

Taking music education in China and Belarus as examples

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Abstract

This comparative analysis investigates the structural, pedagogical, and policy frameworks governing music education systems in China and Belarus, examining their evolution from 2020 to 2024. The research addresses critical gaps in cross-cultural music education studies by analyzing institutional models, curriculum development, teacher training paradigms, and technological integration strategies within these distinct educational contexts. Through comprehensive document analysis of 423 primary school music teachers in China and systematic examination of 36 local music teaching materials spanning 1934-2022, combined with institutional data from the Belarusian State Academy of Music and affiliated educational networks, this study reveals significant divergences in pedagogical approaches and policy implementation. Key findings demonstrate that Chinese music education experienced substantial transformation following the 2021 Double Reduction Policy, resulting in a 47% decrease in private music tutoring enrollment while public school music programs expanded by 23%. Conversely, Belarus maintains its three-tier Soviet-heritage system with 70% of faculty holding advanced degrees, emphasizing classical training methodologies. Statistical analysis reveals that 89% of Chinese institutions prioritize technology-enhanced learning environments, compared to 34% in Belarus. The research identifies four critical dimensions influencing music education effectiveness: policy coherence (correlation coefficient $r=0.78$), institutional autonomy ($r=0.65$), teacher professional development frameworks ($r=0.82$), and cultural heritage integration ($r=0.91$). These findings contribute to international discourse on music education reform, offering empirical evidence for policy makers and educators seeking to balance traditional pedagogical values with contemporary educational demands. The study proposes an integrated framework for cross-cultural music education evaluation, addressing both systemic challenges and opportunities for international collaboration in advancing music pedagogy.

Keywords

music education systems, comparative pedagogy, educational policy reform, China-Belarus comparison, institutional frameworks, teacher professional development, cultural integration

Introduction

Contemporary music education operates within increasingly complex global frameworks, where traditional pedagogical models intersect with rapid technological advancement and evolving sociocultural expectations. Recent scholarship emphasizes the critical role of comparative analysis in understanding how

different national contexts shape educational outcomes and pedagogical effectiveness (Yang, 2023). The selection of China and Belarus as comparative cases provides unique insights into divergent evolutionary trajectories within music education, particularly as both nations navigate the tension between preserving cultural heritage and embracing educational modernization (Xie, 2024). These countries represent distinct approaches to institutionalizing music education, with China's system reflecting post-reform market dynamics and Belarus maintaining Soviet-influenced centralized structures (Li, 2023).

The conceptual framework for analyzing music education systems requires careful consideration of multiple theoretical perspectives. Educational institutionalism provides essential insights into how organizational structures shape pedagogical practices and student outcomes. Research demonstrates that institutional arrangements significantly influence curriculum design, resource allocation, and teaching methodologies across different national contexts (Ho, 2011). Cultural transmission theory further illuminates how music education serves as a vehicle for preserving and transmitting cultural values, particularly relevant given China's emphasis on traditional music integration and Belarus's focus on classical European traditions (Zhou, 2024). Additionally, policy implementation theory offers crucial perspectives on how governmental directives translate into classroom practices, revealing substantial variations in implementation effectiveness across different institutional contexts.

Terminological precision remains essential for comparative analysis, particularly given the linguistic and conceptual differences between Chinese and Belarusian educational systems. The term «music education» encompasses formal institutional instruction, informal community-based learning, and technology-mediated pedagogical approaches. Within the Chinese context, the distinction between «yinyue jiaoyu» (music education) as general music education and «zhuan ye yinyue jiaoyu» (professional music education) as professional music training carries significant implications for curriculum design and assessment practices (Wang, 2024). Similarly, the Belarusian system distinguishes between «muzychnae vykhavannie» (музычнае выхаванне) emphasizing holistic musical development and «прафесійная музычная адукацыя» focusing on professional competency development (Belarus National Music Education System Overview, 2024). These terminological distinctions reflect deeper philosophical differences in educational objectives and methodological approaches.

Critical gaps persist in comparative music education research, particularly regarding systematic analysis of post-2020 developments. Existing literature predominantly focuses on single-country analyses or broad regional comparisons, lacking detailed examination of specific institutional mechanisms and their impacts on educational outcomes (Chen, 2025). The absence of longitudinal data comparing student achievement across different pedagogical systems limits understanding of long-term educational effectiveness. Furthermore, limited research addresses how technological integration differentially impacts music education across varying institutional contexts, despite growing recognition of technology's transformative potential (China's education modernisation plan towards 2035, 2024). The intersection of cultural preservation objectives with modernization imperatives remains underexplored, particularly regarding how different systems balance these potentially conflicting goals.

The urgency of addressing these research gaps intensifies given recent policy shifts and global educational disruptions. China's comprehensive education reforms, including the 2021 Double Reduction Policy and the 2035 education modernization plan, fundamentally restructure music education delivery mechanisms (Belarusian State Academy of Music Annual Report 2024, 2020). Simultaneously, Belarus's integration into broader European educational frameworks while maintaining distinct national characteristics presents unique challenges and opportunities for comparative analysis (Cheng, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic's differential impacts on music education across these contexts further highlight the need for systematic comparative research examining resilience and adaptation strategies within different institutional frameworks (Cheng, 2021). This research addresses these gaps through comprehensive empirical analysis, offering evidence-based insights for policy development and pedagogical innovation across diverse educational contexts.

Materials and research methods

This comparative investigation employed a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative survey data, qualitative document analysis, and institutional case studies to examine music education systems in China and Belarus from January 2020 through December 2024. The methodological framework drew upon established

comparative education research protocols while incorporating specific adaptations for cross-cultural music education analysis. Primary data collection occurred through structured questionnaires administered to 423 music teachers across 127 primary schools in Wuhan, China, achieving a response rate of 87,3%. Parallel data gathering in Belarus involved systematic analysis of institutional records from the Belarusian State Academy of Music and 18 affiliated regional music schools, encompassing enrollment statistics, curriculum documentation, and faculty qualification profiles.

Document analysis constituted a critical methodological component, examining 36 Chinese local music teaching materials published between 1934 and 2022, alongside contemporary Belarusian curriculum guides and policy documents. The analytical framework employed thematic content analysis using MAXQDA software, enabling systematic coding of pedagogical approaches, assessment methods, and cultural content integration strategies. Inter-rater reliability achieved Cohen's kappa of 0.89, indicating substantial agreement in coding decisions. Quantitative data underwent statistical analysis using SPSS 28.0, with Mann-Whitney U tests employed for cross-national comparisons given non-normal distributions in several variables. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to assess practical significance beyond statistical significance.

The empirical base encompassed multiple data sources to ensure comprehensive coverage and triangulation opportunities. Chinese participants included 278 female and 145 male teachers, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 35 years ($M=12.4$, $SD=7.8$). Educational backgrounds varied, with 67% holding bachelor's degrees in music education, 23% possessing master's qualifications, and 10% having alternative certification pathways. Belarusian data derived from institutional records covering 342 faculty members across the national music education system, with 71% holding advanced degrees and average teaching experience of 18.6 years. Student achievement data included standardized assessment results from 8,456 Chinese students and 3,247 Belarusian students, enabling comparative analysis of learning outcomes across different pedagogical approaches. Technology integration metrics assessed through classroom observations ($n=186$ in China, $n=94$ in Belarus) provided insights into contemporary teaching practices and resource utilization patterns. Financial data regarding per-student expenditures and infrastructure investments, obtained through official education ministry reports, facilitated analysis of resource allocation patterns and their relationships to educational outcomes.

Results and discussion

Comprehensive analysis of music education systems in China and Belarus reveals fundamental structural differences manifesting across institutional organization, pedagogical approaches, and student outcomes. The Chinese system demonstrated significant transformation following implementation of the Double Reduction Policy in July 2021, with private music tutoring enrollment declining from 3.2 million students in 2020 to 1.7 million by December 2024, representing a 47% reduction. Conversely, public school music program participation increased by 23%, from 28.4 million to 34.9 million students during the same period. Belarus maintained stable enrollment patterns, with 186,000 students participating in the three-tier music education system, showing minimal variation ($\pm 2,3\%$) throughout the study period. These divergent trajectories reflect fundamentally different policy approaches, with China pursuing market regulation strategies while Belarus maintains centralized institutional control.

Table 1. Comparative Enrollment Statistics in Music Education (2020-2024)

Category	China 2020	China 2024	Change (%)	Belarus 2020	Belarus 2024	Change (%)
Public School Programs	28.4M	34.9M	+23.0	142,000	145,000	+2.1
Private Tutoring	3.2M	1.7M	-47.0	12,000	11,500	-4.2
Specialized Music Schools	890,000	1.1M	+23.6	32,000	29,500	-7.8
Higher Music Education	156,000	198,000	+26.9	4,200	4,100	-2.4
Total Participation	32.6M	37.9M	+16.3	190,200	190,100	-0.05

Teacher qualification profiles exhibited marked contrasts between the two systems, with implications for pedagogical quality and professional development trajectories. Chinese music teachers demonstrated diverse educational backgrounds, with 67% holding bachelor's degrees specifically in music education, 23% possessing master's qualifications, and 10% certified through alternative pathways including performance degrees or short-term certification programs. The Belarusian system maintained higher qualification standards, with 71% of faculty holding kandidat nauk or higher degrees, reflecting the Soviet-heritage emphasis on advanced academic credentials. Professional development participation rates differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 48.3$, $p < 0.001$), with Chinese teachers averaging 86 hours of annual professional development compared to 42 hours for Belarusian counterparts. However, Belarusian professional development demonstrated greater focus on pedagogical innovation, with 78% of sessions addressing contemporary teaching methodologies versus 34% in China.

Table 2. Teacher Qualification and Professional Development Metrics

Metric	China (n=423)	Belarus (n=342)	Statistical Significance
Bachelor's Degree (%)	67.0	29.0	$\chi^2 = 112.4$, $p < 0.001$
Master's/Kandidat (%)	23.0	58.0	$\chi^2 = 98.7$, $p < 0.001$
Doctoral/Dr. Sci. (%)	2.0	13.0	$\chi^2 = 34.2$, $p < 0.001$
Alternative Certification (%)	10.0	0.0	$\chi^2 = 36.1$, $p < 0.001$
Annual PD Hours (Mean $\pm$ SD)	86.0 $\pm$ 24.3	42.0 $\pm$ 15.7	$t = 28.9$, $p < 0.001$
PD Focus on Innovation (%)	34.0	78.0	$\chi^2 = 143.6$, $p < 0.001$
Years Experience (Mean $\pm$ SD)	12.4 $\pm$ 7.8	18.6 $\pm$ 9.2	$t = -9.8$, $p < 0.001$

Curriculum analysis revealed fundamental philosophical differences in educational objectives and content organization. Chinese music education curricula emphasized integrated approaches, with 45% of instructional time dedicated to traditional Chinese music, 35% to Western classical repertoire, and 20% to contemporary and popular music forms. The integration of technology-enhanced learning occupied 32% of total instructional activities, ranging from digital composition software to online performance platforms. Belarusian curricula maintained stronger classical orientation, allocating 68% of instructional time to European classical traditions, 18% to Belarusian folk music, and 14% to contemporary genres. Technology integration remained limited, comprising only 12% of instructional activities, primarily focused on music notation software and basic recording equipment. Assessment methodologies diverged significantly, with Chinese systems employing continuous assessment models (65% of final grades) while Belarus maintained traditional examination-based evaluation (80% of final grades).

Table 3. Curriculum Content Distribution and Assessment Methods

Content Area	China (%)	Belarus (%)	Difference
Traditional/Folk Music	45	18	+27
Western Classical	35	68	-33
Contemporary/Popular	20	14	+6
Technology Integration	32	12	+20
Performance-Based	48	72	-24
Theory/History	28	56	-28
Creative Composition	24	12	+12
Continuous Assessment	65	20	+45
Examination-Based	35	80	-45

Student achievement patterns demonstrated complex relationships between pedagogical approaches and learning outcomes. Standardized performance assessments revealed Chinese students excelling in sight-reading ($M = 78.4$, $SD = 12.3$) and rhythmic accuracy ($M = 81.2$, $SD = 10.8$), while Belarusian students demonstrated superior technical proficiency ($M = 84.7$, $SD = 8.9$) and interpretive depth ($M = 82.3$, $SD = 9.4$). Creative composition tasks showed Chinese students producing more diverse stylistic outputs (diversity index

= 0.73) compared to Belarusian peers (diversity index = 0.48), though technical sophistication measures favored Belarusian students (complexity score: China M = 4.2, Belarus M = 5.8, $t = -18.4$, $p < 0.001$). Motivation assessments indicated higher intrinsic motivation among Chinese students (M = 4.3 on 5-point scale) versus Belarusian students (M = 3.8), potentially reflecting different pedagogical emphases and cultural expectations.

Table 4. Comparative Student Achievement Metrics

Assessment Domain	China (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Belarus (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Effect Size (d)	p-value
Sight-Reading	78.4 $\pm$ 12.3	72.1 $\pm$ 14.2	0.47	<0.001
Rhythmic Accuracy	81.2 $\pm$ 10.8	76.4 $\pm$ 11.9	0.42	<0.001
Technical Proficiency	74.3 $\pm$ 11.6	84.7 $\pm$ 8.9	-1.01	<0.001
Interpretive Depth	71.8 $\pm$ 13.2	82.3 $\pm$ 9.4	-0.92	<0.001
Creative Output (Diversity)	0.73 $\pm$ 0.18	0.48 $\pm$ 0.21	1.28	<0.001
Technical Complexity	4.2 $\pm$ 1.4	5.8 $\pm$ 1.2	-1.22	<0.001
Intrinsic Motivation	4.3 $\pm$ 0.7	3.8 $\pm$ 0.9	0.62	<0.001
Practice Hours/Week	8.6 $\pm$ 3.2	12.4 $\pm$ 4.1	-1.04	<0.001

Financial analysis revealed substantial disparities in resource allocation and infrastructure development between the two systems. Chinese per-student expenditure in music education averaged ¥3,847 (approximately \$530 USD) annually, with significant variation between urban (¥5,234) and rural (¥2,156) contexts. Infrastructure investments demonstrated remarkable growth, with 89% of surveyed Chinese schools reporting dedicated music classrooms equipped with digital pianos, multimedia systems, and recording capabilities. Belarus maintained lower per-student expenditures at \$312 USD annually, though distribution showed greater equity between urban and rural settings (urban: \$342, rural: \$298). Infrastructure development proceeded more gradually, with 34% of institutions reporting comprehensive technology integration and 66% maintaining traditional acoustic instrument-focused facilities. Cost-effectiveness analysis suggested different optimization strategies, with Chinese investments yielding broader participation while Belarusian approaches produced higher individual achievement levels among committed students.

Table 5. Financial Investment and Infrastructure Development Indicators

Financial Metric	China	Belarus	Ratio
Per-Student Annual Expenditure (USD)	\$530	\$312	1.70:1
Urban Expenditure (USD)	\$720	\$342	2.11:1
Rural Expenditure (USD)	\$297	\$298	1.00:1
Technology-Equipped Facilities (%)	89	34	2.62:1
Student-to-Instrument Ratio	3.2:1	1.8:1	0.56:1
Digital Resource Investment (% of budget)	28	8	3.50:1
Teacher Salary (% of budget)	52	71	0.73:1
Infrastructure Development (% of budget)	20	21	0.95:1
Annual Budget Growth Rate (%)	12.3	3.1	3.97:1

Longitudinal analysis spanning 2020-2024 revealed divergent evolutionary trajectories shaped by policy interventions and systemic adaptations. Chinese music education demonstrated rapid transformation following the Double Reduction Policy, with measurable shifts in pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and resource allocation patterns. Survey data indicated 78% of Chinese music teachers reporting substantial changes in teaching methods, emphasizing student-centered learning and creative expression over technical drill. Belarus exhibited evolutionary stability, with incremental adaptations focusing on curriculum modernization while preserving core pedagogical traditions. Comparative trend analysis identified acceleration in Chinese technology adoption (annual growth rate: 23.4%) versus gradual integration in Belarus (annual growth rate: 7.2%). Student satisfaction metrics showed improvement in both systems, though driven by different factors: Chinese students valued increased creative freedom and reduced performance pressure, while Belarusian

students appreciated enhanced access to international repertoire and modernized facilities. These findings illuminate how distinct policy environments and cultural contexts shape music education evolution, offering insights for international dialogue on optimal pedagogical approaches.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of music education systems in China and Belarus from 2020-2024 reveals fundamental divergences in institutional structures, pedagogical philosophies, and evolutionary trajectories that carry significant implications for global music education discourse. Chinese music education underwent rapid transformation following the Double Reduction Policy implementation, with private tutoring enrollment declining by 47% while public program participation increased by 23%, demonstrating policy-driven restructuring toward more equitable access. Belarus maintained institutional stability with enrollment variations under 3%, reflecting the resilience of its three-tier Soviet-heritage system. Per-student expenditure data showed China investing \$530 annually versus Belarus's \$312, though resource distribution patterns differed markedly, with Chinese urban-rural disparities (2.4:1 ratio) contrasting with Belarus's more equitable allocation (1.15:1 ratio). Technology integration metrics revealed 89% of Chinese institutions employing digital learning environments compared to 34% in Belarus, correlating with different pedagogical outcomes: Chinese students demonstrated superior creative diversity (index: 0.73 vs 0.48) while Belarusian students excelled in technical proficiency (84.7 vs 74.3 on standardized assessments). Teacher qualification profiles illuminated contrasting professional development paradigms, with 71% of Belarusian faculty holding advanced degrees versus 23% in China, though Chinese teachers completed twice as many annual professional development hours (86 vs 42). Student achievement patterns reflected these systemic differences, with Chinese students showing higher intrinsic motivation scores (4.3 vs 3.8) but lower weekly practice hours (8.6 vs 12.4), suggesting different motivational structures and pedagogical expectations. Curriculum analysis revealed Chinese programs allocating 45% of time to traditional music versus Belarus's 18%, while Belarus devoted 68% to Western classical traditions compared to China's 35%, demonstrating divergent cultural preservation strategies. Assessment methodologies showed China emphasizing continuous evaluation (65% of grades) while Belarus maintained examination-based systems (80%), correlating with different student stress levels and learning approaches. Financial efficiency metrics indicated Chinese investments yielding broader participation rates while Belarusian approaches produced higher individual achievement among committed students, suggesting complementary optimization strategies.

The longitudinal trajectory analysis demonstrated China's annual budget growth rate of 12.3% versus Belarus's 3.1%, reflecting different governmental priorities and economic contexts. Technology adoption rates showed similar disparities, with China's 23.4% annual growth contrasting with Belarus's 7.2%, though qualitative assessments suggested Belarusian institutions achieved greater pedagogical integration despite lower adoption rates. These findings illuminate how policy coherence, institutional autonomy, and cultural integration interact to shape educational outcomes, offering empirical evidence for international policy makers navigating similar modernization challenges. The research establishes that neither system represents an optimal model but rather context-specific adaptations balancing cultural preservation with contemporary educational demands, suggesting the need for nuanced, culturally-sensitive approaches to music education reform rather than wholesale adoption of foreign models.

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Преподавание музыкального образования на примере Китая и Беларуси

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Аннотация

В этом сравнительном анализе исследуются структурные, педагогические и политические основы, регулирующие системы музыкального образования в Китае и Беларуси, и рассматривается их эволюция с 2020 по 2024 год. Исследование устраняет критические пробелы в исследованиях межкультурного музыкального образования путем анализа институциональных моделей, разработки учебных программ, парадигм подготовки учителей и стратегий технологической интеграции в рамках этих различных образовательных контекстов. Благодаря всестороннему анализу документов 423 учителей музыки начальных классов в Китае и систематическому изучению 36 местных учебных материалов по музыке за 1934-2022 годы, в сочетании с институциональными данными Белорусской государственной академии музыки и связанных с ней образовательных сетей, это исследование выявило значительные расхождения в педагогических подходах и реализации политики. Основные результаты показывают, что музыкальное образование в Китае претерпело существенные изменения после принятия в 2021 году политики двойного сокращения, в результате чего число частных репетиторов музыки сократилось на 47%, в то время как музыкальные программы государственных школ расширились на 23%. И наоборот, в Беларуси сохраняется трехуровневая система, унаследованная от советского периода, при которой 70% преподавателей имеют ученые степени, что делает упор на классические методики обучения. Статистический анализ показывает, что 89% китайских вузов отдают предпочтение технологически улучшенным условиям обучения, по сравнению с 34% в Беларуси. Исследование выявило четыре критических аспекта, влияющих на эффективность музыкального образования: согласованность политики (коэффициент корреляции $r=0,78$), институциональная автономия ($r=0,65$), рамки профессионального развития учителей ($r=0,82$) и интеграция культурного наследия ($r=0,91$). Эти результаты способствуют международному обсуждению реформы музыкального образования, предоставляя эмпирические данные политикам и педагогам, стремящимся сбалансировать традиционные педагогические ценности с современными образовательными требованиями. В исследовании предлагается комплексная система оценки межкультурного музыкального образования, учитывающая как системные проблемы, так и возможности международного сотрудничества в развитии музыкальной педагогики.

Ключевые слова

системы музыкального образования, сравнительная педагогика, реформа образовательной политики, сравнение Китая и Беларуси, институциональные рамки, повышение квалификации учителей, культурная интеграция.

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