Instrumental ensemble teaching and conducting
10	Teaching improvisation

Rated by 58 respondents, the result showed high mean scores ranging from 7 to 8. 21 UK MA respondents assigned relatively higher mean scores to the listed elements from 7 to 10 compared to the other two groups (22 China-domiciled pre-service and 15 in-service respondents). It appeared that across these groups, receiving IVT training concerning musical skills (element 1), lesson design/implementation/evaluation (element 2), and one-to-one teaching strategies (element 5) received the highest mean score of 8. Elements 4, 7, 9 and 10 were rated differently across the respondent groups: in particular, UK MA respondents rated the mean score 8 to the aspects of group teaching strategies (element 4) and creative teaching (element 7), while these obtained the mean score 6 from the other two groups. Furthermore, instrumental ensemble teaching/conducting (element 9) and teaching improvisation (element 10) received the lowest mean score of 5 from China pre-service respondents, while the UK MA respondents assigned a mean score of 8 to teaching improvisation.

Additionally, some respondents provided the aspects they wished to be trained in as IVTs: for example, 'Appreciation of instrumental music' (R16\_IN4), music theory teaching (R17\_MA11; R62\_IN22), 'edutainment' (R19\_PRE3), verbal skills in teaching such as explaining concepts and providing encouragement (R47\_MA20), and 'music management' (R34\_MA16).

#### **4.4.6 Discussion: Music/IVT training and qualification**

Despite a high percentage of respondents (84%) working as part-time Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) during their undergraduate studies, the findings revealed that a substantial number did so without any formal pedagogical training. Specifically, 20 out of these part-time CITs had not received any pedagogical education, highlighting a prevalent issue where musicians with performance expertise engage in teaching without adequate preparation in pedagogical skills (e.g. Boyle, 2020, 2024; Lee & Leung, 2022).

The findings indicate that while many respondents reported that they received training related to school music teaching, only a smaller proportion had I/V teaching related modules within Chinese higher music education. This discrepancy may suggest that pedagogical training in China would be more aligned with preparing music students for classroom teaching rather than one-on-one I/V instruction. However, considering those BA Music students who taught a Chinese instrument privately (68 out of 81 respondents), whether their received training could be interchangeably useful in delivering I/V lessons may warrant further attention.

Additionally, the absence of a parallel teacher certification process for IVTs, as required for school music teachers through the NTCE, may further highlight the gap in formal qualifications for private IVTs in China. It seems that pedagogical training received by those music students in China, particularly in school music teaching, may influence their preparation for the NTCE qualification, as 75% of those who acquired the qualification had received relevant training. However, the limited coverage of essential topics within BA programmes in China, such as student-teacher-parent relationships (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015; Santiago et al., 2016) and classroom management that significantly influences learning outcomes (Evertson & Weinstein, 2013), may indicate a need for more comprehensive teacher education curricula.

Moreover, the survey appears to have identified differences in I/V pedagogical training between the Chinese and UK HE contexts. Specifically, the UK programmes tended to emphasise I/V pedagogical theories, reflective practices, and lesson planning, whereas Chinese programmes focused more on performance training and knowledge of instruments and music. This might lead to different understandings among music students of the necessary and trained abilities of IVTs: for example, those UK MA respondents rated elements such as group teaching strategies, creativity/creative teaching, and teaching improvisation more highly than their counterparts in China.

## **4.5 Teaching experiences**

Diversified teaching roles of a Chinese instrument practitioner were uncovered by the respondents ( $N=76$ ). The result showed that 57% ( $n=43$ ) were part-time CITs, and conservatoire/university music students in China may constitute the majority of this population (Section 4.4.1). Additionally, 22 were self-employed CITs teaching privately, followed by 11 working as a school music teacher, 7 peripatetic CITs in school settings, and 5 full-time school CITs.

64 respondents disclosed their years of teaching, ranging from less than a year to 20 years: most of them had been teaching for 3-4 years (24%,  $n=19$ ) or 5-7 years (17%, 13), while 15% (12) had been teaching for less than a year. Only several respondents had been teaching for 8-10 years (8%, 6) or 11-12 years (6%, 5). 90% of 78 respondents taught one-to-one, and 53% taught group lessons; the overlap indicates that some of them had both.

### **4.5.1 Pupils' ages and learning objectives as understood by the respondents**

Respondents ( $N=74$ ) reported that most of their pupils were aged under 15 (77%,  $n=57$ ), and over a quarter of the respondents' pupils were aged 15-17 or adults at or above age 18. The reduction in student numbers after 15 might be related to Chinese students' choice of stopping their instrumental lessons in order to focus on academic learning and exams in high school (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). As understood by most of the respondents, their pupils who learned a Chinese instrument aimed to have a hobby for musical enjoyment (76% of 74) and/or to take the graded performance exams for certification in China (69%).

Over half of the respondents perceived that their pupils who learned a Chinese instrument were influenced by the expectations of their parents. Specifically, R16\_IN4 stated that

Some elderly people learned to play the instrument just for fun to enrich their daily lives. Some children learned an instrument because their parents wanted them to and because other children were learning an instrument, so they followed the trend.

Nearly half of them helped their pupils prepare for the Yikao in China, while more than a quarter of them facilitated their pupils' participation in music performance competitions.

### 4.5.2 Aspects that influenced teaching

Respondents were asked to rate 13 elements provided by the researcher in a slider rating scale question from 0 to 10 to show the importance of those elements in their teaching practices (see Table 4.4), and an 'Other' open-text option was available for respondents to supplement and rate additional factors that might have impacted their teaching. The researcher-selected elements were inspired by the *Instrumental Music Teaching Influences Questionnaire* developed by Bauer and Berg (2001) to investigate what influenced instrumental teachers' teaching in terms of lesson planning, delivery, and evaluation.

**Table 4.4:** Aspects that might influence a Chinese instrument teacher's teaching

No.	Elements
1	My musical ability and instrumental/vocal learning experiences
2	Types of pieces I am teaching (e.g. traditional or contemporary pieces)
3	Background knowledge of the piece I am teaching (e.g. historical, regional, compositional, or literary aspect)
4	My previous/current teacher(s)' teaching (e.g. their teaching styles or methods)
5	Level and learning objective of individual pupils (e.g. beginners, intermediate, or advanced)
6	Age of individual pupils
7	Individual pupils' knowledge of music theory
8	Formal pedagogical training I received in university/conservatoire studies (e.g. relevant course modules and/or lectures)
9	Masterclasses, forums, or concerts I attended
10	Self-learning through varied materials concerning instrumental teaching (e.g. online videos/audios or relevant literature)

- 11 Observing others' teaching and/or communicating with other teachers
  - 12 I received expectations from pupils' parents
  - 13 Employer(s)' expectations I received
- 

As a result, all the listed factors obtained high mean scores ranging from 5 to 8, rated by 56 respondents. Nevertheless, these 13 elements were rated differently across the three categories of the respondents (China pre-service, China in-service, and UK MA respondents): within the categories, the mean scores rated by 22 pre- and 15 in-service teachers in China were from 5 to 8, while 19 UK MA respondents assigned relatively higher mean scores to the elements from 6 to 9. Specifically, both the pre-and in-service teachers in China rated the highest mean score of 8 to the aspect of their personally-received instrumental/vocal training (element 4) and musical competence (element 1) that strongly influenced their teaching. Similarly, these two elements obtained the highest mean score of 9, rated by the UK MA respondents. In contrast, the aspect of formal pedagogical training including course modules and lectures (element 8) that would impact teaching was rated the second-highest mean score of 8 by the UK MA student-teachers, but this aspect only obtained a mean score of 5 from the China in-service teachers and a mean score 6 from the China pre-service teachers.

Four influential factors in teaching were rated a mean score of 7 by all three categories of respondents: the age of individual pupils (element 6), self-learning strategies (element 10), observing and/or communicating with other teachers (element 11), and expectations from pupils' parents (element 12). Interestingly, it appeared that the pupil's knowledge of music theory (element 7) was considered to have less impact on teaching by the respondents, which obtained a mean score of 5 from both the pre-and in-service teachers in China and a mean score of 6 from the UK MA student-teachers. Moreover, in the open-text box, some respondents reported that preparing their students for the Yikao (R53\_IN17) or graded performance exams would also influence their teaching (R16\_IN4; R54\_MA24), especially if this was required by the pupil's parent (R7\_IN2; R34\_MA16).

### **4.5.3 Professional self-identities**

The respondents were asked to indicate their self-recognised professional identities as a Chinese instrument teacher with reasons specified in the text boxes (more than one identity

could be selected), and 50 respondents provided their answers. 36% of them identified themselves as a beginner teacher because of their role as a pre-service rather than in-service teacher (R2\_MA2), a lack of instrumental teaching experience (R4\_MA4; R63\_PRE17; R67\_PRE20) or a lack of specialist instrumental teacher training (R37\_PRE9); two gave the reason that they would only be able to teach beginner-level pieces due to a lack of advanced-level pupils (R19\_PRE3; R47\_MA20), while one referred to their declined competence in instrumental performance after they completed their instrumental training in their BA studies (R41\_MA17).

44% of the respondents thought that they had fully transferred to the teaching profession as an early-career teacher, as some of them had worked as full-time teachers (e.g. R53\_IN17); one indicated that their received UK MA pedagogical training enhanced their employability to become a full-time teacher (R45\_MA19). Although one respondent had run their own studio and taught different-level pupils in China, they considered their relatively young age as a postgraduate and immaturity to not assert themselves as an experienced teacher (R43\_MA18).

Finally, 20% of the respondents claimed to be experienced teachers, and the reasons included many years of teaching (R53\_IN17; R62\_IN22), having a large number of pupils at different levels (R51\_MA23), teaching the Yikao candidates (R62\_IN22; R101\_IN45), flexibility and adaptability in teaching (R3\_MA3), their highest academic degree (R14\_MA9), as well as whether they had received formal teacher training (R3\_MA3).

#### **4.5.4 Discussion: Teaching experiences**

The survey findings illuminate the diverse teaching experiences of pre-and in-service CITs. It appears that the majority of respondents had been teaching for several years, with a significant proportion teaching one-to-one lessons in private settings. This aligns with the broader context of private tuition (or ‘shadow’ education), which has become increasingly prevalent in China (Wu, 2013); this may further reinforce the view that qualifications of private teachers (e.g. IVTs) would be essential (Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2).

While most respondents reported that their pupils were primarily under 15 years old, indicating a focus on younger learners, there appeared to be a notable aim in instrumental learning among these pupils to pursue graded performance examinations. This

emphasis on certification is consistent with the competitive educational environment in China as identified by the literature, where exam certificates/results seem to be seen as an important metric of students' learning (Lee & Leung, 2020) and teachers' teaching capabilities (Zhang & Bray, 2021).

In evaluating factors influencing their teaching practices, respondents rated their personal musical ability and instrumental learning experiences as having the most significant impact, while formal pedagogical training received comparatively lower ratings, particularly from in-service teachers in China. This aligns with the research finding that many IVTs teach relying on their performance skills and experiences as learners instead of structured teacher training (e.g. Norton et al., 2019; Shaw, 2022). Moreover, respondents expressed the impact of external pressures, such as expectations from parents and the necessity to prepare students for performance examinations such as the Yikao. These findings may reflect the context of Chinese instrument tuition, where performance metrics and exam results appear to dominate pedagogical priorities (Haddon, 2024). These tensions may also explain why these CITs ranked their personal musical ability highly as teachers, as they may view technical skill and performance achievements as the most immediate markers of legitimacy in a competitive market.

The variety of professional identities reported – beginner teachers, early-career teachers, and experienced teachers – may suggest an evolving landscape of CITs. Those who identify as beginners typically cite limited teaching experience or a perceived lack of formal teacher training, while early-career teachers highlight job stability or newly acquired pedagogical insights, often influenced by their further studies such as the UK MA. Interestingly, some respondents considered themselves experienced not only due to years of teaching but also because they taught higher-level pupils or the Yikao candidates, indicating that career stage might not be solely a function of accumulated years of experience but also of the teaching responsibilities one might assume.

These survey results appear to raise several questions that may warrant further investigation through qualitative inquiry. One key area for exploration could be how CITs reconcile their personal teaching approaches with the institutional and parental expectations they might face. While formal pedagogical training was rated more highly by UK MA respondents due to the nature of the course curriculum, it remains unclear how this training translates into their teaching practices. Interviews with CITs could provide deeper



insights into how CITs conceptualise and develop their pedagogical understanding, particularly in relation to cultural and institutional contexts within instrumental music education (see the following chapters on the interview findings).

## **4.6 Summary of the chapter**

The chapter explores the educational experiences of individuals learning Chinese instruments, highlighting their diverse backgrounds as Chinese instrument learners and/or teachers (Section 4.3). A significant number of respondents were young adults, primarily engaged with instruments such as guzheng, erhu and pipa in this current study. Most respondents reported having learned their instruments for 10 to 20 years, with a substantial portion possessing degrees in Music Performance, Musicology, or Music Education (Section 4.3.1). This educational background may reflect the structured pathways within Chinese HE that would prepare students for professional careers in music, addressing RQ2 by identifying the aspects influencing their pathways to the teaching profession.

The respondents demonstrated awareness and learning experiences of regional stylistic features and semi-improvisation techniques, which may suggest a connection to the inheritance of Chinese instrumental music culture. However, a reliance on teacher demonstrations (98% for stylistic knowledge and 89% for semi-improvisation) in learning and the use of online resources as a self-taught strategy was also uncovered (Section 4.3.2). This reliance may indicate a challenge faced by CITs concerning their employment of teaching approaches in delivering Chinese traditional musical and technical features as inherent in the Chinese instrument learning process, which responds to RQ3.

This chapter reveals some insights into teacher training and qualifications in the Chinese context based on the respondents' experiences (Section 4.4). While many respondents in this research reported that they taught Chinese instruments privately during their degree studies in China, a notable percentage lacked I/V pedagogical training, which may point to a gap in preparation for specialist teaching roles (Section 4.4.1). Moreover, the findings suggest that pedagogical training in China appeared to focus more on classroom music teaching in school settings rather than individualised instrumental instruction (Sections 4.4.2/3). The absence of a standardised teacher certification process for private

IVTs might exacerbate this issue, impacting their professional development and pedagogical beliefs as CITs (addressing RQ4).

Furthermore, findings indicate differences in pedagogical training between the Chinese and the UK HE contexts, with emphasis on pedagogical theories and reflective practices in the UK context, while Chinese programme curricula appeared to focus more on performance training (Section 4.4.4). This seems to result in the varied understandings of the musical and/or pedagogical skills necessary for instrumental teaching as rated by the different groups of respondents across the different educational and cultural contexts. Respondents also identified personal musical ability and learning experiences as significant influences on their teaching, which may reflect a reliance on personal experiences over structured training (Section 4.4.5), which appears to further inform the formation of music students' pedagogical beliefs and/or practices influenced by their received curriculum (answering RQ4). The next chapter exhibits findings of the case of China-domiciled pre-service CITs concerning their received training and professional development.

# **Chapter 5: China-domiciled Pre-service CITs’ Perspectives on Their Received Training and Professional Development**

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## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter exhibits findings that emerged from a single case analysis concerning seven pre-service CITs taking postgraduate music programmes at conservatories and universities in China, who simultaneously taught a Chinese instrument or music theory as a part-time CIT in a private or school context; participants also shared their experiences as Chinese instrument learners prior to their postgraduate studies. The data collection process and the interviewee participants’ demographics are detailed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Findings are presented through two major themes which emerged from the data analysis: the learning of a Chinese instrument in private settings in China (Section 5.4 with multiple sub-sections and discussion in Section 5.4.3) and the perceptions of Chinese higher music education coupled with teaching experiences (Section 5.5 with multiple sub-sections and discussion in Section 5.5.6) The research questions that this chapter responds to are:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers’ (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers’ (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

## **5.2 Data collection**

From March through May 2022, online semi-structured interviews in Mandarin were conducted with seven pre-service CITs using VooV Meeting software. In March 2022

invitations to participate in this research, including the research information sheet and a consent form written in both Mandarin and English, were sent by the researcher to seven pre-service CITs who were postgraduate music students at a conservatoire or university in China via WeChat; participants were recruited through both the purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Section 3.5.4).

All seven pre-service CITs agreed to participate, and after returning their completed consent forms, a pilot interview was conducted in April 2022 with one of the participants. This provided valuable feedback which was used to refine the interview questions. The interviews, lasting between 39 and 86 minutes, were conducted thereafter. Following each interview, the researcher carefully transcribed the recordings in Mandarin, ensuring accuracy by revisiting the recordings as many times as needed. Once the Mandarin transcripts were validated by the participants, the researcher translated them into English. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a unique code (PT1/2/3... etc.), which is used to reference their quotations throughout this thesis.

The abbreviations and Chinese terms that appear with high frequency in this chapter are as follows:

- Bachelor of Arts: BA
- China National College Entrance Examination for Arts: Yikao (艺考)<sup>48</sup>
- Higher Education: HE
- Master of Arts: MA

### **5.3 Interviewees' demographic data**

The seven pre-service CITs who took part all taught privately while they were studying in the Chinese HE. They were guzheng teachers (n=5), pipa teacher (1) and erhu teacher (1). This helped with obtaining perspectives from those teaching different Chinese instruments to get as broad a picture as possible concerning their pedagogical experiences and understandings, although they were not representative of wider views from the perspective of their instruments. They had Chinese instrument or music theory teaching experiences ranging from six months to six years; see Table 5.1 below.

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<sup>48</sup> Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

**Table 5.1:** China-domiciled pre-service CIT participants' code number, age, enrolled music programmes, and teaching experiences.

<b>Pre-service teacher participants</b>	<b>Learning and teaching instrument</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Enrolled music programmes</b>	<b>Teaching experiences</b>	<b>Their pupils</b>	<b>Career aspirations</b>
<b>PT1</b>	Guzheng	24	BA in Musicology and MA in Ethnomusicology at a conservatoire	Private guzheng teaching	Mostly children	Pursuing a PhD degree to be able to work in Chinese HE as a lecturer
<b>PT2</b>	Guzheng	24	BA in Music Performance at a university and MA in Music Performance at a conservatoire	Private guzheng teaching	Mostly school-age pupils	Performer and independent guzheng teacher
<b>PT3</b>	Guzheng	26	BA and MA in Music Performance at a conservatoire	Private guzheng teaching	Some children and several Yikao candidates	School music teacher and private guzheng teacher
<b>PT4</b>	Guzheng	24	BA and MA in Music Performance at a conservatoire	Private guzheng teaching	Mostly school-age pupils	Independent guzheng teacher
<b>PT5</b>	Guzheng	26	BA in Musicology at a university and MA in Musicology at a conservatoire	Private guzheng teaching	Mostly school-age pupils; several adult pupils	Music studio owner and private guzheng teacher
<b>PT6</b>	Pipa	26	BA in Music Performance and MA in Musicology at a university	Private pipa teaching; pipa ensemble teaching at a state school	Mostly adolescents and several adult pupils	Independent pipa teacher
<b>PT7</b>	Erhu	26	BA in Musicology and MA in Music Education at a university	Music theory teaching at a private music institution	Mostly Yikao candidates	Independent erhu and music theory teacher

## 5.4 Experiences of Chinese instrument learning in private settings

### 5.4.1 Perceptions of the learning prior to high school

Most pre-service CITs mentioned that they began their Chinese instrument learning since primary school in private one-to-one settings, such as at a music studio or teacher's home; most of their pre-high school teachers were employed at music studios or self-employed. Lessons were teacher-led and focused primarily on learning techniques: 'My [guzheng] teacher emphasised the importance of good hand posture in playing, which should be cultivated at a beginner stage [to develop] a good habit' (PT3); similar attention in lessons focused on fingerings 'My [guzheng] teacher usually started the lessons by asking me to practise the fingerings through playing scales, checking my after-lesson practice' (PT1). These pre-service CITs' perceptions of learning Chinese instruments appeared to be profoundly influenced by the idea delivered by their previous teachers that hand posture and fingerings were the most important foundations for learning music pieces and should ideally be trained 'as early as possible' (PT1).

Imitating their teacher's demonstrations was the way of learning technical skills and a piece of music in the private Chinese instrument lessons; through this process, many pre-service CITs revealed that their previous teachers also used verbal instructions such as 'You're using your shoulders too much' (PT4) or 'Your wrist can be more relaxed and flexible when drawing the bow' (PT7) to instruct the student's playing, accompanied by physical contact to adjust the student's hands and shoulders: 'I think it's quite normal for [Chinese instrument] teachers to correct students' problems through this way [physical contact] so that the student can understand how to adjust their posture' (PT1). Whilst this strategy as a complement to verbal instructions might help with the efficiency of teaching and learning, its appropriateness as a teaching approach may remain further examination in terms of safeguarding issues.<sup>49</sup>

These pre-service CITs were asked to provide one or some examples of teaching approaches used by their previous teachers that would be considered creative or inspiring to them as learners. Interestingly, most of them used the terms 'basic' or 'nothing particular' to describe their teachers' approaches instead of 'creative': 'My [guzheng]

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<sup>49</sup> This aspect was identified by some MA student-teacher CITs as a cultural difference compared to what they had engaged in within the UK educational context (Chapter 8, Section 8.5.3).

teacher taught in a basic way as many other teachers would teach, that was, listening to my playing, finding problems and solving them – a more fixed model of teaching’ (PT3); they added that their teacher mainly used demonstrations combined with verbal explanations (PT3). Moreover, PT1 stated that,

Extracurricular [instrumental] classes in schools would be more creative in order to offer students some interesting musical experiences, while one-to-one [instrumental] teaching focused more on strengthening the student’s performing skills, which is more practical. If the student wanted to improve their skills, they would take one-to-one lessons.

This may show that the mechanism of the model of one-to-one instrumental teaching in the Chinese context, as understood by these PTs, concentrated more on practical ‘problem solving’ concerning technical skills, which does not seem to indicate a creative approach to teaching.

#### **5.4.2 Perceptions of the learning as Yikao candidates**

These pre-service CITs chose to become Yikao candidates while in high school in order to enter higher music education in China. They revealed that their parents and/or previous teachers helped them with setting up the Yikao-targeted training, including one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons, sight-singing and ear training lessons, music theory lessons, and/or vocal lessons; these were the Yikao assessed components (the vocal assessment was optional). It was made clear by the participants that those Yikao-targeted lessons were taught separately by different teachers: for example, some mentioned that their ear training and/or music theory teachers were self-employed conservatoire postgraduates.

For their Yikao-targeted Chinese instrument learning, some of the participants mentioned that they changed teachers from music studio- or self-employed CITs to conservatoire or university employed CITs in private settings; some continued to take lessons with their self-employed CITs while also simultaneously having private lessons with a conservatoire CIT to have ‘the double “insurance” [for conservatoire admission]’ (PT5). PT1 explained that ‘The conservatoire teacher was more professional. Many of them were [the Yikao] examiners and familiar with the admission criteria, so I had to take lessons with them’; this pre-Yikao learning also seemed relevant to the social networking mechanism in

the Chinese context (see Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2 from the in-service CITs' perspectives). Furthermore, PT3 mentioned, 'The [Yikao-targeted] learning was more intense than my previous learning as an amateur [...] the conservatoire teacher had higher demands for the student's technical skills and musical capabilities'.

As recalled by these pre-service CITs, the enhancement of performing techniques remained the main theme of the Chinese instrument lessons which they had privately with the conservatoire/university CITs for the Yikao, in addition to the development of musical understanding and expression. However, PT7 discovered that the university erhu teacher they followed for the Yikao, taught relying completely on verbal instructions and never demonstrated:

This [teaching without any demonstrations] made me feel uneasy. The [erhu] teacher described a lot how the piece of music should be played, with what kind of emotion, just verbally. Every time I could only get abstract feelings [of the interpretation of the music] without knowing how to achieve the interpretation expected by the teacher.

Although the conservatoire guzheng teacher that PT5 encountered did demonstrate, they felt demotivated by the teaching style of that teacher:

No matter how long that piece of music was, the teacher asked me to play it in full within two weeks of practice time. I was feeling desperate, you know. It's like they were treating me like I was a [pre-professional music] student at their Music Fuzhong [the conservatoire-affiliated high school],<sup>50</sup> but I was not. [...] If I failed to improve my playing based on their demonstration of the interpretation, they would assume that my basic technical skills were not solid enough and ask me to practise more after the lesson. [...This experience] discouraged me from becoming a conservatoire [undergraduate] student when I was a Yikao candidate because of this overwhelming atmosphere.

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.2 about the Music Fuzhong; more findings related to this are in Chapter 6, Section 6.6.



### **5.4.3 Discussion: Experiences of the Chinese instrument learning**

These findings show the early and Yikao-targeted Chinese instrument learning experiences of the pre-service CITs, in which their learning typically began in private one-to-one settings and was largely dominated by technical instructions. Their teachers appeared to concentrate extensively on developing students' technical skills from an early age, although such a focus on techniques may come at the expense of more creative aspects of learning that could have been explored together by the teacher and student. This contrasts with research suggesting that creative and expressive engagement in musical activities plays a significant role in the musical development of early learners (e.g. Haroutounian, 2000; Mesissner, 2021). Additionally, the teachers who delivered the private lessons to the participants seemed to have legitimised physical contact as the way of correcting students' playing within the Chinese context. This contrasts with other cultural contexts (e.g. McGovern & McGovern, 2021) where physical contact in teaching is considered inappropriate.

The pre-service CITs' transition to the Yikao preparation may highlight the shift from amateur to more professional music training in the Chinese context, including sight-singing, ear training, and music theory; this shift also involved working with different teachers for the purpose of receiving guidance on the Yikao from CITs working in the Chinese higher music education. The experiences of participants, such as the necessity of adapting to different teaching styles (PT3; PT7) and the challenges faced with the fast pace of learning with the conservatoire teacher (PT5), may illustrate the high pressure associated with the Yikao preparation; however, a sense of frustration mentioned by PT5 and PT7 seems to have arisen from the teaching of the CITs in the Chinese HE for the Yikao candidates, where the students' pedagogical needs at the levels of musical proficiency to which they corresponded might be overlooked.

The private Chinese instrument lessons experienced by the pre-service CITs across their different phases of learning appear to resonate with a conventional music education mode underscored by Burnard (2012) that emphasises technical drills rather than fostering a more holistic and creative approach to music learning. The focus of the lessons on technical enhancement and problem-solving also seems to have constrained the pre-service CITs' perceptions concerning other pedagogical possibilities within the one-to-one tuition contexts. Alongside technical skills, Hallam (1998) proposed a wide range of musical abilities

encompassing for example, cognitive, aural, rhythmic, performing, and learning skills; importantly, these skills can be developed in more diversified, playful, and participatory musical activities (Hallam, 2010) instead of the 'fixed model of teaching' (PT3). Additionally, there is growing recognition that individual music learners may exhibit varying levels of proficiency across these skill areas, with individual strengths and weaknesses shaping their unique musical profile (Hallam, 2010). Nevertheless, it appears that the music studio/self-employed/HE CITs encountered by these pre-service participants paid little to no attention to the wider dimensions of musical development and individuality of students.

## **5.5 Perceptions of the higher music education programme curricula**

### **5.5.1 The core modules: Instrumental learning**

Many pre-service CITs recalled the modules they had taken as an undergraduate music student in the Chinese HE, although they completed different BA programmes. The core modules were typically related to one-to-one instrumental lessons and the learning of music literacy, covering music theory, sight-singing and ear training, music analysis, and beginner-level music composition; some added that Chinese and Western history of music, Chinese traditional and/or World music, and instrumental ensemble were also core modules for music students. The diversity of these modules focusing on musical skills and theories was considered beneficial by some pre-service CITs for their professional development in music: 'My understanding was that this kind of curriculum was designed to help us experience different specialisations within the field of music so that we could choose the path we were interested in' (PT2). However, PT7 underscored that,

These [modules] covered too wide a range of aspects to allow us for in-depth learning [...] In order to earn the required credits, we had to fill our days with classes and then we had to find time to practise [the instrument] and do what we really wanted to do.

Practising their instruments *hard* aside from attending the varied classes was a consistent theme that emerged from the interviews, due to the weekly compulsory one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons with their conservatoire/university CITs during term-time. Some expressed that having their one-to-one lessons was 'the most stressful part of the week' (PT4) because 'my teacher was very strict' (PT5) and 'I was worried that I wouldn't be

able to meet the teacher's requirements, which would make my teacher think that I didn't practise hard enough' (PT7). As a result, PT7 claimed that 'Practising [erhu] took up most of my time' even though they did not major in music performance.

The role of peer pressure in leading to this pre-lesson anxiety was also acknowledged by some pre-service CITs, as their conservatoire/university CITs 'often made comparisons between the performances of our [peer] students' (PT1) or asked them to learn from their peer students who 'played the piece well' (PT7). Therefore, PT4 perceived that there was intense competition among peer students at the conservatoire context in China, and that 'everyone wanted to be recognised by the teacher, so people practised hard, especially before the lessons' (PT4). These perceptions might reinforce the impact of the teacher particularly within a one-to-one teaching context, although the teachers' utilisation of peer comparison or competition to stimulate students' instrumental learning seemed to have affected mental wellbeing among these pre-service CITs.

Conversely, PT2 mentioned that their conservatoire/university CIT was 'a role model' for them, who significantly influenced their choice of professional path:

I met this guzheng teacher who worked at a university when I was a high school student preparing for the Yikao [...]. This teacher's superb performing skills and empathy for students motivated me a lot. [...] They practised every day as much as we students did, which I think was rare among instrumental teachers [in the Chinese HE]. [...] They gave me lessons in a relaxed atmosphere and always respected my opinions and they wouldn't impose the teacher's idea on the student. [...] After my undergraduate study with them [at the university], they had been offered a position at a conservatoire, which is where I'm studying now as a postgraduate student in guzheng performance with this teacher continuously. If I hadn't met this teacher I wouldn't have continued my music performance studies.

These contrasting experiences may show complex dynamics within the teacher-student relationships, which appear to impact students' motivations and choices in both their educational and professional paths.

### **5.5.2 The core modules: Piano accompaniment skills**

Interestingly, the learning of piano and/or piano improvisational accompaniment as part of the undergraduate curricula was mentioned by some pre-service CITs: PT7 articulated that this piano learning was compulsory for musicology students at their university, although 'It's not friendly to us students who had only learned a Chinese instrument' (PT7). PT7 detailed that they had group piano lessons of 'about 10 people for a semester' and then the piano improvisational accompaniment<sup>51</sup> classes of 'more than 30 people for another semester'; however, 'students with and without a previous background in piano learning were mixed together to learn [the piano improvisational accompaniment] in the classes, which led to inconsistencies in our learning needs and progress' (PT7). Moreover, their teacher's delivery of the piano accompaniment classes was considered ineffective by PT7:

The teacher just asked us to apply the chord progressions they provided corresponding to the different keys and the popularly used rhythmic patterns in the accompaniment, but it's still difficult for us Chinese instrument students to learn. [...] It's like everyone [in Chinese HE] had defaulted to the assumption that every [conservatoire/university] music student could play the piano, [so] the teacher taught at a fast pace.

As understood by PT5, who had a similarly challenging experience of learning the piano accompaniment skills, the focus of this kind of curriculum seemed to be associated with the development of the students' employability: 'The school employment market [in China] needed the music teacher's piano accompaniment skills'; likewise, PT3 stated, 'It's difficult to get a stable job if you only specialised in playing a Chinese instrument'.

### **5.5.3 Experiences of pedagogical learning within the BA music programmes**

There appeared to be differences between the pedagogy-related learning experiences of these pre-service CITs, depending on their studied programmes: those PTs who completed their BA in Musicology revealed that music pedagogy was a compulsory module, while PT3 and PT4 mentioned that the pedagogy-related module was optional for music performance students:

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<sup>51</sup> This refers to the skills of improvised piano accompaniment for teaching songs from the school music textbooks and accompanying choirs.

We had already had a full schedule of training and rehearsals in performance, and not taking this module wouldn't make a difference in getting the degree, so hardly any of us [majoring in music performance] took it unless someone was particularly interested in pedagogy. [...] I didn't have a clear idea of what I should or wanted to learn [as an undergraduate performance student], I just followed the scheduled timetable every semester. [I thought that] practising and performing were the most important things at that time, and learning theoretical knowledge wasn't that important, but then I realised this wasn't the case when I started a school placement teaching music. [...] I realised I should have studied pedagogy. (PT3)

On the other hand, the music pedagogy-related modules that some PTs had engaged with focused on learning how to teach in music classroom in school settings and 'how to write a teaching plan [for the music classrooms]' (PT7). PT7 recalled that they learned the Kodály method in the module:

The teacher introduced the basic theory of the Kodály method, such as the use of the hand signs to show the pitches, and the use of "ti ta" to represent the rhythm. The teacher also guided us through a mock-up of a music classroom to design how to teach students pitch and rhythm. [...] I think this would be useful for those who wished to teach in school.

This was the part that PT7 found impressive and interesting in the module; however, a significant portion of the module seemed to be spent designing and critiquing teaching plans:

[The teacher believed that] writing teaching plans was an important skill for us in the future [as teachers], and it's also one of the test components in the NTCE,<sup>52</sup> so we'd better be prepared if we decided to take the exam. (PT7)

Additionally, PT7 mentioned that all music students at their university were encouraged to take the NTCE for the music teacher certification to support their future employment possibilities.

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<sup>52</sup> The National Teacher Certificate Examination in China, see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2.

Contrastingly, PT5 asserted that their pedagogical learning experience was less helpful, as they considered that their teacher who taught this module was ‘not professional because the teacher was not specialised in music pedagogy but in guqin performance’. Another reason PT5 believed that was the case concerned the way in which the pedagogy-related module was delivered:

The teacher had never taught any theory related to music education. They only asked us to take turns preparing a 15-minute music class based on the content of school music textbooks, then they asked us to take turns demonstrating [the pre-designed 15-min music class], followed by comments from our classmates. But the problem was that we had no theoretical foundation or idea of how to reasonably design or teach [a music class], and the teacher hadn’t provided any examples or instructions. [...] It’s like the teacher had never spent time preparing for teaching this module.

#### **5.5.4 Working as a part-time CIT at a music studio and/or school**

All of these pre-service CITs had teaching experiences while they were Chinese HE students: many gave private Chinese instrument lessons at music studios with school-age pupils; PT6 had pipa ensemble teaching experience at a school, and PT7 taught music theory group lessons at a private music institution with the Yikao candidates. These pre-service working experiences were consistent with the findings of the survey study in Chapter 4, Section 4.6.5. Some PTs offered their motivations for working as part-time teachers: ‘I wanted to enrich my experience. [...] Many of my coursemates were also teaching at music studios to earn pocket money. I saw nothing wrong with that, so I did it too’ (PT1); this similar motivation was also mentioned by PT3, while PT2 and PT5 found it fulfilling to teach children the guzheng. These teaching experiences, in turn, seemed to influence many pre-service CITs’ expectations of their future careers: some mentioned their enjoyment working as private CITs whose ‘working hours were more flexible’ (PT5), PT2 expressed that they wished to be a guzheng performer and independent guzheng teacher, while PT3’s school placement experience made them aspire to become a school music teacher.

Whilst most of their private pupils were primary school students, it appeared evident across multiple interviews that these pre-service CITs emphasised their pupils’ music

performance exam/competition results. For example, PT1 asserted that '[...] the techniques of my pupils were solidly developed by following my instructions. They can do well in exams and competitions'; they 'created weekly practising plans' for their pupils including 'both the fingering techniques and the sight-singing tasks' (PT1). Likewise, PT5 mentioned their pupils' award-winning participation in the annual Chinese instrumental performance competitions: 'Those awards were the best incentive for the pupils, which made both the parents and pupils happy'. PT5 articulated that this outcome was achieved by an online 'after-lesson practising WeChat group' developed by themselves to stimulate their pupils' home practice, where the pupils' parents were the group members and responsible for reporting their child's home practising situations:

I didn't ask the parents to report every day in the [WeChat] group, but some committed parents would send a short video of their child practising every day. This motivated other parents and pupils, and then everyone was more active in sending me videos, and I would give some feedback and encouragement. The pupils could also see their strengths and weaknesses compared to others [through the videos of their practices shared in the WeChat group] so that they could improve.

Contrastingly, PT7 claimed that they were less confident in teaching children:

I don't think I'm prepared to teach children. Children think differently than adults, and communicating with children requires skills to keep them interested in what the teacher says. [...] I think there's a huge responsibility to teach children, and maybe one of your words could be remembered by them for a long time.

Little opportunity within their degree studies to learn communication and interpersonal skills was also mentioned by PT7, which seemed to have affected whom they felt able to teach and the form in which they could teach:

The leader [at the music institution where I worked] had asked me to teach music theory to two groups of the Yikao candidates and erhu lessons to several primary school pupils one-to-one [...] Although I specialised in erhu playing, I chose to teach music theory in groups rather than the one-to-one lessons because it's

easier to communicate with the Yikao candidates – they knew what they had to learn and they didn't need much interaction in the classroom.

PT7 further expressed that 'a comprehensive pedagogical learning covering different teaching and learning situations' would be necessary for teachers, 'especially for novice teachers like me, the learning will help to build my confidence as an instrumental teacher'.

### **5.5.5 Academic learning: Challenges and support**

Challenges related to academic learning were disclosed by these pre-service CITs when they shared their experiences and perceptions as Chinese HE music students. Some mentioned the challenges of learning English, as there was a minimum graduation requirement for English exam scores in their undergraduate degree studies at the conservatoire/universities in China (n=4); PT3 illustrated that students could take the English exam multiple times until they received a score higher than the minimum requirement. Interestingly, within the university context PT7 disclosed the distinct requirements for the English exam scores set for music and non-music students, which had led to different academic syllabi for music and non-music students at the university:

The required English exam scores for music students were lower than those non-music students because we were admitted with lower academic scores [compared to those non-music students].<sup>53</sup> So, we were assigned to use the basic level English textbooks [on the BA programme] and not the advanced level English textbooks used by the non-music students. (PT7)

However, PT7 perceived that the reduced academic requirements for music students had resulted in some biased views of music students within the university context, where 'music students were regarded as a privileged group yet have poor [academic] grades by teachers and students from other [non-music] departments' (PT7).

Another challenge appeared to reside in academic writing. As mentioned by PT5, they found it challenging to write a literature review:

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<sup>53</sup> This distinct admission requirements between music and non-music students in the Chinese HE had been uncovered by the in-service CITs in Chapter 6, Sections 6.4.2 and 6.6.1.



I didn't know anything about it [the literature review] until I started my postgraduate studies. [...] My [postgraduate] supervisor asked me to write it by looking at other literature review papers, but now I'm having trouble even finding a suitable topic to write on. The topics I proposed were rejected by my supervisor as not novel enough or too broad.

Similarly, a lack of training in academic writing skills in their undergraduate degree studies was highlighted by PT7:

I had very little experience of writing academic texts, except for writing my undergraduate dissertation, but we [undergraduate students] didn't have an academic supervisor who could teach us how to find literature effectively and how to cite literature. We only had a supervisor who specialised in instrumental performance [on the BA programme], and I received no guidance on my [undergraduate] dissertation from this supervisor [who only taught erhu lessons]. [...] Honestly, I'm currently struggling a bit with my postgraduate studies due to not having proficient academic writing skills.

Contrastingly, it is worth noting that interdisciplinary academic support was received by PT7, in which their postgraduate studies were co-supervised by two teachers respectively from the Departments of Music and Education at the university:

The teacher at the Education Department was responsible for guiding my academic writing and supervising aspects relating to research methods and educational theories, while the other teacher [at the Music Department] focused on music education, those popular methods of teaching music, [such as] the Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze methods.<sup>54</sup>

As a result, PT7 considered that their academic writing skills had improved with the help of the professionalism manifested by the teacher at the Education Department, although they did not perceive their academic skills as having reached a level of proficiency compared to the students they had encountered at the Education Department: 'They [non-music students] were trained in academic skills starting from their undergraduate studies. Their academic writing was more rigorous and standardised' (PT7).

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<sup>54</sup> The work of Tabuena (2021) illustrates these methods in detail.

## **5.5.6 Discussion: The Chinese higher music education programmes**

### ***5.5.6.1 Influences of the pedagogical culture of the one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons***

The one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons in the Chinese HE, although central to developing technical proficiency, often appeared to become a source of stress. Many pre-service CITs described these lessons as demanding and anxiety-inducing due to the expectations and strictness of their teachers, as well as the participants' perceptions of the need for recognition by their teachers (e.g. PT4; PT7); this may reinforce the hierarchical teacher-student relationship in the Chinese context as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.2. In the current finding, this pedagogical culture might result from the teachers' practice of comparing students' performances and using peer comparisons as motivational tools to drive improvement and extensive practising, leading to heightened stress and a sense of inadequacy among students (e.g. PT5; PT7). This is consistent with the intense peer competition among music students in the Chinese conservatoire context and their 'repetitive daily routine' for many hours of practising as revealed in Borel's (2019) study (p. 31). Nevertheless, Hallam (2010) and Moore et al. (2003) recognise that teacher personality, peer influences and interactions are more influential in achieving musical performance excellence than the quantity of practising time.

Conversely, the influence of a supportive and empathetic teacher could be profoundly positive as perceived by PT2 in their degree studies: their guzheng teacher adopted a more respectful and empowering teaching approach that fostered the student's autonomy and impacted the student's professional choice. This indicates that the influence of instrumental teachers extends beyond mere instructions (Manturzewska, 1990; Nielsen, 2006) and may underscore the importance of fostering a positive teacher-student relationship. This finding also highlights the potential for CITs to serve as mentors prioritising students' psychological needs; as illustrated by Bird and Hudson (2015), teachers as mentors build trust with their students – they offer encouragement and provide constructive feedback that responds to individual student's needs. Furthermore, the pedagogical culture revealed in the findings might present challenges within one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons in the Chinese HE, concerning maintaining the teachers'

expected standards, influence and authority in their teaching while addressing the emotional and psychological impacts on the students.

#### ***5.5.6.2 Influences of the curricula and teaching experiences***

It appears evident that the undergraduate music curricula experienced by these participants in the Chinese higher music education context included a broad array of modules. While the curricula might aim to equip students with a broad range of music skills and allow students to explore their interests, it could also impede in-depth learning (PT7) and contribute to a stressful learning experience as noted by many participants: for example, struggling to balance their schedule of classes/compulsory modules with their instrumental practising.

The integration of piano accompaniment into the curricula for pre-service CITs may reveal critical issues related to the relevance and effectiveness of music education programmes. This curricular approach seems to prioritise music students' employability in a job market particularly for school music teachers in China, where piano accompaniment would often be a requirement (PT5); however, if this was not in line with students' specific musical backgrounds and career aspirations (e.g. working as private CITs, expressed by PT2 and PT5), it could undermine the perceived relevance of the training for students whose primary focus was on the practices of Chinese instruments. Notably, PT7's dissatisfaction with the piano group lessons — citing the inefficacy of the fast-paced, 'one-size-fits-all' approach — might underscore a significant pedagogical challenge in the current Chinese higher music education, leading to student frustration and a lack of engagement.

Differences in pedagogical-related learning may emphasise inconsistencies in how pre-service CITs were prepared for teaching skills, although all of them had already started their teaching work as CITs in private settings during their degrees' studies. Musicology students who had a compulsory pedagogical module were taught music pedagogy such as the Kodály method (PT7). In contrast, the lack of preparation in pedagogical skills, as highlighted by PT3, may suggest that students majoring in music performance might miss out on essential teaching competencies if pedagogy was not given sufficient importance in their training. This issue has been recognised by studies on the performance-prioritised curriculum in many music education contexts (Haning, 2020; Lee & Leung, 2022; Polifonia, 2010; Shaw, 2022), which impacts the development of music students' professional identity (Miller & Baker, 2007) and their perceptions of the breadth of musicians' career scope

(López-Iñiguez & Bennett, 2020, 2021). Moreover, the pedagogical module taught by a guqin teacher with limited pedagogical expertise as perceived by PT5, may raise concerns relating to the quality of the available pedagogical training within the Chinese higher music education and to the institutional mechanisms for allocating teachers to modules.

The teaching experiences of pre-service CITs, including part-time teaching roles at private music studios and the school placement, illustrate the practical application of their training; this also aligns with the influence of ‘hands-on experience’ of teaching on the formation of music students’ professional identity as teachers (Miller & Baker, 2007, p. 16). While many found these experiences enriching and beneficial for their career aspirations, there were notable concerns. For instance, PT7’s reluctance to teach children and the need to develop communication and interpersonal skills may reflect a gap in their pedagogical preparation, which affected their confidence in managing diverse teaching environments that involve pupils of varying ages. However, as with a high personalisation of a music student’s professional profile that demands specialism diversification for gaining knowledge and skills, the higher music education curriculum design has been challenged by how musicianship-focused education can be balanced against the pedagogical and practical components (Polifonia, 2010).

#### ***5.5.6.3 Academic challenges and support***

The academic challenges faced by these pre-service CITs in Chinese HE revealed gaps in support and training, particularly in English proficiency and academic writing. One of the primary challenges encountered by the participants was meeting the required English exam scores necessary for graduation. As PT7 noted, music students had lower academic entry requirements compared to non-music students, which appeared to be translated into different academic expectations in their educational environment. This disparity may highlight a broader issue in the Chinese HE, where music students seemed to be perceived as less academically competent (PT7); the biased views of music students in China had also been disclosed by in-service CITs in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2 due to the distinct admission requirements. Worryingly, such perceptions might affect music students’ self-esteem and academic confidence (e.g. PT7) and resultantly of their graduates.

Academic writing also emerged as a challenge, particularly regarding tasks such as literature review writing. The lack of training in academic skills during their undergraduate

studies appeared to leave these pre-service CITs unprepared for the demands of postgraduate education (e.g. PT5; PT7). This might go some way echoing the finding in the study of Lee and Leung (2022) which acknowledges that ‘instrumental teachers’ ability and willingness to learn from research is far behind that of other professionals’ (p. 52). Moreover, the absence of adequate supervision regarding the academic aspect during undergraduate studies, as PT7 noted, further exacerbates this issue, which might create a gap in essential academic skills that can be critical for music students’ further study success.

Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary support mentioned by PT7 during their postgraduate studies, involving co-supervision from both the Music and Education Departments, might suggest a potential model for improving academic skills. This dual supervision appeared to allow for more targeted guidance of the student’s learning, illustrating the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in higher music education. As Gaunt and Westerlund (2013) highlight, ‘in preparing people for present and future life, higher music education needs to extend beyond a focus on technical or historically rooted knowledge for a particular discipline’ (p. 2). PT7 perceived that their academic skills still lagged behind those of non-music students who received more rigorous training in academic skills from the outset; consequently, the need for a more integrated approach to academic support in music education degree programmes, perhaps as early as possible, would be helpful.

## **5.6 Summary of the chapter**

The findings unfold the multifaceted experiences and challenges of China-domiciled pre-service CITs in their music education journey in the Chinese educational context. Beginning in private one-to-one lessons, they were primarily taught through teacher-centred instructions and an emphasis on techniques (Section 5.4.1), which, while essential, often overshadowed opportunities for wider musical and pedagogical co-explorations between the teacher and student (Section 5.4.3). This focus on technical proficiency intensified during their Yikao-targeted preparation, and their transition to more professional training appeared to come with the challenge of adapting to the fast pace and high expectations of conservatoire/university CITs (Section 5.4.2). These reveal the characteristics of the Chinese instrument tuition received by the China-domiciled CITs, addressing RQ1.

The pedagogical culture surrounding one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons within higher music education in China appears to have a profound influence on students' learning experiences and professional development. The influence of the music education received by the participants also manifested through the structure of the curricula, the dynamics of the teacher-student interactions, and the inherent pressures within the Chinese educational environments (Sections 5.5.1/2 and 5.5.6.1). However, the impact of the empowering teacher encountered by PT2 may suggest that the nature of teacher-student interactions/relationships could play a crucial positive role in shaping students' educational and professional trajectories, which responses to RQ2 concerning factors influencing educational/professional paths.

The curricular structures in Chinese high music education also presented challenges, where inconsistencies in pedagogical training for music students and the pedagogical expertise of the teacher who taught the pedagogical module, raised concerns about the effectiveness of preparing pre-service CITs for teaching roles, especially considering that they had already worked as private teachers (Sections 5.5.3/4), although this could not be representative for all Chinese instrument students on similar programmes considering the small sample size in this study. Importantly, the integration of piano accompaniment as a compulsory component and the way of delivering this may need to be re-evaluated to better align with the specific needs of students specialising in Chinese instruments (Section 5.5.6.2). Furthermore, perceptions of academic inadequacy among music students, particularly concerning English proficiency and academic writing in the current findings, highlighted gaps in training within the music education programmes in China, which indicates a need to consider more effective guidance from teachers in the HE and interdisciplinary resources within institutions (Sections 5.5.5 and 5.5.6.3). These challenges and their private teaching experiences through their educational phases addresses RQ3. The aspects of the pedagogical culture of Chinese instrument lessons, the curriculum and professional development of CITs uncovered in this chapter are discussed further in Chapter 10. The next chapter presents findings from the case of in-service CITs working in different educational context in China.

# **Chapter 6: China-domiciled In-service CITs’ Perspectives on Teaching and Challenges within the Profession**

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## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a single case exploration relating to eight China-domiciled in-service CITs’ understandings of their instrumental teaching and challenges working in higher education, school and private settings in China. The data collection process and the interviewee participants’ demographics are detailed in the following Sections 6.2 and 6.3. In the interviews, these in-service CIT participants articulated their work with their students and colleagues in both their workplace and private settings, revealing their teaching contexts, specific teaching scenarios, and a mixed mode of delivering their Chinese instrument lessons, Chinese instrument ensembles/rehearsals, as well as music classes in school settings.

Findings are centred around the following four main themes with multiple sub-sections: Chinese instrument private teaching (Section 6.4, with a discussion in Section 6.4.3); teaching in higher education in China (Section 6.5, with a discussion in Section 6.5.4); teaching in music school contexts (Section 6.6, with a discussion in Section 6.6.2); and teaching in state schools (Section 6.7, with a discussion in Section 6.7.6). The research questions that this chapter answers are:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers’ (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers’ (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

## **6.2 Data collection**

Online semi-structured interviews in Mandarin were conducted with eight China-based in-service CITs in May/June 2022 and April/May 2023 either on Zoom or VooV Meeting software; the extended timeline helped with gathering a number of participants comparable with those of the other two cases (i.e. the China-domiciled pre-service CITs and the UK MA per-service CITs). In April 2022 an invitation to take part in this research, including the research information sheet and a consent form written in both Mandarin and English, was sent by the researcher to seven in-service CITs in conservatoire/university/school settings in China via WeChat and email based on both the purposive and snowball sampling procedures (Section 3.5.4). While two in-service CITs declined the invitation and one did not respond, the remaining four in-service CITs were interviewed after they returned their signed consent forms. A pilot online interview was conducted with one of the CITs in May 2022, with suggestions provided by the interviewee on refining the interview questions; the questions were then revised based on the advice and the pilot interview responses. The duration of the interviews with the four CITs was between 62 to 94 minutes. In April 2023 the research invitation was sent by the researcher to another four in-service CITs in conservatoire/school settings via WeChat; they all gave their consent to participate in the interviews, which lasted between 45 to 63 minutes.

After each interview, the initial interview transcript in Mandarin was transcribed by the researcher by re-visiting the interview recording as many times as needed to ensure the transcription accuracy and validity, and was translated in English by the researcher after participants' validation of the Mandarin transcript. Each participant was given a code number (IT1/2/3... etc.) to protect their anonymity, which is used where the participants' quotations are presented.

The abbreviations and Chinese terms that appear with high frequency in this chapter are as follows:



- Higher Education: HE
- Instrumental/Vocal Teacher(s): IVT(s)
- Continuing Professional Development: CPD
- China National High School Entrance Examination: Zhongkao (中考)<sup>55</sup>
- Conservatoire-affiliated music (secondary and high) school: Music Fuzhong (附中)<sup>56</sup>
- China National College Entrance Examination: Gaokao (高考)<sup>57</sup>
- China National College Entrance Examination for Arts: Yikao (艺考)<sup>58</sup>

### 6.3 Interviewees' demographic data

The eight in-service CITs who took part all worked at a conservatoire/university/school/private setting in China. They had Chinese instrument teaching experience ranging from three to over 20 years and had taken more than one role simultaneously within their working contexts (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1:** China-domiciled in-service CIT participants' code number, instrument, age, employment and teaching experiences.

In-service teacher participants	Learning and teaching instrument	Age	Employment	Teaching experiences	Their pupils
IT1	Guzheng	28	State school music teacher	Classroom music teaching; guzheng ensemble teaching; private guzheng teaching	Mostly children and adolescents; some Yikao candidates
IT2	Dizi (bamboo flute)	25	State school music teacher	Classroom music teaching; school choir facilitator; private dizi teaching	Mostly children and some adult pupils
IT3	Dizi (bamboo flute)	25	State school music teacher	Classroom music teaching; private dizi teaching	Mostly children and some adult pupils
IT4	Chinese-traditional vocal	26	Private music school teacher	Vocal (private) teaching; solfeggio	Mostly adolescents and Yikao

<sup>55</sup> Similar to the GCSE exams in the UK; see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.2.

<sup>57</sup> Similar to the A-level examinations in the UK; see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

				and music theory teaching	candidates; some children
<b>IT5</b>	Guzheng	29	Guzheng teacher at a university music department	Guzheng (private) teaching; guzheng ensemble teaching	University music students; Yikao candidates; some children and adolescents
<b>IT6</b>	Guzheng	44	Guzheng teacher at a university music department	Guzheng (private) teaching; guzheng ensemble teaching	University music students; Yikao candidates
<b>IT7</b>	Guzheng	34	Conservatoire and Music Fuzhong guzheng teacher	Guzheng (private) teaching; guzheng ensemble teaching	Conservatoire students; music primary and secondary school students; Yikao candidates
<b>IT8</b>	Chinese-traditional vocal	50	Conservatoire Chinese-traditional vocal teacher	Vocal (private) teaching	Conservatoire students; Yikao candidates

It should be noted that all the in-service teacher (IT)-participants worked in first or second-tier cities in China with high socioeconomic development, and the universities where IT5 and IT6 worked belong to the highest ranking universities (namely, ‘Yi Ben 一本’, see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1) in China, thus they might have been able to access privileged educational/institutional resources.

## 6.4 Private Chinese instrument teaching

All in-service CITs (n=8) were involved in giving private one-to-one Chinese instrument teaching at home and/or in private music studios outside of their full-time working contexts. For the CITs who worked at a state school (n=3) in China, the pupils who learned privately with them were mostly primary and secondary school students wanting to have ‘a hobby’; these CITs also taught several adult pupils privately who had full-time jobs and learned a Chinese instrument because of their interests. For the CITs working in music school and/or higher education settings (n=5), their private lessons were mostly delivered to the Yikao candidates who were high school students and had chosen their educational pathway into music, and simultaneously, these candidates were preparing for the Gaokao concerning their academic-subject examination.

### 6.4.1 Teaching amateur pupils privately

As indicated by the state school CITs (i.e. IT1, 2 and 3), many of their school-age private pupils learning a Chinese instrument were influenced by their peers at school: 'It's very common [in China] that a school student learns an instrument as a hobby. Many of them wanted to learn an instrument because of their "crowd psychology" to follow what their peers did' (IT1), and interestingly, this motivation was also acknowledged by IT3 in relation to some of their pupils' parents:

The communication between parents had a huge impact on how they cultivate their child to avoid being left behind by peers. [...] If they heard someone achieved a good result with a good [instrumental] teacher, they would also try to contact that teacher for their child.

A negative effect of this crowd behaviour, however, was highlighted by IT3: 'The challenge of learning an instrument was always underestimated by parents, and many of them relied completely on the teacher, which was not enough for the child to learn the instrument persistently'. Similarly, IT2 mentioned a pupils' attrition after having several dizi (Chinese flute) lessons due to the gradually increased challenges in learning the techniques and lacking 'an appropriate guidance from their parents to accompany them overcome this phase'. IT2 observed that 'many parents were used to blaming their child for not practising hard enough', which often led to the teacher's frustration concerning how to maintain the pupil's interest and resilience in learning the instrument with the help from the pupil's parent. Nevertheless, no teacher-pupil-parent interaction or communication discussing proactivity and strategy in the private teaching context was mentioned by these three state school CITs.

The private Chinese instrument lessons for the amateur pupils given by these three state school CITs in private settings were mainly based on the Chinese instrument graded exam<sup>59</sup> materials, even though not all of their pupils aimed to take these exams: 'Some pupils only learned for their initial interests and gave up easily. [...] I hadn't really thought about using materials other than the graded exam pieces. Maybe I should look for other more attractive materials [for these pupils]' (IT2). The exam book<sup>60</sup> used by IT2, specifically,

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<sup>59</sup> See Section 2.3.2.1 on Chinese instrument graded exams in China.

<sup>60</sup> 中国笛子考级曲集 – 初级 [*China dizi graded exam repertoire – Beginner level*].

contained a range of both ‘traditional and contemporarily recomposed beginner-level [Grade One to Four] dizi pieces, [...] selected and compiled by the renowned dizi master-teachers in China’. IT3 used material<sup>61</sup> compiled by another graded exam board in China, which comprised both etudes and exam pieces: ‘[I used this book] because of its authority. It’s also the one used by my teacher [when I was a learner]’.

Notably, IT1 mentioned their awareness of positivity in guzheng teaching by occasionally using pupil-preferred music pieces, which usually were popular songs:

My pupils learned the simple popular songs fast, but sometimes parents would think you were teaching their child to ‘play’ rather than ‘learn’ proper repertoire. [...] Learning to play popular songs was an additional option or could be seen as a reward when the pupil learned the exam repertoire well.

This choice of using non-exam-related material in teaching, as revealed by IT1, was influenced by another experienced guzheng teacher they had worked with, who ‘was good at getting along with school-age pupils and pupils’ parents and shared experiences such as creating their own collection of teaching repertoire according to pupils’ preferences [...] but this requires parents’ trust and open-mindedness’. However, this pupil interest-based option would reach a compromise with learning the exam pieces when the pupil started preparing for the graded exam (IT1).

Gaining extra income (n=3) and not losing technical skills (IT2) were considered as reasons why these state school CITs continuously committed themselves to private instrumental teaching:

School music teaching is completely different from instrumental teaching, which requires no performing techniques but just general knowledge of the music from the teacher’s side, and you don’t need to play the music yourself but use the online resources. If you don’t have something to do with your major instrument, you will lose the performing expertise you gained. (IT2)

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<sup>61</sup> 中国音乐学院社会艺术水平考级全国通用教材 – 竹笛 1-10 级 [China Conservatory of Music: National textbook for social art level examinations – Bamboo flute – Grades 1 to 10].

Additionally, IT3 mentioned an adult pupil's enthusiasm and resilience in dizi learning, which motivated them significantly to work as a private CIT, even if the teacher sometimes 'felt overwhelmed by the work [at school]':

This adult pupil was employed in a completely different area from music and was very busy dealing with their daily work, but because of their passion for learning dizi, they had passed the Grade Ten [the highest grade in the graded exam]. As they only had time to practise very late at night after work, an empty place in a park was their practice space every night. Their attitude influenced me a lot. [...] Nothing is the excuse when you really want to do something.

#### **6.4.2 Teaching the Yikao candidates privately**

For the music school and HE CITs (i.e. IT4, 5, 6, 7 and 8), their private pupils were mostly high school students who wished to strengthen their performing skills for the Yikao and to 'build up the Guanxi [关系, social network]<sup>62</sup> in advance' with someone who was an insider in their targeted HE institution, through the help of their existing social network including their parents and former teachers (IT6). This pre-Yikao set-up appears to be not exclusive in the context of Chinese instrument tuition but 'a default consensus' (IT5) between the Yikao candidates, their parents, and IVTs in the Chinese HE institutions: IT1, 2, 3, 4 and many China-domiciled pre-service CITs mentioned this pre-Yikao set-up they had when they were the Yikao candidates (Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2). This might also be manifested in the situation where IT6 reported that 'I barely have time to teach non-Yikao pupils in the private context because of the increasing population of students taking Yikao'.

Particularly focusing on students' performing skills, both IT5 and IT7 indicated that conservatoire programmes had more competitive entry requirements compared to university music programmes. This might be embodied in the diversified types of the repertoire required in the Yikao for the conservatoire admission: by way of an example, the Yikao candidate playing guzheng should 'prepare five professional-level guzheng pieces [to be assessed] including one traditional solo piece, two contemporary solo pieces, and two sonata pieces with piano accompaniment' (IT7), while 'usually only two [professional-level]

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<sup>62</sup> The discussion on Guanxi in China is in Section 6.4.3.2 and Chapter 10: General discussion.

pieces were assessed in the Yikao for being qualified for university music programmes' (IT5). The Yikao-focused instrumental teaching, therefore, was repertoire-based and prioritised the pupils' performing skills and progress including 'the ability to not be nervous when performing on the stage' (IT7), 'musical understanding and expression' (IT6), and 'personal aesthetic awareness' (IT8).

Despite the musical assessment, i.e. the Yikao result, 'the Gaokao result is also the key to whether the candidate can be admitted or not' (IT5). Between the university and conservatoire admission contexts, a disparity of admission requirements for the candidates' academic-subject exam results in the Gaokao appeared to be evident. IT5 explained that

As the academic requirement for entering a highest-ranking [一本] university is much higher than that for entering a conservatoire, the student who aimed for the university would spend more time on their academic subjects learning and have less time in [instrumental] practice. It's like a decision students need to make by evaluating their musical and academic learning abilities separately and choosing the one that is more advantageous.<sup>63</sup> For students who aimed for a conservatoire, their academic subjects learning was usually sacrificed.

Similarly, IT7 gave their personal experience as an example:

For students who chose the pathway to become a music student at a very young age [with parental involvement], like me, studying at the Music Fuzhong, I spent much more time on [guzheng] practice than on learning the general school curriculum. [...] I always felt that I was not good at learning [the academic subjects], which was also the bias people had about music students [in China], saying, "They choose music [pathways] because they have poor [academic] grades". The negative thing about only focusing on guzheng learning [since school age] was also that, in my further [degree] study, I had to learn English and other subjects from the very beginning, and things such as grammar, listening and writing were so difficult for me.

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<sup>63</sup> It is worth noting here that conservatoire courses in terms of performance, composition, and conducting may be seen as more prestigious than university ones in the Chinese context.

The current HE admission system in China, specific to the university and conservatoire programme entry requirements as revealed by these HE CITs, was viewed as likely to enable those secondary-level students who chose to take the Yikao to make use of their musical or academic strengths. However, the decision towards future educational pathways made by the Yikao candidates tended to be regarded as high stakes, considering if someone had an outstanding performance in the Yikao but failed the Gaokao (Section 6.6.1). Moreover, it appeared that the HE CITs were solely responsible for the candidates' instrumental learning in this private pre-Yikao set-up, while the learning of the other assessed components such as music theory and aural skills would also affect the student's Yikao result. Findings relating to this aspect are in Section 6.6 on music school settings and Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2 on the pre-Yikao training received by the China-domiciled pre-service CITs.

### **6.4.3 Discussion: Private Chinese instrument teaching**

In private settings, it appears that the learning level of a pupil of a CIT (employed by an educational institution in the current study), could be associated with the CIT's working context and status; Hargreaves and Flutter (2019) define 'teacher status' as their standing in both the societal and professional contexts, namely *teacher* and *teaching*. For the state school CITs in China, most of their private pupils were school-age amateur Chinese instrument learners, while for the music school and HE CITs, their private pupils had mostly reached an advanced or pre-professional levels and were preparing for higher music education admission. These CITs' deployment of their teaching could be different considering their pupils' ages, interests, and learning objectives towards hobby cultivation, the graded exams, or the Yikao; this was manifested in the CITs' use of the graded-exam, the pupil's interest-based repertoire, or the Yikao-focused teaching materials.

#### **6.4.3.1 The impact of performance examinations**

Whilst the CITs had the autonomy to choose which piece/s to teach, this appears to have been constrained by 'the emphasis on performance examinations' in the Chinese context, which tends to be narrowed down to 'a focus on the examination repertoire as the sole curricular material' for efficiency and target completion (Haddon, 2024, p. 170). This

educational culture appears to inevitably shape the CITs', learners' and parents' understanding of what represents engagement and achievement in instrumental learning: in this regard, while some pupils enjoyed learning to play popular songs, only learning the exam repertoire and success in exams counted as attainments. It is evident that little personal autonomy was enabled for pupils in the private Chinese instrument teaching contexts: their learning was regulated externally by the examination-focused educational system, teachers and their parents. Students within this controlling environment may 'invest less energy, [less] concentration, and [less] attention during their practice, and feel less motivated to continue their learning' (McPherson et al., 2012, p. 38), hence resulting in attrition.

Whilst the significance of strategically and adaptably guiding students towards taking ownership of their musical journey has been highlighted by studies on effective instrumental tuition utilising learner (meta)cognition (Coutts, 2019), through attentive support for students' self-management 'at every opportunity, in every lesson – from playing the correct notes, monitoring tone and expression, to the choice of [...] repertoire' (McPherson et al., 2012, p. 41), there is little evidence to suggest that these in-service CITs were aware of this rationale to foster self-regulated learners<sup>64</sup> amid the exam-focused educational environment in China, and neither were the pupils' parents. This possibility of facilitating pupil self-regulation might also be hindered by a lack of effective teacher-pupil-parent communication as exhibited in the findings; featured by hierarchies in the Chinese sociocultural context, this triangular relationship involving parental authority and progression-focused expectations further challenges pedagogical practices of private IVTs (Haddon, 2024). Although there was one adult pupil (from IT3) who manifested self-management ability in their daily self-motivated dizi practice, the process of how their self-regulation was enabled or worked was not detailed by IT3.

#### ***6.4.3.2 The Guanxi in private Chinese instrument teaching***

In the literature, the Chinese term 'Guanxi [关系]' is defined as personalised social connections between two individuals, embodied in people's interrelated feelings such as 'feelings of affection one has toward the other..., or feelings of reciprocal obligation one

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<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2.2.



owes to the other..., or feelings of respect one gains from the other' (Bian, 2019, p. 5). It is worth noting that reciprocity often characterises people's social connections in the Chinese context, involving affective binding and potential exchange of benefits 'at some future time when there is a need' (Barbalet, 2021, p. 1). The Guanxi disclosed by the CITs in their private teaching contexts was reflected in the parent-parent connection to share information and secure a trustworthy resource for their child's education, as well as the parent-teacher or teacher-teacher connection for the learner's access to their future possible educational pathways to music (e.g. the pre-Yikao set-up), although the Guanxi does not play a decisive role. Despite this connection establishment between the Yikao candidates, their parents, and the HE IVTs being assumed to be the default by stakeholders, tensions would arise concerning those who had no access to this social network, leading to potential inequality in gaining access to higher music education in China. Moreover, Bai (2021) highlights Chinese parents' action upon not feeling 'left behind educationally' to organise piano learning for their child (p. 517); this may go some way to explaining why parents of the Yikao candidates acquiesced to the pre-Yikao networking, and a similar mindset was identified by IT3 from their pupils' parents who followed other parents' choices while lacking deliberate consideration about the journey their child might walk through when learning an instrument, hence resulting in parents' insufficient support.

#### ***6.4.3.3 Impact of higher music education admission requirements***

Differences concerning admission requirements between conservatoire and university music programmes, prioritising either musical exam results in the Yikao or academic exam results in the Gaokao, were acknowledged by the CITs. This appears to enable the Yikao candidates to optimise their musical or academic strengths for a greater probability of admission to their targeted university or conservatoire. However, Guan et al. (2024) underline that 'Chinese higher music education [institutions] primarily base admissions on the outcomes of two high-stakes standardised tests', i.e. the Gaokao and the Yikao, while 'a multifaceted evaluation approach, encompassing interviews, essays, portfolios, [...] roles in extracurricular activities and community engagements, as well as letters of recommendation from mentors' adopted by international HE institutions (p. 3) may suggest more comprehensive admission criteria for stakeholders to consider. This could also be a

starting point for diversifying higher music education opportunities in China, decentralising performance examination results.

For the students who prioritised their musical training, such as IT7 who made the choice to study at the Music Fuzhong, they tended to view themselves as being ‘not good at learning’ the other school subjects, and interestingly, this perception regarding music students as a group with the label of ‘hav[ing] poor [academic] grades’ (IT7) appeared to also be held by many Chinese people in society, including the student musicians themselves. Reasons for this seem to lie in the distinct curriculum focus of music schools, which ‘differ[s] in structure from their academic counterparts’ (Bai, 2021, p. 514), as well as in the disparity of university entry requirements and distinct syllabi set for music and non-music students (Chapter 5, Section 5.5.5).

In parallel with the perceived hierarchy of the enrolled music programmes and professional identity as a performer or teacher discussed in Chapter 5 from the perspective of China-domiciled pre-service CITs, this creation of bias in society and self-categorisation of identity (i.e. music and non-music groups in the current finding) aligns with the theory of social identity: heightening distinctions between groups in perceived hierarchies to safeguard the self-esteem of group members, in which individuals may identify themselves as part of a group when they acknowledge the common traits shared by the group members (Hatch & Schultz, 2004; Tajfel, 1981; Stroebe et al., 2012). Concerning being at a perceived disadvantage in learning school academic subjects, this biased view of students who committed themselves to music (instrumental/vocal) learning might in some way lead to a binary choice between music and academic-subjects learning made by school-age students and their parents in China; however, ‘it is often music that is sacrificed’ (Bai, 2021, p. 514) considering the high costs and risks compared to ‘the mainstream pathway of academic studies [...] and greater career choice flexibility’ in future (Ibid., p. 520).

## **6.5 Teaching in HE**

Four of the in-service CIT participants worked in the HE context in China (IT5, 6, 7 and 8). As indicated by IT8, IVTs in HE in China appeared to have autonomy in selecting what content and repertoire to teach and how to teach within their instrumental/vocal lessons. Their lessons (mostly one-to-one; some were one-to-two) were weekly, based on semester dates

and were scheduled directly with their individual or paired students; each lesson was between 30 to 45 minutes. This sense of teacher agency was reflected in IT6 'modularising' their guzheng teaching based on their teaching aims and students' needs. Specifically, IT6 designed four modules including 'an etude module, a traditional guzheng repertoire module, a contemporary guzheng repertoire module for students' concerts or competitions, and a [guzheng] ensemble module'; IT6 articulated that both etudes and traditional guzheng repertoire had a positive impact on improving their students' technical skills, while the contemporary pieces helped more with their students' musical understanding and expression, and 'students can be trained comprehensively' (IT6) through the guzheng ensemble rehearsals.

### **6.5.1 Perceptions of music programme curricula for conservatoire and university music students**

For IT5 and IT6 who worked at the university music departments, their students mostly majored in BA Musicology and BA Music Education, and they only had several Music Performance undergraduate students due to the university's planned enrolment numbers. As indicated by the HE CITs, aside from the programme-dependent compulsory/core modules (Chapter 5, Sections 5.5.1/2), IT5 and IT6 disclosed that their universities offered a wide range of optional modules for students to choose from, which were designed and delivered by lectures/professors from different university departments in addition to the music department: for example, IT5 mentioned the optional modules 'Children with Special Educational Needs'<sup>65</sup> from the Department of Education, 'Introduction to Chinese Culture'<sup>66</sup> from the Department of History and Culture, and 'Ancient Chinese Poems and Literature Appreciation'<sup>67</sup> from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at their university. Additionally, lecturers/professors at the Department of Music would, in turn, be responsible for providing optional modules relating to basic music knowledge or appreciation for university non-music students to choose from (IT5). As a result, the curricula and students' experiences in the university context are likely to be enriched by this interdisciplinary collaboration across the university departments; this collaboration also benefited one of the

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<sup>65</sup> '特殊儿童教育' in Chinese.

<sup>66</sup> '中国文化导论' in Chinese.

<sup>67</sup> '中国古代诗词文学鉴赏' in Chinese.

pre-service CITs' postgraduate study in a university in China, co-supervised by two professors from the departments of music and education (see PT7<sup>68</sup> in Chapter 5, Section 5.5.5).

Contrastingly, in the conservatoire context in China, IT7 articulated that the BA music programmes were more diversified including Chinese (traditional) instrument/vocal performance,<sup>69</sup> Chinese instrument (traditional) orchestra conducting,<sup>70</sup> and Chinese (traditional) instrumental/vocal music composition.<sup>71</sup> The Chinese instrument lessons that IT7 taught were compulsory for those performance students but optional for students in conducting or composition. Similarly, IT8 indicated that their conservatoire students all majored in Chinese-traditional vocal performance. The other music-related compulsory modules their students took at the conservatories were similar to those available for the university music students, while the optional modules appeared to be less varied than in the university settings but more music-focused due to the music specialised nature of the conservatories, as explained by IT7.

Notably, all four of these CITs in both conservatoire and university contexts uncovered a lack of instrumental/vocal specialist pedagogical learning when they were Chinese instrument student musicians at a conservatoire or university: 'In the past, there were no guidelines for instrumental teaching. Teachers taught according to their own experiences and had no idea about what pedagogy was, let alone instrumental specialised pedagogy' (IT6) and 'performance training was everything' (IT7). This appeared to be a continuing situation for Chinese instrument student musicians as indicated by these CITs at conservatoire/university: 'Only students majoring in music education had a [school] music pedagogy module, but performance students had no pedagogical-related learning' (IT6), and none of these CITs expressed their awareness of any instrumental/vocal specialist pedagogical module available to Chinese instrument student musicians at their institutions. However, paradoxically, three of these CITs mentioned that many of their conservatoire/university students taught Chinese instrument lessons at private music studios to 'support their living expenses [... and instrumental music] studio owners and

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<sup>68</sup> PT = the quoted China-domiciled pre-service CIT.

<sup>69</sup> '民族乐器演奏' in Chinese.

<sup>70</sup> '民族管弦乐队指挥' in Chinese.

<sup>71</sup> '中国民族音乐作曲' in Chinese.

amateur pupils need them' (IT7), while pedagogical-oriented conversations such as what and how to teach in Chinese instrument lessons between these in-service CITs and their students who taught was absent (IT6; IT7).

Moreover, all of these CITs mentioned compulsory modules relating to ideological and political education for all students in Chinese HE contexts. The modules included, for example, an introduction to the theory and ideology of Marxism (IT7), and the Chinese modern history (IT6). This ideological education appeared to be not exclusive to the HE context and appeared to be related to the moral and patriotic values education in the school music education contexts in China (see Section 6.7 on teaching in state school settings and Section 6.7.6.3 on the discussion of this educational focus relating to music).

### **6.5.2 Supporting Chinese instrument students' development in HE**

In addition to the role of a CIT delivering individual Chinese instrument/vocal lessons at a university/conservatoire context, these four CITs elaborated their role as a 'facilitator' to help with Chinese instrument/vocal solo/duet/ensemble/orchestra rehearsals for students' concerts, competitions, and public performances outside of the university/conservatoire contexts. Specifically, IT5 was one of the co-leaders of a Chinese instrument orchestra at their university: this group of students was comprised of both music and non-music students from the university who passed the annual orchestra audition and opted to participate in weekly rehearsals. IT5 recalled:

We often received performance invitations from varied organisations and universities for Chinese traditional music-related events. I was responsible for scheduling the rehearsals and facilitating the guzheng players when they needed my help, and we had a professional conductor who graduated from a conservatoire [...] The amateur [non-music] students did need more guidance and time than the professional [music] students when rehearsing, but our group atmosphere was really good, and the students always practised together and helped each other, especially when they prepared for a performance.

Similarly, IT6 and IT7 facilitated guzheng solo/duet/ensemble rehearsals for their guzheng students when there was a performance or competition opportunity, while IT8 helped more with Chinese-traditional vocal solo practices. Although the group rehearsals

needed more time and energy than giving one-to-one lessons (IT5), IT5 and IT6 emphasised the importance for their guzheng students to learn from and collaborate with each other during rehearsing:

[...] it not only requires individual playing skills but also requires teamwork.

Ensembles can also reawaken students' enthusiasm when rehearsing together, and many students told me that they would have a sense of achievement when they successfully rehearsed or performed a whole piece. (IT6)

Additionally, IT7 disclosed that their students at the conservatoire were used to having plenty of performance opportunities, which fostered the students' independence in arranging and monitoring their rehearsals by themselves: 'On many occasions I don't need to be there, and the students can have the space to discuss how to rehearse the performance'. The conservatoire students' independence in musicianship was also mentioned by IT8: 'The conservatoire students were rigorously selected [in terms of music professional skills] so my role is more like a problem solver when they encounter technical problems that couldn't be solved by themselves'.

The university CITs described their roles as a 'supporter' and 'referrer' in helping with individual guzheng students' consideration of their post-programme professional development. For instance, IT6 indicated that many of their students planned to pursue a Master's degree in China or overseas after their undergraduate study due to the competitiveness in the current employment market in China:

[...] Many of my students wanted to apply for Masters' degree courses in Western countries. [...] I intentionally helped them achieve their goals and left them more time to prepare for language exams such as IELTS and TOEFL tests, especially for year three and four [undergraduate] students; for these students, I wouldn't expect them to have [guzheng] recitals or take competitions. On the contrary, for those who intended to take admission exams for postgraduate studies in conservatoires, I was strict with their performance expertise, as it's very competitive among candidates in conservatoires due to limited enrolment places.

Likewise, for their university students who aimed to participate in the conservatoire admission exams for their postgraduate study, IT5 attempted to set up a contact (i.e. the

Guanxi) between the student and the conservatoire teacher to 'ensure the student will be trained in the conservatoire-way during their exam preparation'. IT5 uncovered that

When my student started [the exam preparation] with the conservatoire teacher, I would avoid teaching the same piece [taught by the conservatoire teacher] to that student, as my understanding and performance of the piece would definitely be different from that of the conservatoire teacher. This is like a default norm between me and many conservatoire teachers to avoid conflicts of opinions [in guzheng teaching, avoiding teaching the same piece].

### **6.5.3 Perceptions of CPD: Resources and challenges**

All four CITs were aware of the CPD sources within and beyond their institutions including Chinese instrument masterclasses, visiting scholar programmes and/or performance exchange overseas, 'lectures by experts' (IT5), and short-term instrumental teacher training in first-tier cities (IT7). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, IT7 and their colleagues had visited a conservatoire and Music Departments at universities in the US for a month, organising concerts with Chinese traditional instruments and interacting with hosting institutions: '[This experience was] interesting and inspiring [... but] we could only get a rough idea of the [music] educational culture in the US [...] the main purpose was to spread our [Chinese] musical culture'. Similarly, IT5 had a performance exchange experience in Canada with their colleagues and students: 'We learnt about the daily workings of their colleges through our exchanges but hadn't had the opportunity to experience how the [instrumental] teachers there taught their students'.

Whilst these CITs mentioned several CPD courses focusing on instrumental/vocal teaching provided by conservatories in different cities, only IT5 had participated in the two- or three-day guzheng teacher training sessions at two conservatories 'to meet my favourite guzheng performers [who were the trainers] and get the latest composed guzheng piece [by one of the trainers], [and] getting the training certificates'; however, the training appeared to concentrate on how to perform, instead of how to teach the specific piece: '[the trainer] underscored the most difficult places in the piece [selected by the trainer], where mistakes most likely to be made, demonstrated how to play them correctly and incorrectly, what to keep in mind [when playing]' (IT5). Due to their profit-driven nature, these CPD courses

were considered unsystematic and superficial by IT7 and IT8: 'They invite one expert at most to give a talk, and the rest of the training would be completed by [conservatoire] postgraduate students [... these courses are] for [private] teachers from amateur studies who wish to be certificated for their business' (IT7).

Despite these CPD possibilities, challenges were acknowledged by these CITs in the Chinese HE concerning academic publications (n=4) and obtaining a doctoral degree (IT5; IT7) as part of their professional development and as the 'most important' (IT5) indicators for promotion. Due to an absence of sufficient academic research training as former music students and in-service employers in higher music education in China (IT7; IT8) and a lack of academic interpersonal networks for publication (IT6), these CITs expressed their stress, insecurity, and the feeling of 'hav[ing] no choice' (IT7) concerning this faculty employment system and competitiveness within the Chinese HE. These feelings appeared to be particularly evident in IT5 and IT7's articulation because of their five-year assessment for promotion: IT7 was working on their part-time doctorate and IT5 was applying for one at the time when being interviewed, while this seemed not to be the case for IT6 and IT8 due to their permanent positions.

## **6.5.4 Discussion: Teaching in HE**

### ***6.5.4.1 Teacher agency in HE***

Findings show the flexibility and adaptability of the roles taken by the CITs in the Chinese HE, manifested through their actions in supporting both within- and post-programme development of their students based on the student's needs. This resonates with the conceptualisation of teacher agency concerning individual teachers' capacity and context-based choices (Li & Ruppert, 2021), such as decision making for lesson frequency/content/duration, enabling student/colleague collaborations, and utilisation of the interpersonal network they had across institutions (i.e. the Guanxi). This appears to correspond to resource seeking/navigation as a salient finding in the literature on teacher agency in the Chinese context due to the resource-constrained environment (Mu et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2017). Additionally, the avoidance of teaching the same piece to avoid potential conflicts of ideas in Chinese instrument teaching, revealed by IT5 in their working context, may go some way to echoing the well-respected authority of CITs in performances



(Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1), as well as the ecological perspective of teacher agency concerning the (socio)cultural and structural norms that impact teachers' beliefs and actions (Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1).

The versatility of the IVT profession appears evident in the findings, where these CITs in HE took the roles of teacher, planner and organiser, facilitator, networker and practitioner; this aligns with the characteristics of the profession reported by the European Association of Conservatoires (Polifonia, 2010) across cultural contexts. However, it is also evident that these CITs in the Chinese HE had no formal (music/instrumental/vocal) pedagogical learning, but instead taught based on personal experiences, which reinforced the finding in existing studies on IVT qualification concerning a lack of formal pedagogical education and regulation in many contexts that is not limited to China (e.g. Boyle, 2021; Casas-Mas & López-Íñiguez, 2022; Haddon, 2009; Lee & Leung 2022; Mills, 2007; Norton et al., 2019); furthermore, benefits from the utilisation of rationalised pedagogical approaches (i.e. PCK)<sup>72</sup> in instrumental/vocal teaching might be hindered by this absence.

#### ***6.5.4.2 Conservatoire and university music programme curricula***

Findings indicate a largely music-focused curricula for conservatoire students, while for university music students, the curricula involved more subject areas such as education, history, and Chinese literacy that might benefit the interdisciplinary development of music students in HE; additionally, the collaboration between music and non-music students in the context of university Chinese instrument orchestra rehearsals and the independence of the conservatoire students in performance rehearsals were revealed by the HE CITs. Apart from reflecting on *what* comprises higher music education curricula, Coutts and Carey (2021) emphasise the focus on *how* those curricula are delivered to music students, responding to the growing need for transferrable skills and transformative professionalism beyond their graduation.

Whilst 'the special strengths and traditions of the institution', the institutional financial status quo, as well as the space in the curriculum would influence what constitutes the curriculum, 'personalisation of the students' learning processes and the development of their individual professional profile' should also be taken into account (Polifonia, 2010, p.

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<sup>72</sup> Pedagogical content knowledge, see Chapter 2, Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 for the literature review.

17). However, it appeared that the teaching practices of those conservatoire/university Chinese instrument student musicians at private music studios as, for example, part-time CITs had not yet been sufficiently considered by the design of their enrolled HE music programme curricula, with no instrumental/vocal pedagogical components integrated as support. This might hinder the development of Chinese instrument student musicians' professional profile for their future careers, as existing studies have indicated the significant role of higher music education curricula in (re-)shaping music students' professional identity, while also leading to their future career aspirations and choices (e.g. Haning, 2020; López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020, 2021; Miller & Baker, 2007; Yang, 2022); relevant findings and discussion are in Chapter 5, Section 5.5 on the professional development and identity of China-domiciled pre-service CITs.

#### ***6.5.4.3 CPD resources and challenges in HE***

It appears that a range of CPD opportunities were available to the CITs in the Chinese HE, offered by institutions where they worked, conservatories, and overseas institutions jointly. However, the inexplicit qualification of the trainer-teachers (e.g. conservatoire students rather than experienced teachers) in the short-term CPD courses<sup>73</sup> was challenged by some CITs, as well as the main purpose of those courses (e.g. financial profit for the organisers), although IT5 revealed their positive experience of taking the courses for networking and resource seeking (e.g. celebrated musicians and the newest composition). Concerns may arise relating to the supervision and regulation of the CPD courses in China, while the absence of empirical research on this is evident (Eskandar & Zheng, 2025; Lee & Leung, 2022). Notably, those CPD courses and the overseas interactive opportunities predominantly prioritised performance skills or cultural transmission rather than *how* to teach, although the CITs seemed not to consider this as a problematic issue in the interviews. The perception that 'the quality of CPD and its relevance for teaching' is challenged by many teachers in Western countries reflects the generally negative attitude teachers hold towards their participation in CPD (Symeonidis, 2015, p. 49), which may again

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<sup>73</sup> Website information about available CPD courses for IVTs in China is presented in Eskandar and Zheng (2025).

reinforce the lack of attention to instrumental/vocal pedagogy in the Chinese instrument tuition contexts as discussed in the above sections.

Findings concerning challenges identified by academic research concerning CITs in the Chinese HE context appear consistent with the personnel system reforms in Chinese HE on a large scale since 2014 emphasising research outputs (Wang & Wang, 2024), characterised by ‘Publish-or-perish’ (Yang et al., 2022, p. 249), ‘up-or-out [promote or leave]’ (Wang & Jones, 2021, p. 49),<sup>74</sup> ‘Quasi-market competition, quantitative performance-based evaluation and an emphasis on accountability’ (Ibid., p. 50). However, the insufficient academic research training, within both the pre-and in-service contexts, perceived by the CITs may further challenge their career development (especially for newly-recruited teachers, see Wang and Jones, 2021) and lead to negative feelings. The consequences of these system reforms in China are receiving ongoing scrutiny by Chinese academics (Wang & Wang, 2024), which reveal a negative impact on lecturers’ mental health and research quality (Tian & Lu, 2017) and a negative correlation with lecturers’ innovative behaviour (Yang et al., 2024). Finally, the lack of academic networking for publication, seen by IT6 as one of the challenges, may echo the role of Guanxi in Chinese society (Section 6.4.3.2) and affect perceptions of agency and priorities.

## 6.6 Teaching in music school contexts

Both IT4 and IT7 had experience of teaching in a music school context in China: IT4 was a full-time Chinese-traditional vocal teacher at a private music high school, and IT7 worked as a part-time guzheng teacher at a conservatoire-affiliated music secondary and high school (i.e. Music Fuzhong). As stated by IT4 and IT7, to succeed in the Yikao was the ultimate goal set by all music school students, and IT7 mentioned that successful candidates with the highest ranking would be awarded a scholarship by the conservatoire. This, as well as the demanding entry requirements (IT6; IT7), might increase peer competition in the Yikao. As a result, the Yikao-focused training in music school contexts was intensive: for example, ‘Our school curriculum was designed based on the Yikao syllabus’ (IT4):

Multiple hours of practice every day is the basic. Apart from teaching, my colleagues and I were also in turn responsible for supervising the students’ daily

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<sup>74</sup> ‘非升即走’ in Mandarin.

practice. They wouldn't be allowed to leave the practice room if they hadn't achieved the number of practice hours for the day set by their teacher. (IT4)

Similarly, IT7 mentioned eight hours of average practice time required by the instrumental teachers at the Music Fuzhong and that 'my [school] students were quite used to this intensive daily practice, as they know how competitive the Yikao was and how well-skilled their peers [at the Music Fuzhong] were'.

### **6.6.1 Perceptions of disparities between private and affiliated institutions**

As disclosed by IT7, many students at the Music Fuzhong had previously received professional training in their chosen Chinese instrument since they were primary or secondary conservatoire-affiliated music school students<sup>75</sup> – a decision concerning entering the professional music pathway at an early age made by many of the students' parents in China (IT7). Compared to this, however, many of the students at the private music school were previously amateur Chinese instrument learners and were transferred from a state high school for the Yikao preparation:

Many of our students decided to take the professional music training very late, even in their final year [of high school], because they realised that there was almost no chance of getting into a good university just by relying on their academic grades. Our school is the place offering a period of Yikao-targeted training for those students. (IT4)

Consequently, competing with those pre-professional Music Fuzhong students in the Yikao seemed to potentially disadvantage the students at the private music school; as IT4 said, 'Generally, we advise our students to primarily target university [music programmes] instead of conservatories and to improve their academic grades as much as they can, since universities value the academic result more'. This again shows the disparity of entry requirements between universities and conservatoires, as revealed in Section 6.4.2.

Aside from giving one-to-one Chinese vocal lessons in the private music school, IT4 was also responsible for teaching solfeggio and music theory in a classroom context with about 15-20 students. Previously trained as a Chinese-traditional vocal performer, IT4 did

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.2.

not receive ‘an in-depth professional training’ on aural skills and music theory and experienced challenges when they started teaching those classes: ‘Although the teaching materials and plans for the solfeggio and music theory classes were prepared by the course leaders, it was difficult for me to answer challenging questions asked by the students about music theory’. At the time of the interview, IT4 had taught those classes for two years and had become more experienced:

To be able to teach the classes with more confidence, I spent extra time mastering music theory and practising my aural skills at home through being immersed in the mock-exam exercises, as well as seeking help from the course leaders. It became easier when I got familiar with the different types of questions in the exams over the recent years and found the patterns within them.

In contrast, the training of solfeggio and music theory in the Music Fuzhong context was ‘systematic’ and was delivered by teachers who ‘graduated or worked at the conservatoire who specialised in solfeggio or composition’ (IT7). This appears to help the pre-professional students at the Music Fuzhong to be well-prepared for the Yikao: ‘[the students] received all the necessary training towards Yikao since they were young’ (IT7), and compared to the Music Fuzhong students’ Yikao results, IT7 expressed more concerns about the students’ academic results in the Gaokao: ‘There were always students who failed [to get admitted to the conservatoire] because of their poor academic results’.

### **6.6.2 Discussion: Teaching in music school contexts**

Differences between teacher expertise at private and conservatoire-affiliated music schools in China were evident in the findings: IT4 experienced both on-the-job (e.g. seeking help from their course leaders) and off-the-job learning (e.g. practising at home) as a private music school teacher in order to gain confidence in teaching music theory and aural skills aside from their specialised vocal expertise, while the teaching (subject and load) allocation at the Music Fuzhong seems to be more dedicated. This might cast doubt on the monitoring and regulation of private music education in China concerning teacher recruitment, qualification, and professional development, while also warranting concerns about educational equality across institutions. Whilst learning at work (typically informal) is an integral part of the workplace in general to meet the needs of the work (e.g. Felstead et al.,

2015; Gerken et al., 2018), and teachers learn a range of specific skills from their colleagues (Papay et al., 2020), more structured on-the-job support with an experienced individual as a mentor, featured by objective-orientation, practice, provision of feedback, evaluation and reflection is suggested by research (e.g. Al-Zoubi et al., 2022; Jacobs, 2003).

Differences also concerned the sources of the students enrolled in the two institutions. The Music Fuzhong students had received pre-professional music training at the primary or secondary level before their progression into the post-secondary level, while such training appeared to be absent in the prior learning experience of those students at the private music high school. Because of this absence, the suggestion concerning improving the academic grade given by IT4 to their private music school students might indicate inadequate teacher confidence in their students' musical skills, and perhaps a strategy to boost students' progression rates; additionally, this aligns with market-oriented competition and performativity in private education in China (Zhang & Bray, 2021; see Chapter 10, general discussion). Nevertheless, Bai (2021) identifies that the Music Fuzhong students have 'less pressure [...] to perform well academically, and [...] do not need to allocate as much time to academic course study' due to the direct progression from secondary to post-secondary level within the conservatoire-affiliated schooling system in China (p. 514); this could explain why IT7 worried more about their Music Fuzhong students' academic results compared to their performance in the Yikao. This again warrants concerns about the binary choice between school academic-subject leaning and musicianship-focused training in China, which may leave a challenging, as well as a risk-taking decision to make for school-age students (and for their parents) choosing their (child's) future educational pathways, in association with the disparity of entry requirements set by universities and conservatoires regarding the Yikao and the Gaokao results (also see Sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3.2).

## **6.7 Teaching in state school settings**

IT1, IT2, and IT3 taught music at the state primary or secondary school settings in China: the cities where IT1 and IT2 worked were inland second-tier cities, while IT3 worked in a coastal first-tier city. As elaborated by these CITs, the majority of their work was to give weekly

classroom music teaching based on the China national standardised *Music* textbooks<sup>76</sup> and the *Compulsory Education: Arts Curriculum Standards*,<sup>77</sup> formulated by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2022), PRC. Apart from classroom music teaching, IT1 undertook the teaching of the guzheng ensemble (Section 6.7.3), while IT2 facilitated the school choir rehearsal (Section 6.7.4). Additionally, as a state school music teacher, it did not seem unusual to have classroom teaching demonstration activities for professional development (Section 6.7.2) and school administrative work (Section 6.7.5).

### 6.7.1 Classroom music teaching

As described by the CITs (n=3), the sizes of the music classes at the state primary and secondary schools where they were responsible for teaching were large, ranging from 49 to 56 students in a single class, and they each had nine to 13 classes of students (which usually belonged to the same year of study such as Year 3 or Year 7) to teach once a week during semester dates (e.g. IT2 taught 11 different classes of Year 8 students at their school once a week). However, compared to the emphasis on sustaining and diversifying music classes at primary school (IT1; IT3), IT2 revealed that despite music being a compulsory subject at all levels,

The music classes needed to ‘make way’ for the key subjects<sup>78</sup> such as Chinese, maths, and English learning for the Zhongkao<sup>79</sup> to enter high school. When it came to the exam seasons,<sup>80</sup> there was no music class at all [lesson time was used for the key subjects],<sup>81</sup> and this was particularly the case for the secondary school students in their final year, they had no music class for almost the whole year.

Interestingly, these CITs mentioned their awareness of the educational policy change concerning the inclusion of music as one of the assessed subjects, despite the small proportion of marks allocated for music within the total score in the Zhongkao. This

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<sup>76</sup> The titles of the textbooks are ‘*Music (Year 1/2/3/...9)*’, ‘音乐(一年级/二年级/三年级/... 九年级)’ in Chinese, published by the People’s Music Publishing House (人民音乐出版社).

<sup>77</sup> ‘义务教育艺术课程标准(2022年版)’ in Chinese, published by Beijing Normal University Publishing Group (北京师范大学出版集团).

<sup>78</sup> ‘主科’ in Chinese; all three CITs mentioned this term in their interviews.

<sup>79</sup> China National High School Entrance Examination.

<sup>80</sup> This is usually at the end of the semester, e.g. in November/December (Autumn semester) or May/June (Summer semester).

<sup>81</sup> ‘占课’ in Chinese.

included ‘both a written and singing test [...] The [written-test] questions were like “Who is the composer Xian Xinghai?” and “What four groups of instruments constitute a Western orchestra?”’ (IT2). Nevertheless, IT2 further expressed their paradoxical feeling regarding this change:

It’s hard to say if it’s a good or bad thing. Although it seems that the status of the music subject has been elevated – to be assessed formally as other key subjects, and the students could learn more about the music-related knowledge, the reality is that they have to again start the exam-oriented memorisation, which eliminates all the fun.

This might also be the case for those teachers who have to teach for exams; parallels could be seen in private Chinese instrument teaching following performance examination syllabi (Section 6.4).

The classroom music teaching preparation, on the other hand, appeared to be individual teacher-dependent in terms of their selection and use of online materials to assist their teaching, given that the music teachers at their school ‘were assigned to teach different years of students’ respectively (IT2); contrastingly, ‘for the key-subject teachers, they have multiple people teach the same year of students,<sup>82</sup> so they can often plan their teaching together’ (IT2).<sup>83</sup> As detailed by these CITs, the *Music* textbooks were compiled by categorising the music into themes, such as ‘the themes of patriotic music, [Chinese] traditional music,<sup>84</sup> orchestra music, Western classical music, and film and TV drama music’ (IT2). Whilst ‘the teachers had the textbooks and the standardised teaching guidance’<sup>85</sup> as support (IT2), they attempted to diversify their teaching by integrating ‘storytelling for Year 1 to 3 students, [...] the Dalcroze method using the rhythmic body movement’ (IT3), and searching for online video/audio resources that were relevant to the content they taught: ‘The students became more concentrated when watching the online performances that were fun’ (IT2).

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<sup>82</sup> Considering the teaching load of key-subject teachers on a daily basis, they were not likely to be assigned to teach all classes of students in the same year as the music teachers were assigned.

<sup>83</sup> The term used in Chinese school settings to describe ‘planning the teaching together as a group’ is ‘集体备课’ in Chinese, for maintaining consistency and sharing approaches; see Yuan and Zhang (2016) for challenges and strategies about the collaborative planning in school contexts in China.

<sup>84</sup> This aligns more with Chinese ‘national music’ [minzu yinyue] (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3).

<sup>85</sup> ‘教学参考’ in Chinese.



Notably, concerning teachers' professional development, there appeared to be a difference between in-service school music teachers in the coastal first-tier and in-land second-tier cities in China: 'I'm aware that music teachers in the coastal first-tier cities are required to take the training of the Orff and Dalcroze methods,<sup>86</sup> but it's not the case for us in the second-tier city' (IT2). This was validated by IT3's experience of taking the short-term Dalcroze pedagogical training session: 'Taking the training and obtaining the certificate is compulsory for music teachers at our school. [...] We used the Dalcroze method quite often in [classroom music] teaching'. While this pedagogical training requirement cannot be generalised to represent situations in all school settings in the first-tier and second-tier cities in China based on the experiences of these two state school CITs, a disparity in the support of music teachers' professional development might indicate concerns relating to educational (in)equality across regions in China.

### **6.7.2 Classroom teaching demonstration activities**

All three CITs mentioned their participation in the classroom teaching demonstration activities, which were regularly organised within the school contexts during semesters and were not limited to the music subject: 'In this activity, several experienced teachers and school leaders would be invited as the audience and to provide both written and oral feedback to the teacher who demonstrated their classroom teaching' (IT2). IT1 positively recalled their experiences of demonstrating their music teaching:

I think the feedback I received was very useful. Though the [audience] teachers were not all music teachers and couldn't say much about the musical aspect, they could discover things such as your teaching pace, the teaching language you used, and the students' classroom behaviour [...] they gave you suggestions based on what they observed and their own teaching experiences. I also felt motivated when I received encouragement from the leaders and my colleagues.

However, IT2 and IT3 revealed a less positive experience of this music class demonstration activity when it went beyond the individual school context and was

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<sup>86</sup> As compared by Tabuena (2021), the Orff approach focuses on the play and improvisation of the music, utilising 'A mixture of Singing, Dancing, Acting, and the Use of Percussion Instruments', while the Dalcroze method uses the body as the primary instrument (p. 11).

organised by the Municipal Education Bureaus<sup>87</sup> in their local areas. This activity would become a competition where the music teachers were nominated by their schools respectively to 'plan, rehearse, and demonstrate' a music class with a class of primary or secondary school students assigned by the competition committee (IT3); each demonstrated class session was assessed and ranked by the committee to be awarded a prize. 'It's very stressful for teachers in the competition because you represented the whole school, and the teaching you demonstrated represented the teaching quality within your school' (IT2). IT3 stated:

It can consume all your energy to design a class that is as rich and diverse as possible, in a way that we might feel a little exaggerated in our daily teaching, a way we might not really adopt in daily teaching. [...] But it's how we teach normally that counts, isn't it? Then what's the point of teachers using their rehearsed classes to compete?

Interestingly, there appears to be a particular term used by school teachers that described the process of preparing and trialling the teaching session that would be demonstrated in the competition, which is 'Mo Ke [磨课]'.<sup>88</sup> IT3 stated that the nominated teacher could decide the teaching content for the competition within the school music syllabus, and they could trial the session with a class of students at their school as many times as they felt needed to; during this preparation process, 'the school and teaching team leaders were supportive and serious about this opportunity. They would join the mock sessions to give you feedback' (IT2). Whilst participating in the class demonstration activity and the competition within and beyond an individual school context could be helpful concerning the teachers' reflection and professional growth, the pre-rehearsed sessions might disrupt the spontaneity that a music class could have had, as well as the students' instantaneous responses to the teacher's teaching. Moreover, the competition context and the teacher's perception of being on behalf of the school might inevitably emphasise the competition result rather than the process, hence increasing the teacher's anxiety and reducing the learning outcomes for pupils.

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<sup>87</sup> '区/市教育局' in Chinese.

<sup>88</sup> The literal translation of 'Mo Ke' is to 'polish' and improve the teaching of the session by trialling the session repeatedly.

### 6.7.3 Chinese instrument ensemble teaching

As an extracurricular practice at their school, IT1 was responsible for teaching guzheng ensemble to a group of 12-15 students (Years 3 to 6): 'This guzheng ensemble group was a special feature developed and sustained by the headmaster at our school due to the culture preservation of Chinese traditional music in our city'; consequently, performance opportunities were available outside of the school context if 'there were activities organised by the local cultural or artistic community' (IT1). IT1 stated that this ensemble teaching ran on Wednesdays and Saturdays during semesters, and each class lasted 90 minutes; 'Sometimes our ensemble group would invite several students who learned yangqin, pipa or erhu to rehearse for a bigger performance event' (IT1). According to IT1, having the autonomy to decide which guzheng ensemble piece to teach and organise each class, as well as 'enjoying the rehearsal outcomes' were positive aspects of this teaching experience, while the extra time spent on searching for suitable teaching materials, planning, 'communicat[ing] with students' parents after class', and 'check[ing] each student's practice progress [in a WeChat group consisting of the students' parents]' were 'energy consuming, especially when there was an upcoming performance event'.

Apart from paying attention to 'the sight-reading and technical aspects' when teaching the guzheng ensemble, 'I also needed to improve my skills in conducting to remind the students of the tempo and expression markings using gestures' (IT1). Although IT1 expressed the usefulness of having had 'conducting classes for about two semesters' when they were an undergraduate music student, 'it's not enough when you start working as an independent conductor [at school]'. To be able to have the competence in leading the ensemble group, IT1 consolidated their conducting skills by 'learn[ing] from the free online lessons offered by professional conductors on Bilibili<sup>89</sup> and observing how other school teachers did in performances [...] but mainly learned from my own experiences', yet no further support from the school was mentioned by this CIT.

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<sup>89</sup> A widely used digital video-sharing platform in China: <https://www.bilibili.tv/en>.

#### 6.7.4 School choir facilitator

These CITs indicated that it was common that state schools had their school choirs for Year 3 to 9 students to ‘engage with teamwork and choir singing as suggested by the *Arts Curriculum Standards*’ (IT2) and to participate in the ‘annual school choir competition held by the Municipal Education Bureaus’ (IT2; IT3); however, only IT2 had the experience of facilitating the school choir rehearsals with their colleague: IT2 was responsible for playing the piano accompaniment and their colleague was the choir conductor. Specifically, their choir rehearsals ran three times a week and ‘were concentrated around the first two months leading up to the choir competition, as the rehearsals shouldn’t take up most of the time for the students’ key subjects learning’ (IT2). However, as the choir members were from different years of study and classes, challenges emerged when there were issues related to communication and coordination with the subject leaders:

Some subject leaders were not supportive of their students joining the choir, they felt it was a waste of time. They prioritised completing tasks in key subjects, which often led to the student’s absence from rehearsals, hence slowing down the progress. [...] The rehearsal would have been very difficult to carry out if the headmaster hadn’t effectively coordinated with the subject leaders. (IT2)

Additionally, IT2 expressed that,

The emphasis that a school [curriculum] places on the [...] subjects of music and art [including relevant activities] depends to a large extent on whether or not the headmaster of the school places importance on them [... influenced by] the policy and competing schools. The [developmental] orientation and environment of the school would be different [as a result]. My feelings on this are because we happened to have a new headmaster this year who was not as supportive [of the music teachers] as the last one was.

#### 6.7.5 Administrative work and the ‘in-the-system’ positionality

Another commonly recognised aspect among these state school CITs concerns the school administrative work, which would be assigned to ‘us “non-key subject”<sup>90</sup> teachers such as

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<sup>90</sup> ‘副科’ in Chinese.

music, art or PE teachers because we don't have as heavy a teaching load as the key subject teachers' (IT2). As elaborated by these CITs, the administration tasks included 'updating staff and students' documentation, managing staff attendance records, [...] assistance in evaluating teaching staff performance metrics, reception of visitors, organisational networking and outreach, such as interacting with people in the Municipal Education Bureau' (IT2), as well as organising 'school patriotic educational activities' (IT3) and 'the [Festival of Arts] event at school for students to showcase their instrumental, singing and dancing performances, and their painting work, exhibited on the wall' (IT1). According to these CITs, these latter activities were organised annually instead of on a regular basis. Specifically in the patriotic educational activities, IT3 stated,

The students were arranged to watch documentaries relating to Chinese traditional folk culture and lives in rural areas, patriotic and historical movies, or appreciate Chinese traditional music performances, and the students were invited to comment on what they watched and write down how they felt about it as their homework. [...] My responsibility was to do the overall planning, find the relevant materials with my colleagues and communicate with the school leaders.

Whilst the administrative work 'was sometimes an "arduous and thankless task"' (IT2)<sup>91</sup> and 'was very tiring when you had to balance it with your teaching work' (IT3), these CITs indicated the inevitability yet reasonableness for undertaking such responsibility in relation to their 'in-the-system'<sup>92</sup> positionality with a tenure track:<sup>93</sup>

I have a tenure track and am at an early-career phase, you know, sometimes you have to take extra administrative tasks set by your leaders, and they wouldn't assign the tasks to [short-term] contract teachers. [...] Although we as tenured teachers had more responsibility and heavier workload than contract teachers, we also had more income and the "in-the-system" benefits such as stability, the subsidy and annual bonuses. (IT2)

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<sup>91</sup> '吃力不讨好的工作' in Mandarin.

<sup>92</sup> '体制内' in Chinese.

<sup>93</sup> '编制 Bianzhi' in Chinese. Teachers with the Bianzhi in China are advantaged in 'lifelong employment, public housing subsidies, reliable health insurance, and stable salaries' (He et al., 2023, p. 3).

Additionally, IT2 disclosed that the contract teacher positions appeared to be increasingly available in school settings in China compared to the restricted number of tenured teacher positions released by the relevant governmental sectors every year in different regions: ‘getting a tenure track by taking the Bianzhi exam<sup>94</sup> is becoming harder for teachers [in China] due to too few positions and too many competitors’ (IT1).

### **6.7.6 Discussion: Teaching in state school settings**

Apart from their private Chinese instrument lessons (Section 6.4.1), findings exhibit the varied roles undertaken by the CITs when employed in the state school settings in China, including but not limited to classroom music teacher, Chinese instrument ensemble teacher, choir facilitator, and administrative organiser.

#### ***6.7.6.1 Teacher agency in state school settings***

It appears that the educational policy on the school subject of music, the environment within and beyond the individual school context, the school leaders and colleagues, as well as their students and students’ parents would impact how these in-service CITs think and act. Instead of simply attributing teacher agency to individual capacity, Priestley et al. (2015) highlight whether and how teachers achieve their agency is ‘both constrained and supported by discursive, material, and relational resources’ available to them, namely conversations with oneself and others, the environment, and structural relationships (p. 30). Whilst the educational policy change concerning the integration of the music assessment into the Chinese national examination system for secondary-level students might attract more attention to the school subject of music, the paradoxical feelings about teaching music within the exam-result-prioritised environment disclosed by IT2 might result from a wider dimension – the culture of accountability and performativity in educational contexts in general (Harris et al., 2020; Priestley et al., 2015; Wright & Shore, 2000; see the following

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<sup>94</sup> ‘考编’ in Mandarin, which belongs to ‘the exam-based recruitment system’ (Wang et al., 2023, p. 1) for permanent employment in ‘a Party or government administrative organ (jiguan), a service organization (shiye danwei) or a working unit (qiye)’ (Brødsgaard, 2002, p. 364). The teacher Bianzhi belongs to the service organisation (shiye danwei), and teachers generally are not required to be involved in any political parties, although this involvement would be useful for a career progression towards official administration roles at state schools in China. The Bianzhi exam includes both the written and teaching (usually 15 minutes) tests (Teacher Bianzhi Analysis, 2022).

Section 6.7.6.2 and Chapter 10 for more discussion). Within this culture, Priestley et al. (2015) found that teachers would act for 'survival rather than the realization of long-term aspirations' (p. 95); this seems to be at odds with IT2's understanding of music teaching for enabling fun.

The structural relationship in a hierarchy within the state school contexts in China appears to be evident, from the distinction between the 'key' and 'non-key' subjects as understood by the CITs, as well as the prioritisation made by the school leaders and headteachers between those subjects. This hierarchical situation seems to challenge the CITs' implementation of the school music curriculum such as the compromise of time yielding to the other subjects during the exam seasons and the management of the school choir, especially when the supportive coordination from the school leaders/headteachers became scarce or even absent. Parallels could be seen from two high school contexts as uncovered by Priestley et al. (2015), in which teachers who were more able to achieve agency in the new curriculum enactment were more likely in a reciprocal and collaborative working environment rather than hierarchical. Notably, the city culture that emphasised the value and preservation of Chinese traditional music experienced by IT1 appears to help with their work in leading the guzheng ensemble group with the support from their school agenda and the local cultural and artistic community; this may arise from the branding practices for promoting symbolic economy in cities in China by the commodification of culture (Wang & Feng, 2023), which could perhaps in turn help with the school branding and enhancing the school's prestige.

#### ***6.7.6.2 Teacher discourses and performativity***

Competition/demonstration between teachers' classroom music teaching, administrative work and position of employment seem to constitute these state school CITs' recall and discourse on 'the situations in which they act' (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 60), apart from the aspects of educational policy and structural relationship. Priestley et al. (2015) believe that what and how teachers talk (i.e. vocabularies and discourses) present 'the ways in which they see and reflect on their practice and [...] the ways in which such seeing and thinking help or hinder the achievement of agency' (p. 59). When talking about the experiences of classroom teaching demonstration (competition) activities, it appears that the CITs focused more on factors such as meticulous preparation, stress, evaluation, and school prestige that

might be enhanced by a superior competition result, leading to their ‘exaggerated’, unusual way of teaching (IT3). This aligns with the impact of performance measurements on teachers to perform, meeting external targets in a particular way (Harris et al., 2020), which contrasts with the discourses and vocabularies centring around ‘student-centred, dialogical and active pedagogy [...] establishing good relationships with [students]’ and not only the result (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 94), when teachers are active developers instead of producers of performance statistics (Biesta, 2015a). However, as education is embedded in the public sphere with performative and external pressures (Priestley et al., 2015), institutions’ prestige reinforces their sustainability and competitiveness (Miotto et al., 2020), yet ‘maintaining or enhancing a public image of a “good school” [means that] less time and energy is spent on pedagogic and curricular substance’ (Apple, 2001, p. 416).

The tendency of recruiting contract teachers disclosed by the CITs appears to be in line with the situation where ‘Short-term and fixed term contracts in many countries, replaced secure employment’ (p. 3) due to crises such as austerity measures as highlighted by Symeonidis (2015) and system-wide performativity in the Chinese educational settings (Wang & Jones, 2021). Whilst these CITs felt obliged to take extra administrative work because of their stable in-the-system employment, they also mentioned it as an ‘arduous and thankless task’ (IT2). Research by He et al. (2023) underscores the double-edged effect of the tenure system in China: while it provides long-term career stability for teachers, it also requires extensive obligations (e.g. socioemotional aspects such as fairness, satisfaction and promises)<sup>95</sup> from both the teacher and the employer parties. He et al. (2023) draw attention to the stronger negative emotions/behaviours of tenured teachers, triggered by a psychological contract breach<sup>96</sup> when they perceive less support and disrespect by their working environment compared to those non-tenure-track teachers who focus more on ‘economic exchanges, such as remuneration and [specific] work tasks’ (Ibid., p. 3). Additionally, the on-the-job learning was reflected in their development of skills such as music class planning and choir/ensemble teaching/conducting; however, corresponding

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<sup>95</sup> See Rousseau and McLean Parks (1993) for more explanations.

<sup>96</sup> A ‘subjective perceived contextual feature that impacts thriving at work’ (He et al. 2023, p. 2) based on ‘an employee’s beliefs about the reciprocal obligations’ between themselves and their working institution (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 229).



institutional support for these CITs appears to be lacking and displayed disparities across city tiers in China (e.g. the training of the Dalcroze method, Section 6.7.1).

### **6.7.6.3 Values and ideological education in educational settings**

The findings indicate that Chinese traditional music, traditional culture, and patriotic music have been an integral part of music education in the Chinese context, embodied in the content of the school music textbook, the *Arts Curriculum Standards*, and the extracurricular educational activities. This aligns with the deployment of Chinese nationalism ideology and moral values in educational settings, where music serves as an ingredient ‘not only in school education but in fostering loyalty and good citizenship in students’ to enhance their national and cultural identity for social harmony and economic development (Ho, 2018, 2021, p. 238). However, while the Chinese teacher-participants in Ho’s (2021) study acknowledged the educational value of teaching Chinese traditional and folk music, they expressed the need of in-service training to teach effectively those types of nationalistic and traditional music and were aware that their students showed less interest in learning patriotic songs. Moreover, this citizenship-oriented ideological/moral education in the Chinese context underpinned by the values of Confucianism (Ho, 2021) appears to be dissimilar from the citizenship development in Western countries, which focuses on students’ agency, self-esteem, self-identity, self-determination, and community (service) engagement as part of their cognitive development (Cappella et al., 2016).

## **6.8 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter illuminates the complex interplay of music/instrumental/vocal teaching practices, institutional frameworks, and societal norms, thereby addressing several key research questions about the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across specific educational contexts in China. Specifically, the findings reveal the characteristics of the teaching practices across private, school, and higher education settings in China (RQ1), while also uncovering the pathways and professional development of CITs (RQ2), as well as their pedagogical work, beliefs and challenges influenced by the aspects articulated below (RQ3 and RQ4).

The findings present interconnected themes of teacher roles, educational contexts, and broader systemic influences impacting those China-domiciled in-service CITs' teaching practices and their students' outcomes (Section 6.1). In private settings, CITs affiliated with state schools tended to work with school-age amateur learners, emphasising exam-focused instrumental teaching (Section 6.4.1). In contrast, those employed by music schools or higher education institutions (HEIs) primarily taught advanced students preparing for higher music education admissions, balancing repertoire learning with more advanced musical skills development (Section 6.4.2). This distinction in pupil demographics and learning objectives may underscore the adaptive teaching strategies employed by CITs across different contexts and the impact of the CITs' employment contexts and status (Section 6.4.3). Notably, the pervasive influence of performance examinations emerged as a central theme, shaping both teaching focus and student/parent aspirations. The emphasis on the performance examination repertoire as the core teaching material may reflect broader societal and educational norms in the Chinese context, influencing perceptions of achievement and engagement in music learning (Section 6.4.3.1). Despite the potential benefits of fostering learner autonomy and self-regulation particularly highlighted in Western pedagogical literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3), CITs in China might face challenges in learning and integrating these principles within an exam-centred framework.

In higher education settings, CITs demonstrated their agency in navigating their roles, adapting teaching practices to meet diverse student needs (Section 6.5.2). However, their pedagogical approaches often relied on personal experiences rather than formal training; the absence of formal pedagogical training among CITs suggests a critical gap in their professional development, potentially hindering the adoption of evidence-based instrumental/vocal pedagogical practices (Section 6.5.4.1). While CPD opportunities were available, they predominantly focused on performance skills rather than pedagogical methods, potentially limiting CITs' opportunity to enhance their teaching practices (Sections 6.5.3 and 6.5.4.3). This finding calls for more targeted CPD initiatives that could integrate pedagogical training alongside performance skills enhancement. Additionally, higher music education curriculum disparities were reflected in musicianship-focused training in conservatories and broader interdisciplinary education in universities, which may suggest the need for approaches to music education that balance musicianship with broader academic competencies, as well as pedagogical support for Chinese instrument students

exploring diverse career paths in music (Sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.4.2). Moreover, CITs in the Chinese HE identified inadequate training in academic (music) research, contributing to negative perceptions of career development (Sections 6.5.3 and 6.5.4.3). Challenges in academic networking for publication also reveal the cultural significance of the Guanxi in Chinese society, impacting CITs' access to publishing opportunities and collaborative research efforts.

The concept of the Guanxi emerged as pivotal in understanding the educational (eco)system surrounding Chinese instrument teaching (Section 6.4.3.2). It appears that the Guanxi could facilitate networks among parents, teachers, and educational institutions, influencing educational pathways and opportunities for students. However, its uneven distribution and implications for educational equity may suggest a need for institutional policies that could mitigate potential inequalities in access to music/instrumental/vocal education in China. Furthermore, differences in admission requirements between conservatories and universities highlight the complex choices students face regarding their academic and musical trajectories (Sections 6.4.2 and 6.6.1); this also reveals the impact of admission requirements in higher music education, contrasting the emphasis on standardised, high-stake tests (the Yikao and Gaokao) in China with more multifaceted evaluation criteria in international contexts (Section 6.4.3.3). This may not only affect student preparation strategies but also provoke thoughts for alternative possibilities aiming at diversifying music education criteria in China against the exam-centredness articulated by these participants.

Finally, state school settings uncover varying levels of teacher agency influenced by educational policies and structural hierarchies (Section 6.7), where ideological and values education, including the promotion of Chinese traditional music and patriotic music, tends to be a continuing priority in school settings in China. However, the integration of music into the Zhongkao might reinforce the culture of performativity and accountability in the Chinese educational context, impacting CITs' teaching objectives and professional satisfaction as school music teachers. In music school contexts, CITs may face challenges related to teacher expertise and institutional support/resources, while differences in student backgrounds and preparation appear to underscore concerns about educational equity and teacher confidence in fostering students' musical development (Section 6.6). The dimensions of music/instrumental/vocal teacher professional development, performativity,

accountability, and structural hierarchy within the Chinese music (teacher) educational context uncovered in this chapter are further discussed in Chapter 10. The next chapter exhibits findings from the case of student-teacher CITs on the UK MA course concerning their cross-cultural pedagogical learning and practice experiences.

# Chapter 7: UK MA Student-teacher CITs' Perspectives on Instrumental Pedagogical Education and Practices across Cultures

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## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter offers findings emerging from a single case analysis concerning 16 student-teacher CITs taking the MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course (the MA/course hereafter) at the University of York, UK (Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1). Detailed in Sections 7.2 and 7.3 are the data collection process and the demographic profiles of the participants. To distinguish the UK-trained pre-service CITs from the China-domiciled pre-service CITs, the term 'student-teacher' and the abbreviation 'ST' are used to present findings from these UK MA CITs throughout the thesis.

In the interviews, these student-teacher CIT participants disclosed their learning and teaching experiences in China prior to their UK study, and reflected on why they chose to take the MA course, their perceptions of differences in instrumental/vocal pedagogical cultures, as well as their beliefs, challenges and strategies for navigating cross-cultural learning and adaptation. Emerged from the data analysis, findings are organised into the following three themes, each with multiple subsections: Chinese instrument teaching practices prior to the MA study (Section 7.4, discussed in Section 7.4.5); awareness of aspects that influence instrumental pedagogical practices in the Chinese context (Section 7.5, discussed further in Section 7.5.3); cross-cultural instrumental/vocal pedagogical learning: awareness of pedagogical differences, adaptations and implementations, and challenges (Section 7.6, discussed further in Section 7.6.6). As a result, this chapter addresses the research questions as follows:

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

## 7.2 Data collection

In addition to examining Chinese instrument learning and teaching experiences in China, the interview questions designed for this cross-cultural investigation were to explore the four aspects (i.e. metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behaviour) of cultural intelligence (CQ)<sup>97</sup> of these individual student-teacher CITs studying in the UK HE in an open-ended manner; the questions asked about their awareness and feelings of differences in instrumental pedagogical cultures, pedagogical beliefs as CITs, experiences and strategies in cross-cultural learning and adaptation, mindset and behavioural adjustments and challenges encountered during their MA study in the UK. No rationale for the CQ theory was explained to the participants in advance of the interviews to maintain the spontaneity, 'interconnectedness and internal coherence' of responses (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 662).

Invitations to take part in this investigation were sent by the researcher to student-teacher CITs on the MA course via email in each academic year 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 respectively,<sup>98</sup> including a research information sheet and consent form in both Mandarin and English. However, due to a low email response rate, a second message was individually sent to each student-teacher CIT via WeChat two weeks later, according to habits of the social media usage of Chinese students using WeChat (Hou et al., 2021) rather than email for increasing the response rate.<sup>99</sup> Student-teacher CITs who agreed to participate in this research had returned their signed consent forms. A pilot interview was

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<sup>97</sup> The CQ theoretical framework is detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4.

<sup>98</sup> The MA course leader helped with providing institutional UoY email addresses of student-teachers who specialised in a Chinese instrument during the relevant academic years.

<sup>99</sup> There was an official online group on WeChat for international postgraduate music students from China enrolled in each academic year at the Music Department, University of York, for chats and information sharing; this was organised by the staff of the departmental International Office. With the approval of the staff, the researcher joined the WeChat groups to contact individual student-teacher CITs.

conducted with one participant within each academic year, following which some questions were adjusted or added to gather appropriate data.

Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in the UK in 2021 and 2022, semi-structured online interviews in Mandarin were conducted in March/July/October 2021 with three student-teacher CITs (September 2020/21 or January 2021/22 entries),<sup>100</sup> and in September 2022 with six student-teacher CITs (September 2021/22 entry) using Zoom. In May 2023, in-person, semi-structured interviews in Mandarin were conducted with seven student-teacher CITs (September 2022/23 entry) in a study room in the university library. The interviews lasted between 53 and 87 minutes. This timeline allowed for gathering data from multiple cohorts of Chinese international student-teachers on the MA course with a variety of Chinese instruments they specialised in, as it appeared that relatively more guzheng student-teachers were studying on the course compared to erhu, pipa, dizi or yangqin student-teachers; this diversity of Chinese instrument learning and teaching backgrounds could enrich the data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of impacts of this cross-cultural pedagogical learning.

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings in Mandarin, reviewing them multiple times to ensure accuracy. Participants then validated the Mandarin transcripts, which were subsequently translated into English by the researcher. Each participant was assigned a unique code (ST1/2/3... etc.), which is used when presenting their quotations to ensure anonymity.

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<sup>100</sup> These three student-teacher CITs (specialising in guzheng) participated in three rounds of online interviews in the longitudinal study (Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2 on the rationale) – 1<sup>st</sup> round in March 2021, 2<sup>nd</sup> round in July 2021, and 3<sup>rd</sup> round in October 2021 – for exploring more nuanced aspects of their pedagogical transformations in teaching one particular Chinese instrument – guzheng, i.e. examining ‘changes during a defined period [...] with the same respondents/[interviewees] twice or more’ (Kalinauskaitė, 2017, p. 125). These three guzheng student-teachers also belonged to this single case of the UK MA student-teacher CITs; the interview questions informed by the CQ framework were asked in their third round of interviews, and their interview data contributed to the findings exhibited in this chapter. The findings generated from the longitudinal study are detailed in Chapter 8, with the data collection methods and procedure articulated in Section 8.2.

### 7.3 Interviewees' demographic data

**Table 7.1:** Information about the interview participants, including their instrument, age, teaching experiences, and their pupils.

UK MA Student-Teacher	MA course enrolment	Learning and teaching instrument	Age	Teaching experiences in China prior to the UK MA course	Teaching experiences during the MA course	Their pupils
ST1	September 2020-2021	guzheng	23	Private guzheng teacher at a music institution; teaching guzheng group lessons at a primary school	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, <sup>101</sup> not regularly	Many school-age pupils and a few adult pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
ST2	September 2020-2021	guzheng	23	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Some school-age pupils and some adult pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
ST3	January 2021-2022	guzheng	22	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Private online guzheng teaching with school-age and adult pupils, regularly; also taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons	Some school-age pupils and some adult pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
ST4	September 2021-2022	guzheng	23	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
ST5	September 2021-2022	guzheng	24	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
ST6	September 2021-2022	guzheng	22	Teaching guzheng group lessons at a primary school for a semester	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner level

<sup>101</sup> Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.1.



<b>ST7</b>	September 2021-2022	guzheng	24	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner level; had one adult pupil over 50 at a beginner level
<b>ST8</b>	September 2021-2022	pipa	23	Private pipa teacher, self-employed	Taught pipa one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Three early-age pupils at a beginner level; two adult pupils at a beginner level
<b>ST9</b>	September 2021-2022	Dizi (bamboo flute)	27	Private dizi teacher at a music studio	Private dizi teaching with school-age pupils, regularly; also taught dizi one-to-one for the course assessed lessons	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner or intermediate level
<b>ST10</b>	September 2022-2023	guzheng	24	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner level
<b>ST11</b>	September 2022-2023	guzheng	23	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly children at a beginner level
<b>ST12</b>	September 2022-2023	guzheng	23	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio who also supervised piano practice one-to-one	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly children at a beginner or intermediate level
<b>ST13</b>	September 2022-2023	guzheng	24	Private guzheng teacher at a music studio	Taught guzheng one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Some school-age pupils and some adult pupils at a beginner level
<b>ST14</b>	September 2022-2023	yangqin	24	Private yangqin teacher at a music studio who also had Chinese instrument ensemble teaching at a school	Taught yangqin one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly school-age pupils at a beginner/intermediate/advanced level
<b>ST15</b>	September 2022-2023	erhu	24	Private erhu teacher at a music studio	Taught erhu one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly children and several adults at a beginner level
<b>ST16</b>	September 2022-2023	erhu	23	Private erhu teacher at a music studio who also had classroom music teaching at a school	Taught erhu one-to-one for the course assessed lessons, not regularly	Mostly children at a beginner level

## **7.4 Chinese instrument teaching practices prior to the MA study**

Prior to these student-teacher CITs' MA studies in the UK, their experiences working as part- and full-time CITs in private or school settings in China enabled them to develop their ways of teaching. Directive verbal instructions, demonstration and imitation, technology assistance (e.g. using online resources), and extrinsic rewards were the specific strategies frequently mentioned by these student-teachers when they taught in China.

### **7.4.1 Directive verbal instructions**

The application of verbal strategies identified by student-teachers in their pre-MA teaching presented a mixed pattern relating to narrative and metaphor. To enhance their pupils' understanding of the pieces of music they taught, many student-teachers reported concentrating on introducing the background information of the pieces being taught by using descriptions (n=5): for instance, 'If the student could understand the background of how this music was created or composed [...] this would benefit the student to express their understanding and emotions relating to the music' (ST3). Additionally, they would describe the emotion or scenario that the music might convey for their pupil: 'I would tell my pupil what the piece is supposed to sound like, as some pieces are sorrowful, and some are cheerful and passionate' (ST3). ST9 considered that the necessity of introducing the background information to the pupil was due to the characteristics of the repertoire being taught: 'Most of the [dizi] pieces were traditional ones and descriptive in nature, developed based on festival celebration scenes or natural landscapes [as seen by composers in China]. Pupils need to know this to better understand the music'.

For younger pupils, some student-teachers mentioned that they adopted a metaphorical approach, engaging the pupil's imagination: 'I asked the pupil to imagine that the music was trying to talk to them, with a louder or softer voice, which could help them understand the dynamics more easily' (ST3); similarly, ST14 noted that imagination could help 'improve the pupil's musical expression, and I would describe the scene [related to the piece] for my pupil'. Moreover, verbal instructions were reported to have been straightforwardly provided by student-teachers in teaching, such as saying 'stronger', 'weaker', or 'louder' to their pupils.

### **7.4.2 Demonstration and imitation**

Many student-teachers mentioned their frequent use of demonstration in their teaching (n=6), due to its 'direct' and 'time-saving' effect (e.g. ST2; ST3). ST2 was aware of the indispensability of adopting this approach in their lessons from their pupils' needs: 'All my pupils wanted me to demonstrate, otherwise they didn't know how to play'. ST3 identified using demonstration as a supplement to verbal teaching: 'I found that my student couldn't understand if I only taught verbally. If I demonstrated to the student, they could quickly "get on the right track"'. Equally, it appeared that the pupil imitating the teacher's playing would usually follow the teacher's demonstration: 'I think imitating the teacher's demonstration is an essential step in learning, especially when learning a new piece' (ST15). Interestingly, ST11 noted that when they were a learner, they were used to imitating 'famous [guzheng] players' interpretations of the pieces, if a video of their performance was available online'; as disclosed by ST6, this learning strategy was also suggested by their previous guzheng teacher. Moreover, ST2 and ST7 stated that they also imitated the pupil's incorrect playing in the lessons; ST2 regarded this as an effective strategy, which helped their pupil self-identify the problems through the teacher's imitation.

### **7.4.3 Technology-assisted teaching**

Many student-teachers indicated their employment of technology-assisted strategies in their pre-MA teaching, including watching online videos of expert guzheng performance together with the pupil (ST2; ST8), listening to audio recordings on a digital platform (ST1), and recording the pupil's playing for their self-reference (n=4): 'I recorded the pupil's playing in the lesson to show them the effect of their performance so that they could observe their playing as an audience' (ST2); likewise, ST16 encouraged their pupil to record their playing when practising at home, as 'details in the playing would be overlooked [by the pupil], the recording could help them be aware of those details'. The effectiveness of using performance videos for introducing a piece to the pupil was recognised by ST2: 'Watching the video can familiarise the pupil with the music and give them a general impression [of the music]'. Furthermore, two student-teachers acknowledged a double effect of the

widespread use of digital platforms in China, such as the ‘Rednote’<sup>102</sup> and Bilibili,<sup>103</sup> where there were a variety of videos of performances and the teaching of Chinese instruments shared by independent Chinese instrument players or teachers: although ‘pupils could learn from the available videos, many players [on the platforms who shared their performances] were not professional and even taught incorrect things’ (ST5); ST12 expressed that they would not encourage their pupil to learn from the online resources, as ‘the online materials are of varying qualities’.

#### **7.4.4 Extrinsic rewards**

The use of rewards was also mentioned by some student-teachers, especially when they taught in private music studio settings: ‘The place I worked for displayed many small gifts on the shelf to attract children’s attention, and the children were told [by the teacher] if they learn well they could get the gifts’ (ST1); ‘If they [the pupil] practised well, they would be rewarded with small stickers [by me], which could be exchanged for a gift when they had a certain number of stickers’ (ST2). However, ST14 indicated the inefficiency of this reward-stimulation strategy, ‘if the pupil did not really want to learn the instrument themselves’. Likewise, ST3 recognised that ‘[The frequency of the pupil’s practice] depended on whether they really liked learning the instrument, as some of my pupils were influenced by the children around them who learned guzheng, or their parents who wanted them to learn it’. Although this may show that some student-teachers were aware of the crucial role of intrinsic interests in instrumental learning and the influences of peer students and parents on the pupil, it appeared that the teacher’s use of extrinsic rewards was prevalent in the Chinese context of teaching young learners.

#### **7.4.5 Discussion: Chinese instrument teaching practices prior to MA study**

Specific approaches adopted by the student-teachers in their pre-MA teaching in China included directive verbal instructions, demonstration and imitation, use of performance recordings, and providing rewards. The purpose of the student-teachers’ use of verbal instructions, however, showed limited signs of developing two-way teacher-pupil

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<sup>102</sup> ‘小红书’ in Chinese, a popular video-sharing platform in China.

<sup>103</sup> A digital video-sharing platform widely used by Chinese people: <https://www.bilibili.tv/en>; this was also mentioned by an in-service CIT in Chapter 6, Section 6.7.3.

interactions such as dialogic teaching of asking questions and building on the answers (e.g. Meissner, 2021). The findings also suggest that the student-teachers' application of directive approaches aimed to increase the pace of teaching and ensure efficiency (e.g. time-saving); this may indicate a prioritisation of teachers' teaching pace over students' learning pace in the student-teachers' teaching practices in China and might neglect their pupils' learning needs. This also aligns with the Chinese pedagogy comprising 'teacher-directed explicit instructions', teacher talking, and result-oriented learning, as disclosed by Li et al. (2012, p. 611).

Reasons for these teacher-centred practices might be related to the pressure of the graded exams and parental expectations, which appeared to shape the pupil's purpose of learning the instrument and their passive learning behaviours in the Chinese context. This passive style of learning is also shown by other studio-based instrumental learners in the Chinese context, with no agency engaged in the selection of teachers and repertoire (Lee & Leung, 2020). Additionally, as identified by Mullen (2017), teachers are often under pressure from students' parents who expect exam-based teaching. This sense of accountability pressure is highly likely to prevent teachers from being creative in practice, considering the consequences of being perceived as contrary to external expectations (Beghetto, 2019).

The findings showed that student-teachers had different views of providing rewards to their pupils. In-kind rewards are regarded as something that stimulates people's actions externally, namely extrinsic motivation (Renwick & McPherson, 2002; Ryan, 2019). The effect of being motivated extrinsically leads to short-term and low-efficiency productivity (Ryan, 2019). In other words, if the pupil takes a Chinese instrument lesson and is only driven by being rewarded (or their parent's expectation), they are less likely to consistently make high-quality efforts in learning and daily practising. Nevertheless, a study by Bear et al. (2016) reports a higher frequency of providing rewards to students in school contexts in China, compared to other cultural contexts (e.g. the school settings in the US and Japan). In contrast, finding enjoyment and interest in doing the activity itself demonstrates an intrinsic motivation, which helps individuals persist in the active process through internalised perceptions such as satisfaction and happiness (Ryan, 2019).

Digital technology appeared to have assisted some student-teachers' teaching. This aligns with technology having been increasingly utilised in music teaching contexts due to the technological integration relating to people's lives, school settings, and the music itself

(Bauer, 2020). Creech and Gaunt (2012) advocate the usefulness of web-based resources in facilitating students' independent music learning, including digital recordings of students' performances for reviewing; however, concerns about the quality of online materials were evident in the current finding, suggesting a need for careful curation of resources as a teacher. Moreover, Bauer (2020) points out the intertwined connections among subject/content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge in music teaching, which requires teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogical purposes and ways of using technologies and to consider how these dimensions can be effectively integrated to achieve their students' learning outcomes. This may be of inspiration for IVT education concerning an integration of technological knowledge into pedagogical (content) knowledge.

## **7.5 Perceptions of aspects influencing pedagogical practices in the Chinese context**

### **7.5.1 Perceptions of pupils' characteristics**

Student-teachers indicated their use of different approaches in teaching based on their pupils' age, which mainly concerned agency for learning between school-age and adult pupils. Some student-teachers discovered that their adult pupils were clearly aware of why they wanted to learn guzheng and what kinds of pieces they were interested in learning (n=4). Contrastingly, most of their school-aged pupils seemed to be inexplicit about their learning aims, apart from the graded exam certification-focused expectations from some of the pupils' parents (n=5). The adult pupils therefore demonstrated a higher level of learner autonomy, through 'self-learning ability, and they had looked up the information of the piece online before I taught it to them' (ST3). Moreover, an active amateur learner from a university impressed ST3, as 'they often asked me a lot of questions and [proactively] gave me feedback on their [home] practice, which made the lesson more effective'. Interestingly, despite the adult pupils' agency in self-motivating their guzheng learning, ST3 revealed that their school-aged pupils appeared to practise guzheng and attend lessons more regularly than their adult pupils, thanks to the parents' supervision; the adult pupils of ST1 were busy with their daily work and 'had very limited time practising after the lessons, leading to slow progress'.

The learning agency exhibited by the pupils in different age groups appeared to in turn affect some student-teachers' diversification of their teaching content relating to music theory and reading notations: 'I only taught this knowledge [music theory] to adult students' (ST3), and 'music theory is simpler for them [adult pupils] to understand' (ST1). Interestingly, ST1 and ST3 mentioned both their school-aged and adult pupils' resistance to learning the staff/clef notation due to a lack of interest and their customary use of numbered notation;<sup>104</sup> this may narrow the range of selected teaching material considering pieces written in diverse notation formats. Additionally, because of the characteristics presented by the school-aged pupils such as limited concentration and dependence on the teacher's actions (n=4), ST3 and ST4 emphasised that their lessons with children were more 'vivid/creative' than with adults, through more frequent employment of 'musical games [...]' such as naming some rhythm patterns for recognising them in the piece [being taught]' (ST4) and connecting knowledge to 'things they [children] were familiar with in their daily life. For example, how to divide the beats like cutting fruits' (ST1).

Furthermore, pupils' passive learning habits were identified by some student-teachers when they taught in the Chinese context: 'I found that some pupils didn't know what they really wanted to learn' (ST2), and pupils appeared to wait for tasks assigned by the teacher (ST8; ST11). ST1 had a similar experience, where 'the pupil wouldn't take the initiative to say that "I think this piece sounds good so I want to learn it" [...], the pupil was more used to following the teacher's instructions'. For after-lesson practising, 'very few pupils would go to find extra resources or performance videos to learn actively' (ST1). Nevertheless, the student-teachers did not explicitly illustrate that they had provided opportunities for their pupils to express their thoughts and preferences concerning the music (e.g. asking their pupil what they preferred or were interested in learning).

### **7.5.2 Perceptions of expectations from pupils' parents and employers**

Student-teachers mentioned that they taught mostly school-aged pupils in China and sometimes had after-lesson communications with the pupils' parents concerning the pupil's learning progress and home practice. They revealed that their pupils' parents 'respected their child's wishes [to learn the instrument]' (ST3) but some also expressed an exam-

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<sup>104</sup> The numbered notation is usually used in learning Chinese instruments.

focused learning objective on behalf of their child (n=5): 'the expectation of Chinese parents was that their child could pass the [graded] exam successfully, and a higher mark is better (ST1). ST3 stated that 'An important goal for elementary and secondary school students to learn an instrument was to take the graded exams for certificates'; a similar perception was held by ST5 and ST14.

As understood by ST3, a sense of ambivalence relating to the perspective of Chinese parents on the child's instrumental learning might also be shown in the parents' attitudes towards progress-making and the pressure on the child:

When the child starts to learn a new technique that is more advanced, the parent wants to see an immediate result of their child's practice, such as mastering the technique in the music piece within two or three weeks, but this is impossible because improvement requires time [...] So I could only ask the parent to be patient. Although they wanted to see [fast] progress [in their child's learning], they also didn't want to put too much pressure on their child, as the pressure from the school [study] was enough.

As revealed by the student-teachers, the progression-oriented sociocultural expectation was largely manifested in their interactions with the pupils' parents and their employers at the music studios (n=3). The importance placed on perceptible progression by 'consumers' (i.e. parents and adult pupils), a word used by ST1, made ST1 'subconsciously speed up the teaching pace by teacher dominance' to avoid pupil attrition. ST2 and ST3 had part-time teaching experiences at private music studios, and the ability to retain students was highly valued by ST2's previous employer. This was reflected in ST1's understanding of their working experience at a private music institution in China:

There were many [institution] options for students and parents to choose from [...] When I started working at the institution, I felt that teachers had gradually become a kind of service profession. For example, as a parent [...] came to learn guzheng as an adult [pupil], if I felt that the learning progress was slow, then I could change [to study at] another institution.

Additionally, parental involvement in the child's learning process, such as sitting in the teaching room during the lesson, was intentionally avoided by some student-teachers



because of interference incidents that had negatively affected their teaching. ST2 described the role played by the parent they encountered as a 'middleman' who 'repeat[ed] my words to their child, "the teacher said this this this, and you need to do like this!" which occupied the time in my lesson'. Similarly, ST3 mentioned that

sometimes the child would be distracted by their parent [...] the child might peek at their parent's facial expressions [...] if the child didn't pay attention to what I was talking about, the parent would directly call the full name of the child in a serious tone.

Furthermore, the parents' direct interference made some student-teachers feel 'uncomfortable' and 'embarrassed' (n=4), which may not be conducive to a healthy parent-pupil-teacher relationship, where parents support 'children's evaluation as self-regulating musicians' and respect for the teacher (Upitis et al., 2017, p. 84).

### **7.5.3 Discussion: Chinese instrument teaching practices prior to MA study**

#### ***7.5.3.1 Pupils' characteristics***

The findings revealed the influences of pupils' age and agency on the teaching of student-teachers. Student-teachers acknowledged that their younger pupils tended to rely heavily on teacher direction and external validation from their parents, compared to adult pupils who demonstrated greater autonomy and motivation in learning. According to Bandura's (2008) theory of self-as-agent, the four components concerning intentionality (e.g. self-planning), forethought (i.e. anticipating outcomes of actions), self-regulation, and self-efficacy are the key for oneself to take ownership of their learning. Whilst 'Agency is integral to students' ability to regulate, control, and monitor their own learning' (Code, 2020, p. 3), scholars also highlight that agency should not be seen solely as an inherent trait of individuals (i.e. capacity) but as a relational outcome shaped by the context in which it operates (i.e. achievement of agency), thus the interaction between individual capacities and the ecological conditions determines whether the agency can be achieved by individuals (Archer, 1996; Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al., 2012). This may concern whether students are provided with an environment or conditions by teachers that could enable them to achieve their agency in learning, while limited opportunities provided by the

student-teachers (or some of the pupils' parents) for the pupils to independently make choices, think about and/or interpret the piece being taught were evident in the findings.

### ***7.5.3.2 External expectations in the Chinese context***

The findings may indicate a significant impact of Chinese parents on the participants' teaching, reflected in the parents' expectations of fast progress and gaining graded exam certificates. Parents here appeared to regard the exam certificate as proof of their child's experience of learning an instrument while potentially neglecting the child's inner motivation/interest in learning it. Similarly, research by Bai (2021) disclosed that some Chinese parents view instrumental learning as 'a pragmatic tool to facilitate direct entry into the best possible education' (p. 521), whilst the aesthetic enjoyment of music learning and development of musicianship (Hallam & Himonides, 2022) may be neglected. For Chinese parents, their involvement in the child's development includes 'care, concern, and love for the child in addition to governing the child' (Ren & Edwards, 2015, p. 621), influenced by the inherited Chinese culture in which parental authority prevailed (Hu & Feng, 2022).

Interestingly, in Ren and Edwards' (2015) study, parent-participants from three cities in China self-reported their parenting style as democratic instead of authoritarian; this seems to contrast with some of the student-teachers' perceptions of the parents who demonstrated insecure guidance through their directiveness and verbal hostility during the lessons. The parents' expectations of exam taking, faster progression, and less pressure were perceived by some student-teachers; this appears to generate challenges for them to work with the multiple expectations. Moreover, Upitis et al. (2017) highlight that parents with self-efficacy are more able to strategically facilitate their child's music learning, such as responding to the child's needs, stimulating motivations, and effective communication with the teacher; this may lead to further consideration concerning how teachers could act to help Chinese parents enhance parental self-efficacy so as to benefit their child's instrumental learning.

It is possible that the reasons for the teacher-led practice articulated by the student-teachers are related to the pressure of exams, parental expectations, and the pressure for no loss of pupils in the workplace in China. The consumption of children's education has been considered by default as a family investment in China (Lin, 2019) through purchasing, for example, private tutoring (Zhang & Bray, 2021). Whilst families' expenditure on

children's arts education has accelerated the growth of the private music/instrumental tuition market, it also has intensified competition within the industry (Zhang, 2020). For the teaching profession in China, Zhang and Bray (2017) point out the reality influenced by competitive relationships between teachers and between students, where teachers' value is often 'quantified by performance indicators and goal attainments' (p. 68).

## **7.6 Perceptions of cross-cultural pedagogical learning**

### **7.6.1 Motivations for taking the MA course**

Characterised by an 'involved culture' (ST5; ST12),<sup>105</sup> interviewees expressed that they chose the UK MA course to improve their employability as Chinese returnees: 'The minimum degree in the [Chinese] job market now is a bachelor's degree' (ST9); 'A Master's degree is a precondition for getting employed by a state school [in Beijing]' (ST14) or for 'taking the Bianzhi exam<sup>106</sup> for getting a tenure-track at state school [in first-tier cities in China]' (ST13). Likewise, ST12 was concerned about the employment situation they experienced in China, with 'a plethora of candidates competing for just one position as a primary school music teacher [... so] having a Master's degree is important'. Many student-teachers also mentioned that they wished to experience different cultures, enhance their teaching practices, improve English proficiency, and experience life as an international student; this shows their intrinsic motivations aside from the external stimuli resulting from their experienced competitive sociocultural environment.

### **7.6.2 Awareness of differences between instrumental lessons in the Chinese and the UK contexts**

After observing the one-to-one piano/violin/flute lessons delivered by UK instrumental teachers to different ages of pupils on the MA course, many student-teacher CITs compared these lessons with their previous Chinese instrument learning experiences in China. The UK teachers' prioritisation of fostering pupils' self-efficacy and independence was perceived as distinctly different from the focus of Chinese instrument teachers they encountered, who

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<sup>105</sup> '内卷文化' in Chinese. This refers to an intense peer competition in the current Chinese context (Dou et al., 2022).

<sup>106</sup> The exam-based teacher recruitment system in China (Wang et al., 2023); also see Chapter 6, Section 6.7.5 from the in-service CITs' perspectives.

emphasised hard practice and progress. The student-teachers noted how the UK teachers created encouraging and relaxing learning environments by showing care for their pupils' feelings, using praise, and incorporating open-ended questioning, with less dominance from the teacher: 'the pupil can choose what they want to learn' (ST7); 'the [MA] flute teacher encouraged the pupil to describe how they felt [about the music] instead of the teacher's talking' (ST16); 'the questions [asked by the teacher] were inspiring [...] their teaching was creative' (ST10). In contrast, as described by ST3, ST12 and ST15, their guzheng and erhu teachers in China often used verbal instructions such as, 'You should/shouldn't/can't...' or 'Your interpretation is incorrect, follow me' (ST9).

'Strict', 'straightforward', and 'serious' were the most frequent words used by the student-teachers to characterise their previous Chinese instrument teachers and the learning atmosphere in China. ST14, for example, highlighted a deficit-based teaching approach adopted by their yangqin teacher, who 'only saw problems and mistakes I made in playing and never praised [what I did well]'. Although teacher-led lessons in China were acknowledged for their benefits, including fast learning progress, improved technical skills, and 'avoid[ing] misdirected attempts in playing the music by myself' (ST6), little autonomy and more anxiety were also revealed by the student-teachers' narrations: 'My personal interpretation was never good enough for my teacher [...] they always corrected things in their way' (ST4); 'My teacher required me to practise making zero mistake by repeatedly playing the piece three times without a break – it's like a reassurance of perfect performance' (ST14); 'I experienced stage anxiety, but my teacher attributed that to "not practising hard enough so you got nervous"' (ST16). Aside from the negative impression of making mistakes and the Chinese instrument teachers' exhibited authority and high expectations, it appeared that little attention was paid to the learners' feelings and agency, which contrasts with how the UK instrumental teachers gave their lessons in a pupil-autonomy-prioritising manner.

### **7.6.3 Adapting to the pedagogical culture on the MA course**

Multi-faceted adaptations from the Chinese to the UK educational contexts were identified within this cross-cultural professional pedagogical development. Most student-teachers mentioned their pedagogical adaptation to a more equal teacher-student relationship with

the MA teaching staff compared to the teacher-student hierarchy they experienced in China: 'My ideas were valued by my [MA] supervisor who always encouraged me to try [...] teachers in China [HE] made me feel more distant because they were strict with students' (ST3); 'I felt respected because the MA teacher asked me what I wanted rather than what they wanted me to do' (ST1). Notably, ST15 mentioned a less competitive learning environment they experienced in the UK study, as 'We only knew our own assessment results [on the MA] and didn't know the results of other peer students, which was very protective, but in China the exam results were made public, so students would compare the exam results with each other'.

Student-teachers expressed their appreciation for writing lesson commentaries that helped their pedagogical adaptation and reflection as teachers, whereby they were able to 'recall and re-consider the effect of the strategies used' by themselves in the lessons (ST8) and 'not take personal impression [as the teacher] for granted' (ST12). While using academic sources to inform reflective writing was considered an unfamiliar practice by the student-teachers due to their previous experience with music programme curricula/syllabi in Chinese HE, this practice benefited their awareness of other available and 'more creative' (ST10) teaching strategies, their use of teaching materials: 'I used to think my pupil was too lazy to practise the piece I gave, but now I realised I didn't ask whether the pupil was interested in learning the piece' (ST3), verbal communication: 'I purposefully used more encouraging words. I can see the pupil became more active' (ST5), and pupils' wellbeing: 'I now understood there can be varied reasons behind the pupil's behaviour, and their feelings are important to check' (ST15). This may indicate the significant role of reflection in enhancing teachers' pedagogical awareness and a lack of literature-informed self-evaluation practices within music teacher education in China that could enhance teachers' professional growth.

Furthermore, some student-teachers indicated limited specialist pedagogical support provided in the Chinese HE context when they were undergraduate students: 'I started guzheng teaching since I was a third-year undergraduate [in China ...] the [BA] course didn't teach us how learners' motivation works, how to more effectively communicate with pupils and parents [compared to the MA course content]' (ST11); '[instrumental] teachers in China cared more about students' performing capabilities instead of how they taught' (ST13).

Learning on the MA made ST10 realise that they ‘over-emphasised the technical aspects and neglected the pupil’s real interests [in their pre-MA teaching practices]’.

#### **7.6.4 Challenges in cross-cultural pedagogical implementations**

Whilst the pedagogical differences between the Chinese and UK contexts appeared to help the student-teachers be more conscious of their previous routinised teaching procedure (which they themselves recognised as being similar to the teacher-centred styles of teaching influenced by their former teachers, e.g. ST2; ST7; ST14) and motivated them to learn more about pupil-centred instrumental pedagogy on the MA, the actual pedagogical adjustment and implementation in teaching Chinese instruments were considered challenging by the student-teachers.

On the MA, imitating how the UK instrumental teachers used open-ended questions was the first step made by many student-teachers in their assessed lessons. However, as articulated by ST1,

Although I imitated to ask the question as the [MA] teacher did, asking [my pupil], “What do you think could be done with this phrase?”, I couldn’t help telling them how they should play if they didn’t know the answer. After I received my [lesson feedback] report, I realised I was still instilling my idea into my pupil’s mind rather than cultivating their own thinking.

Teaching by telling instead of inspiring the pupil to find answers by themselves was commonly self-disclosed by the student-teachers; not surprisingly, their pupil’s over-reliance on the teacher’s directives and demonstration in learning was evident as indicated by ST2, ST6, and ST15.

While the student-teachers acknowledged the advantages of prompting the pupil’s active communication and independent thinking during lessons, they expressed concerns about the limited lesson time, the slowed-down pace of teaching, and the delivery of the preserved features/interpretations of Chinese music concerning the traditional repertoire featured by Chinese literary categorisations in music (e.g. ST8, ‘Wenqu 文曲’ [civil] and ‘Wuqu 武曲’ [martial] in pipa repertoire), regional characteristics (e.g. Northern and Southern musical styles, n=7), and distinct regional-technical applications (e.g. ST9, ‘[dizi] tonguing techniques in the South are “颤 Chàn、叠 Dié、赠 Zèng、打 Dǎ” while in the

North they are “花 Huā、滑 Huá、剁 Duò、吐 Tǔ”). As stated by ST14, ‘Though I learned many teaching approaches on the MA, I still don’t know how to teach those traditional elements in a pupil-engaged way and what to do when my pupil doesn’t want to follow [the traditions]’. ST9 explained that

Learning traditional repertoire is fundamental for dizi and other Chinese instrument learners, though there’s hardly any space for the pupil to interpret the traditional music themselves, as learners need to imitate how the teacher breathed, phrased, and used the tonguing, otherwise the music wouldn’t sound right.

Additionally, ST14 mentioned that ‘it’s irresponsible if I knew there’s a [regional-]stylistic problem [in the pupil’s playing] but didn’t correct them’. This may show the Chinese instrument teachers/learners’ understanding of the interrelationship between the music, the historically inherited/authentic performance, and the music culture continuity that may impact their ongoing pedagogical choices (e.g. falling in line with the teacher-dominated teaching) and may limit personalised/creative interpretations of their pupils.

### **7.6.5 Challenges across distinct educational and academic environments**

The challenge of building up learning independence during the MA study without teacher dominance was mentioned by the student-teachers: whilst they appreciated how the MA teaching staff established a mentor-friend relationship with them and encouraged them to try varied ideas in teaching and academic writing, it appeared that some student-teachers still preferred getting straightforward answers from the MA tutors to ‘know specifically how I should teach’ (ST14) and ‘avoid misunderstanding what the tutor wanted me to do’ (ST15). ST12 explained that the educational environment in China led by the teachers’ and parents’ regulation of ‘what you should do at every stage’ hindered the development of independence and self-regulation capabilities.

Adapting to the Western postgraduate academic environment using a second language was another challenge: ‘I thought English was my strength when I was in China, but it’s not enough for this [MA] literature-based learning and academic writing that meets Western [academic] standards’ (ST4); ‘I could have got higher marks [in MA assessments] if my English could be better’ (ST7). The distinct academic criteria within music programmes in

China and UK HE were revealed: ‘Evidence from the literature is always needed for what I wrote [on the MA], but this wasn’t mentioned by my teacher when I wrote my [undergraduate] dissertation [in China]’ (ST12); additionally, students expressed the confusion of using culture-specific instrumental terminologies in English such as ‘specify[ing] the playing positions on pipa’ (ST8) and ‘[dizi] tonguing’ (ST9). While these issues are not likely to be exclusive to Chinese instrument students studying in English-speaking countries, they may indicate the need for ‘alternate paradigms’ in music scholarly and linguistic communities across cultures that help communication and understanding (Stock, 2023, p. 505).

Moreover, several student-teachers disclosed their reliance on the study abroad agency (SAA) in China for overseas course applications, which appeared to have hindered their pre-programme preparedness. For instance, ST15 stated, ‘I had no idea what the course [curriculum] was like, it was the [study abroad] agent who helped me filter the courses and apply for them’ (ST15). Similarly, ST13 showed unfamiliarity with the course content: ‘I thought this course was similar to the music performance [programme] in China and wondered [...] how would they teach us non-Western-instrument students. [...] The agent didn’t tell me it’s all about I/V pedagogy’ (ST13). Additionally, ST8 explained that ‘The IELTS exam overwhelmed me, so I had to ask a [study abroad] agent to apply for the course for me’.

### **7.6.6 Discussion: Pedagogical learning across cultures**

By means of the CQ theory-informed lenses exploring cross-cultural pedagogical learning, it appears evident that the cognition (existing knowledge), metacognition (self-understanding/awareness), motivation (self-determination), and behaviour (actions in pedagogical implementations) of those Chinese instrument student-teachers interact with differences within pedagogical cultures between the Chinese and the UK educational environments.

#### ***7.6.6.1 Motivations and preparedness***

The motivations behind the decision to pursue a Master’s degree in the UK reflected both external pressures and intrinsic desires among these student-teacher CITs. They expressed



their intrinsic motivations such as to experience different cultures and enhance their teaching practices, aligning with research that underscores the role of transformative educational experiences, ‘a new kind of experience that brings an epistemic shift’, in fostering personal and professional growth (Paul & Quiggin, 2020, p. 561). However, they also highlighted a highly competitive environment in China, where a graduate degree might have become essential for securing employment in the education sector in first-tier cities (Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1), particularly for positions in state schools, emphasising the changing landscape of qualifications needed in the current job market. This echoes the push-pull effect featuring international student mobility as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2.

Importantly, the findings reveal a concerning reliance among some student-teacher CITs on study abroad agencies, which may raise questions about their preparedness for the MA programme and their roles as international students. Many participants expressed unfamiliarity with the course curriculum, suggesting inadequate pre-programme preparation. This aligns with Li’s (2022) study that the regulation of study abroad agencies in China is insufficient, which can result in mismatches between students’ expectations and the actual academic demands of their chosen programmes. Consequently, this reliance may diminish their autonomy as learners, compounded by anxiety about language proficiency. The interplay of motivations – driven by the necessity to enhance employability yet hindered by a lack of preparedness – may illustrate the complexities faced by international students navigating higher education within a globalised context. This duality appears to emphasise the need for more robust support systems that not only guide students through the application process but also adequately prepare them for the academic and cultural challenges they may encounter abroad.

#### ***7.6.6.2 Cross-cultural pedagogical differences, adaptations and challenges***

The findings present distinct pedagogical priorities and philosophies within music instrumental education in China and the UK, where the cultural continuity-oriented teacher-led Chinese instrument teaching differs from the empirically-supported instrumental pedagogy which promotes learner autonomy and independence. According to Ho (2018), this culture-centred music education appears to be featured in values education in China, where teachers’ identity, agency and practices are permeated with the politically-formed

significance of the relationship between music teaching and the transmission of cultural and societal moral values/responsibilities.

Emphasis on learner empowerment, self-regulation and wellbeing on the MA course may provide alternative pedagogical possibilities in teaching Chinese instruments; this motivated the UK Chinese instrument student-teachers' cross-cultural pedagogical learning towards learner-centredness. Adhering to Burrige (2018), teachers' motivation and consciousness of their routinised behaviour of teaching would be awakened by new or unusual circumstances, based on a simulated discursive cognition whereby pedagogical changes may happen. However, embedded in the Chinese sociocultural expectations towards efficiency, competitiveness, and results (also see Haddon, 2024), as well as the teacher-led/external-regulated learning environment in China, tensions could arise from how these student-teacher CITs cope with the preserved Chinese music traditions while also enabling pupils' learning engagement and personalised/creative practices underpinned by pupils' understanding/preference of the music. To illuminate this, research on effective practices in culture-specific instrumental teaching contexts is suggested, unfolding and building upon potential contextual and pedagogical constraints (e.g. as identified by Luguetti et al., 2019).

#### ***7.6.6.3 Distinct academic learning environments and English proficiency***

Challenges perceived by the student-teachers emerged in their adaption to literature-based academic learning and independent learning with less teacher dominance. However, it appears that some student-teachers retained their pre-formed cognition of needing the so-called 'correct' answers and external recognition of their teaching from authority (e.g. the MA tutors). This may concern the convergent thinking of some Chinese students, a socioculturally-shaped mindset believing in a single standardised solution to a question yet lacking critical and creative thinking (Wan, 2023; Wang, 2019). Despite these challenges, the student-teachers exhibited their metacognitive and behavioural adjustments in their reflective practices by self-evaluation and adopting alternative strategies they learned on the MA.

Nevertheless, their awareness of the importance of English proficiency on the UK masters course and a lack of relevant academic training/support (e.g. literature-informed academic writing) in Chinese educational contexts may result in their frustration as

international students. Moreover, considering the challenge of distinguishing ‘advanced training in scholarly English from deep inculcation into the values and norms of an anglophone-dominated academy’, to avoid colonial knowledge assimilation (Stock, 2023, p. 500), international HE programmes could consider further advocating and supporting of linguistic pluralism in music teaching concerning culture-specific instruments, their playing techniques and use of musical terminologies, supporting students to gain greater educational value from cross-cultural pedagogical opportunities.

## **7.7 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter explores the teaching practices of student-teachers in China prior to their MA study in the UK, revealing a reliance on directive verbal instructions, demonstration, and imitation, alongside the use of technology and extrinsic rewards (Section 7.4). The chapter also highlights the diverse views on extrinsic rewards among student-teachers, with concerns regarding their effectiveness in promoting pupils’ sustained engagement (Section 7.4.5). While digital technology was employed to enhance learning by some student-teachers and their pupils, issues related to the quality of online resources prompted calls for careful curation (Section 7.4.3). Furthermore, differences in pupils’ age and agency appeared to have shaped the teaching strategies of teachers, with adult learners exhibiting greater autonomy compared to school-aged pupils who relied on teacher direction and parental validation (Section 7.5). These disclose characteristics of the student-teacher CITs’ teaching at their phases of education prior to the cross-cultural pedagogical learning in the UK (responding to RQ3).

The findings indicate that these student-teachers often prioritised efficiency and pace over fostering interactive and dialogic teaching approaches. This teacher-centeredness may reflect broader trends in Chinese pedagogy, characterised by explicit instructions and a results-oriented mindset. Factors such as the pressure of graded exams and parental expectations significantly influenced the pupils’ learning motivations/objectives, often leading to passive learning behaviours and a lack of agency among pupils (Section 7.5.3), which appeared to also influence the student-teacher CITs’ pedagogical beliefs and practices (addressing RQ4).

The findings address the student-teachers' motivations for pursuing the MA, disclosing the need for higher qualifications amid a competitive job market in China (Section 7.6.1). The UK MA programme introduced these student-teachers to learner-centred pedagogies that prioritise empowerment, autonomy, and creative engagement. This shift in focus encouraged them to critically reflect on their teaching methods and adapt to new cultural and pedagogical contexts (Sections 7.6.2/3/4), responding to RQ5 concerning cross-cultural adaptation. Despite the challenges posed by differing educational philosophies and environments, the experience of engaging with diverse teaching practices prompted student-teachers to reconsider their approaches to teaching Chinese instruments. These appear to be factors influencing their pedagogical beliefs and practices, addressing RQ4.

Additionally, reliance on study abroad agencies raised concerns about the preparedness of Chinese international students for their overseas degree studies, highlighting the complexities faced by international students navigating academic and cultural challenges across cultures (Section 7.6.5); this might also influence their cross-cultural adaptation (RQ5). The chapter concludes by discussing cross-cultural pedagogical differences and distinct academic learning environments, emphasising the need for greater support systems and adaptability in pedagogical practices within the context of globalised education (Section 7.6.6.3). The aspects of external sociocultural expectations in the Chinese context, their impacts on students' learning and teachers' practices, as well as the MA student-teacher CITs' pedagogical awareness and transformation revealed in this chapter are further discussed in Chapter 10. The next chapter presents findings of the longitudinal study using the video-stimulated interview (VSI) technique with three guzheng student-teacher CITs on the UK MA concerning their pedagogical transformation.

# Chapter 8: Findings of the Longitudinal Study: Three UK MA Guzheng Student-teachers

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## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings that generated from a longitudinal study concerning three guzheng student-teachers taking the MA course at the University of York, UK. As detailed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2, a longitudinal investigation focusing on the teaching of one particular Chinese instrument – guzheng – over 12 months, comprising three rounds of semi-structured, one-to-one online interviews, was employed to explore changed and unchanged aspects in guzheng teaching identified by those three guzheng student-teachers, alongside the pedagogical impact of the MA course they studied. A technology-assisted research method – video-stimulated interview (VSI) – was adopted to facilitate their interview processes (Chapter 3, Section 3.5.2). Exhibited in Section 8.2 are the data collection processes and the video materials that facilitated the data collection; Section 8.3 shows the participants' information.

Findings emerged from the data analysis are organised into three themes, each with multiple subsections: pedagogical choice-making in guzheng teaching (Section 8.4, discussed further in Section 8.4.4); the MA-course-informed pedagogical practices (Section 8.5, with further discussion in Section 8.5.4); ongoing pedagogical transformation (Section 8.6, discussed further in Section 8.6.4). This chapter responds to the following research questions:

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

## 8.2 Data collection

Invitations to take part in this longitudinal study were sent to guzheng student-teachers (September 2020/21 and January 2021/22 entries) on the MA Music Education at the University of York in February 2021 by the researcher via email and WeChat, with an information sheet detailing the purpose and procedure of this study and a consent form attached. The information sheet articulated the use of the VSI method, including a *reflective* and *interpretive* process for exploring participants' cognitive process stimulated by the video(s) utilised during the interview (Van Braak et al., 2018). Therefore, guzheng student-teachers on the MA who received the invitation were informed that there were three rounds of online interviews in Mandarin, and to facilitate the reflective VSI process (e.g. asking *why* participants applied specific approaches at certain points in their teaching), they were asked to record one of their lessons with their adult pupils (20-30 minutes) and send the recording to the researcher before each round of interviews.

Three guzheng student-teachers (i.e. ST1/2/3, Chapter 7, Section 7.3) returned their completed consent forms and agreed to record their lessons. However, instead of receiving three recorded one-to-one guzheng lesson videos before each round of interviews, as expected by the researcher, two guzheng lesson recordings (LR1 and LR2) were received before the first round from ST2 and ST3; one recording (LR3) was received before the second round from ST3; and one (LR4) was received before the third round from ST3 as well, with an average duration of 31:22 of the recordings. This was highly understandable due to the limited availability of the student-teachers' adult pupils, the constrained access to the ideal teaching environment affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, and the practicability of simultaneous research participation and completion of the MA course assignments. Consequently, ST1: no lesson recordings; ST2: one lesson recording (ST2: LR1); ST3: three lesson recordings (ST3: LR2/3/4).

Aside from utilising the recordings of the student-teachers' one-to-one guzheng lessons to explore their teaching actions via the reflective VSI, online videos of expert guzheng performances were also used so as to gain an understanding of their espoused teaching beliefs through the interpretive VSI (e.g. asking *how* they would teach the music that was being performed) as CITs with cross-cultural pedagogical experiences.

As a result, three expert guzheng performance videos on YouTube were used as prompts in the interpretive VSI processes. The YouTube videos were selected by the researcher according to the literature on regional contexts of Chinese instrument music (e.g. Chow-Morris, 2010; Thrasher, 1989), the focus being on the inclusion and representativeness of repertoire from the Northern and Southern guzheng genres and the reputation of the performers in China: Video 1 – *Yu Zhou Chang Wan* (渔舟唱晚, *Fisherman's Song at Night*; Northern genre)<sup>107</sup>; Video 2 – *Feng Xiang Ge* (凤翔歌, *Song of Flying Phoenix*; Northern genre)<sup>108</sup>; Video 3 – *Fen Hong Lian* (粉红莲, *Pink Lotus*; Southern genre)<sup>109</sup>.

Each interview included questions on the videos and a semi-structured interview (SSI), which used open-ended questions and related to the participants' guzheng learning and teaching experiences in China, as well as their perceptions of acquiring and applying the instrumental/vocal pedagogical knowledge learned during their MA study. Before each reflective VSI, observation notes were made by the researcher by repeatedly reviewing the participants' lesson videos in order to generate interview questions based on timestamps of specific instructional points (see Table 8.1 for an example). The three YouTube videos (i.e. Video 1/2/3) were prepared for screen-sharing in the corresponding interpretive VSI as summarised in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.1:** Sample of two of the interview questions generated with timestamps from LR2: ST3.

Timestamps	Observation	Interview questions
02:02	ST3 was asking their student to practise an etude of fingerings before playing the piece.	What do you think of the fingering practice?  Why did you choose this kind of approach?
04:19; 21:55	ST3 emphasised the student's hand shape and the skill of using their finger joints to exert force when flicking the strings.	Why did you emphasise these techniques?

<sup>107</sup> Link to Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuj7kY4QCr8>.

<sup>108</sup> Link to Video 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBh3gghgZuo>.

<sup>109</sup> Link to Video 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3MonhzOfp4>.

**Table 8.2:** Interview timeline and procedure with abbreviations.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> round: March 2021, Spring term</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> round: July 2021, Summer term</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> round: October 2021, Post-MA</b>
ST1	SSI	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 2/3 used)
ST2	Reflective VSI (with ST2: LR1) + SSI	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 2/3 used)
ST3	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR2) + SSI	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR3) + SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR4) + SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 2/3 used)

As presented above, these three guzheng student-teachers engaged in all three rounds of interviews (i.e. nine interviews in total, averaging 63 minutes each). Based on agreement with these participants regarding the scheduling of interviews, the first round of interviews was carried out in March 2021, the second round in July 2021, and the third round in October 2021.

### **8.3 Participants' demographic data**

To provide a context for the research findings in this chapter, more extensive information about the participants is listed in Table 8.3, in relation to their prior guzheng learning and teaching settings, their pupils taught in China, and their envisaged employment situation as Chinese returnees. By the time of the third-round interviews, two of the participants had returned to China and were not teaching, and none of them were employed.



**Table 8.3:** Information about the participants and their pupils.

<b>Student-teacher</b>	<b>ST1</b>	<b>ST2</b>	<b>ST3</b>
<b>The UK MA course enrolment</b>	Cohort A, September 2020-2021	Cohort A, September 2020-2021	Cohort B, January 2021-2022
<b>Instrument</b>	guzheng	guzheng	guzheng
<b>Years of learning</b>	15-years learning	10-years learning	10-years learning
<b>Years of teaching</b>	Teaching for three years	Teaching for five years	Teaching for five years
<b>Learning contexts prior to their UK MA study</b>	Learning 1-1 before and during their conservatoire study in Northern China	Learning 1-1 before and during their study at a university in Southern China	Learning 1-1 before and during their study at a conservatoire in Southern China
<b>Teaching contexts prior to their UK MA study</b>	Group teaching at a primary school (part-time) and 1-1/small group teaching in a private music institution in China (full-time)	Private 1-1 teaching at a music studio in China (part-time)	Private teaching at a music studio in China (part-time)
<b>Teaching contexts during their UK MA study</b>	Private 1-1 teaching in the UK (for the MA course assessments, not regularly)	Private 1-1 teaching in the UK (for the MA course assessments, not regularly)	Online 1-1 teaching in the UK (regularly)
<b>Their pupils</b>	Mostly Chinese (had one non-Chinese pupil in China); mostly school students and a few adult pupils at beginner/intermediate level; taught two Chinese adult pupils (including one course mate) during the MA	All Chinese; mostly school students and some adult pupils at beginner/intermediate level; taught two Chinese adult pupils (including one course mate) during the MA	All Chinese; mostly school students and some adult pupils at beginner/intermediate level; taught five Chinese pupils (including one course mate) during the MA
<b>Envisaged employment situation as returnees</b>	Private guzheng teacher (part-time) and considering this as a full-time job	Full-time school music teacher and teaching guzheng privately at home outside of working hours	Private guzheng teacher (full-time) or pursuing further study

## **8.4 Pedagogical choice-making in guzheng teaching**

The participants started teaching as part-time guzheng teachers during and after their undergraduate studies in China. ST2 and ST3 worked for private studios, teaching one-to-one, while ST1 taught group lessons in an extracurricular classroom in a primary school. Their pupils were mostly school students aged 6-17 and some adults. During the reflective VSI process, ST2 and ST3 unfolded the reasons behind their intuitive or purposeful selection of pedagogical approaches in their videoed guzheng lessons; the participants' envisaged teaching scenarios relating to delivering the particular guzheng pieces shown to them were communicated via the interpretive VSI.

### **8.4.1 Impact of previous guzheng teachers in China**

Prior learning experiences before the conservatoire study, mainly dominated by technical training, tended to inevitably influence the student-teachers' teaching orientation in their guzheng teaching practices. These three participants placed emphasis on technical skills in guzheng teaching: 'I think basic [technical] skills are very important in playing any instrument [...] I wanted to cultivate their [the pupils'] awareness of the importance of practising fingerings' (ST3); 'I felt that all the prerequisites for playing music depend on the technical skills [...] I mainly taught the basic [fingering] skills first through etudes' (ST1).

Some of the teaching strategies that were used by the student-teachers appeared to be highly duplicative of the approaches adopted by their guzheng teachers in China. In one of the lesson recordings provided by ST3, they began the lesson by asking the pupil to play the etude of finger practice assigned in the previous lessons (2:02, ST3: LR2). ST3 specified that this teaching procedure and their use of the material was habitual due to their previous teacher's identical instruction: 'When I was a child, my teacher did the same [assigned the fingering etudes] to me, asking me to practise fingerings first'. In the video, when the pupil found it challenging to play the piece with both hands together, ST3 suggested they simultaneously play the left-hand chordal melody and sing the right-hand melody to help with the coordination of both hands and provided a demonstration of how to do that (15:30; 19:00, ST3: LR2). Likewise, ST3 revealed that they employed this strategy subconsciously, influenced by their teacher's use of the same approach when addressing similar coordination issues in teaching.

Similarly, the subliminal impact of the previously received teaching on the student-teacher's pedagogical choice was reflected in the lesson conducted by ST2: when working on the dynamics of the music, they asked the pupil to imagine the scene that the music was trying to describe (29:03, ST2: LR1). ST2 attributed this utilisation to the influence of their own teacher: '[The teacher] guided me to imagine the scene that the music wanted to express in my mind and let me think about why the sound [the dynamics of the music] should become stronger and why [some phrases] should be weaker'. Due to the associative teaching contexts – working with technical and expressive issues – experienced asynchronously by the student-teachers, they were likely to make familiarity/experience-based pedagogical choices in practice, responding to similar teaching encounters.

The participants' envisioned use of strategies turned out to conform with their received pedagogical influences in China through their situational understanding of teaching the selected exam pieces that they watched being performed in the interpretive VSI. When discussing how they would teach the semi-improvisational part shown in the performance video of *Fen Hong Lian (Pink Lotus)*, for instance, ST3 stated that

I think I would teach it as how my teacher taught me – I would focus more on the completeness and expressiveness of the music. I would teach the semi-improvisation integrally with the piece when we encounter the places [where the technique should be applicable] in the music.

Although ST1 had not yet taught a pupil who had reached the level of learning the piece *Pink Lotus*, they anticipated that they would follow how their teacher taught this piece, utilising its contextualisation:

I would recall how my teacher taught me this [...] this piece requires the learner's understanding of the music characteristics of Chaozhou [潮州] genre [where this piece belongs, stylistically]. My teacher taught me the stylistic aspect first, which helped me master the basic style of the music, so I would also teach my pupil the background knowledge first.

### 8.4.2 Impact of traditional musical features in guzheng repertoire and performance

Regional features in guzheng music relating to the Northern and Southern musical styles appeared to have impacted the student-teachers' teaching practices, their technical application in performance, and their understanding of the music. ST1 mentioned the division of different guzheng genres, leading to the development of their representative musical characteristics and techniques. ST3 identified the distinction from a technical perspective between the repertoire that belongs to different regions in China:

[...] in the Southern guzheng genres, they emphasise the variation notes using Chanyin [颤音, *vibrato*], but they won't press the strings straightforwardly [by the left hand] as the Northern genres do. [...] Their action of applying the Huayin [滑音, *portamento*] is more subtle compared to the Northern genres.

A similar influence on the application of the techniques was acknowledged by ST2, which appeared to help with enhancing the musical character of the particular genre:

[...] the Shandong genre [Northern], I would emphasise the musical characteristics of that genre [...] and] focus on the use of Chanyin [颤音, *vibrato*], which is different from what we would use when playing music from the South. The Chanyin in the South sounds softer and lighter.

Interestingly, according to the musical and technical features that the music contains, all participants were able to recognise which region the pieces belong to after watching the videos of the performance (i.e. Video 1/2/3) in the interpretive VSI. In the teaching context, how the pupil applied the techniques, especially with their left hand to bring out the musical feature of the genre was focused on by ST3:

When I taught music pieces of the Shandong genre [Northern], I paid attention to how my pupil played the [regionally/stylistically] typical techniques [...] I would tell my pupil that they need to show it [the techniques] clearly in their playing.

Alternatively, ST1 and ST2 concentrated more on verbally introducing the background information of the pieces to their pupils, related to the regional and musical character.

### 8.4.3 Selection and influence of teaching materials

Owing to the exam-oriented learning expectations, the guzheng exam repertoire was prioritised by the student-teachers in their teaching:

I usually use the books for guzheng graded exams, which contain the basic [traditional] repertoire that would be learned by most guzheng learners, such as the exam-focused repertoire book<sup>110</sup> affiliated with the China Conservatory of Music and the serial tutorial books<sup>111</sup> compiled by professors at the China Conservatory of Music. These ones are the most popular guzheng books on the market. (ST1)

Likewise, ST3 mentioned that 'I used the [serial] books<sup>112</sup> for guzheng graded exams compiled by Shanghai Guzheng Society [...] recommended by the examination committee'.

The student-teachers' selection of different repertoire books may indicate a relatively wide range of guzheng teaching materials available to practitioners; however, issues relating to varied syllabi within each guzheng graded exam board were identifiable:

[I chose teaching materials] according to the requirements of those institutions that organise the graded exams. They have different requirements for the repertoire and textbooks [...] the exam committee wished to standardise the version of the repertoire played by examinees, so they suggest examinees practise their recognised versions. (ST1)

Apart from the exam repertoire, popular music pieces, such as 'the theme songs of some movies' (ST3), were favoured by the pupils, 'especially teenagers' and beginners (ST1), although ST2 expressed that they had less experience with teaching those pieces due to the lack of access to them. This is also reflected in ST3's response that 'there were not many materials available for guzheng teachers to teach popular music'. Alternatively, a re-composition process based on the popular music was used: 'The recomposed version was relatively easier to learn because it was basically based on D major, and the pupil didn't need to tune the instrument [guzheng learners usually start with D major].' (ST3) Similarly,

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<sup>110</sup> Picture of the books, received from ST1 after the interview, is attached in Appendix C.

<sup>111</sup> As above.

<sup>112</sup> Picture of the books, received from ST3 after the interview, is attached in Appendix C.

ST1 looked for the sheet music of popular songs on an open-source website<sup>113</sup> for guzheng learners in China, 'as there are many independent guzheng players who like to recompose popular music for guzheng playing.'

It appears that the contemporary guzheng repertoire, namely 'professional-level [pieces] such as the concerto for guzheng and piano, in which the piano plays the accompaniment part' (ST3) was exclusively available for conservatoire and university music students in China: 'The sheet music is usually provided by the teachers at the conservatoire. I had a lot of copies of the [contemporary] music given by my teacher in my undergraduate study [at the conservatoire]' (ST1). ST3 further explained that 'Much of the [contemporary] sheet music was not published in [repertoire] books and was mainly available among conservatoire teachers and students'. This would lead to a situation revealed by ST2 that, 'as I'm no longer a student in the university', those more recent guzheng pieces would be challenging to get for practising; similar challenges concerning accessibility to the contemporary teaching materials may be encountered by those who work outside of the Chinese HE contexts.

#### **8.4.4 Discussion: Pedagogical choice-making in guzheng teaching**

As both guzheng learners and teachers in China, participants indicated their experiences of a teacher-dominated guzheng pedagogy, corroborated by the teacher-led strategies and expectations of enhancing technical skills and being aware of the background knowledge of the piece being learned; this way of teaching appears to be followed by the student-teachers. A similar tendency has been identified in Haddon's study (2009), showing that instrumental student-teachers' teaching is significantly influenced by how they were taught by their previous teachers. Nevertheless, aspects that can be explored together by the teacher and student within music pedagogical contexts could be diversified, which includes 'the relationships between detailed honing of stylistic expression and technique on the one hand, and personal expression, spontaneity and risk-taking on the other, while also pursuing and exploiting possibilities for co-creation and experimenting with audience interactions' (Gaunt, 2017, p. 31).

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<sup>113</sup> Zhong Guo Guzheng Wang (中国古筝网), Chinese guzheng website. <https://m.guzheng.cn/>

It appears that the regional stylistic features that characterise Northern and Southern guzheng performances influence the participants' interpretation and pedagogical practice of the music from those regions. As summarised by Thrasher (1989), the stylistic differences between North and South Chinese instrumental repertoire are embodied in their musical forms, application of techniques, and interpretations. This is likely to be preserved, to some extent, by guzheng teachers while it may limit other possibilities of interpretation underpinned by a personal understanding of the music. Alternatively, those stylistic features may perhaps have a default value in the perception of guzheng teachers, influenced by those master-teachers and the notion of guzheng as a Chinese traditional instrument, but this may not be the case for young pupils today; for example, the diversified music market and cultural integration may differently shape young musicians' understanding of the value of classical music (Hunter & Broad, 2017). This seems open to questions concerning how to understand the inherited guzheng musical features as teachers and learners, and whether they are potential constraints in guzheng performance and tuition.

The findings indicate pupils' interest in popular music, especially demonstrated by school-aged pupils as recognised by the student-teachers. Davis (2015) states that children's musical identity can be shaped by the popular music they engage with, simultaneously linked to their interactions with media, peers, and family members. However, in addition to the exam-focused materials, the participants revealed a lack of 'guzheng-friendly' materials available for teaching popular music to their pupils, as well as limited access to contemporary guzheng pieces outside of conservatoire settings in China. Additionally, there was relatively little comparison between teaching beginner and advanced-level pupils in their interviews, due to the student-teachers' lack of experience in having advanced pupils. The reason for this may be provided by Bai (2021), concerning pre-professional instrumentalists in China (specific to pianists in their study) who choose music schools, and those amateurs who sacrifice their instrumental hobby for more dedicated academic learning in high schools.

## 8.5 The MA-course-informed pedagogical practices

### 8.5.1 Utilisation of questions

Open-ended questioning was one of the teaching strategies learned on the MA course and was acknowledged by all participants as a useful way to activate their pupils' thinking: for example, ST1 stated, 'I can feel that the student actually thinks more on their own than before [since I employed this questioning method]'. The lesson videos showed ST2 and ST3's integration of this approach into teaching. For instance, ST2 asked their pupil, 'How do you feel this time when playing?' (12:44, ST2: LR1); ST3 asked, 'What are you struggling with in practising this piece?' (11:47, ST3: LR2). These types of questioning are considered open-ended questions according to Allsup and Baxter (2004), as the answers for responding to them are not likely to close the questions with a single word.

Both ST2 and ST3 appeared to understand the mechanism of this approach because of the teacher training and used questioning purposefully in the lessons: 'I wanted the pupil to proactively think and analyse [their playing]' (ST2); 'The pupil could have a sense of participation [by pointing out challenges], which enhances their impression' (ST3). Nevertheless, ST2 mentioned that the method of asking questions was rarely used in their teaching before the MA, 'because at that time I didn't realise that asking questions was a very important part of teaching'. Additionally, ST3 ascribed the infrequent use of questions in their previous teaching in China to the pupils' inactive response to the questions they asked, although what kind of questions were asked may need further reflection concerning varied roles of questioning methods in teaching, listed by Saxton et al. (2018), such as asking a closed question for a short answer, a probing question for reasons, and a leading question for a desirable answer.

Moreover, their pupil in China who had online lessons with ST3 demonstrated a pedagogical adaptation process in ST3's trials of questioning skills learned on the MA:

In the beginning, they [the pupil] stated that it was a bit challenging for them to express themselves and answer my questions because I didn't ask those questions before, but later after they got used to my new teaching style, they were actually more willing to express themselves to me.



### **8.5.2 Enabling pupils' autonomy**

Secondly, the participants' understanding of pupil-centredness was shown in their teaching and espoused pedagogical practice in the VSI, influenced by the MA study. They believed that giving students the autonomy to present their own understanding of music interpretation demonstrated a student-centred feature. In the lesson video recorded by ST3 for the third-round reflective VSI, before demonstrating a particular part of the piece, they said, 'My interpretation of the music is not the only answer. I just share my understanding of the music with you' (9:34, ST3: LR4); they explained their intention that

Many students would think what the teacher demonstrated is completely right, and they completely imitate what the teacher did [... the pupil] doesn't need to imitate my playing completely because everyone has different ideas [of interpretation], and I don't want to limit their performance because of my demonstration.

Likewise, in the reflective VSI, ST2 stated that

I won't tell them [the pupil] directly how they should play [the piece] because I don't want to dominate their learning anymore, and I'll guide them to think how they would like to play it like the MA teachers did.

Although the demonstrative approach would be primarily applied by ST1 in their teaching, they hoped to focus more on the inspirational role rather than being imitated by their pupil.

### **8.5.3 Awareness of safeguarding and encouragement**

Moreover, as understood by the participants, pupil-centredness was also conveyed by the teacher's concern for not only the student's learning outcomes but also for their feelings. The aspect of avoiding physical contact in teaching had been overlooked by all three student-teachers prior to the MA study, reflecting the approach of their previous guzheng teachers: 'My teacher would correct my hand shape through touching my fingers; sometimes, if my student's hand shape was incorrect, I would also tell them how to put their hands through physical contact' (ST3); 'I didn't realise that this [physical contact] was inappropriate [...] my teacher taught me the same way' (ST1); 'My undergraduate teacher would directly grab my hands and instruct me to play' (ST2). After taking part in a session

relating to safeguarding in teaching on the MA course, all student-teachers expressed that they would now consciously avoid making physical contact with their pupils due to the discomfort that might be experienced by the pupil and their guardians. The influences of the MA pedagogical training that facilitated the student-teachers to intentionally choose teaching methods and strategies are not limited to the above-mentioned dimensions: all participants hoped to create a more friendly teaching environment for their pupils as the tutors did; ST2 and ST3 presented their encouragement-oriented teaching in the recorded lessons, providing specific praise to their pupils as recommended by the course (e.g. 4:55, ST2: LR1; 1:20; 11:41, ST3: LR2; 5:34, ST3: LR4). Furthermore, aspects that promoted the student-teachers' pedagogical transformation during the MA and their concerns in future teaching are presented in Section 8.6.

#### **8.5.4 Discussion: The MA-course-informed pedagogical practices**

The findings show that the student-teachers' pedagogical choices would be simultaneously impacted by how they were taught both previously and concurrently, which aligns with Haddon's (2009, 2019) findings. The transformative impact of the UK MA course on the student-teachers' guzheng teaching practices was evident in their adoption of open-ended questioning, promotion of pupil autonomy, and heightened awareness of safeguarding. This appears to exhibit a pedagogical transformation of the student-teachers from teacher-centredness to pupil-centredness with an increased awareness of their pupils' active learning participation, autonomy, and wellbeing. Based on the impact of education on shaping people's beliefs, i.e. subjectification (Biesta, 2015b) as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, the student-teachers seem to have internalised values concerning effective pedagogy and goals to make changes in practice, influenced by the MA course tutors' demonstrated pedagogy.

The UK MA teacher training with research-informed pedagogy and reflective practices appears to help the student-teachers become aware of their habitual teaching process, pre-formed by the China-domiciled environment, and promotes their pedagogical transformation. Student-teachers recognised that providing students with the autonomy to develop their interpretations of the music not only democratised the learning experience but also validated individual perspectives on music. Moving away from a directive and

imitative practice as revealed in Chapter 7, Sections 7.4.1/2, by stating, for example, ‘My interpretation of the music is not the only answer’ (ST3), the student-teacher created an environment where pupils could feel empowered to explore their unique musical identities. Additionally, the emphasis on encouragement and positive reinforcement appeared to become central to their teaching approaches: student-teachers actively integrated praise into their lessons, fostering a more supportive environment that would facilitate their pupils’ confidence and motivation. This approach is corroborated by research highlighting the role of encouraging and constructive feedback in promoting student motivation and learning outcomes (Sellbjer, 2018).

Student-teachers acknowledged the discomfort that physical contact could create, a method prevalent in their previously received training. This realisation aligns with contemporary understandings of ethical teaching practices (McGovern & McGovern, 2021), emphasising the importance of respecting students’ personal boundaries. However, considering cultural differences in proxemics (Earley & Ang, 2003) between, for example, the Chinese and UK contexts, teachers’ understanding of culturally specific knowledge as underscored by Ford (2020) would be useful in a culturally-diverse educational environment.

## **8.6 Ongoing pedagogical transformation**

### **8.6.1 Enhanced consciousness**

Student-teachers indicated that the MA facilitated their awareness of student-centred pedagogical knowledge. ST2 compared their teaching before and after the MA:

When I was [teaching] in China, I was affected by the methods I received in guzheng lessons when I was a child, that was, the teacher-led model [...] After the MA study, I would think more about the pupil, think about how to improve the pupil’s participation in the lesson or how to ask questions.

ST1 pointed out that ‘the [undergraduate] training [in China] mainly focused on guzheng performance. [This means that] we spent the majority of time practising guzheng rather than learning how to teach guzheng’, while ‘The MA course has played a vital role to help me figure out the rationale behind different teaching approaches’ (ST1). ST3 recalled that ‘[before the MA] I would praise them [the pupil] only when they make progress’, but after

the MA, 'I think encouraging students, giving feedback to students, communicating with students and their parents [...] are all methods that can stimulate pupils' learning.' Furthermore, ST2 mentioned that 'I think their teaching ideas [communicated by the MA] are more inclusive to consider music students' wellbeing', but 'in China, the teacher may not think about this aspect too much and may not consider the physical condition of the student'. These articulations show that the MA provided diversified angles, enabling the student-teachers to understand their pedagogical work more comprehensively.

### **8.6.2 Confidence-building process**

A positive effect of trialling the learned strategies on the MA increased the student-teachers' confidence to adjust their teaching. ST2 mentioned that 'the atmosphere in my lesson has become better and more positive [after implementing the learned strategies]' and they felt a sense of achievement when the pupil talked a lot instead of being dominated by the teacher's talking in the lesson. Similarly, ST3 trialled approaches after learning them in the lecture, and 'found that the method is indeed effective', inspiring them to 'make adjustments in teaching constantly'. It seems that familiarity with the learned pedagogical knowledge could help with the student-teachers' confidence-building, such as completing the course tasks and assessments that reinforced their understanding of the knowledge (ST2; ST3). The student-teachers showed confidence in their future implementation of questioning skills trained by the MA due to the overall positive reactions received from their multiple trials, which enhanced their familiarity with the approach itself to help with adjustments such as 'reduce [...] or] increase the number of questions' (ST1) and prepare more effective questions (ST2). Additionally, ST3 indicated the literature that helped with their confidence in using specific praise, while ST2 mentioned the literature-informed practice when they encountered challenges in teaching: 'I need to read the literature in the reading list first and consider what content might answer my question [about teaching], but I feel very happy after finding some ideas or explanations with my own efforts'.

### **8.6.3 Concerns as Chinese returnees**

As returnees, these three student-teachers raised several concerns based on their perceptions of the teaching contexts in China. Because of the parents' request, ST2 reflected

on their strictness with the child when they were teaching in China: 'Some of the parents even wanted me to criticise the student if they didn't focus on playing', and they revealed that the parents might rely on the authority of the teacher's role to lead their child's learning: 'The parents said that they could not manage their child [in guzheng learning]. The parents thought that the teacher was more authoritative and wanted the teacher to discipline their child' (ST2). When teaching in China, ST1 encountered a situation where their adult pupil required a rapid result to be able to perform an entire piece after 10 lessons; this made ST1 worry that 'I think it [my teaching] may change back [to teacher-led mode] in the environment after returning to China due to the culture [prioritising results]'. Although the student-teachers affirmed their awareness of safeguarding issues, ST3 expressed that 'I think the biggest challenge for me [as a returnee] is that I can't touch my students anymore [to make corrections in teaching]', as 'I'm aware of caring about the student's and my own wellbeing and boundaries. However, I'm not sure whether other teachers are aware of this aspect in China and how students' parents might think about this issue' (ST3).

#### **8.6.4 Discussion: Ongoing pedagogical transformation**

The findings highlight an ongoing pedagogical transformation among student-teachers following their MA study in the UK, particularly in their approach to guzheng teaching. One of the notable changes is the enhanced consciousness of student-centred pedagogical practices. The confidence-building process emerged as a crucial aspect of their transformation. Many student-teachers reported feeling empowered to implement new strategies learned during the MA, such as open-ended questioning. The positive responses from their pupils reinforced their self-efficacy and motivated them to adapt their teaching styles further. This reflects Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2001) theory of teacher self-efficacy, which posits that belief in one's capabilities can significantly influence their teaching practices.

However, the student-teachers expressed concerns about returning to the Chinese educational context, where external pressures and parental expectations may compel them to revert to more teacher-dominated teaching methods. ST2 highlighted the strict expectations from parents they met, who often expected the teacher to discipline their

child. This mirrors findings by Mullen (2017), which emphasise the external pressures faced by teachers in China, where results-oriented learning can inhibit pedagogical creativity.

ST1's apprehension about returning to a results-driven environment raises questions about the sustainability of the pedagogical changes they experienced during their MA study.

Moreover, the student-teachers' awareness of safeguarding issues – such as avoiding physical contact – may represent another critical shift in their professional development as CITs. ST3 articulated a struggle between the newly learned principles of wellbeing and the typical practices of physical correction common in their earlier training. This appears to echo cultural clashes between evolving, research-based pedagogical approaches and entrenched educational norms in the Chinese instrumental teaching context, as discussed by Haddon (2024). They also identified challenges that might be encountered by the UK-trained instrumental teachers as Chinese returnees, including progress-oriented and parent-influenced pedagogy (Ibid.). Similar concerns were raised by these three student-teachers in the current study, based on their interactions with learners and parents in China, as well as the sociocultural environment.

## **8.7 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter discloses the pedagogical transformation of student-teachers they perceived in their teaching practices following the MA study in the UK through engaging in the VSI processes, which responds to RQ4. Student-teachers highlighted the influences of their experiences within a predominantly teacher-led pedagogical framework in the Chinese context on their teaching practices (Section 8.4), characterised by an emphasis on technical skill development and on the traditional musical features of the pieces being learned (Sections 8.4.1/2). There also appeared to be a lack of teaching materials concerning 'guzheng-friendly' popular music pieces and limited access to the contemporary repertoire, which may limit the student-teachers' opportunity to engage pupils with diverse musical preferences/interests (Section 8.4.3).

Notably, the MA course facilitated an enhanced awareness of student-centred pedagogical practices among the student-teachers (Sections 8.5 and 8.6.1/2); this concerns pedagogical adaptation and transformation, addressing RQ5. They began incorporating open-ended questioning techniques to promote pupil participation and enabling their

pupils' learner autonomy, which marked a shift from their previous approaches (Sections 8.5.1/2). The focus on safeguarding and reducing physical contact emerged as another critical change in the student-teachers' pedagogical approach (Section 8.5.3). Physical correction, previously common in their received training in China, was re-evaluated after their learning on the MA. This shift may reflect a growing awareness of ethical teaching practices and the need to adapt to more research-informed approaches.

Despite these developments, the student-teachers expressed concerns about reintegrating into the Chinese educational environment (Section 8.6.3), which might impact their ongoing practices (RQ4). Tensions between maintaining new pedagogical practices and adhering to the expectations of Chinese educational norms appear to remain a key challenge for these student-teachers as they consider their future careers in the Chinese context. Presented in this chapter, the dimensions of the impact of cross-cultural pedagogical training on the student-teacher CITs' professional development, their transformative teaching practices, and the sustainability of the UK-trained pedagogy across cultures are discussed further in Chapter 10. The next chapter discusses findings of CITs' perceptions of specific pedagogical practices relating to student-centredness, authentic teaching and learning, interpretation and semi-improvisation emerged from cross-case synthesis.

# **Chapter 9: Findings: Cross-case Synthesis of CITs’ Perspectives on Beliefs and Practices: Student-centredness, Authentic Teaching and Learning, Interpretation and Semi-improvisation**

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## **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter exhibits a cross-case synthesis of the three cases of CITs after the single case analyses (see Chapter 3 for the multiple case study design and analysis in Sections 3.4.2 and 3.7): the seven China-domiciled pre-service CITs (Chapter 5), the eight China-domiciled in-service CITs (Chapter 6), and the 16 UK MA student-teacher CITs (Chapters 7 and 8); the processes of the data collection and the interviewees’ demographics are shown in the corresponding chapters. As noted in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1.1, similarities and differences emerged from comparing the dataset of the three cases, centring around the enquiry of pedagogical understanding and beliefs as a CIT about specific concepts/notions asked in the interviews across the cases, which could thus be presented in a comprehensive and coherent manner. By adhering to the previous chapters of the findings, the code numbers PT1/2/etc., IT1/2/etc., and ST1/2/etc. are used where the participants’ quotations are presented.

Findings are concentrated on the following three themes: CITs’ pedagogical understanding towards student-centredness in teaching (Section 9.2 with a discussion in Section 9.2.4), CITs’ beliefs about authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (Section 9.3 with a discussion in Section 9.3.4), and CITs’ approaches to interpretation and/or semi-improvisation in teaching and/or learning the repertoire (Section 9.4 with a discussion in Section 9.4.4). The findings from the cross-case analysis collectively address the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?



**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

## **9.2 Pedagogical understanding of CITs towards student-centredness**

### **9.2.1. The China-domiciled in-service CITs' perspectives**

Many in-service CITs acknowledged their awareness of an educational agenda shift 'years ago' (IT6) in China urging student-centeredness, which was identifiable in, for example, the school music education syllabi and/or regular faculty/teacher meetings (n=5); within this, two of the CITs in the Chinese HE context mentioned an increasing attention paid to their students' mental health due to the stressful social and employment environment (IT5 and 6). However, it appears that these in-service CITs' professional development to follow the shift towards student-centredness depended on individual teachers' agency: 'Most teachers are content with the status quo. [...] Teachers who are more passionate about their work might be more willing to update their teaching approach' (IT5).

In-service CITs appear to have a varied understanding of the notion of student-centeredness. Some in-service CITs understood it to mean what is 'good' and 'important' for their students at their students' individual stages of Chinese instrument learning. IT3 mentioned, 'I think being student-centred is to cultivate the pupil's good habits in their learning so that they don't need to rely [for] everything on the teacher, as the teacher can't be there for them at any time'. As an example, IT3 articulated that it is vital for their

beginner dizi pupils to properly and habitually utilise their breath combined with the tonguing techniques: 'If I felt that the pupil didn't appropriately use their breath, I would stop [their playing] immediately to correct them.' As understood by IT7, student-centredness tends to be embodied in how they helped their conservatoire students solve their 'problems' in playing and improved the students' performing ability: 'recognis[ing] what the student needs to improve and help them solve their technical problems is the most practical way [to be student-centred]'.

Alternatively, IT1 stated that for children, 'Being student-centred is to follow their interests and the pattern of their development at their age'. Whilst IT6 had a similar opinion, expressing that they would ask about and listen to their students' ideas of what they wanted to learn, they also had concerns about basing their teaching 'completely' on their students' preferences:

My students [at the university] always wished to learn contemporary [guzheng] pieces. [...] I often encountered situations where the student was not interested in the traditional piece at the beginning when I required them to learn it because they didn't know much about what the piece was composed for and what the piece contained, but they gradually understood the beauty of the piece and appreciated it because of the time they spent on practising and understanding it. Maybe this is the process or opportunity that we, as teachers, should provide to our students to encounter and experience traditional music in learning. (IT6)

Likewise, IT8 highlighted that there should be a balance within being student-centred: although they expressed that they were 'open-minded to see different interpretations of the [vocal] pieces' from their conservatoire students, they emphasised the necessity of maintaining 'the original charm and features of the music' in the students' interpretations, which should be 'ensure[d]' by the teacher.

### **9.2.2 The China-domiciled pre-service CITs' perspectives**

It appears that the Chinese-domiciled pre-service CITs' understanding of the notion of student-centredness was influenced by the educational theory they learned in their degree programme modules (Chapter 5, Section 5.4), although they considered that their learning of the theory was 'superficial' (PT7) and 'not applicable to specific instrumental teaching'

(PT1). It is noteworthy here that four pre-service CITs at a Chinese university/conservatoire mentioned that they had encountered the concept of ‘being student-centred’<sup>114</sup> in the exam materials that they studied for the Chinese National Teacher Certificate Examination;<sup>115</sup> comparatively, none of the in-service CITs mentioned their experience or the influence of taking the Teacher Certificate Examination. Nevertheless, the pre-service CITs indicated that they ‘forgot how it [being student-centred] was defined’ (PT5) or ‘forgot what it relates to’ (PT3) after they finished the exam, as ‘It’s a memorisation-based learning instead of practice-based’ (PT3). This might suggest that taking this exam would be merely a milestone for professional and employment opportunities rather than a valuable training in itself.

Based on their own experiences of teaching as part-time CITs (Chapter 5, Section 5.6.1), they attributed student-centredness to ‘teaching centred around the individual pupil’s ability’ (PT5), ‘what the pupil acquired in this lesson [...] and] whether the pupil felt satisfied with the lesson’ (PT4). PT2 mentioned their intention of maintaining a ‘relaxing learning atmosphere by being patient with some of the pupil’s unpredictability’, although sometimes PT2 felt disappointed because their efforts were not appreciated nor rewarded by the pupil’s behaviour: ‘they were totally fine with coming to my lesson without practising at home [...] I’ve become a bit sceptical of my practice [...] such as wondering] what’s the right way to put students at the centre of my teaching’. Several pre-service CITs indicated that they were neither taught nor skilled in being student-centred in teaching due to the absence of experiencing a student-centred education and cultural environment where they were nurtured in the Chinese context (PT1, 4, and 7).

### **9.2.3 The UK MA student-teacher CITs’ perspectives**

Consistent with the China-domiciled pre-service CITs’ experience of learning the educational theory where the concept of student-centredness was included, some UK MA student-teachers also mentioned that they had encountered this concept in their BA programme modules in China and their preparation for the National Teacher Certificate Examination. Whilst ST5 considered the module relating to ‘educational psychology’ towards school music teaching they had in China ‘comprehensive’ including both theoretical and practical

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<sup>114</sup> ‘以学生为中心’ in Mandarin.

<sup>115</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2.

components, a lack of clarification and practicability in understanding the concept in the Chinese context was revealed by most of the student-teachers: 'I knew the student-centred concept when I was in China but didn't understand *how* it worked. Teachers also didn't explain it clearly' (ST2); 'We weren't taught *how* exactly to be student-centred' (ST10). Notably, ST10 disclosed that 'Student-centred teaching for music teachers in China was like a slogan, they always say, "being student-centred" but they don't really know what it means'.

Many UK MA student-teachers expressed that they were trained 'systematically' on the UK MA course to understand the notion of student-centredness 'from different angles' (ST15), from the MA teachers' one-to-one instrumental teaching demonstrations (see Chapter 7, Section 7.6.2), and from reflections (n=6); this 'sorted out the [student-centred] related concepts I came across in China' (ST2). Specifically, 'the definition and theories' related to student-centred instrumental/vocal teaching were taught on the MA (ST12), integrating practical and reflective conversations on, for example, how to promote learners' active participation in the lessons by asking 'open-ended questions' (n=8) and using 'specific praise' (n=6), 'how to creatively teach scales [on the instrument]' (ST10), and how to motivate the pupil by teaching a pupil-selected piece (n=5). After learning on the MA, ST4 mentioned their awareness of the complexity of 'the logic [rationale] behind' the notion of student-centredness, which may require the teacher to implement approaches in a reflective manner:

You need to think about those [student-centred] ideas a lot when combined with your practice, such as pupils' interests, emotions, and behaviour, then you may understand why they [the MA course] teach you these ideas and how you can make a change as a teacher.

#### **9.2.4 Discussion: CITs' perceptions of student-centredness**

The findings show that the concept of student-centredness has been integrated into educational settings in China including music education syllabi/curricula/agendas, although there appears to be a variety of understandings of the concept held by individual teachers; of those, many recognised an ambiguity within both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the concept of student-centredness, and a superficiality within the

understanding of this concept in the Chinese context. The cross-cultural pedagogical experiences of the MA student-teacher CITs in the UK might render their comparisons of the practice and/or delivery of this concept between their home and the host cultural contexts, from which they indicated that the student-centred teaching had not yet been effectively understood/practised in the Chinese context.

Despite this, Bremner (2021) highlights the ‘wide-ranging nature’ of conceptualising student/learner-centred education across literature, individual perceptions, teaching practices, disciplines, and cultural regions (p. 160). This includes ‘the widespread opportunities for misinterpretation’ of the salient dimensions of student/learner-centred education, such as active/interactive participation, adapting to needs, autonomy/metacognition, relevant real-life and higher-order skills, power sharing, and formative assessment, identified by Bremner’s (2021) systematic review of the literature on conceptualising student/learner-centred education (p. 180). Interestingly, while power sharing and formative (instead of summative) assessment are considerably valued by creative disciplines/social sciences such as Music and Art compared to ‘hard’ sciences (e.g. Medicine), it appears that these two aspects are paid minimum to no attention in the East Asian context owing to ‘largely fixed curricula and tending to assess students solely through summative examinations’ (Ibid., p. 175). This may go some way to explaining some of the in-service CITs’ understanding of student-centredness that solely contained their own perceptions of what was ‘good’ and ‘important’ for their student and what was ‘correct’ from the teacher’s perspectives, rather than seeking their students’ definitions of ‘good’, ‘important’ and ‘correct’ as learners themselves.

Moving beyond understanding the definition of student-centredness (i.e. knowing the *what*), it appears to be evident that knowing specific ways *how* to implement student-centredness is equally important for pre-service CITs (including both the UK MA and China-domiciled pre-service CITs). The China-domiciled pre-service CITs’ perceptions of student-centredness tend to be dependent on their examination-focused memorisation of the concept instead of their comprehension through actual practice and reflection; additionally, the programme modules relating to educational theories mentioned by the China-domiciled pre-service CITs showed no signs of enabling reflective practices and were considered ‘not applicable’ to specialist instrumental teaching (PT1, in Section 9.2.2). Comparatively, the UK MA student-teachers’ engagement with the concept was supported by the MA curriculum,

the instrumental/vocal teaching practices delivered by the MA teaching staff, and the student-teachers' reflections on their instrumental/vocal pedagogical implementations.

This reinforces the findings of the studies on the significant role that critical reflections play in the development of both professional identity and skills of teachers concerning self-awareness and/or pedagogical change-making (e.g. Burridge, 2018; Coutts, 2019; López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022), where 'the practical and discursive consciousness [...] is in contrast to the unconscious' (e.g. routinised teaching norms, Burridge, 2018, p. 148) to ensure the 'transformation of the teacher, the student, and the learning environment' towards student-centredness and student empowerment (Coutts, 2019, p. 504). In other words, avoiding sloganising the concept (ST10, in Section 9.2.3) or being politically advantageous but practically incoherent (Schweisfurth, 2013). Collaboratively, higher music education programme curricula (López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022), institutional administrations, and (inter)disciplinary teacher communities can initiate and support such reflective and transformative pedagogical practices (Burridge, 2018).

### **9.3 Beliefs of CITs towards authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertoire)**

Across the three cases of the CITs, there was consistency concerning their understanding of what might be attributed to authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertory); the rationale for this enquiry is in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, and Chapter 3, Sections 3.4.1 detail the methodology. All pre-service CITs (n=23) responded that this was 'the first time' they had been asked or thought about the concept of authenticity as a Chinese instrument learner/teacher; two in-service CITs had the same response (IT2 and 3), while IT5 and 6 indicated that this concept had not been directly communicated within their daily teaching practices with their students: 'We talked more about our learning attitudes and our performances, instead of "authenticity" this kind of philosophical and abstract word itself, [...] but it may be conveyed silently and unintentionally through my behaviours and requirements in teaching' (IT6). Encouraged by the open-ended follow-up questions in the interviews (Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1), many CITs revealed their perceptions regarding this concept based on their learning and teaching experiences.

### 9.3.1 The China-domiciled in-service CITs' perspectives

In-service CITs' beliefs about aspects that might contribute to authentically learning and/or teaching a Chinese instrument (repertory) largely concentrated on the historical, cultural, and regional context of the music. For example, IT4 considered that 'the traditional repertoire is where the authenticity comes from', while IT8 indicated that understanding what shaped the styles of the music could help students to authentically learn the repertoire: 'the geographic characteristics formed different styles of Chinese [traditional vocal] music [... such as] long-phrase songs produced by herdsmen in the vast grasslands and short-phrase songs generated from marketplace folklore'. IT3 considered being aware of 'the literary and narrative nature of Chinese traditional [instrumental] music' important as a Chinese instrument learner, '[being] a storyteller of the history [behind the music] in the performance'.

The aspect of the continuity and preservation of the historical/cultural/regional characteristics of the music seemed to influence the in-service CITs' beliefs about authentically teaching the instrument (repertory) to their students. This might be shown in IT7's response:

[...] acknowledg[ing] the value of guzheng music in Chinese culture [with my students ...] I make sure that students could at least master some representative traditional guzheng pieces to preserve our music culture [... This is] my responsibility to preserve and promote guzheng music and culture in my teaching, which may also influence my students' understanding of their own responsibility as guzheng learners.

Similarly, this sense of responsibility as a CIT was disclosed by IT3, who valued 'the teacher's attitude of respect for the inherited interpretations [...] to get familiar with the representative interpretation and teach it to the student'. Personal experiences, seemingly detached from the historical/cultural aspects, also appeared to impact some in-service CITs' beliefs about authentically learning the instrument (repertory): 'the routine I built up with practising the instrument and the music [...] the feeling of satisfaction I got from practising my favourite pieces of music' (IT5), as well as 'Individuals' aesthetics of the music' (IT8) were the relevant factors.

### **9.3.2 The China-domiciled pre-service CITs' perspectives**

Comparatively, some China-domiciled pre-service CITs attributed authentically teaching a Chinese instrument (repertory) to their familiarity with the music they taught: 'I felt more authentic when I taught the pieces I was familiar with' (PT2); 'my expertise in [playing] the music of Southern genre made me feel that I taught Southern pieces more authentically than Northern ones' (PT3). This perception appeared to influence the choice of specific repertoire made by PT3 in their teaching: 'Most of the time I taught the pieces from one particular Southern genre, as [...] I had less confidence in teaching other genres [...] I was afraid of delivering inaccurate or, inauthentic, interpretations to my pupils'.

Similar to the perception held by IT7, PT5 also considered promoting 'the preserved musical culture and its value' necessary for their pupils: '[My] adolescent pupils had no interest in learning traditional repertoire. They only wanted to learn how to play popular music, to which I had no objection, but I became worried about the [future of the] traditional music' (PT5). Moreover, PT5 mentioned that 'help[ing] the pupil learn techniques and the notation is the foundation for them to authentically experience the pieces of music [by being able to play the pieces]'. Additionally, emotional experience as a factor was mentioned by PT4: 'My emotional resonance with the music I was playing made me feel [I was] learning the music authentically'.

### **9.3.3 The UK MA student-teacher CITs' perspectives**

Despite their awareness of the inherited characteristics of the music, some UK MA student-teachers mentioned the aspect of teacher-pupil interactions that might contribute to authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertory). For instance, ST4 revealed that 'I wish my pupil can learn the music authentically through our conversations [in the lessons ...] the more [pupil] participation the more authentic experience they could obtain'; likewise, ST15 felt that 'the [pupil's] learning process wouldn't be authentic if there was no pupil-teacher interactions' (ST15). The aspect of the pupils' feelings was also considered as a factor: 'whether the pupil enjoyed learning the piece of music or not would influence whether they learned authentically' (ST6); 'help[ing] the pupil enjoy their instrumental learning is to help them learn the music authentically' (ST12). Moreover, many MA student-teacher CITs (n=13) acknowledged that their cross-cultural pedagogical learning



experience on the MA programme strengthened their pedagogical awareness of thinking more from their pupils' perspectives.

As is consistent with the perceptions of the in-service CITs, the inherited cultural aspects of the music seemed to have a predominant impact on the UK MA student-teachers' understanding of teaching/learning authentically. For instance, ST8 mentioned 'the typical division of the "Wenqu" [文曲, civil] and "Wuqu" [武曲, martial] styles of the pipa repertoire', which might be seen as 'standards' to evaluate whether the repertoire was authentically interpreted by the performers/learners. Likewise, these types of stylistic 'standards' in playing the Chinese traditional instrument repertoire by distinguishing regional musical styles of the North and South in interpretations was identified by ST11, as well as applying 'the corresponding techniques' based on the regional musical styles of the repertoire: 'It would be considered unprofessional if a performer applied Da Tuo Pi [大托劈, a fingering technique belonging to the Northern guzheng genres] in playing a Southern piece of music' (ST13).<sup>116</sup>

However, tensions appeared to arise between the MA student-teacher CITs' increased awareness of their pupil-involved context including pupil-teacher interactions and pupils' feelings about where authentic learning might lie, and their beliefs about what might characterise teaching/learning authentically: e.g. standards formed by the culturally inherited features. While these standards might inevitably influence a CIT's pedagogical beliefs, ST10 reflected that 'personalised interpretation of the music is more authentic to oneself instead of the "standardised" interpretation', and perhaps 'the authenticity of the pupil's interpretation shouldn't be [solely] evaluated by the teacher's standards of authenticity' (ST4).

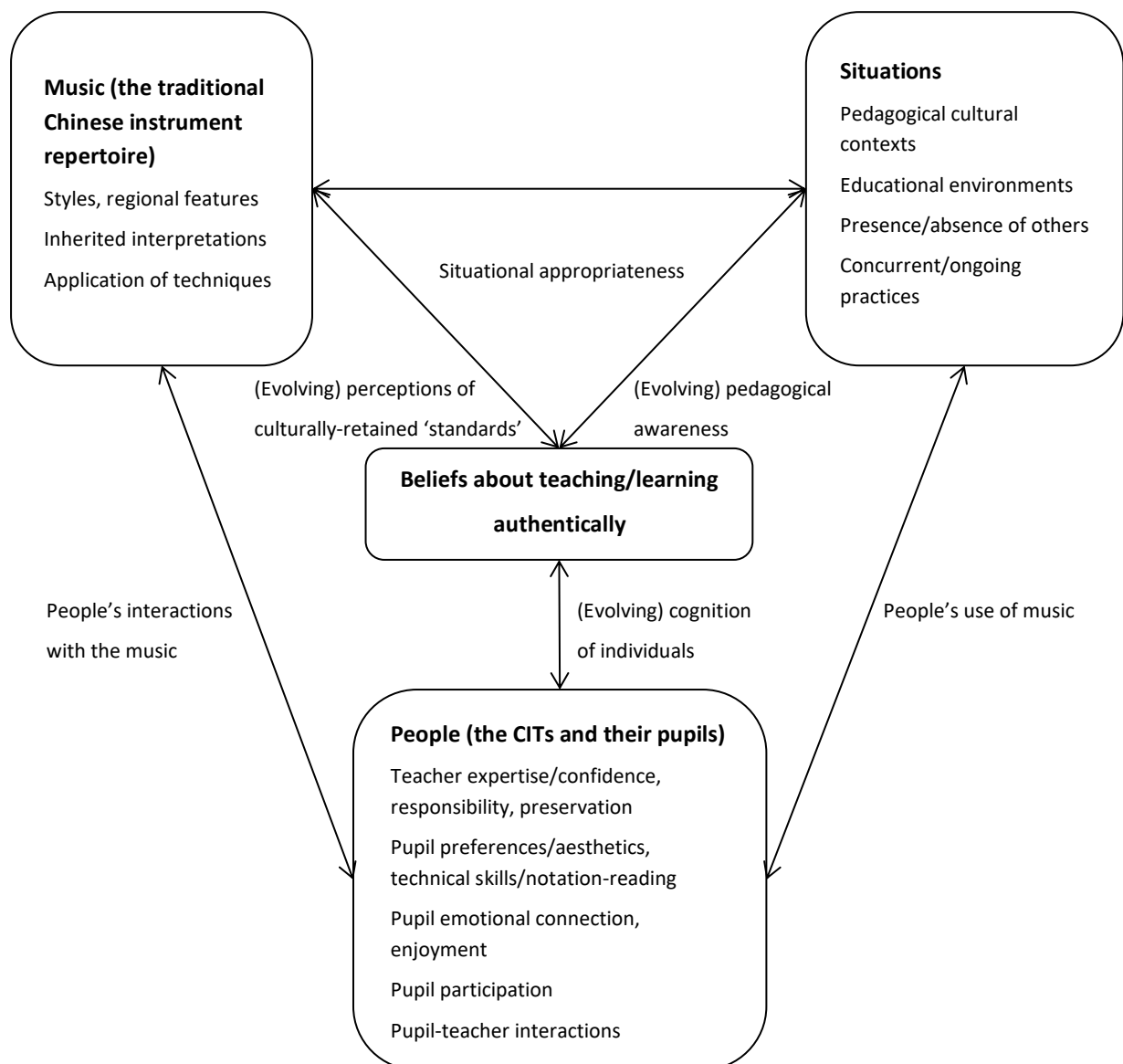
#### **9.3.4 Discussion: CITs' beliefs about authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertory)**

The findings show reflections of the China-domiciled in-and pre-service CITs and the UK MA student-teacher CITs when they encountered the enquiry of what might construct their beliefs of authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertory). By

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<sup>116</sup> More findings of the impact of the Chinese musical stylistic features (e.g. Northern and Southern differences) on the UK MA student-teacher CITs' pedagogical implementation and transformation are in Chapter 7, Section 7.5 and Chapter 8, Section 8.4.

referring to Hargreaves et al.'s (2011) theoretical model of interactive relationships and cognitive responses between music, people, and situations/contexts where the music is generated/played (also discussed in Chapter 8, Section 8.5.2 on pupil/performer-music-teacher/listener dynamics), the CITs' beliefs about teaching/learning authentically in the findings could be categorised by these interrelationships; within this current research context, the music mentioned by the CITs typically referred to the Chinese traditional instrument repertoire, the people concerned the CITs and their pupils, and the situations included the Chinese and the UK contexts where they learned and taught (see Figure 9.1).



**Figure 9.1:** Theoretical model of interactions between the music (i.e. the Chinese traditional instrument repertoire), the people (i.e. the CITs and their pupils), and the contexts, derived and re-created from the reciprocal feedback model of musical response (Hargreaves et al., 2011, p. 157) with the thesis findings integrated.

Across the three cases of the CITs, as combined with Hargreaves et al.'s (2011) theoretical model in Figure 9.1, their perceptions of teaching/learning authentically appear to be largely shaped by the aspect of the music (e.g. the styles, regional features, inherited interpretations) due to the embedded historical, literary, and regional roots (e.g. IT3, IT7 and ST12). Their perceptions also seem to be influenced by the aspect of the individuals as the teacher (e.g. expertise/confidence, responsibility, preservation of the inherited interpretations) and as the learner (e.g. preferences/aesthetics, technical skills/notation-reading, emotional connection, enjoyment). The aspect of the pedagogical cultural context, where there was a 'presence' of the UK MA pedagogy that influenced their beliefs about teaching/learning authentically, appears to be only mentioned by the UK MA student-teacher CITs; this could be again explained by the cross-cultural pedagogical comparisons of the teaching practices they experienced between their home and the host educational cultural contexts, from which the 'situational appropriateness' may become salient (Hargreaves et al., 2011, p. 157).

Notably, tensions tend to be identifiable from the MA student-teacher CITs' beliefs about the aspect of the music (e.g. the culturally retained features) and the aspect of their pupils, revealing their awareness of pupils' participation and pupil-teacher interactions; this awareness appears to be stimulated by their cross-cultural pedagogical learning on the UK MA (also see Chapter 8 on the case of the UK MA student-teacher CITs). This interactive pupil-teacher co-construction aligns with constructivist beliefs and approaches to teaching and learning, informing how a sense of authenticity can be actualised through empowerment, dialogue, and engagement (e.g. Baxter-Magolda, 1999; Bialystok, 2017; Kreber, 2010, see Chapter 10 for further discussion). Nevertheless, IT6 noted that 'authenticity' was not a primary consideration in their daily teaching, describing it as 'abstract' and 'philosophical'. This could indicate that individual CITs might interpret and engage with the concept of authenticity differently, depending on whether they had previously reflected on it in relation to their practices or encountered it in other settings

(e.g. academic literature or discussions). Consequently, those who had already contemplated authenticity might offer more insights, whereas those encountering the concept for the first time might give more general responses. This diversity in perspectives could highlight how real-world understandings of ‘authenticity’ would differ from the more specialised discussions found in academic scholarship (see further discussion in Chapter 10, Section 10.2.4).

As exploring the notion of authenticity in education ultimately discloses the purposes of educational practices, the identities of stakeholders, and the realities in which they act (Bialystok, 2017), those beliefs, shaped by the CITs’ previous and concurrent experiences, would inevitably impact *how* they teach a Chinese instrument (repertory) to their pupils. This may be evident in the specific ways of teaching revealed by the CITs in the previous chapters of the findings and the following section.

## **9.4 Interpretation and/or semi-improvisation in teaching and/or learning the Chinese instrument repertoire**

### **9.4.1 The China-domiciled in-service CITs’ perspectives**

Many in-service CITs focused on teaching the traditional repertoire indicated that ‘mastering’ the interpretation of the piece with ‘the essential characteristics’ (IT8) would be a prerequisite for students to trial other ways of interpretations or to semi-improvise with the music. IT8 used the idiom ‘Learn to walk before you run’ to explain the relationship between learning the preserved version of interpreting the piece, described as ‘the basic [version]’ by IT8 and IT3, and the creation of personalised interpretations with semi-improvisation integrated. On the other hand, IT5 and IT6 tended to draw a parallel between their perceived appropriate interpretation of the piece and an ‘accurate expression of the music’, aligning with ‘what the composer wished to convey [... to] sound expressively accurate’ (IT6).

There appeared to be differences in teaching the traditional and contemporary repertoire concerning semi-improvisation: IT6 stated,

I generally wouldn't suggest students [apply] "jiahua" [加花, adding flowers]<sup>117</sup> on the traditional pieces, as there are widely-recognised versions of performance of the pieces [...] students [are expected to] carry on with this [...] Maybe one day when you become famous, you can have your own version of the performance of the [traditional] piece that can be recognised by people. [...] Contrastingly, it's more feasible for students to interpret the contemporary pieces, presenting their own styles.

While enabling their students to interpret the contemporary piece based on personal understandings, IT6 expressed that

I focused on the purpose of the student when they wished to interpret the [contemporary] piece differently. [...] I always asked my students why they added things or played differently [from the notation] in particular places and what effect they intended to achieve. [...] Overall, I think teachers still need to gatekeep their students' interpretations especially if the piece is composed based on the traditional musical elements [...]

IT6 used the contemporary piece of *Liang Zhu* [梁祝, *The Butterfly Lovers*] as an example:

[The piece] is originally composed for the violin based on the Yue Opera [originated in Zhejiang province] with the characteristics of the music of Southern China, the style of the Zhejiang music genre. [...] In this case, the "jiahua" the performer applied should only help to exhibit those characteristics rather than ignore or remove them in order to show the performer's individuality.

Interestingly, IT2 recalled their previous dizi teacher's understanding of the semi-improvisation in the playing of the dizi traditional repertoire, distinguished by the ways adopted by conservatoire-trained and folk musicians:

[...] the "jiahua" technique is just a small part of semi-improvisation, which is actually different from the traditionally defined semi-improvisation. My [dizi] teacher told me that the current conservatoire-style ways of playing are different from the ways of playing adopted by folk Chinese instrument musicians. They [the

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<sup>117</sup> See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.1 for more information.

folk Chinese instrument musicians] were good at semi-improvising with the music, while the conservatoire-style playing is only related to adding ornaments or applying different tonguing techniques, so [conservatoire] students couldn't genuinely learn how to semi-improvise diversely from their [conservatoire-trained] teachers. The true semi-improvisational techniques might be at risk of being lost when the old folklorists passed away.

#### **9.4.2 The China-domiciled pre-service CITs' perspectives**

Due to the levels of the pupils (mostly beginners) of those China-domiciled pre-service CITs, some indicated that the opportunities to teach or enable their pupils' personal interpretation or semi-improvisation were limited: '[...] the pupil was still learning the basic techniques and how to read the notation. They relied on the teacher's phrase by phrase teaching' (PT4). PT6 disclosed that

I hadn't really had the chance to teach the semi-improvised techniques to my pupils due to their levels. Some simple ornamentation would be taught when teaching the piece. The ornaments were added by my previous pipa teacher when I learned the piece, and I now teach them to my own pupils.

Additionally, PT1 considered that their pupil had little interest in learning how to semi-improvise with the piece:

They [the pupil] just wanted to learn to play the whole piece smoothly as soon as possible and then learn the next piece. The new piece is always more attractive than the one they are currently learning. I rarely encountered a pupil who had their own ideas to say "I want to play it in this way"; they all waited for the teacher's instructions rather than semi-improvising by themselves.

It appeared that the personal learning experiences of those China-domiciled pre-service CITs concerning interpretation and semi-improvisation influenced how they would teach their own pupils. In parallel with IT2's recollection of their former dizi teacher's statement (Section 9.4.1), PT3 mentioned that their previous guzheng teacher did not deliberately teach them the semi-improvised techniques, which seemed to be associated

more with the characteristics of the specific piece they were learning and their teacher's musicality:

My teacher knew where to add or change some details in playing the piece. I just followed their suggestions, and the interpretation indeed improved. Sometimes they would interrupt my playing [during the lesson] to tell me that I could make some changes here or there to improve my playing. Based on this kind of experience, [in my teaching] I would give similar suggestions to my own pupils, but not frequently, [at the stage] when they had no problems with [reading] the notation and techniques.

Moreover, the different approaches to interpreting the traditional repertoire, mostly 'the repertoire for the graded exam' (PT3), and the pieces re-composed based as popular music were revealed by some pre-service CITs:

I taught the traditional repertory according to the master-musician's version of playing it [by watching the recorded video online] just in case I might have the stylistic or expressive details of the piece handled incorrectly, but for the re-composed popular pieces, it could be taught more freely, such as freely applying the technique *guazou* [刮奏, *glissando*] where the music needs to be pushed to a little climax, or even adding chords [on the guzheng]. (PT4)

This difference might also concern the pupils' purposes of learning a piece: 'Some pupils were learning a piece for the graded exam. For them, I wouldn't focus on things such as an eye-catching interpretation of the music. [Ensuring] the pupil's solid interpretation of the music [in the exam] is the priority' (PT4). This may show the constraints of exams that would affect a sense of authenticity within the pupil's learning.

#### **9.4.3 The UK MA student-teacher CITs' perspectives**

Similar to the China-domiciled pre-service CITs' perspectives, some UK MA student-teacher CITs expressed that their experiences of learning interpretations and/or semi-improvisations as learners in China impacted their teaching with their own pupils (also see Chapter 8, Section 8.4). Some of them mentioned their gradual accumulation of the 'jiahua' technique while they were learning the specific repertoire, while they did not seem to regard their

previous teachers' delivery of such technique as deliberate transmission; this appeared to be consistent with the learning experience of PT3 (Section 9.4.2): 'I don't think my teacher taught me this [semi-improvisational] skill as systematically as they taught the fingering skills [...] maybe this [skill] is subjective and requires our own understanding of the music' (ST1). As a result, ST5 considered that they could only provide suggestions to their pupils concerning how to add semi-improvised ornaments instead of deliberately teaching the technique; many also indicated that the levels of their pupils would impact whether they integrated this technique in teaching specific repertoire, consistent with some of the China-domiciled pre-service CITs' perspectives: 'I think the "jiahua" requires the pupil's performing capability. If they don't have a high level of performing skills, they don't know where and how they can semi-improvise' (ST14).

Interestingly, ST11 recalled their experience as a guzheng learner, in terms of interpreting the piece by imitating the version of interpretation performed by their favourite guzheng musician, with the musician's personalised ornaments added; however, ST11's guzheng teacher asked them to remove those ornaments: 'My teacher thought that I wasn't able to handle the ornamentation as well as that musician, so it would be better to leave it out'. Similarly, ST9 revealed that while their dizi teacher was pleased to see their interpretation of the piece with their (ST9's) 'personal ideas of interpreting the music and "jiahua"' integrated, their teacher would 'point out the problem [in my personal interpretation] and tell me why I couldn't interpret in this way, then I just followed my teacher's idea [of interpreting], yeah, it's always like this when I now think back on it'.

#### **9.4.4 Discussion: Interpretation and/or semi-improvisation in teaching the Chinese traditional instrument repertoire**

The findings exhibit similarities in the aspect of teaching or enabling the semi-improvisational feature in musical interpretation across the three cases of the CITs. This may concern the types of the repertoire the CITs taught: the space for personal semi-improvisation within the traditional pieces appears to be narrower than for the contemporary (IT6) or the re-composed popular pieces of music (PT4), owing to the 'widely-recognised version of performance of the [traditional] pieces' (IT6) and 'the essential characteristics' of the traditional pieces that may need to be preserved by the learner (IT8)



and ‘gatekept’ by the teacher (IT6). This adheres closely to the findings in relation to the CITs’ beliefs about authentically teaching and/or learning Chinese instrument repertoire, where their perceptions tended to be influenced by the inherited/established ‘standards’ of the interpretation of the music (Section 9.3), i.e., the prototypical representation of the music (Hargreaves et al., 2011) and the prestige of ‘famous’ (IT6) and master-musicians (PT4). This possession of authority or prestige in the dimension of culture has been acknowledged as a ‘cultural capital’, where the unique symbolic nature of distinction guarantees benefits for those who possess a significant amount of cultural capital, reinforcing social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 2016).

Secondly, the pupils’ performing techniques may be prioritised by the CITs in their teaching, as many of them considered the technical skills the basis for interpreting the music or for being able to achieve the semi-improvisation (e.g. IT8, PT4, ST14). However, research on developing music learners’ awareness and ability in the aspect of musical improvisation provides alternative pedagogical priorities, including imagination, the *act* of improvising (Erkkilä et al., 2011), autonomy (i.e. the learner’s psychological needs, Hickey, 2009), creativity, and the underlying cognitive interactions (Clarke, 2011); nevertheless, the semi-improvisation tends to be different from improvising completely new material, which may have held expectations concerning the preservation and continuation of the Chinese sociocultural and musical roots (e.g. the authority of the prescribed standards demonstrated by ST9’s dizi teacher, who interrupted ST9’s personalised interpretation with their semi-improvised attempts). In this case, challenges and possibilities within the development of the semi-improvisation in practice may resonate with those within improvisation; they may be inseparable from ‘The engagement of cognitive processes with both social factors (performance traditions, socially constructed notions of “innovation” and the limits of acceptable radicalism, the interactions between narrowly defined musical processes and the social context of performance) and physical factors’ (Clarke, 2011, p. 27).

The paradox appears to reside in the established interpretations/representations/repetitions and ‘a certain degree of freedom and creativity’ enabled by the semi-improvisation feature in interpreting the repertoire (Yung, 1987, p. 84, also see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2), reflected in the CITs’ beliefs, teaching, and/or experiences as learners. Still, Attali (2009) argues that musical activities featuring creativity should be pursued *not* for the reproduction and representation values but purely for the enjoyment of

the individual engaging in it, which represents a complete break from the roles (composer, performer, audience) that have historically characterised music practices. This may suggest re-considerations of the teacher's perception of 'what is "good" or "not good"' – potentially shaped by those reproduction and representation values – in evaluating individual students' musical learning, producing, and engagement (Hickey, 2009, p. 295). Particularly, teaching efforts should consider how technical skills interact with and depend on a learner's inherent inclinations, to balance the pedagogical focus on developing techniques and other musical capabilities (Ibid.). For example, based on the characteristics of young music learners, Meissner (2021) suggests enabling pupils' emotion-based free trialling (e.g. making sounds on the instrument to show their happy/sad/angry emotions) at the beginner stage, which develops learners' musical expressiveness.

Notably, the distinction between the ways of semi-improvising adopted by the conservatoire-trained musicians and the folk Chinese instrumentalists, uncovered by IT2's recollection of their learning experience with their dizi teacher, may indicate the impact of different transmission contexts in China. It appears evident in the findings that many CITs referred to the semi-improvisation as the 'jiahua' technique and adding ornaments, while this tends to be only one of the ways in which semi-improvisation could be actualised according to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.1; yet, the hierarchical (e.g. the teacher's authorised standards in the findings) and inheritance-oriented transmission of Chinese instruments (repertoire) may challenge when, how, and to what extent (e.g. the density of integrating semi-improvised elements, reviewed in Section 2.2.2.2) a learner could personally interpret the piece with their personalised semi-improvisation. This might be enlightening for the training of CITs, for example by learning and incorporating semi-improvisation practices from folk Chinese instrumentalists to help with understanding this musical feature in more depth.

## **9.5 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter exhibits a mixed picture of pedagogical awareness, beliefs, practices, and contexts in relation to the concepts of student-centredness and authenticity in music education, specific to the repertoire teaching and learning of a Chinese instrument. The integration of student-centredness in Chinese music education agendas appears to have

been both advocated and challenged: there might be ambiguity and superficiality in its implementation within the Chinese context, in which CITs tended to have varied interpretations of what student-centredness might entail, leading to inconsistencies in how it was applied in their practice (Section 9.2). This issue may be further complicated by the fact that many CITs relied on their own perceptions of what is 'good' and 'important' for their students, rather than engaging with their students' own definitions and perspectives (Section 9.2.1), exhibiting their pedagogical beliefs and aspects influencing their beliefs (RQ4).

The cross-cultural comparisons articulated by the MA student-teacher CITs between the practices of student-centred teaching in the Chinese and UK contexts highlight distinct priorities within educational frameworks and curricula: on the UK MA, the student-teacher CITs benefited from the curriculum that supports critical reflection combined with their practical application of student-centred approaches in instrumental/vocal lessons. Comparatively, the Chinese approach tends to prioritise examination-focused learning through memorisation instead of reflective practices (e.g. targeting the Teacher Certificate Examination, Section 9.2.2), which appears to limit the depth of understanding and implementation of student-centred principles. This reveals impact of pedagogical training combining reflective practices on teacher's pedagogical understandings (RQ2 and RQ4) and aligns with research emphasising the importance of reflective practice in developing teachers' professional identities and pedagogical skills, informing music/instrumental/vocal teacher education. The education systems in the East Asian context characterised by fixed curricula and summative assessments as shown in the literature may also warrant re-evaluation (Section 9.2.4).

The findings concerning the examination of the CITs' beliefs about authentically teaching and/or learning a Chinese instrument (repertory) present a range of aspects that would influence their beliefs, hence affecting their practices (addressing RQ4); their beliefs as a CIT appear to be rooted in the culturally-retained interpretations of the music, emphasising inherited standards and technical skills (Section 9.3), i.e. characteristics of teaching practices (RQ1). By referencing Hargreaves et al.'s (2011) theoretical model, the influential aspects included the interactions among the characteristics of the music they taught/learnt, the people (including their perceptions as teachers and/or their consideration of their student's perspective), and the contexts where they taught/learned (Sections

9.3.1/2/3). Additionally, the cross-cultural learning experiences of the UK MA student-teachers may contribute to their awareness of tensions between culturally informed and pupil-engaged/focused teaching towards authenticity (Section 9.3.3), revealing a heightened sensitivity to pedagogical and situational appropriateness through their commitment to reflective and adaptive teaching practices, enabled by the UK MA curriculum (RQ5 concerning adaptation).

The findings highlight tensions between incorporating individual interpretations of the specific pieces through semi-improvisation and the historically- or teacher-authority-constructed interpretations featuring values of representation and repetition within a cultural capital (Section 9.4, also responding to RQ4). This dichotomy may reflect ongoing challenges of balancing learner engagement through promoting autonomy/personality/creativity in interpretations with semi-improvisation enabled and the established practices prioritising standardisation in interpretations and the acquisition of technical skills (Sections 9.3.3 and 9.4.1/2/3). Moreover, when, and the extent to which learners could engage in personalised interpretations (embodying student-centredness) might be largely affected by the hieratical and inheritance-oriented nature of (traditional) Chinese music education. Finally, the dimensions of standardisation/reproduction (i.e. the cultural capital) and individuality/creativity in music education, as well as the interrelationships between (instrumental/vocal) teacher education, teachers' pedagogical awareness/beliefs/reflections and practices revealed in this chapter are further discussed in Chapter 10.

# Chapter 10: General Discussion

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## 10.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general discussion of the findings that emerged from the perspectives of Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) across diverse educational backgrounds (Chapter 4), perspectives of China-domiciled pre-service CITs (Chapters 5/9), perspectives of China-domiciled in-service CITs (Chapters 6/9), and perspectives of the UK-trained student-teacher CITs (Chapters 7/8/9). These responds to the five research questions as follows: RQ1 (Section 10.2), RQ2 (Section 10.3), RQ3 (section10.4), RQ4 (Section 10.5), and RQ5 (Section 10.6).

## 10.2 Research question 1

**What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?**

Across diverse educational contexts, findings suggest that the teaching and learning of Chinese instrument might be characterised by orientations concerning efficiency and performance examinations, teacher-led practices with teacher authority, and the preservation of inherited musical features, as discussed below.

### 10.2.1 Performance examinations and efficiency orientation

The findings show that the influence of performance examinations in Chinese instrument tuition appears to have a notable impact on both teacher and student agency, fostering a culture that prioritises efficiency. This emphasis on examinations may lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, focusing predominantly on the repertoire required for assessments (Haddon, 2024). In this context, there seems to be a shared understanding among teachers, learners, and parents that success might be primarily defined by mastering exam pieces and achieving high scores, while other aspects of musical engagement might receive less attention (e.g. Chapter 5, Section 5.4 on the learning as Yikao candidates). This is also evident in the survey findings from this study (Chapter 4), indicating that most CITs tend to teach younger students, often under 15 years old, with a strong emphasis on preparing for

graded performance examinations; this pattern aligns with the growing trend of private tuition in China (Wu, 2013).

Largely influenced by an examination-driven educational system, authoritative teaching practices, and parental expectations, learners within private Chinese instrumental teaching contexts appear to experience limited personal autonomy. Literature suggests that students in such environments might struggle to maintain motivation and engagement, potentially leading to decreased energy and concentration during practice sessions (McPherson et al., 2012). However, it is important to note that the thesis findings are drawn from a relatively small sample and may not represent the experiences of all students in China.

Existing research highlights the potential benefits of fostering learner autonomy and self-regulation in instrumental education (Coutts, 2019; McPherson et al., 2012). Self-regulated learning can be embodied in, for example, as McPherson et al. (2019) and Zimmerman (2000) illustrate, *learner self-planning* (e.g. analysing what needs to be done and building up motivation through learning goals in a forethought phase); *self-observation* (e.g. staying focused and controlling their attention in a performance/action phase); *self-reflection* (e.g. reviewing what went well and what did not in a self-evaluation phase for their next practice/learning session, restarting self-planning); this cycle then repeats. However, there seems to be limited evidence in the current findings suggesting that these CITs actively facilitate their pupils' self-regulation by enabling their pupils' own choice-making and self-evaluation of their interpretations. It might be that many of these CITs had not yet engaged in this or other relevant mechanisms of educational psychology such as individual core self-evaluations and self-efficacy influencing motivation and outcomes (Erez & Judge, 2001; Johnson et al., 2008) from their received training and research. It might also be that the strong focus on efficiency and measurable outcomes overshadows opportunities for these CITs to enable their students to take ownership of their musical development. This environment might not fully support the exploration of diverse musical experiences and creative expression, as evident in the context where pre-service CITs were preparing for the Yikao (Chapter 5). Teachers are evaluated by stakeholder expectations (e.g. parents, school/exam boards and the established standards), which increases teacher accountability and forms teachers' pedagogical priorities (Hwa, 2021). Ultimately, while research underscores the benefits of self-regulated learning and learner autonomy, the prevailing

focus on efficiency and external accountability in Chinese instrument tuition appears to limit CITs from adopting truly innovative, student-centred practices, signalling a need for a paradigm shift that could combine measurable outcomes with reflective approaches to effectively empower pupils as self-directed learners.

### **10.2.2 Teacher-led learning and teacher authority**

The dynamics of teacher-led learning and the teacher authority within Chinese -instrument tuition as disclosed by some China-domiciled pre-service CITs and UK MA student-teacher CITs appeared evident; this may relate to the hierarchical nature of the Chinese sociocultural context (as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2). Findings from both pre-service and in-service CITs, as well as student-teachers on the UK MA course, appeared to suggest complexities inherent in the traditional pedagogical approaches that might be common concerning one-to-one teacher-student relationships in the Chinese context. Whilst one-to-one lessons would be central to developing technical proficiency, they often seem to create stress, as perceived by some pre-service CITs in Chinese HE (Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1). Several pre-service CITs indicated that these lessons were demanding and anxiety-inducing, largely due to high expectations from their teachers and the perceived necessity for their teachers' recognition of their learning/practising/playing. Wang (2019) attributes this perception to the result of typical Chinese-style education that emphasises teacher authority rather than students' independent voices, which can make students' self-perception dependent on authoritative judgements and hinders the development of their independent and critical thinking. This might reinforce hierarchical teacher-student relationships. The tendency for teachers to compare students' performances and utilise peer competition as a motivational strategy could lead to increased stress and feelings of inadequacy among learners. This observation aligns with Borel's (2019) findings on the intense peer competition and rigorous practice routines prevalent in Chinese conservatoires.

While the hierarchical nature of these relationships may stem from cultural values that prioritise respect for authority and collectivism in the Chinese context (Wang, 2019), there was also evidence that supportive and empathetic teaching could yield positive outcomes: one pre-service CIT noted how their guzheng teacher adopted a more respectful

and empowering teaching style that fostered autonomy and influenced their professional choices positively (Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1). This underscores the significant role that teachers play, extending beyond mere instruction, and highlights the importance of nurturing positive teacher-student relationships (Haddon, 2012; Manturzewska, 1990; Nielsen, 2006).

Additionally, the authority of established standards and the prestige associated with renowned master-musicians perceived by those CITs might influence their teaching practices and interpretations. Such authority can serve as a form of cultural capital, reinforcing social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 2016) in, for example, music education. The tension between enabling individual interpretations through semi-improvisation and adhering to historically or teacher-authority-driven interpretations might reflect broader challenges in balancing tradition with innovation in the practices of teaching Chinese instrument music.

### **10.2.3 Inherited musical features and preservation**

The preservation of inherited musical features appears to be an important aspect of Chinese instrument tuition, as revealed by those CITs. Participants demonstrated an understanding of the interrelationship between the music, historically inherited performances, and the continuity of musical culture (Chapter 9, Section 9.3). This emphasis on preservation appeared to have influenced their pedagogical choices. For instance, ST14 mentioned feeling it would be ‘irresponsible’ not to correct a pupil’s stylistic issues, suggesting a sense of responsibility to uphold traditional performance practices as a CIT. This perspective may stem from the embedded historical, literary, and regional roots of Chinese instruments, where stylistic differences between Northern and Southern repertoires are historically preserved by Chinese instrumentalists (Thrasher, 1989). However, this focus on preservation might also constrain the scope for more pedagogical possibilities and personal interpretation. This could raise questions about how CITs and learners could understand and engage with inherited musical features, and whether these features could potentially restrict creativity in performance and teaching.

However, compared to the different ways of applying the techniques of semi-improvisation as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.1, those CITs’ understanding of the semi-improvisation techniques appeared only related to the ‘Jiahua’. This was identified



from one of the in-service CITs' narrations concerning their dizi teachers' understanding of the inheritance of this technique, as they noted a distinction between the approaches of conservatoire-trained musicians and folk musicians. This might be related to the modes of transmission within different contexts between conservatoire teachers/students and folk musicians in China (i.e. 'xueyuan pai' versus 'minjian pai') as acknowledged by many ethnomusicologists (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.3). Additionally, Hughes (2004) uncovers that at SOAS,<sup>118</sup> Stephen Jones taught beginning students in the Jiangnan Sizhu<sup>119</sup> ensemble class by asking them to 'think of (or read the notation for) only a skeletal "bone melody" (*guganyin*) while actually playing a more complex style based on "adding flowers" (*jiahua*)', thus helping 'novices grasp the process by which an undefined deep structure can yield a range of variants' featuring musical creativity (p. 274).

This appears to be completely different from the teaching practices disclosed by CITs concerning teaching and/or learning semi-improvisation across their specific contexts (Chapter 9, Section 9.4). Interestingly, Witzleben (2004) reveals that 'disinterest in developing aural and/or semi-improvisational skills is an attitude that was shared by virtually every Chinese music student I met at [... a Chinese] Conservatory' (p. 150). One possible reason for this could be that although some Chinese instrument students have advanced techniques thanks to their received training in Chinese higher music education, they lack sufficient familiarity with 'the musical genres being performed to be expected to add improvised "flowers" idiomatically' (Ibid., p. 150). These observations, as well as the contrasting approaches to teaching semi-improvisation in the two different cultural contexts (i.e. at SOAS and the CITs' practices in this research) should warrant critical attention and reflection from stakeholders (e.g. Chinese instrument teachers/learners and Chinese music educators/researchers). Further research is also needed to examine conservatoire and university Chinese instrument students' attitudes towards learning aural and semi-improvisational skills, offering an opportunity to assess the relevance and validity of these views as presented in the literature two decades ago.

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<sup>118</sup> The School of Oriental and African Studies, a member college of the University of London, UK.

<sup>119</sup> String-and-wind ensemble music (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.3).

#### **10.2.4 Authenticity as multifaceted and negotiated practices**

The notion of authenticity in Chinese traditional music appears to remain a source of tension and debate. Early scholarship in China often equated ‘authenticity’ with ‘originality’ – that is, requiring music to retain its historical form and indigenous context, for instance, in ritual or festive settings (Shi, 2015). However, the findings in this study, which include perspectives from China-domiciled and UK MA student-teacher CITs, indicate that authenticity could also be influenced by personal engagement (e.g. emotional connection, teacher-learner interactions) and by the demands of contemporary pedagogical or cross-cultural environments.

‘Authenticity’ tends also to be shaped by cultural power and authority dynamics. For example, the CITs in this research navigate a tension between the ‘standards’ of inherited repertoire and the practical need to accommodate exam requirements, parental expectations, and cross-cultural teaching settings. Some emphasised region-specific repertoire – such as Northern or Southern guzheng techniques – as markers of ‘authentic’ interpretation. Others observed that market demands (e.g. graded exams, performance competitions) often favour technical uniformity, making it more challenging to preserve local aesthetics and cultural nuances. Apart from a musical practice, ‘authenticity’ in Chinese traditional music is a sociocultural construct from a broader ethnomusicological viewpoint (Shi, 2015). The sociocultural dimension appears evident among CITs who studied in the UK, revealing how authenticity could be viewed and negotiated where Western educational philosophies intersect with Chinese musical traditions.

### **10.3 Research question 2**

**What influences Chinese instrument teachers’ (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?**

Findings indicate that distinct admission criteria in Chinese HE and programme curricula both within and across cultures would influence those CITs’ pathways to music and their teaching profession, as illustrated below.

### **10.3.1 Educational pathways: Admission requirements in Chinese HE**

The educational trajectories of individuals engaged in Chinese instrument tuition appears to reveal a complex landscape shaped by admission requirements and the structure of music programme curricula. Findings from pre- and in-service CITs in China suggest that these factors may influence both their experiences and perceptions concerning professional development at this phase of education within Chinese HE. Specifically, admission requirements between conservatories and universities seemed to present complexities. Differences in the emphasis placed on the Yikao and Gaokao examinations might allow students to optimise their strengths in either musical or academic domains, as perceived by some in-service CITs; however, their educational choices concerning pathways could potentially be influenced, especially considering if this choice making was not based on their inner interest but the external constraints (i.e. the requirements). Some participants observed that students aiming for conservatories might sacrifice academic subjects to focus on musical training (e.g. Music Fuzhong students), while those targeting universities might allocate more time to academic learning at the expense of instrumental practice (Chapter 6, Section 6.6).

However, challenges appear to arise concerning academic requirements and support within these educational pathways. Some pre-service CITs reported difficulties in meeting English language proficiency standards necessary for graduation, suggesting potential gaps in support and training on their enrolled music programmes in China. Some pre-service participants noted that music students seemed to have lower academic entry requirements compared to their non-music peers, which might translate into differing academic expectations within the educational environment. This disparity could contribute to perceptions of music students as less academically competent, a viewpoint that aligns with Bai's (2021) and Yang's (2022) studies and was echoed by some in-service CITs and may impact music students' self-esteem and confidence within their learning environment. Moreover, this might also have an impact on those music students who may wish to study abroad, as the challenge concerning English proficiency was also noted by the UK MA student-teacher CITs.

Academic writing emerged as another area of challenge, particularly in tasks such as literature reviews. The lack of training in essential academic skills during undergraduate studies may leave music students unprepared for the demands of postgraduate education.

The absence of adequate supervision and support, acknowledged by some pre-service CITs, in developing these skills could hinder students' academic progression and limit their capacity for critical engagement with scholarly work (Chapter 5, Sections 5.5.5 and 5.5.6.3). This situation appears to resonate with findings by Lee and Leung (2022), who acknowledge that instrumental teachers' engagement with research might lag behind that of other professionals, which hinders their professional development.

### **10.3.2 Music programme curricula in Chinese HE**

The educational experiences of pre- and in-service CITs appeared to suggest that the structure of music programme curricula in Chinese HE may present both opportunities and challenges. Participants recalled that their undergraduate studies encompassed a range of modules (Chapter 5, Sections 5.5.1/2). While this diversity was seen by some as beneficial for professional development – e.g. allowing exploration of different specialisations within music (PT2) – others felt it hindered in-depth learning. For instance, PT7 expressed that covering too wide a range of topics made it difficult to delve deeply into any one area, leading to packed schedules and leaving limited time for instrumental practice. This pressure to balance with the demands of practising for compulsory one-to-one Chinese instrument lessons appeared to be a consistent theme among pre-service participants, contributing to a stressful learning environment.

The inclusion of piano and piano improvisational accompaniment in the curriculum appeared to be particularly challenging for those without prior piano learning experience. PT7 highlighted that their attended group piano classes mixed students with varying levels of proficiency, resulting in inconsistencies in learning needs and progress. This might lead to non-piano students' dissatisfaction and frustration, suggesting a potential misalignment between curriculum design and students' backgrounds or career aspirations.

Differences in pedagogical training in Chinese HE also emerged. It seemed that Musicology students often had compulsory modules in music pedagogy, such as learning the Kodály method (PT7), whereas students majoring in performance reported a lack of preparation in teaching skills (PT3). This disparity might mean that some music students miss out on essential competencies required for teaching, even though it appeared that many had already begun working as CITs in private settings during their undergraduate

studies. This issue aligns with concerns raised in studies about performance-focused curricula potentially impacting the development of professional identity and limiting perceptions of career scope (Haning, 2020; López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020).

The practical teaching experiences of pre-service CITs, such as part-time roles at private music studios, were generally viewed as valuable for their career development. However, challenges such as reluctance to teach certain age groups and the need for improved communication skills might point to possible gaps in pedagogical preparation, whereas as noted by Polifonia (2010), balancing musicianship-focused education with pedagogical and practical components appears to be a challenge in curriculum design. Furthermore, as emphasised by Rowley and Bennett (2019), ‘musicians need to know how to lead their learning across the career lifespan’ (p. 179). The employment-oriented capabilities of music students such as leadership skills, creativity, resilience, and cultural awareness (Bennett et al., 2018), as well as the mindset of being an agentic lifelong learner through critical thinking, reflection, strategic learning, and self-regulation are considered beneficial to be developed in higher music education (López-Íñiguez & Bennett 2021).

### **10.3.3 Impact of educational pathways concerning pedagogical learning across cultures**

The pedagogical learning experiences of student-teacher CITs undertaking a Master’s degree in the UK appear to reflect a complex interplay between knowledge acquisition, value internalisation, and socialisation, as conceptualised by Biesta’s (2015b) theoretical model (Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1, Figure 2.3). This model suggests that education encompasses not only the transmission of knowledge and skills (qualification) but also influences individuals’ beliefs and identities (subjectification) and their actions within socio-culturally embedded contexts (socialisation). The experiences of these CITs may illustrate how their prior educational backgrounds and the new learning environment in the UK interact to shape their pedagogical beliefs and practices.

The experiences of student-teacher CITs on the UK MA course appear to illustrate shifts in their pedagogical beliefs, value internalisation, and subsequent actions. Observing one-to-one piano, violin, and flute lessons delivered by UK instrumental teachers, many student-teachers drew comparisons with their previous learning experiences in China. The

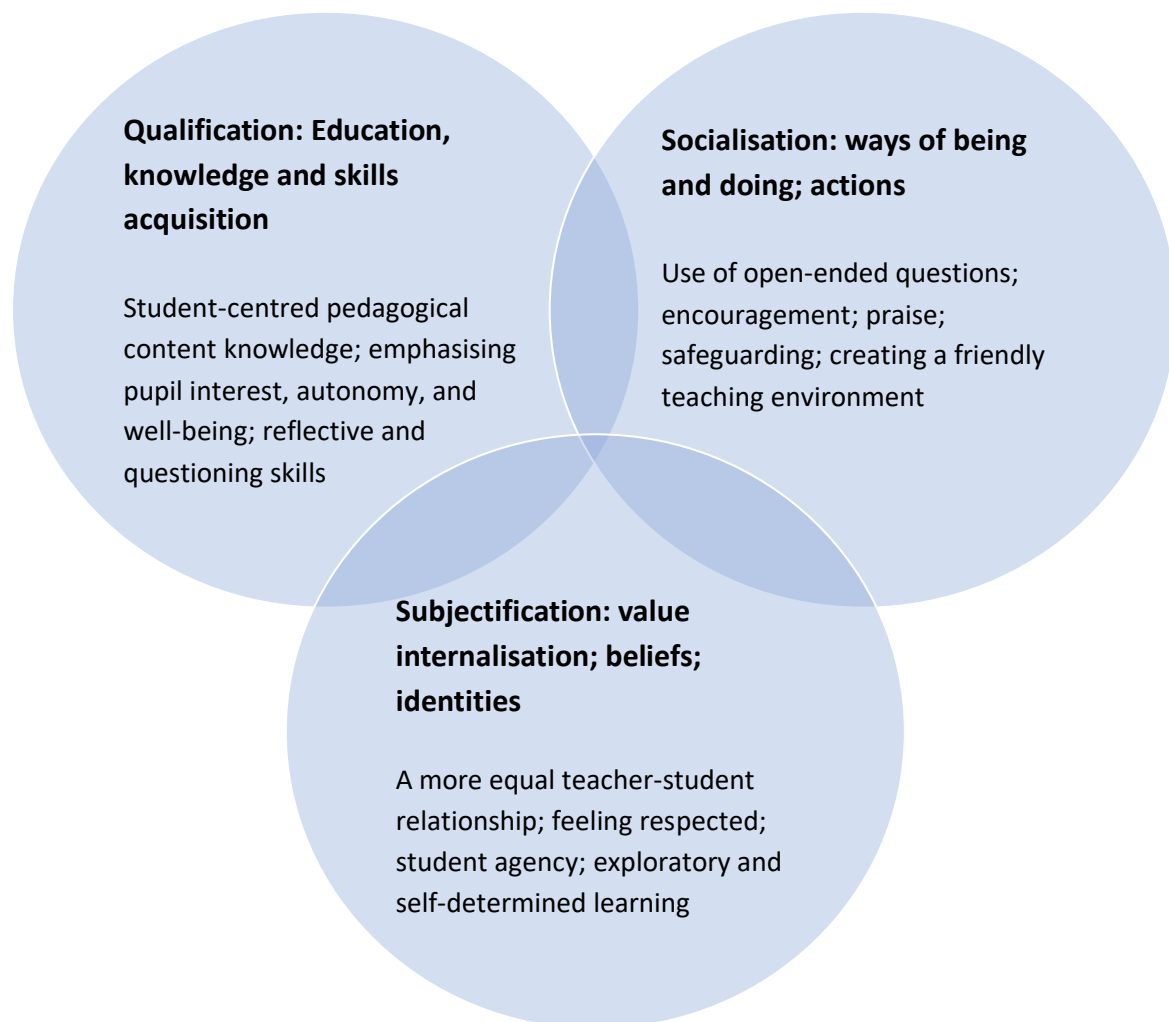
UK teachers seemed to prioritise fostering pupils' self-efficacy and independence, creating encouraging and relaxed learning environments by showing care for their pupils' feelings, using praise, and incorporating open-ended questioning. In contrast, direct verbal instructions and strict learning atmosphere in the Chinese context were compared by the student-teachers, although the teacher-led lessons they received in China were acknowledged for their benefits, including rapid learning progress and improved technical skills. Student-teachers also revealed experiences of limited autonomy and increased anxiety (Chapter 7).

This contrast in teaching approaches seems to reflect a shift in pedagogical beliefs, aligning with the knowledge acquisition aspect of Biesta's (2015) theoretical model. The exposure to learner-centred pedagogies in the UK may have led to the acquisition of new pedagogical knowledge that emphasises pupil interest, autonomy, and well-being. Writing lesson commentaries on the MA course was appreciated by the student-teachers, as it helped them reflect on their teaching strategies and consider their effectiveness, potentially enhancing their pedagogical understanding.

The value internalisation, or subjectification, appears to manifest in the student-teachers' evolving beliefs about instrumental teaching and learning. Experiencing a more equal teacher-student relationship in the UK, they felt their ideas were valued and encouraged. ST3 mentioned feeling respected because their MA supervisor asked what they wanted rather than directing them. This experience might indicate an internalisation of values that prioritise respect, student agency, and collaborative learning, contrasting with the hierarchical relationships they were accustomed to in China.

In terms of action, or socialisation, the student-teachers began adapting their teaching practices accordingly. They incorporated open-ended questioning into their lessons to activate pupils' thinking, as recommended on the MA course. For example, ST2 asked, 'How do you feel this time when playing?' and ST3 inquired, 'What are you struggling with in practising this piece?' They also sought to enable pupils' autonomy by allowing them to develop their own interpretations of the music. ST3 told their pupil, 'My interpretation of the music is not the only answer. I just share my understanding of the music with you', aiming to prevent limiting the pupil's performance through imitation. Additionally, there was an increased awareness of safeguarding and encouragement. The student-teachers recognised the importance of avoiding physical contact, a method prevalent in their

previous training, due to potential discomfort for pupils. They consciously aimed to create a more friendly teaching environment, integrating specific praise and encouragement into their lessons. The influences of the UK MA course on the beliefs and practices of the student-teacher CITs could then be summarised by the following adapted version of Biesta's (2015b) theoretical model (Figure 10.1):



**Figure 10.1:** The influences of the UK MA course on the beliefs and practices of the student-teacher CITs (adapted from Biesta, 2015b, p. 78).

### 10.4 Research question 3

**Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?**

As revealed by the findings, across their phases of education and/or professional development, those pre- and in-service CITs' pedagogical work and/or challenges would be

characterised by their multiple teaching roles in the profession, as well as peer students and/or parents they encountered during learning and teaching; these are articulated below.

#### **10.4.1 The versatile profession with multiple roles**

The findings regarding in-service CITs in the Chinese context indicate a profession characterised by significant versatility and adaptability. The CITs showcased a range of roles, such as teacher, planner, facilitator, networker, and practitioner, responding to the varied needs of their students; additionally, those CITs' required roles and competences appear to be inseparable from their working institutions, educational policies for school music education and/or higher music teacher education, and curricula. For example, IT1, IT2, and IT3, who taught in state school contexts in China, each engaged in a diverse array of activities beyond merely classroom music instructions. These included guzheng ensemble teaching, choir facilitation, and various administrative duties. Such versatility aligns with the broader literature that acknowledges the expanding roles of music educators, often requiring them to adapt to differing educational contexts and demands (Polifonia, 2010). However, this multifaceted role can also place considerable demands on CITs, particularly those at the beginning of their careers (Shaw, 2021). For those who worked at school contexts, they reported that administrative tasks would detract from their focus on teaching. The pressures of balancing these roles may highlight the additional challenges faced by IVTs in navigating their professional identities and responsibilities, in line with the findings of Gaunt and Westerlund (2022).

Additionally, the concept of teacher agency emerged as a critical theme within the CITs' reflections on their roles. As discussed by Priestley et al. (2015), teachers' agency is shaped by a combination of individual capacities and the contextual resources available to them. In the case of these CITs, it appears that the educational policies governing music education, the hierarchical structures within their schools, and the interactions with school leaders strongly influenced their ability to enact their professional identities. IT2's experience, where support from the headmaster was pivotal for the choir's rehearsals, might underscore the importance of leadership in fostering a conducive environment for music education in China.



### 10.4.2 Peer students and parents

The role of peer students and parents in the Chinese instrument tuition context emerged as a crucial element influencing both teacher practices and student learning experiences. Findings indicate that while CITs might possess some autonomy in their choice of repertoire (rather than their pupil's choice), this might be often constrained by an overarching emphasis on performance examinations for certification in the Chinese context (e.g. Bai, 2021), where achievements are often closely linked to examination results (Zhang & Bray, 2021). Within this environment, the dynamics of teacher-student-parent relationships are complex, shaped by cultural hierarchies where parental authority could hold considerable weight (e.g. Haddon, 2024). Mullen (2017) highlights that teachers often find themselves under pressure from parents who demand exam-based teaching; it appears that the expectations surrounding progression might further complicate the efforts of teachers may wish to encourage students' self-regulated learning.

Additionally, a lack of effective dialogue between teachers, students, and parents as revealed by some UK MA student-teacher CITs who avoid parental involvement in their teaching (Chapter 7, Section 7.5.2) could potentially hinder the development of learners' after-lesson practice, as the traditional hierarchical structures leave little room for collaborative decision-making regarding students' learning journeys in the Chinese context (Lee & Leung, 2020). Due to the competitive educational environment in China, 'the scare of "lagging behind"' is rooted in the mindset of Chinese parents (Lin, 2019, p. 6); this may prevent the parents from being patient about the long-term rewards of their child's instrumental learning. Chinese parents sometimes appear to demonstrate 'insecure guidance' (i.e. an authoritarian parenting style) such as directiveness and verbal hostility, identified as being negatively associated with the children's acquisition of social-emotional competencies (Ren & Edwards, 2015, p. 621). Nevertheless, this social and emotional learning process develops self and social awareness, self-regulation, responsibility, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2023), in which the ability of self-regulation including self-reinforced and self-monitored practices is crucial in instrumental learning (McPherson & Renwick, 2011). Additionally, studies have recognised positive relationships between effective parenting inputs and children's achievement in music learning with growing autonomy (e.g. McPherson, 2009; Uptis et al., 2017), whilst parental pressure and over-control can hinder children's development of such independence (McPherson, 2009).

However, it is also important to note that not all Chinese parents exert pressure; some prioritise their child's interests and enjoyment over performance outcomes, highlighting a spectrum of parental attitudes towards music education (Ho, 2009; Bai, 2021).

## **10.5 Research question 4**

**Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?**

Findings uncover that pedagogical beliefs and practices of those CITs would be influenced by educational environments where performativity and accountability appear to permeate and distinct sociocultural contexts, while their pedagogical beliefs may also simultaneously influence their practices, as discussed below.

### **10.5.1 Performativity and accountability**

The experiences of CITs in state school settings may suggest a complex interplay of performativity and accountability within the educational landscape in China. All three CITs working in this context shared their participation in classroom teaching demonstration activities, which were structured to provide professional development opportunities alongside evaluative feedback. In these contexts, their colleagues and school leaders appeared to have offered insights that could be perceived as constructive and evaluative. For instance, IT1 reflected on the feedback received and mentioned its potential value in assessing aspects such as teaching pace and classroom management.

The external pressures experienced by these CITs appeared to be intensified by administrative and market forms of accountability, which seem to create an environment where schools are expected to respond to performance standards and family demands, as noted by Maroy (2009). Such pressures might compel educational institutions to aim for increased effectiveness and contextual sensitivity (West et al., 2011). However, it seems that the responses of schools to these pressures were not always uniform; they might depend on various contextual and organisational factors. For instance, research indicates that organisations might react differently to the same external stimuli, often in ways that do not align with policy expectations (Scott, 2013).

This complexity is evident when schools facing competition or performance pressure possibly resort to symbolic and emotional appeals or fragmented practices, which may lead to short-term improvements rather than substantive innovations (Lubienski, 2007); this echoes the teaching rehearsals and exaggerated ways of teaching in order to win the teaching competition for school's prestige rather than for teaching improvement, as revealed by some school in-service CITs. This might also reflect how competitive contexts can shift the focus from genuine pedagogical practice to performance outcomes, aligning with Harris et al. (2020) on the notion that performance measurements may compel teachers to conform to external standards, sometimes at the expense of authentic engagement with students.

Additionally, the administrative responsibilities assigned to CITs may highlight another layer of performativity. IT2 explained that music teachers often undertake additional administrative tasks, which may arise from their lighter teaching loads compared to core subject teachers. This situation could indicate the evolving dynamics within educational settings, where teachers may need to navigate bureaucratic responsibilities while trying to maintain their passion for teaching (He et al., 2023). Moreover, the increasing trend of hiring contract teachers, as mentioned by the CITs, might introduce a competitive climate that prioritises job security over pedagogical engagement, prompting educators to balance their responsibilities carefully.

The dual pressures of performativity and accountability appear to challenge teacher agency, as suggested by Priestley et al. (2015). Their work seems to indicate that teacher agency is shaped by various contextual and relational resources. For the CITs, external pressures – such as educational policies prioritising key subjects and performance metrics – may strongly influence their teaching approaches. Despite the formal recognition of music education as an assessed subject, systemic pressures seem to lead to a reduction in music classes during exam periods, which may reflect a broader undervaluation of arts education in favour of more academically emphasised subjects in the Chinese context (Chapter 6, Section 6.7).

### 10.5.2 Pedagogical beliefs influencing practices

The findings of this study suggest that the concept of student-centredness has increasingly found its way into educational frameworks in China, including music education syllabi and curricula (Chapter 9, Section 9.2). However, there appears to be a notable variability in how individual CITs interpret and implement this concept. Many have expressed some ambiguity regarding both the theoretical and practical aspects of student-centredness within the Chinese context. Consequently, it appeared that some in-service CITs based their understanding of student-centredness primarily on their personal perceptions of effective teaching, rather than seeking to understand their students' views on learning. This inward focus could, perhaps, hinder the development of a genuinely student-centred learning environment in China. For instance, embodied in a collective (instead of individual) student-centredness and 'unified knowledge acquisition' by following the teacher, Zhang et al. (2023) recognise the culturally-localised pedagogical practice of student-centred education in school music teaching in China with inadequate opportunities provided for students to think independently and creatively (p. 283).

Additionally, the findings indicate that grasping the definition of student-centredness might only be one aspect; pre-service CITs also seem to need support in understanding *how* to implement this pedagogical approach effectively. In the case of China-domiciled pre-service CITs, their comprehension of student-centredness often appears to rely on rote memorisation (e.g. learning the concept from the book for the teacher qualification exam) rather than reflective practices. The music programmes they attended might also not sufficiently emphasise the importance of critical reflection, leading many to view the curriculum as irrelevant to their specific roles as instrumental teachers. In contrast, UK MA student-teachers seemed to have benefited from the curriculum that actively encourages reflection and critical engagement with their pedagogical practices.

Across the cases studied, CITs indicated that their beliefs about authenticity in teaching and learning Chinese instruments were largely influenced by the Chinese traditional instrument repertoire, as well as the historical and cultural contexts they inhabited (Chapter 9, Section 9.3). These beliefs also seem to incorporate the expectations placed on them regarding their technical skills and the preservation of traditional interpretations. Interestingly, the awareness of pupil-teacher interactions in creating an authentic learning experience appears to be more pronounced among the UK MA student-

teacher CITs, suggesting that their cross-cultural experiences may have prompted them to consider the importance of student engagement. However, this interaction could potentially be complicated by sociocultural expectations that often prioritise technical skills over creative expression (e.g. Zheng & Leung, 2021a, 2021b). CITs might frequently view technical proficiency as foundational for interpreting music and achieving semi-improvisation, yet this emphasis could inadvertently restrict opportunities for engagement and personal expression among their students.

### **10.5.3 Pedagogical sustainability across cultures**

The findings of this study indicate that while the pedagogical differences between China and the UK appear to have prompted MA student-teachers to reflect on their previous teaching routines/habits, which often mirrored traditional, teacher-centred approaches, they seem to have encountered various challenges when trying to apply pupil-centred methods in their teaching of Chinese instruments (Chapter 7, Section 7.6.4). For instance, some student-teachers mentioned that their initial efforts to incorporate open-ended questions, inspired by the UK IVTs on the course, were often met with difficulty. ST1 articulated this experience, noting that despite attempting to ask open-ended questions, they found themselves reverting to directive teaching methods, inadvertently instructing students on how to play rather than encouraging independent thought.

Challenges concerning implementing learner autonomy/independence promoted pedagogy appeared to become especially evident when discussing traditional repertoire, which encompasses inherited musical categorisations, regional characteristics, and specific technical applications. This perspective appears to align with a broader understanding among CITs and learners of the interconnectedness between music, inherited performance practices, and cultural continuity. Within this context, teacher agency could be constrained by the values embedded in music education in China, where teachers play a crucial role in transmitting cultural and moral responsibilities through music (Ho, 2018) for promoting cultural preservation. Research into effective practices within culture-specific instrumental teaching contexts might illuminate how to navigate these complexities while addressing potential pedagogical constraints (e.g. Luguetti et al., 2019). Moreover, the findings also suggest that the CITs share similarities regarding the teaching of semi-improvisation in

musical interpretation (Chapter 9, Section 9.4). While traditional pieces may permit limited personal expression compared to contemporary works, as understood by some CITs, there remains a sense of obligation to adhere to established performance standards, reinforcing the impact of cultural continuity ideologies or ‘symbolic power’ (Burnard & Haddon, 2015, p. 9) in China.

## **10.6 Research question 5**

### **How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?**

Findings indicate that those student-teacher CITs’ cross-cultural pedagogical learning concerns their adaptation to distinct academic and educational environment due to cultural differences, as well as their adaptation to learning in a second language, as articulated below.

#### **10.6.1 Distinct academic and pedagogical environments across cultures**

Navigating the transition between distinct academic and pedagogical environments presents several challenges for student-teachers. During their MA studies, some student-teachers mentioned the challenge of developing learning independence in an environment that encourages autonomy, independence, and creativity (Chapter 7, Section 7.6.3). Some noted a desire for specific guidance on how to teach, which could reflect an expectation for direct instruction that might have been cultivated during their earlier educational experiences in China. Nevertheless, gaining independent learning skills is essential for becoming a well-rounded graduate, as it allows students to continue their education and pursue their careers in music or other fields (Haddon, 2012).

Distinct academic criteria between music programmes in China and the UK also became evident, as some mentioned that while evidence-based writing was emphasised in the UK, this aspect was less prominent during their undergraduate studies in China. However, the reliance on study abroad agencies for course applications may further complicate the transition for student-teachers, as some reported feeling unprepared for the MA curriculum, with ST15 sharing that they had limited understanding of the course structure beyond what their agency provided.

Despite these challenges, student-teachers displayed metacognitive and behavioural adjustments in their reflective practices, suggesting their capacity for pedagogical adaptation and growth. The focus on safeguarding and fostering a supportive learning environment was noteworthy. Participants indicated a newfound awareness regarding physical contact in teaching, illustrating a pedagogical shift that was influenced by their experiences in the MA programme. This willingness to adapt and embrace new pedagogical strategies, such as providing specific praise and encouragement to their pupils, indicates their developing understanding of learner-centred approaches.

### **10.6.2 Discussion of the findings as viewed through the cultural intelligence (CQ) theoretical lens**

The CQ theoretical framework reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.4 contributes to the exploration of the across-cultural pedagogical adaptation and transformation of the student-teacher CITs in this research. The following sub-sections discuss the student-teacher CITs' adaptation to the distinct academic and pedagogical environments across cultures through the CQ four overarching aspects: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural, informed by Earley and Ang (2003) and Ang and Van Dyne (2015).

#### ***10.6.2.1 Metacognitive aspect***

The metacognitive aspect of CQ refers to an individual's conscious cultural awareness during cross-cultural interactions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015); it involves an individual's ability to observe and revise a collection of beliefs (i.e. internal representations) of cultural norms and behaviours (Chedru & Ostapchuk, 2023). Van Dyne et al. (2012) further divide metacognitive CQ into three sub-dimensions: planning, awareness, and checking. Planning entails strategising before engaging in culturally diverse encounters; awareness involves recognising cultural knowledge of oneself and others in real-time interactions; checking refers to the process of reviewing and adjusting one's assumptions when actual experiences differ from expectations (Ibid.).

For the student-teacher CITs transitioning to the UK MA programme, metacognitive CQ appears to play a role in their pedagogical transformation. Before commencing the programme, these student-teachers often relied on teaching methods prevalent in China,

such as directive verbal instructions, demonstration and imitation, technology-assisted teaching, and the use of extrinsic rewards (Chapter 7). Their teaching practices were deeply rooted in their own learning experiences and the cultural context of Chinese music education. Upon entering the UK educational context, the student-teachers became more aware of the cultural differences in teaching styles, such as the UK emphasis on fostering student autonomy, encouraging open-ended questioning, and providing specific praise. For instance, they noticed that their teachers on the MA programme prioritised creating an encouraging and relaxed learning environment, which contrasted with the strict and serious atmosphere they were accustomed to in China.

The student-teachers appeared to have actively checked and revised their assumptions about effective teaching practices. For example, they recognised that their habitual use of directive instructions and demonstrations might inhibit student participation and independent thinking. One student-teacher reflected on how they used to tell students exactly how to play a piece, but after receiving feedback on their teaching practice, they realised they were still imposing their ideas rather than cultivating the students' own thinking. This self-reflection helped them to adjust their pedagogical understandings and adopt more student-centred approaches, such as asking open-ended questions and encouraging their pupils to express their own opinions during the lessons.

#### ***10.6.2.2 Cognitive aspect***

Cognitive CQ pertains to an individual's knowledge of cultural norms, practices, and conventions acquired through education and experiences (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Van Dyne et al. (2012) explain that it includes culture-general knowledge (understanding the fundamental elements that constitute cultural environments), cultural-specific knowledge (how cultural norms manifest in specific contexts), and procedural knowledge (how to effectively react within a specific context).

It appears that the student-teachers expanded their cognitive CQ by acquiring new knowledge about Western music/instrumental/vocal pedagogical theories and practices. The MA programme provided them with systematic training on student-centred teaching, which was a concept they had encountered in China but had not fully understood or implemented (Chapter 9). Moreover, the student-teachers appeared to have deepened their understanding of the cultural underpinnings of music education in both China and the



UK: they became cognisant of the differences in music educational philosophies, such as the UK focus on nurturing students' independent thinking and creativity versus the Chinese emphasis on technical proficiency and adherence to traditional interpretations (Chapter 7). This cognitive expansion allowed them to appreciate the value of integrating student-centred approaches into their teaching of Chinese instruments.

The student-teachers also developed context-specific knowledge by adapting to the UK academic environment. They became familiar with Western academic standards, such as the necessity of supporting arguments with literature evidence in their reflective writing and assessments. This knowledge helped them to critically analyse their teaching practices and to consider how cultural differences impact pedagogical effectiveness.

### ***10.6.2.3 Motivational aspect***

Motivational CQ reflects the ability to direct attention and energy towards learning about and working in culturally diverse situations (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Van Dyne et al. (2012) identify three sub-dimensions concerning motivational CQ, including intrinsic interest (personal enjoyment of culturally diverse experiences), extrinsic interest (valuing tangible benefits from such experiences), and self-efficacy to adjust (confidence in cross-cultural interactions).

Findings indicate that the student-teachers had strong motivational CQ in their pursuit of the MA programme, and their motivations were both extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsically, they recognised the competitive job market in China and the need for higher qualifications to secure employment, particularly in first-tier cities. A Master's degree was viewed as a prerequisite for job opportunities and career advancement. Intrinsically, the student-teachers were driven by a desire to experience different cultures, enhance their teaching practices, improve their English proficiency, and broaden their perspectives as international students. They expressed interest in learning new pedagogical approaches and were proactive to apply these strategies in their lessons (Chapters 7 and 8).

Furthermore, their self-efficacy to adjust was evident in, for example, adapting to a new educational system, using their second language, and engaging with unfamiliar teaching methodologies across cultures. Despite their perceived challenges such as fostering student independence and autonomy, they remained committed to their professional development as IVTs and their degree studies as international students. In the findings, they

sought feedback, reflected on their previous and concurrent experiences, and demonstrated resilience in adjusting their practices.

#### ***10.6.2.4 Behavioural aspect***

Behavioural CQ includes flexibility in both verbal and non-verbal behaviours (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, and body language) when interacting with people from different cultures (Van Dyne et al., 2012). The student-teacher CITs showed behavioural adaptation by modifying their teaching practices to align with the pedagogical expectations of the UK educational context.

Verbally, they began incorporating more open-ended questions into their lessons to encourage pupil participation. They consciously used more encouraging language and specific praise to create a positive learning environment. For example, they provided detailed feedback acknowledging students' efforts and progress, rather than focusing solely on correcting mistakes. They practised expressing openness to their pupils' ideas, rather than asserting definitive answers. They also learned to frame feedback and instructions in ways that could encourage their pupils to think actively. Non-verbally, they became aware of safeguarding practices, such as avoiding physical contact when correcting a pupil's posture or technique – an approach that differed from their experiences in China where physical adjustments by the teacher were likely to be common (Chapters 7 and 8).

#### ***10.6.2.5 Interweaving of the CQ aspects in cross-cultural adaptation and other dimensions***

The four aspects of CQ – metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural – are likely to be deeply intertwined in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. For the student-teachers, their motivation to succeed in the UK educational context appeared to fuel their willingness to engage in metacognitive strategies, such as planning and reflecting on their teaching practices. Their cognitive development, through acquiring new knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, appeared to inform their behavioural adjustments in the classroom.

It is possible that as they became more aware of the cultural nuances in teaching and learning, they consciously monitored and revised their approaches (metacognitive CQ), which required them to draw upon their knowledge of cultural norms and values within

specific contexts (cognitive CQ). Their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (motivational CQ) provided the drive to persist through cross-cultural challenges. Their behavioural adaptations were the tangible expressions of their internal adjustments, demonstrating the practical application of their metacognitive insights and cognitive understanding.

While the CQ framework provides valuable insights into cross-cultural adaptation, it is important to acknowledge the moderating role of personality traits of individuals (Chedru & Ostapchuk, 2023), which were not explored in this study. The Big Five personality dimensions – openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism – can significantly influence an individual's CQ and intercultural effectiveness (Fang et al., 2018). For example, Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) reveal that individuals high in openness are more likely to engage in international experiences and adapt to new cultural environments. For the student-teachers, varying levels of openness may have affected their receptiveness to new pedagogical approaches and their teaching adjustment, as Ozorio (2024) suggests that music teachers' openness to change makes them particularly skilled at tailoring lessons to students' different learning needs. Similarly, agreeable teachers are empathetic and encourage students to take 'risks' and express themselves musically by creating a comfortable and non-judgmental environment (Ibid.). In contrast, while conscientious teachers are likely to be organised and meticulous, their conscientiousness can sometimes lead to rigidity, making it harder for them to adapt to new ideas or differentiated teaching methods (Paloş et al., 2022).

Extroverted individuals may find it easier to engage with peers from different cultures and seek out social interactions that could enhance their cultural understanding (Sahin et al., 2014). In the context of the student-teachers, those who were more extroverted might have been more proactive in participating in discussions or collaborations with other students and teaching staff on the MA, which might help with their cross-cultural pedagogical learning outcomes. Additionally, music teachers with low neuroticism (i.e. negative emotional instability, Miranda, 2020) are more likely to be equipped to maintain emotional balance, providing stability and support for their students (Ozorio, 2024). As a result, these traits might have an impact on the student-teachers' engagement with their cross-cultural learning and adaptation, and future research could consider the influence of these personality traits combined with the CQ dimensions of international music students

and teachers, which might inform corresponding support to assist their transition across cultures.

### **10.6.3 English proficiency and challenges**

Adapting to a Western postgraduate academic environment while using English as a second language appears to present challenges for MA student-teachers. Some expressed that their expectations regarding their English proficiency did not fully align with the demands of a literature-based approach on the UK MA, indicating a potential gap between their self-assessment of language skills and the requirements of the academic setting. Additionally, some student-teachers noted confusion when trying to use culture-specific instrumental terminology in English; this may also concern the use of subject-specific (i.e. music) terminologies (Li & Zheng, 2025), which may reflect broader challenges faced by non-native speakers studying in English-speaking countries.

In navigating this academic environment, students might feel the need for advanced training in scholarly English. This training might not only involve language skills but also an understanding of the values and norms prevalent in an Anglophone-dominated academy. Stock (2023) cautions against potential colonial knowledge assimilation when pursuing this kind of training, which raises questions about how educational institutions could address these concerns. It may also be worth considering the promotion of linguistic pluralism in music education, particularly regarding culture-specific instruments and their associated techniques.

Whilst Chinese international students who learn Western vocal or classical instruments would perceive a legitimacy and authority while studying in the West, attributed to the cultural roots of Western music/instruments (Haddon, 2019, 2024; Wang, 2020), they might simultaneously encounter ‘an expectation of assimilation encoded into the values of Western classical music’ from the host environment (Ford, 2020, p. 3) or from their own perceptions: ‘the prevailing discourses [of Asian musicians are] to find their place in the world of Western classical music [...] with doubts and insecurities about [their] musical voice and expression’, influenced by their cultural (sub)consciousness and identity (Wang, 2020, pp. 190-91). Similarly, those Chinese instrument students studying in the

Western HE might perceive that 'I need to study Western things like piano [... because] I'm in England' (from one Chinese instrument-participant in Haddon, 2019, p. 50).

Moreover, a noteworthy dimension of the findings might be the way CITs navigate a musical environment in which Western classical music often holds an elevated status internationally (see Borel, 2019). Differing from Chinese pianists or violinists, who may benefit from the global prestige of Western classical music (Yoshihara, 2007), CITs of traditional instruments (e.g. guzheng, pipa, or erhu) might encounter limited institutional support and unfamiliarity among peers and faculty when studying abroad. This disparity could influence how they perceive their roles as prospective teachers: while they may exhibit strong motivational CQ (i.e. determination to succeed), they may also feel compelled to defend or explain the cultural and/or technical value of their instruments to classmates and lecturers who might be more accustomed to Western repertoire. In a Western academic setting, the global 'benchmark' of Western classical tradition might create an extra layer of negotiation for CITs. Their adaptation, therefore, appears not to be only about embracing learner-centred pedagogy but also about negotiating a sense of legitimacy for Chinese traditional instruments within a Western-dominated musical hierarchy. As a result, CITs who come to the UK for advanced study may invest additional effort in engaging their international peers on the aesthetic and historical dimensions of Chinese traditional music, sometimes reconfiguring their teaching practices to incorporate more Western-friendly frameworks (e.g. notation systems). Although this endeavour could deepen CITs' cultural understanding and promote cross-cultural musical exchange, it may also intensify the identity work required of them as they balance reverence for their instrument's cultural roots with the institutional expectations of a Western institution setting. This may warrant further attention from international programmes in supporting students to gain greater educational value from their cross-cultural studies.

# Chapter 11: Key Findings, Implications, Limitations, and Final Remarks

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## 11.1 Introduction

This research has investigated what characterises pre- and in-service Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical experiences and challenges, and what might underlie their pedagogical understandings and actions within and across cultures. As highlighted in Chapter 2, the transmission of Chinese instruments and the repertoire is associated with the model of master-apprenticeship, teacher-student hierarchy, historically inherited musical features and interpretations; nonetheless, teaching practices received and conducted by pre- and in-service CITs at the present time across different educational settings and cultures, as well as their perceptions and understandings of their experiences was underexplored. This research enhances the current knowledge of teaching and learning Chinese traditional instruments by examining the educational pathways and professional development of both pre-service and in-service CITs within and across various educational and cultural contexts. It also has explored the cross-cultural pedagogical learning experiences of Chinese instrument student-teachers in UK higher music education, broadening the understanding of how Chinese international students adapt, transform, and apply their subject-specific pedagogical knowledge in their teaching practices across cultures. Therefore, this research aimed at answering the following questions:

**RQ1:** What characterises the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across private/(music) school/higher education settings in China?

**RQ2:** What influences Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pathways through formal music learning and music/instrumental/vocal teaching professions?

**RQ3:** Across their phases of education and/or professional development, what characterises Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical work and/or challenges?

**RQ4:** Which aspects within and/or across educational and cultural contexts influence the (trans)formation of Chinese instrument teachers' (CITs) pedagogical beliefs and practices?

**RQ5:** How do Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) adapt to their cross-cultural subject-specific pedagogical learning in the UK higher music education?

Both interview and survey data were collected from the cases of China-domiciled pre-service CITs, China-domiciled in-service CITs, and student-teacher CITs on the UK MA course at UoY, with key findings listed below.

## **11.2 Key findings**

A concise summary of the key findings of this research is presented as follows:

- a) Pedagogical instructions within the teaching of Chinese instruments appeared to be predominantly teacher-centred as perceived and experienced by the participants, focusing on technical proficiency, which might limit opportunities for broader musical, collaborative, and creative explorations between teachers and students. Participants also appeared to draw on their personal learning experiences in teaching and prioritise musical abilities as a CIT.
- b) Participants showed their awareness of regional stylistic features and semi-improvisation techniques in learning Chinese instrument repertoire (particularly traditional pieces), which could indicate a connection to the inheritance of Chinese instrumental music culture that was embedded in Chinese instrument learning.
- c) There seemed to be a dependence on teacher-led demonstrations and online resources for learning the stylistic nuances and the semi-improvisation techniques within Chinese instrument traditional repertoire; whilst this might highlight a potential challenge in fostering autonomous learning strategies by using online resources, there were also concerns relating to the quality and the effective use of those resources mentioned by the participants.

d) The educational backgrounds of music students specialising in Chinese instruments appeared to be varied: they appeared to hold degrees in Music Performance, Musicology, or Music Education, suggesting structured pathways within higher education that might prepare them for careers in music.

e) Whilst the China-domiciled pre-service CITs uncovered their learning in a music pedagogical related module in the Chinese higher music education context, this training appeared to prioritise classroom music teaching over individualised/specialised instrumental instruction, which could impact the effectiveness of CITs' practices in their private one-to-one teaching settings, especially considering the complex dynamics within one-to-one teacher-student relationships. This might also suggest a possible gap in preparation for specialised instrumental teaching roles in China.

f) In comparison to the curricula components mentioned by the China-domiciled pre-service CITs, the UK MA course curriculum seemed to place greater emphasis on pedagogical theories and reflective practices. This appeared to result in varied understandings of necessary pedagogical skills among CITs across educational contexts. The educational differences appeared to also reside in the conceptualisation of pedagogical concepts such as student-centred teaching.

g) The UK MA student-teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices appeared to be influenced by the MA course content/curriculum, including learner-centred pedagogies, reflective practices, and encouragement-oriented teaching, in which they showed their motivations and adaptiveness to the teaching styles and methods on the MA. Challenges also occurred, relating to their English proficiency and their awareness of tensions between the preservation of the interpretations of the music they received/learned from their previous teacher and the possibility for enabling learners' individuality or personalised interpretations in learning.

h) The examination-centric educational culture in China, along with parental expectations, perceived and experienced by the participants appeared to lead to an emphasis on their



teaching efficiency and their pupils' results of performance examinations, which could shape teacher-dominated teaching practices and might constrain learner autonomy.

i) Those in-service CITs working in different educational contexts including music studios/music schools/state schools/higher education appeared to have a range of pedagogical and/or administrative work (e.g. teaching ensemble/music theory/sight-singing) aside from teaching Chinese instrument lessons. However, there appeared to be a lack of continuing professional support for them to strengthen their professional and pedagogical skills, considering the available training focused on performance skills. Additionally, those who worked in higher education perceived the need of support for their academic research skills.

j) The concept of Guanxi (social networks) seemed to have played a role in influencing educational opportunities in the Chinese context, although it might also contribute to possible inequities within the educational system.

### **11.3 Implications**

The findings of this research suggest several implications for the field of music and instrumental/vocal teacher education, particularly regarding the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments across various contexts. The insights gained may indicate a need for a nuanced understanding of how performance examinations, teacher authority, and cultural preservation influence the educational experiences of Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) and their students while highlighting potential pathways for future research and educational practices.

First, the emphasis on performance examinations and efficiency-oriented teaching in Chinese instrument tuition raises questions about the impact of such an environment on student autonomy and creativity. The findings seem to suggest that a curriculum focused primarily on examination preparation might narrow the scope of musical engagement, often prioritising technical mastery over artistic expression. This focus could inadvertently limit students' opportunities for personal interpretation and the exploration of diverse musical experiences. It may be worthwhile for music education programmes to consider adopting

more holistic assessment approaches that encompass not only performance metrics but also students' creative processes and emotional engagement. Chinese HE institutions could benefit from a broader array of assessment methods that move beyond technical standardisation. For instance, incorporating oral presentations, project-based collaborations, or creative (semi-)improvisation tasks into graded exams would give CITs space to consider not only technical proficiency but also students' interpretive and communicative abilities. Future research could explore the effects of diverse assessment methods on student motivation and engagement in music education, potentially providing a richer understanding of how to cultivate well-rounded musicians.

Second, music/instrumental/vocal teacher education programmes in China could more explicitly integrate reflective practice into their curricula. This might involve guiding CITs to document and analyse their teaching experiences, thereby reinforcing student-centred approaches in real-world contexts. By including modules content on reflective teaching strategies, music cultural preservation, and pedagogical creativity, Chinese institutions could help CITs strike a productive balance between upholding traditions and encouraging learner autonomy. Such training could also underscore the value of embedding local musical traditions within contemporary school education contexts in China, mitigating the perceived devaluation of music as a subject.

Third, the hierarchical nature of teacher-student relationships in Chinese music education, characterised by teacher-led practices and authority, raises important considerations for pedagogical approaches. While the traditional model can facilitate rapid skill acquisition, it may also contribute to student anxiety and reduced confidence. The findings suggest a potential shift towards more supportive and empathetic teaching styles, which could foster positive teacher-student dynamics. This evolution invites exploration into how teacher training programmes might equip CITs with the skills necessary to balance authority with empowerment, thereby encouraging a more collaborative learning environment. Integrating professional development opportunities that emphasise emotional intelligence, communication skills, and student engagement strategies could potentially be beneficial in shaping the next generation of music educators.

Moreover, the preservation of inherited musical features within Chinese instrument teaching highlights the tension between maintaining cultural traditions and encouraging individual creativity. While upholding traditional practices may be essential for cultural

continuity, it would be crucial to consider how these practices can coexist with innovative interpretations and personal expression. The research indicates that CITs could benefit from training that encourages them to embrace both heritage and creativity in their teaching. Programmes that foster an understanding of semi-improvisation and contemporary interpretations within traditional frameworks might empower CITs to cultivate a richer musical landscape for their students. Further studies could explore how blending traditional and contemporary pedagogies influences students' creative engagement and artistic identities.

At the same time, acknowledging the notion of authenticity as a concern for stakeholders in Chinese music education, such as policy-makers, curriculum designers, and conservatory administrators, might help create a more dynamic environment for preserving and transmitting Chinese traditional music. Instead of enforcing a single, rigid conception of 'authenticity', institutions could foster more flexible approaches that blend historically-rooted methods with contemporary learner-centred strategies in advancing pedagogical approaches. This perspective resonates with the findings that CITs often negotiate between region-specific repertoire standards and practical demands (e.g. exam-based systems, parental expectations). By recognising context-dependent and evolving 'authenticity' of the traditions, stakeholders might encourage CITs to retain core cultural elements of their inherited repertoire while exploring new avenues for creativity and cross-cultural collaboration, thereby creating a more inclusive and innovative framework for Chinese instrument education.

Future research could engage with the philosophical debates on authenticity by investigating how local communities and/or ethnic minority groups in China articulate and defend their own conceptions of 'the authentic' when confronted by top-down standardisations. Additionally, longitudinal studies could follow CITs who return from UK programmes to observe how they sustain or modify learner-centred pedagogy within Chinese domestic contexts, thereby illuminating the ongoing tension between historically 'authentic' traditions and modern pedagogical adaptation. With input from ethnomusicologists as well as educators and students, these inquiries would help clarify how philosophical understandings of authenticity interact with the practical realities of cultural preservation and societal development (e.g. economic imperatives) in Chinese (traditional) music in the contemporary context.

The challenges faced by CITs regarding their educational pathways, particularly in adapting to distinct academic environments and language proficiency across cultures, also warrant consideration. The findings reveal that many student-teachers struggle with the transition to Western academic standards, particularly in areas such as literature-based learning and critical writing. This indicates a potential need for enhanced support systems, including language training tailored to the demands of academic discourse in music education. Educational institutions might benefit from implementing workshops that address both language skills and cultural nuances, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for international students. Furthermore, there may be broader systemic approaches that could help counteract the apparent devaluation of music within both school settings and higher education institutions. For instance, revisiting and potentially revising admissions standards and entry requirements for music programmes might help ensure that candidates could not only be assessed on technical performance but also on their broader creative and critical capacities. Such a review could lead to more comprehensive criteria that acknowledge the diverse educational pathways from which students originate. Western higher education institutions could also take proactive steps to develop a deeper understanding of the varied backgrounds that international students bring to their programmes. This might involve conducting pre-admission assessments that consider previous pedagogical experiences and the specific skill sets that have or have not been emphasised in students' earlier training. Institutions could then design bridging modules or orientation programmes aimed at equipping students with the necessary tools to succeed in a new academic context.

Finally, the role of peer relationships and parental involvement in music education emerges as a factor influencing teaching practices and student learning experiences. The findings suggest that establishing effective communication channels between teachers, students, and parents could enhance collaboration and support for students' musical journeys. Future research might investigate how to navigate and leverage these relationships to promote a more balanced approach to music education that values both achievement and emotional wellbeing.

In summary, the implications of this research seem to encourage a re-evaluation of pedagogical practices in Chinese instrument education, emphasising the need for supportive frameworks that nurture creativity, autonomy, and emotional engagement. By considering

these areas, music teacher education might evolve to meet the complexities of contemporary musical learning and prepare CITs for diverse teaching environments. Further research would likely be essential to deepen our understanding of these dynamics and to develop effective strategies that enhance the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments within and across cultural contexts.

## **11.4 Limitations**

As an insider researcher, despite attempts to consider potential bias and address the potential effects of my positionality (Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1), it is possible that these factors may have influenced the data collection and interpretation processes. My familiarity with the programme's curriculum and pedagogical frameworks could have inadvertently influenced the questions I posed or the interpretations I drew, as I approached the data from an 'insider' perspective. Participants, particularly interviewees, might have felt pressure to align their responses with what they perceived to be the expected viewpoints or to avoid criticism, which could affect the authenticity of their responses. Similarly, the likelihood of identification within the institutional contexts (although highly unlikely due to the anonymity within the data collection and analysis processes) could have led participants to self-censor, compromising the richness of the data. The potential for bias in participant responses is a concern, as it may limit the diversity of perspectives shared; this is particularly relevant to the demographics of the research interviewees, who were all employed in China's first- or second-tier cities. The findings could be further enriched by broadening the scope to include participants from cities, towns or villages beyond these tiers.

The methodological limitations also encompass the nature of the data collection tools employed. The online survey, while practical and efficient for gathering responses from a larger audience, presents challenges in capturing the depth of participant experiences. The reliance on self-reported data may lead to issues such as incomplete responses or surface-level engagement with open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2018). Additionally, despite the inclusion of open-text boxes aimed at eliciting richer qualitative data, the overall structure of surveys might not fully facilitate the exploration of nuanced experiences and beliefs related to teaching and learning practices.

Furthermore, the longitudinal aspect of the study aimed to track changes in pedagogical beliefs and practices over time. While this approach is beneficial for understanding the transformation of these aspects, it also introduces complexity regarding participant retention and the potential for attrition (e.g. missing video materials for facilitating the video-stimulated interview process). The challenges of maintaining participant engagement throughout the study could affect the overall validity of the findings.

## **11.5 Final remarks**

This thesis has explored the pedagogical practices, beliefs, and challenges faced by Chinese instrument teachers (CITs) within the diverse cultural, educational, and cross-cultural contexts in China and the UK. Throughout this research, the focus has been on understanding the factors that influence CITs' teaching practices, including how their educational environments, professional development, and sociocultural contexts have shaped their pedagogical beliefs and approaches.

In concluding this thesis, I reflect on the multifaceted nature of instrumental pedagogy, particularly in the context of Chinese instrument teaching across diverse educational and cultural settings. My initial motivation to explore the intricacies of cross-cultural pedagogical learning stemmed from my own experiences as a guzheng teacher transitioning from China to the UK. Engaging with diverse learner-centred approaches during my MA at the University of York enlightened me to the vast pedagogical differences between these two educational contexts. It prompted a deep reflection on both my personal teaching practices and the pedagogical approaches that I had received as a student in China. This personal journey laid the foundation for a broader investigation into how CITs adapt their teaching practices within their specific educational contexts and across cultural boundaries, and how these experiences inform their professional development.

This research set out to answer the research questions regarding the pedagogical dynamics and challenges faced by CITs, both within China and in the UK. By examining the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments, this study aimed to uncover the factors influencing CITs' educational pathways, their pedagogical work, and the transformations in their beliefs and practices within and across cultures. The study focused on the specific

pedagogical contexts in which CITs teach – ranging from private tuition to institutional settings in China and the UK – and explored the impact of cultural and educational frameworks on their teaching philosophies.

One of the central findings of this research was the persistence of a teacher-centred, efficiency-driven pedagogical model within Chinese instrument tuition. The prominence of performance examinations in China appears to contribute to this focus on efficiency. The challenge of balancing the emphasis on technical skills with the cultivation of musical creativity is an ongoing pedagogical tension that CITs may face, both in China and abroad. This tension also highlights the role of examinations and parental expectations in shaping the teaching practices of CITs, reinforcing the need for more holistic approaches that allow for greater student agency.

The influence of cultural traditions on teaching practices was another key theme emerging from this study. CITs' perceptions of their responsibilities in preserving the stylistic integrity of Chinese traditional music appears to play an important role in shaping their teaching practices. This focus on preserving inherited musical features often limited the scope for personal interpretation. While the preservation of regional styles could be crucial for maintaining the continuity of Chinese musical culture, considering how CITs can balance this preservation with opportunities for students to explore alternative interpretations of the music might also be necessary. This balance would help foster a more dynamic, evolving approach to Chinese instrument education that both respects tradition and encourages both pedagogical and musical innovation.

The cross-cultural aspect of this study, particularly the experiences of CITs studying in the UK, also provided valuable insights into how these teachers adapt their practices in response to different academic and pedagogical environments. CITs from China who were exposed to the instrumental pedagogy on the MA reflected on how their pedagogical beliefs shifted, incorporating more learner-centred approaches and focusing on learner engagement. However, challenges remained, particularly around the tension between preserving Chinese traditional musical practices and embracing new pedagogical models. Despite these challenges, the adaptability and growth displayed by the CITs in this study suggest that cross-cultural pedagogical learning could lead to awareness and transformations in teaching practices. Moreover, findings suggest that authenticity in Chinese instrument teaching would be shaped by the music itself (e.g. regional features,

inherited interpretations), the people involved (teachers' expertise and learners' preferences), and the pedagogical contexts, particularly the cross-cultural environment influencing the UK MA student-teacher CITs. The variety of perspectives on the notion of authenticity presented in this thesis underscores the distinction between real-world, practice-oriented understandings of the notion and more specialised academic discussions.

In conclusion, this research contributes to an extended understanding of the teaching and learning of Chinese instruments. It highlights the complexities of balancing tradition with innovation, technical proficiency with creativity, and teacher authority with learner autonomy. As globalisation is likely to continue to shape the educational landscape, the insights gained from this study could inform future pedagogical practices and curricula, fostering inclusive and dynamic approaches to Chinese instrument music education, with application in both Chinese and other contexts. If, as Freire observed, 'Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage. It cannot fear the analysis of reality or, under pain of revealing itself as a farce, avoid creative discussion' (2021, p. 34), this thesis supports further investigations into these complexities, building on the insights revealed here concerning this under-researched area, which will be of benefit to learners, teachers and their families across the world.



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# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Information sheets and consent forms

### 1. Information sheet for the MA student-teacher participants

#### Background

The University of York would like to invite you to take part in the following research project: Instrumental pedagogy across cultures: Teaching Chinese instruments inside and outside their original context. Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear or you would like further information. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Xinpei Zheng ([xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk)), or the academic supervisor Dr. Liz Haddon ([liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)).

#### What is the study?

This study is carried out by Xinpei Zheng, who is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Music at the University of York. In order to understand the differences between Chinese and Western instrumental pedagogy, the researcher would like to investigate pedagogical approaches that Chinese instrumental student-teachers may apply their teaching. At the same time, these Chinese student-teachers are studying the MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course at the University of York, which may have an impact on their teaching and provide the opportunity for them to experience Western music pedagogy.

This study is going to analyse the student-teachers' teaching process and perceptions through video-recall online interviews, where the participant and the researcher will watch the lesson recording online together by sharing the screen; meanwhile, the researcher could ask questions, and the participant could answer and talk about what was happening during the lesson.

The video of one-to-one lessons (online, by using the platform e.g. Zoom) will be recorded by the student-teacher participants. The approximate dates of recording the lesson could be on/during 8-12 Mar, 2021, 17-21 May, 2021, and 19-23 Jul, 2021. Each student-teacher will be asked to record three lessons in total and can adjust the date

according to their and their pupils' convenience. The file that contains lesson recordings will be sent to the researcher via email, after this, the teacher will be asked to delete the file by the researcher.

The approximate date of the video-recall online interviews for the teacher and non-Chinese pupil participants will be within the week after the lesson recording (15-19 Mar, 2021, 24-28 May, 2021, and 26-30 Jul, 2021). The duration of the interview will last no more than 90 minutes, which will be recorded by the researcher, using Zoom. Participants can choose to use Mandarin in the interview, to give more detailed responses.

Raw data including the video recordings of the lessons and interviews will be stored securely on a password protected laptop. The researcher will take all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the student-teachers and pupils involved in the study. The recordings cannot be watched by anyone else except the researcher, research supervisor, and potentially the examiners of the PhD. When writing up the dissertation, all participants will be anonymised.

Personally identifiable data will try to be avoided. Although the participants' age range, gender, and nationality will be collected, the risk of being identified is low. This collection helps to develop the scope of the study. Please note that this investigation will make no expectations or assessment on the student-teacher and their pupils, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part is because that you are the type of participants (the MA Music Education students or Chinese adult pupils) the researcher is looking for and can make this research meaningful. Your teaching/learning experience may have implications for Chinese instrumental teachers to reflect on and consider their teaching in different contexts. It may also enlighten the aspects of pedagogical adaptation and transferability.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records and will be asked to complete a participant information form. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason.

### **On what basis will you process my data?**

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data.

In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1) (e) of the GDPR:

*Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest*

Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):

*Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes*

Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data. In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

### **How will you use my data?**

Data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice.

### **Will you share my data with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties?**

No. Data will be accessible to the project team at York only. Anonymised data may be reused by the research team for secondary research purposes.

### **How will you keep my data secure?**

The University will put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal data and/or special category data. For the purposes of this project we will store the data securely on a password protected Google drive and laptop.

Information will be treated confidentiality and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, we will anonymise or pseudonymise data wherever possible.

### **Will you transfer my data internationally?**

No. Data will be held within the European Economic Area in full compliance with data protection legislation.



### Will I be identified in any research outputs?

No.

### How long will you keep my data?

Data will be retained in line with legal requirements or where there is a business need. Retention timeframes will be determined in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule.

### What rights do I have in relation to my data?

Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/general-dataprotection-regulation/individuals-rights/>.

### Questions or concerns

If you have any questions about this participant information sheet or concerns about how your data is being processed, please contact [hrc-ethics@york.ac.uk](mailto:hrc-ethics@york.ac.uk) - the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee in the first instance. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Acting Data Protection Officer at [dataprotection@york.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@york.ac.uk).

### Right to complain

If you are unhappy with the way in which the University has handled your personal data, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see [www.ico.org.uk/concerns](http://www.ico.org.uk/concerns).

## 2. Participant information sheet (with Chinese translation)

博士研究项目邀请函:

中国器乐教学方法与哲学理念

受邀人: 中国器乐教师

An invitation from a PhD research project:

Pedagogical approaches and philosophies in Chinese instrumental teaching

Invitee: Chinese instrumental teachers

项目信息

## Information Sheet

### 背景

#### Background

这项研究由英国约克大学音乐学院在读博士生郑心培发起并执行。此研究已通过约克大学艺术与人文伦理委员会(AHEC)的审查。在同意参与此项研究前, 请仔细阅读项目信息。如果您需要关于此项目的进一步的解释与说明, 请通过邮箱地址 [xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk) 或微信号 xinpei059 联系研究者, 或联系博士生导师 Dr Liz Haddon [liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk).

This study is conducted by Xinpei Zheng, a second-year PhD student at the Department of Music, the University of York, UK. It has been approved by the University's Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee (AHEC). Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let us know if anything is unclear. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Xinpei Zheng ([xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk) /WeChat: xinpei059) or the academic supervisor Dr Liz Haddon ([liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)).

### 这项研究是什么?

#### What is the study?

为了了解中西方器乐教学法上的异同, 此项目将探索在中国音乐教学语境下被教师们所运用到中国器乐教学中的具体的教学方法以及所遵循的教育哲学理念。受邀对象, 即中国器乐教师, 不限于全职或兼职, 也不限于一对一或集体教学; 只要您有教授中国乐器(例如古筝)的经历, 您将是此项目诚心邀请的对象。我们期待倾听您作为中国器乐教师的心路历程与对未来中国器乐教学的思考!

To understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western instrumental pedagogy, this study explores specific teaching approaches that Chinese instrumental teachers applied in their teaching process in a Chinese context and their espoused educational philosophies. Invitees, i.e. Chinese instrumental teachers, are not limited to full-time or part-time nor one-to-one or group teaching; as long as you have Chinese instrumental teaching experiences, you are sincerely invited to participate in this study. We look forward to listening to your journey as a Chinese instrumental teacher and your thoughts on the future of Chinese instrumental teaching!

### 研究过程与保密性

#### Investigation process and confidentiality

此研究基于半结构化的线上一对一中文访谈, 访谈过程将不会超过 60 分钟。线上访谈将在 Zoom 或者腾讯会议上进行并录制以便于后续分析。受访者有权选择采访的录制方式, 即视音频同步录制或仅音频录制。采访中将会涉及到一系列有关中国器乐教学与教学理念的开放性问题, 包括但不限于教龄、教学设置、教材选用、影响教学的因素、教学中面临的挑战与解决措施等。

此研究所收集的原始数据，包括视、音频，将会根据约克大学所使用的数据保护规定(GDPR)被安全地存储到受密码保护的约克大学谷歌云端硬盘上，并将会在博士项目结束后被永久删除。

研究者将采取所有必要措施来保护参与受访者的匿名权，即确保身份与个人信息不被识别。所录制的视、音频将不会被任何除项目相关人员接触，即除研究者本人、学术导师和学位授予考察人员外，无人有权获取此项目数据。尽管受访者的年龄范围和性别将会被收集基于研究范围所需，其他个人的、可被识别的信息将被避免问及，所以受访者身份被识别的可能性极低。当研究者使用所得数据完成其个人学位论文以及撰写学术型文章时，所有受访者将会被匿名。此研究不会对参与者本身、其教学方式以及访谈内容做出任何期望与评判，所以受访者无需感到压力。

This study is based on semi-structured one-to-one online interviews using Chinese (Mandarin), which will last for no more than 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded via Zoom or VooV meeting for further analysis. Interviewees have the right to choose how to be recorded (e.g. video/audio recording). A series of open-ended questions relating to Chinese instrumental teaching and philosophical ideas will be asked in the interview, including but not limited to years of teaching, teaching setup, material selection, factors that influence teaching, challenges in teaching and coping strategies.

Raw data, including video/audio recordings of the interviews, will be stored securely on the University of York Google Drive with password protection, according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and will be permanently deleted after the PhD programme.

The researcher will take all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants involved in the study. The data cannot be obtained by anyone else except the researcher, research supervisor, and potentially the PhD examiners. Although participants' age range and gender will be collected due to the scope of the investigation, other personally-identifiable information will be avoided, so the risk of being identified is low for all the participants. Please note that this study does not make any expectations or judgements on participants, including their ways of teaching and interview responses, so participants do not need to feel stressed.

我必须参与吗？

Do I have to take part?

不，参与是可选的。如果您决定参加此研究，根据道德与普通法的保密义务，我们将共同签署一份同意书以了解此项目的研究意义与过程。如果您在参与过程中改变了主意，您将可以随时退出此研究并无需提供任何理由。

No, participation is optional. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form together with the researcher in line with ethical expectations and to comply with the common law duty of confidentiality, showing your understanding of the study and the process. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason.

对于我的数据我有哪些权利？

What rights do I have in relation to my data?

在数据保护的规定下(GDPR)，您拥有访问您的数据、更正、删除、限制、反对或可移植性的权利。您也有权退出。请注意，并非所有权利都适用于纯粹出于研究目的处理数据的情况。如需更多信息，请参阅下方链接。

Under the GDPR, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdraw. Please note that not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/>.

### **3. Consent form for MA student-teachers and adult pupil participants: Introduction**

You are invited to take part in a study exploring Chinese instrumental pedagogy and teaching a Chinese instrument in different cultural settings. The participants in this study will be Chinese student-teachers who study the MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching course in the UK and have had teaching experiences in both the UK and Chinese contexts.

This investigation has no expectations or assessment on the student-teacher and their pupils. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Xinpei Zheng ([xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk)), or the academic supervisor Dr. Liz Haddon ([liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)).

#### **Process and duration**

It is requested that the student-teacher participants will record their teaching (online, by using the teaching platform, e.g. Zoom/Teams), based on the approximate dates (on/during 8-12 Mar, 2021, 17-21 May, 2021, and 19-23 Jul, 2021). Each student-teacher will be asked to record three lessons in total and can adjust the date according to their and their pupils' convenience. The videos will need to be stored securely on a password protected laptop.

The approximate date of the video-recall online interviews for the teacher and non-Chinese pupil participants will be within the week after each lesson recording (15-19 Mar, 2021, 24-28 May, 2021, and 26-30 Jul, 2021) by Zoom/Teams. You will be invited to watch the video footage of the lesson with me in the interview through my screen sharing and talk to me about what you experienced during the lesson. The duration of the interview will last no more than 30 minutes, which will be recorded by the researcher. There are approximately 12 open-ended questions for each student-teacher and the pupil respectively, and follow-up questions may be asked according to the responses. The

student-teachers and pupils can choose to use Mandarin in the interview, in order to give more detailed responses.

### Anonymity

Raw data including the video recordings of the lessons and interviews will be stored securely on a password protected laptop. The researcher will take all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the student-teachers and pupils involved in the study. The recordings cannot be watched by anyone else except the researcher, their academic supervisor and potentially the examiners of the PhD. When writing up the dissertation, all participants will be anonymised.

### Confirmation of the statements:

- I understand the purpose and structure of this study.
- I understand that all the lesson recordings and video-recall interviews will be conducted online due to the Covid-19 restrictions.
- I confirm that I have read all the information on the consent form and information sheet.

### For student-teacher participants:

- I agree to record my one-to-one lessons, and my teaching process can be analysed by the researcher.
- I agree with the approximate dates of the lesson recording and the interview.
- I confirm that I will keep the video recordings on a password protected Google Drive and send it to the researcher only, and it will be deleted by me after the transfer.
- I understand and agree with the process of video-recall interviews.
- I confirm that my responses can be recorded by the interviewer and can be used for the research.
- I understand that my responses will be made anonymous in written materials/research presentations.

### For adult pupil-participants:

- I agree to be recorded in the one-to-one lessons, and my learning process can be analysed by the researcher.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Interviewer's name: Xinpei Zheng (郑心培)

Interviewer's signature:

Date:

## 4. Consent form for Instrumental teachers in China

What will be video/audio recorded?

An online one-to-one interview: 30 April 2022

What will the video/audio recording(s) be used for?

Recording(s) will be used by the researcher to transcribe, translate, and analyse for their PhD research. They may be viewed by the research supervisor Dr Liz Haddon and the PhD examiners on a need-to-know basis only.

Where and how will the video/audio recording(s) be stored?

Recording(s) will be stored securely in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on the University of York Google Drive. To preserve anonymity, participant names will not be used in file names or any written work for the project.

Who will have access to the video/audio recording(s)?

Only the researcher, the supervisor, and the PhD examiners will have access to the recordings. Additional consent must be obtained from both researcher and participant if either party wishes to share the recording(s) more widely.

How long will the video/audio recording(s) be retained?

The recording(s) will be retained until the end of the researcher's PhD study (expected to be December 2024). If at any point you wish to withdraw your consent, you should notify the researcher, who will destroy the recording(s) as quickly as possible.

How will the video/audio recording(s) be destroyed?

The recordings will be permanently deleted from the University of York Google Drive.

If you have any questions that are not answered above or concerns about being recorded for the purposes outlined above, please contact the researcher Xinpei Zheng ([xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk) /WeChat: xinpei059) or the supervisor Dr Liz Haddon ([liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)).

If you are happy to provide consent for an interview to be video/audio recorded, please read the declaration on the next page. Then complete your name and signature to indicate that you have provided consent on the stated date.

Project originality protection

To protect the originality of the project, please do not share the information sheet with any other person outside this project without informing the researcher.

Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the information above and consent for my interview to be recorded and stored under the conditions outlined above.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Researcher's name: Xinpei Zheng (郑心培)

Researcher's signature:

Date:

## Appendix B: Interview questions

Which RQ does this help you answer?	Aspects	Questions	Potential prompts
RQ 2	a. Background	1. How old are you?	
RQ 1, 2		2. For how many years have you learned guzheng?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you learn in a one-to-one context or a group context?</li> <li>How often did you have guzheng lessons with your teacher?</li> <li>Did you take the guzheng exams?</li> </ul>
RQ 1, 2		3. How long have you been teaching guzheng?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you have pupils before the MA course, in China?</li> <li>If so, are they adults or children?</li> </ul>
RQ 1		4. How many pupils do you have now? [as part of the MA course?]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How long have you been teaching them?</li> </ul>
RQ 1, 2		5. Did you study for an undergraduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which one? [especially conservatoire/university?]</li> </ul>

		degree in a conservatory or a university?	
<b>RQ 1, 2</b>		6. What was your major when you were an undergraduate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (If the participant majored in Music Education) have you learned any modules related to pedagogic approaches (general or instrumental)?</li> <li>• How do you feel about instrumental teacher training?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 1, 2</b>	<b>b. 'Hidden' learning contexts</b>	7. How many guzheng teachers did you have before taking the admission exam to get into a music conservatory or university to study music in China?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have had more than one teacher, why was this the case? [to get lessons with the 'desired' teacher in the next educational context for example]</li> <li>• Who set this up? Your teacher/parents/you?</li> <li>• What do you think about learning guzheng with more than one teacher relating to effectiveness, progress, and student-teacher relationship?</li> <li>• If you had more than one teacher, how would they coordinate when teaching you? E.g. work together/know about each other/discuss your progress with each other/teach you with both of them in the lesson together?</li> <li>• How would you describe and compare their teaching styles?</li> <li>• How did you adapt to their teaching styles?</li> <li>• What might be the impact of learning with them on the admission exam relating to performance?</li> <li>• Did having two teachers influence your own teaching? If so, how?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 1, 2</b>		8. How many guzheng teachers did you have in your undergraduate study? [were these consecutive or simultaneous?]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have more than one teacher at the same time, is this a normal set-up for the programme of study?</li> <li>• How do you feel about being taught by more than one teacher?</li> <li>• Is this a normal set-up for the programme of study?</li> <li>• How would they coordinate when teaching you?</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What might be the influences of their teaching on your practice?</li> </ul>
RQ 1, 2		9. What do you think of your learning autonomy when learning guzheng in China with your previous teacher(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you evaluate this?</li> </ul>
RQ 1, 2	<b>c. Teaching experience</b>	10. What do you think of your pupil's learning autonomy when you teach them in China?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think might be the factors that affect their learning autonomy?</li> </ul>
RQ 1, 2	<b>d. Teaching materials</b>	11. What kind of repertoire would you teach your pupil - traditional or contemporary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do you choose to teach traditional/ contemporary music (e.g. for fun or passing exams)?</li> <li>What would you think your pupils are aiming for, e.g. fun or passing exams?</li> </ul>
RQ 2, 3		12. What might be the differences between teaching traditional and contemporary repertoire?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would you think the pupils are aiming for?</li> </ul>
RQ 2	<b>e. Pedagogical adaptation</b>	13. What do you now think of your own teaching approaches or ideas that you used before taking the MA course?	
RQ 2		14. What do you think might be the factors that shape your previous teaching approaches or ideas?	
RQ 2, 3, 4		15. After learning the MA course for a few months, how do you feel about receiving 'new'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you feel about applying the strategies in your teaching practice simultaneously when you are still learning them?</li> </ul>

		teaching philosophies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What ones would you identify as being 'new'?</li> </ul>	
<b>RQ 2, 3</b>		16. Do any of the ideas and approaches from the MA course contrast with ideas of what you think of as teaching in the Chinese context? If so, which ones and how do they contrast?  17. What do you think of authenticity in relation to pedagogical approaches in the MA course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you evaluate the authenticity?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>f. Awareness of pedagogical authority</b>	18. How would you describe 'pedagogical authority'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What might be the factors that influence the pedagogical authority?</li> <li>Have you identified/experienced any pedagogical authority? If so, how do you feel about it?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 2</b>	<b>g. Professional vulnerability</b>	19. What do you think about the concept of 'professional vulnerability'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you experienced any professional vulnerability? If so, when did you experience it?</li> <li>How would you describe the experience?</li> <li>How did you work with the vulnerability you felt?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 2, 4</b>	<b>h. Proactivity of pedagogical development</b>	20. What do you think about your proactivity in pedagogical development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did you develop your teaching when you were in China? What about your peers?</li> <li>Why do you choose to take the MA course? What outcomes relating to your teaching do you expect to have within and after taking the MA course?</li> </ul>

<b>RQ 1, 2</b>	<b>i. Authenticity</b>	21. How would you understand 'authenticity' in guzheng learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you authentically experienced guzheng learning? If so, could you give an example?</li> <li>• How would you help your pupil authentically engage with guzheng learning?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 2, 3</b>	<b>j. Creativity</b>	22. What kind of teaching practices would you describe as creative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you experience any creative teaching or activities? If so, could you describe it?</li> </ul>
<b>RQ 2, 3</b>		23. Have you adopted any kind of creative approach in your teaching? If so, please tell me about them!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was your purpose for using them?</li> <li>• How do you think of the effectiveness of the approaches used?</li> <li>• How did you identify those approaches?</li> <li>• How do you evaluate them?</li> </ul>

### **Interview questions for UK MA student-teacher CITs: Perceptions of cross-cultural learning and pedagogical training**

*Motivational level: initiatives for the cross-cultural study, teaching improvement...*

- Why do you choose to take the MA course concerning the pedagogical training in the UK?
- What do you think of the pedagogy you learned in the UK compared to what you experienced/learned in China?
- Has your professional identity changed when you are taking this MA course? If so/not, how and why?
- What do you think of pedagogical training from the perspective of your professional identity?
- What do you think of this cross-cultural learning experience from China to the UK?

*Metacognitive and Cognitive level: teaching focus, choice-making, thinking patterns...*

- Have you noticed any cultural adaptations and/or transformations during this cross-cultural learning experience? If so, what are they?
- Have you noticed any pedagogical adaptations and/or transformations during this cross-cultural learning experience? If so, what are they?
- What might be changed in your teaching practice during and after you take the training cross-culturally?
- Would you usually reflect on the lessons you gave to your pupil(s)? How would you consider your reflections on your teaching before and/or during the MA programme?

- What might be changed in your view on professional development (based on your current professional identity) during and after you take the training cross-culturally?

*Behavioural level: 1) verbal: cultural-specific language, communication; 2) non-verbal: proxemics, modelling, lesson planning*

- What do you think of the use of language (e.g. communication) in your teaching in the UK compared to in China?
- Have you noticed any differences concerning non-verbal aspects, such as proxemics between teaching in China and the UK? If so, how would you understand such differences?
- Have you noticed any differences concerning non-verbal aspects, such as teacher authority and modelling between teaching in China and the UK? If so, how would you understand such differences?
- Have you noticed any differences concerning non-verbal aspects, such as lesson planning between teaching in China and the UK? If so, how would you understand such differences?
- Have you noticed any other differences concerning behavioural aspects between teaching in China and the UK? If so, what are they?

Additional aspects

- What do you think could help with your cross-cultural learning as a Chinese international student taking the music education course in the UK?
- Any other comments or thoughts to add?

### **Interview questions for in-service CITs**

- How old were you?
- How long had you been working as an [insert instrument] teacher?
- How did you describe your teaching responsibilities at your workplace?
- What did the teaching setup in your practice look like – were the lessons one-to-one or in groups?
- How did you usually plan your lessons and prepare your teaching content?
- What were your thoughts on establishing your own teaching pedagogy and teaching philosophy?
- What was your opinion on a performer's personal style of interpretation and expression in Chinese instrument performance?
- How did you approach encouraging your pupil's personal interpretation or expression of the music?
- What were your views on your own teaching beliefs as a Chinese instrument teacher at [insert their working place]?

- From your perspective and experience, how did you understand the relationship between instrumental/music teaching and educational policies in China?
- What were your thoughts on the curricula designed for undergraduate students majoring in Chinese instrument performance, musicology, or music education?
- How did you view 'student-centred' versus 'teacher-centred' teaching?
- Were you aware of whether your pupils were also training to become Chinese instrument teachers, aside from their studies at the conservatory/university?
- Did you think your teaching methods influenced how your pupils would eventually teach their instrument? In what ways?
- How did you describe people's motivations and perseverance in becoming a Chinese instrument teacher or a Chinese instrument learner?
- How did you motivate your pupils in learning and practising?
- What was your perspective on teacher agency in teaching improvement, and how proactive were you in improving your own teaching?
- What were your views on instrumental teachers' professional development? Had you received any formal or informal training related to your teaching work?
- When you encountered the term 'authenticity', how did you interpret it in the context of Chinese instrument learning, teaching, and performance?
- What were your thoughts on techniques such as 'jiahua' and other variations that featured semi-improvisation in Chinese instrument playing and learning?

## Appendix C: Additional materials from interviewees



**Title:** National guzheng performance: Graded exam repertoire for Grades 1-5 (the third set)

**Editors:** Music Examination Committee of the Chinese Musicians' Association and WANG, Zhongshan

**Publisher:** Henan Literature and Arts Publishing House

**Year of publication:** 2016



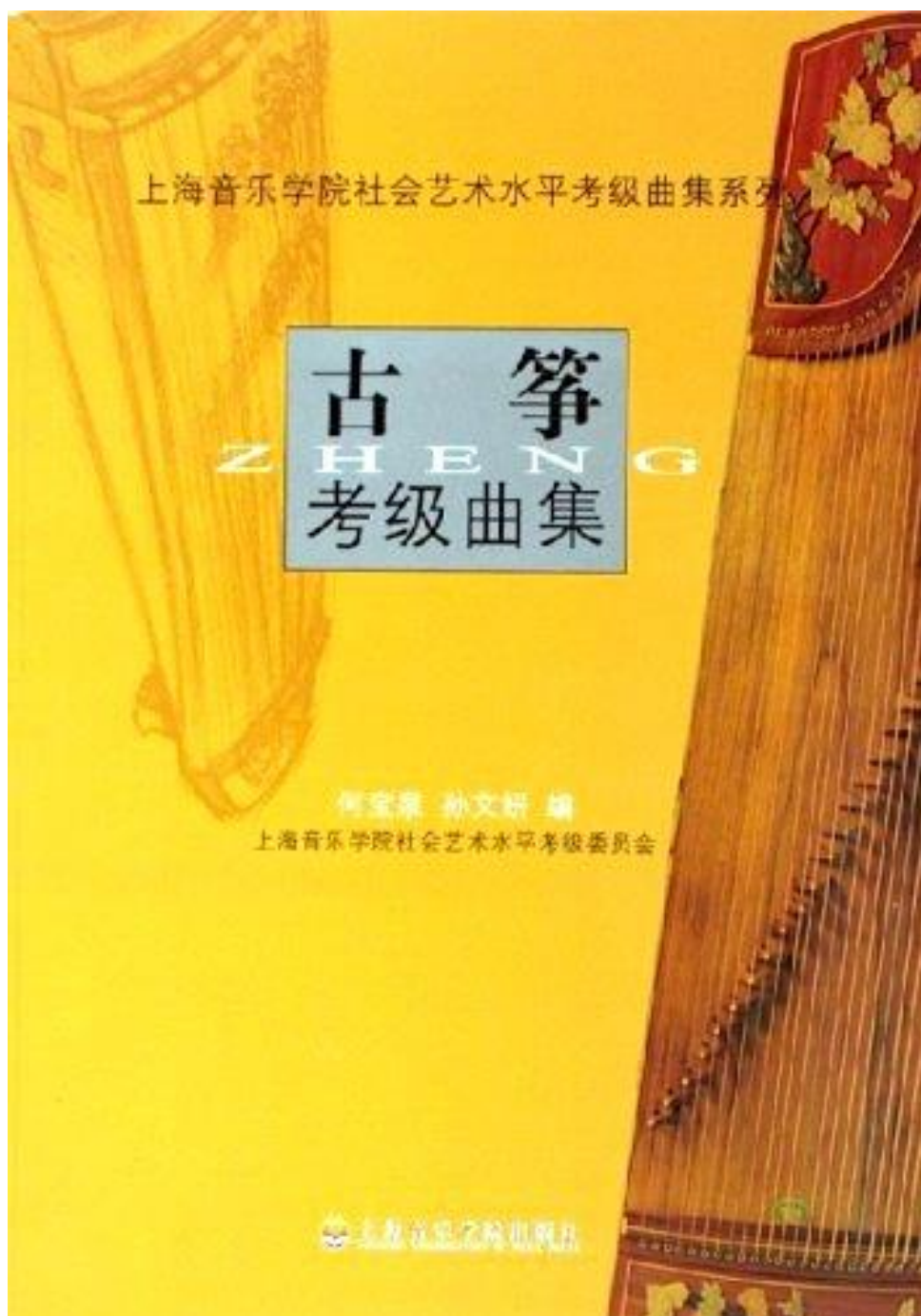
**Title:** China Conservatory of Music: National textbook for social art level examinations:  
Guzheng (Grades 1-6)

**Editors:** China Conservatory of Music Examination Board and LIN, Ling

**Publisher:** China Youth Publishing House

**Year of publication:** 2012





**Title:** Shanghai Conservatory of Music social art level examination repertoire series for guzheng

**Editors:** Shanghai Conservatory of Music Social Art Level Examination Committee, HE, Baoquan, and SUN, Wenyan

**Publisher:** Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press

**Year of publication:** 2003



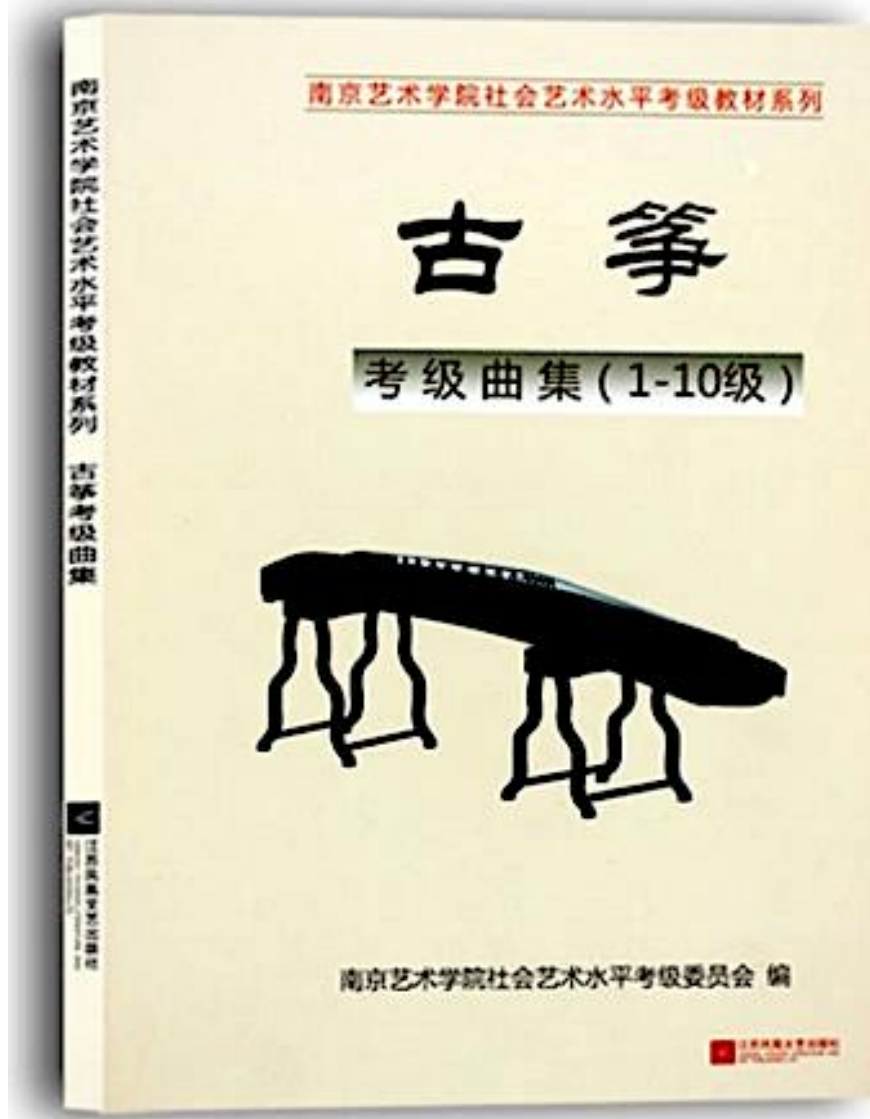


**Title:** Chinese guzheng exam repertoire collection (Volumes 1 & 2 for Grades 1-10)

**Editors:** Shanghai Guzheng Association

**Publisher:** Shanghai Music Press

**Year of publication:** 2005

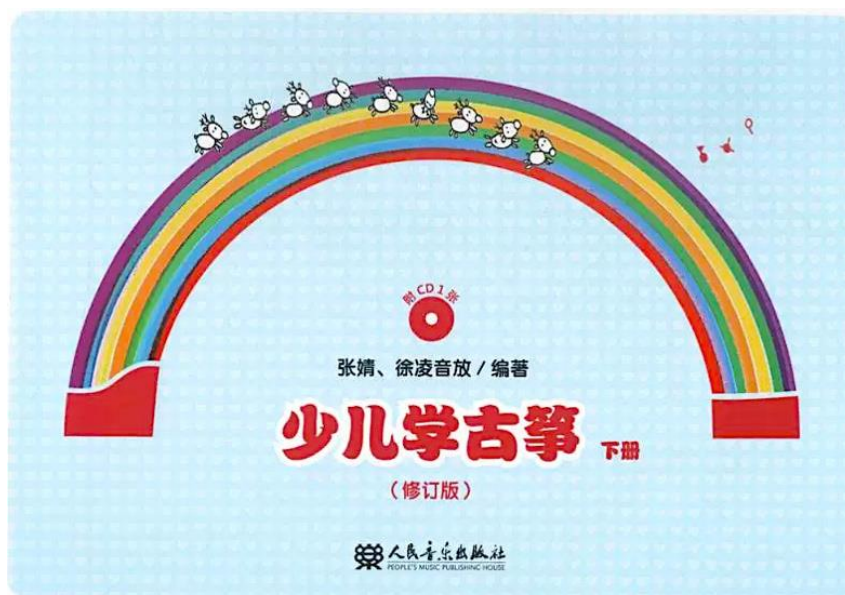


**Title:** Nanjing University of the Arts social art level examination textbook series: Guzheng repertoire (Grades 1-10)

**Editors:** Nanjing Arts Institute Social Art Level Examination Committee

**Publisher:** Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House

**Year of publication:** 2017



**Title:** Learning guzheng for children (Volumes 1 & 2)

**Editors:** ZHANG, Jing and XU, Linyinfang

**Publisher:** People's Music Publishing House

**Year of publication:** 2016

**Appendix D: Permission request form for excerpts of music scores in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.1, originally published by Yuan (1983) in the *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music***

**谱例使用许可授权方信息:**

谱例出处: 期刊文章《民间器乐曲中常用的变奏手法》(pp. 33-46)

出版/发表年份: 1983

作者: 袁静芳

谱例名称: 民间乐曲《小放牛》片段 (p. 34) 和江南丝竹《欢乐歌》两段旋律对比片段 (p. 39)

出版单位: 交响—西安音乐学院学报

地址: 陕西省西安市雁塔区长安中路 108 号西安音乐学院内

联系电话: 029-88667062

邮箱: xiycinjiao@163.com

**谱例使用方信息:**

使用人/作者: 郑心培

使用人/作者邮箱: [xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk](mailto:xinpei.zheng@york.ac.uk)

使用人/作者电话: +86 181 6424 4196

博士导师: Dr Liz Haddon

博士导师邮箱: [liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)

单位: 英国约克大学 (University of York, UK)

地址: University of York, York, YO10 5DD, UK.

单位联系电话: +44(0)1904 320 000

使用目的: 完成博士学位 (Doctor of Philosophy) 毕业论文

博士学位论文原标题: Instrumental pedagogy and practice across cultures: Perspectives of Chinese-instrument teachers in China and the UK context

修改后为 Navigating pedagogical shifts between China and the UK: Chinese instrument teachers' practices and beliefs

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签名：西安音乐学院《交响》编辑部

日期：2024-11-07

