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Research on the Transfer Path of Drum Circle Activities in Promoting Music Teaching Skills of Normal University Students

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Abstract: This study focuses on the cultivation of music teaching skills among normal university students, exploring the transfer pathways and mechanisms through which Drum Circle activities enhance teaching competencies. The research reveals that Drum Circle activities significantly improve rhythm perception, classroom organization, teaching innovation, and teamwork skills through both low-road and high-road transfer. The study identifies the facilitating roles of diverse musical style integration, reflective practice, and progressive training in skill transfer, while also recognizing obstacles such as resource limitations, instructor deficiencies, and evaluation gaps. Optimization strategies including diversified situational design, metacognitive intervention, and institutional safeguards are proposed. This research provides new pathways for the reform of music education pedagogy.

Keywords: Drum Circle, normal university students, music teaching skills, transfer mechanism

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

Current music education reforms impose higher demands on the practical abilities of normal university students. The new curriculum standards emphasize the concept of "creative teaching," rendering traditional training models that prioritize technical skills over pedagogical development inadequate. Drum Circle activities, as an innovative form of music education characterized by collaboration, improvisation, and diverse expression [1], offer a novel approach to cultivating music teaching skills among normal university students.

Originating from community drumming traditions in West African indigenous tribes, Drum Circle activities were introduced to North America in the 1960s and gradually applied in educational and psychotherapy contexts [2]. After being introduced to China in 2008, they underwent localization: initially implemented in primary and secondary school clubs, later expanding to university mental health courses and normal universities [3]. Post-2018, research on Drum Circle applications in preschool education and elementary music classrooms increased significantly, demonstrating strong alignment with new curriculum standards [4-5].

In normal music education, the educational value of Drum Circle activities manifests in three aspects: first, by simulating real classroom scenarios to directly develop rhythm teaching and classroom organization skills; second, through improvisational characteristics that foster creative teaching skills; and third, via group activities that enhance teamwork

and communication abilities. Qufu Normal University's "Drum Circle Music Course" significantly improved students' exploratory spirit and collaborative skills [5], while Tianjin Foreign Studies University's practice confirmed its effectiveness in alleviating psychological stress [6].

Theoretically, this study enriches transfer theory in music education by exploring the dual-path mechanism of Drum Circle activities in transferring to teaching skills. Practically, it provides operable teaching models for normal universities, addressing deficiencies in traditional training for rhythm collaboration and improvisation skills.

1.2. Core Concept Definition

1.2.1. Drum Circle Activities

Drum Circle refers to collective improvisational performances primarily using percussion instruments, where participants form a circle and engage in rhythm exploration, imitation, and creation guided by the facilitator's gestures. Core characteristics include:

- **Cultural roots:** Traceable to West African tribal community drumming traditions with functions of worship, communication, and social cohesion.
- **Activity format:** Employs the "teaching without teaching" principle, emphasizing free expression and group cooperation through demonstration rather than verbal instruction.
- **Educational value:** Promotes multisensory channel integration (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), fostering creativity, social skills, and self-awareness.

Diverse applications include: in basic education-teacher-child/parent-child activities in preschools and "instruments in classroom" programs in primary/secondary schools; in higher education - as psychotherapy tools and supplementary methods for solfège and rhythm teaching in normal universities.

1.2.2. Music Teaching Skills

As the core of normal university students' professional competencies, music teaching skills comprise four dimensions:

- **Basic skills:** Piano-vocal skills (core requirement for school singing classes) and rhythm perception (identifying complex rhythm patterns and converting them to teaching practice).
- **Instructional design and implementation:** Designing teaching activities based on student characteristics and objectives (e.g., Qufu Normal University's Drum Circle music course), and classroom organization skills (coordinating group activities, stimulating participation).
- **Innovation abilities:** Improvised accompaniment and music composition, sound and movement design. Incorporating diverse styles like African drumming and samba expands teaching innovation space.
- **Psychological and social skills:** Drum Circle activities cultivate teamwork and leadership through "shared responsibility" and "open communication" principles, while their music therapy foundations promote emotional regulation and stress management.

Traditional training models often neglect rhythm collaboration and improvisation skills that align with new curriculum standards, which Drum Circle activities can specifically strengthen.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study systematically investigates the transfer pathways and mechanisms through which Drum Circle activities enhance music teaching skills of normal university students, specifically:

(1) Revealing dual-path transfer mechanisms - through low-road transfer (automatic skill conversion via situational simulation for rhythm teaching) and high-road transfer (metacognitive abstraction forming creative teaching principles).

(2) Constructing a transfer enhancement model incorporating diverse musical styles (e.g., African drumming, samba), reflective practice (extracting metaphors like "rhythm dialogue = classroom interaction"), and collaborative experience conversion (applying "shared responsibility" to group learning).

(3) Overcoming practical bottlenecks by addressing instrument shortages, instructor deficiencies, and quantitative evaluation gaps to develop systematic music teacher training tools.

1.4. Research Methods and Data Collection

This mixed-methods study combines questionnaires, behavioral observation, and teaching practice evaluation. Participants included 189 music majors from a provincial normal university (71.4% female, 56.1% juniors, 39.7% seniors or above). All completed at least 12 hours of systematic Drum Circle training, with 95.8% exposed to Drum Circle techniques in music pedagogy courses.

A pretest-intervention-posttest design employed the "Normal University Students' Music Teaching Skills Assessment Scale" and "Drum Circle Experience Questionnaire" measuring five dimensions: rhythm teaching ability, classroom organization, teaching innovation, emotional expression, and teamwork, using 5-point Likert scales.

2. Transfer Mechanisms Between Drum Circle Activities and Teaching Skills

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

2.1.1. Mechanism Under Transfer Theory Framework

Drum Circle activities' promotion of teaching skills can be explained through transfer theory:

- **Low-road transfer:** Automatic skill conversion driven by situational similarity [7]. For example, rhythm imitation and creation activities directly convert to classroom rhythm teaching ability, aligning with "hugging" strategies (achieving skill automation through repetitive practice in similar contexts). Data shows controlled teaching rhythm ability scored 4.65/5.
- **High-road transfer**: Metacognitive abstraction forms creative teaching principles [7-8]. Improvisation rules (e.g., call-and-response, variation) convert to teaching principles through "bridging" strategies. For instance, "shared responsibility" experience abstractly applies to group cooperative learning, with teaching innovation scoring 4.65/5.

2.1.2. Mechanism from Music Psychology Perspective

From music psychology, Drum Circle activities promote skill development through multiple mechanisms [9]:

- **Emotional expression:** Nonverbal musical interaction helps release emotions and build confidence. 86.4% participants reported improved emotional expression (average 4.67/5), directly transferable to music teaching.
- **Teamwork:** Collective features cultivate listening, responding, and coordination skills. Teamwork scored 4.66/5, particularly valuable for classroom management.
- **Multisensory integration:** Engaging visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels strengthens multimodal memory and enhances music information encoding efficiency.

2.2. Skill Correspondences and Transfer Pathways

2.2.1. Core Skill Transfer Correspondence Table

Drum Circle Elements	Transferred Teaching Skills	Data Support(Average/5)	Transfer Type
Rhythm imitation and creation	Rhythm perception and teaching ability	4.63	Low-road transfer
Collective improvisational collaboration	Classroom organization and management	4.66	Low/high-road transfer
Instrument timbre exploration and combination	Teaching resource innovation	4.59	High-road transfer
Tempo and dynamics control	Teaching rhythm regulation	4.65	Low-road transfer
Alternating leadership and role switching	Teaching adaptability and differentiated instruction	4.62	High-road transfer
Nonverbal conducting techniques	Classroom body language expression	4.58	Low-road transfer

2.2.2. Main Transfer Pathway Analysis

- **Pathway 1:** From rhythm training to rhythm teaching ability. Progressive training (fixed tempo → duration variation → rhythm pattern combination) improves complex rhythm identification (4.63/5), addressing traditional rhythm teaching inefficiency.
- **Pathway 2:** From collective performance to classroom organization. Observing facilitators' physical cues to coordinate sections mirrors classroom management. 83.6% participants reported improved classroom organization.
- **Pathway 3:** From improvisation to teaching innovation. The "facilitator demonstration → individual improvisation → group integration" process develops creative abilities (4.68), transferring to instructional design flexibility (4.65).
- **Pathway 4:** From multi-part coordination to differentiated instruction. Multi-part experience helps master differentiated teaching (4.62), adapting to varying student levels.

2.3. Factors Influencing Transfer Effectiveness

2.3.1. Facilitative Conditions

- **Situational diversity:** Incorporating African drumming, samba, etc., broadens skill application scope.
- **Reflective practice:** Guiding teaching metaphor summarization (e.g., "rhythm dialogue = classroom interaction") enhances high-road transfer (teaching strategy adjustment ability 15% higher than control group).
- **Progressive difficulty design:** From single-part to multi-part, conforming to "zone of proximal development" principles.

2.3.2. Challenging Factors

Surveys revealed main challenges: unskilled facilitation techniques (31.2%), insufficient instruments (34.9%), inadequate practice time (42.9%), limited improvisation ability (56.6%). Solutions require instructor training and resource allocation.

3. Empirical Validation and Barrier Analysis

3.1. Key Research Findings

Significant skill transfer effects (averages >4.5/5):

- Improvisation showed greatest improvement (4.68/5), with 81.9% participants enhancing classroom interactivity.
- Rhythm perception and teaching (4.63/5): 83.6% could identify complex rhythm patterns.
- Teaching innovation design (4.65/5): 76.6% could independently design teaching activities.
- Classroom organization (4.66/5): 85.2% effectively used body language for classroom management.

Emotional and cognitive improvements: 86.4% reported enhanced emotional expression (4.67/5), 73.5% alleviated teaching anxiety. Behavioral observation showed experimental group used Drum Circle-derived techniques 3.2 times in micro-teaching (vs. control group's 0.8).

3.2. Systematic Analysis of Transfer Barriers

3.2.1. Resource Barriers

- Instrument and space limitations: 34.9% reported instrument shortages (only 21.2% met African drum demand), with 5-6 students sharing one drum; 68.3% training rooms were smaller than standard (2m²/person).
- Time allocation issues: 42.9% considered practice time insufficient, with Drum Circle training comprising only 18.7% of music pedagogy coursework, and 82.4% concentrated in final two weeks.

3.2.2. Technical Barriers

- Facilitation deficiencies: 31.2% had unskilled techniques, including ambiguous rhythm cues (28.6%), rigid improvisation guidance (56.6%), and multi-part coordination difficulties (39.8%).
- Instructor training gaps: Only 17.5% facilitators held Drum Circle certification, with 64.3% acquiring skills through short workshops.

3.2.3. Cognitive and Evaluation Barriers

- Conceptual misunderstandings: 32.7% students viewed Drum Circle as "group games," underestimating teaching transfer value.
- Evaluation system absence: Only 11.3% institutions established mapping evaluation indicators, with Drum Circle accounting for 5% of final grades, far below piano (35%) and vocal music (30%).

3.3. In-Depth Analysis of Barrier Causes

3.3.1. Institutional Factors

- Insufficient curriculum integration: Drum Circle was mostly fragmented elective content, with only 4.2% institutions offering dedicated courses.
- Resource allocation imbalance: Percussion instruments comprised only 8.9% of purchases, with 72.6% being small rhythm instruments.

3.3.2. Practical Factors

- Transfer guidance absence: Only 23.4% teachers highlighted teaching application scenarios.
- Situational adaptation difficulties: 41.5% participants didn't know how to adapt activities for different grade levels.

3.4. Implications from Empirical Research

3.4.1. Key Elements for Successful Transfer

- Reflective practice: Participants in "Drum Circle-teaching" dual journal projects showed 27.3% higher transfer efficiency.
- Progressive curriculum: The "single-part imitation → multi-part collaboration → teaching scenario simulation" three-phase training yielded significantly higher posttest classroom organization scores (4.71) than traditional classes (4.32).

3.4.2. Barrier Breakthrough Pathways

- Resource optimization: Instrument sharing programs ("1 professional drum + 5 homemade drums" hybrid model increased utilization 58%); VR training systems addressed space limitations.
- Instructor development: Implemented "dual-mentor system" (community Drum Circle leaders collaborating with music pedagogy faculty); established "Drum Circle Teaching Case Database" (82 primary/secondary application examples).

4. Optimization Strategies for Transfer Pathways

4.1. Diversified Situational Design Expansion

4.1.1. Contextualized Applications of Diverse Musical Styles

- Cross-cultural rhythm integration: Incorporating African drumming (asymmetrical meter perception training), samba (dynamic coordination enhancement).
- Multi-instrument collaborative design: Combining wood, metal, and membrane instruments (e.g., woodblocks,

triangles, African drums) to design sectional collaboration tasks simulating differentiated instruction.

4.1.2. Authentic Teaching Scenario Recreation

- Role-playing and task-driven activities: Implementing "teacher-student" role reversal, adjusting facilitation strategies by student age.
- Classroom management simulation: Presetting "instrument shortage" or "instruction confusion" scenarios to develop adaptability.

4.2. Deep Implementation of Metacognitive Interventions

4.2.1. Reflective Practice Tool Development

- Structured journal framework: Designing reflection forms with dimensions like "rhythm cue clarity" and "student engagement level."
- Teaching metaphor extraction: Comparing "rhythm dialogue" to classroom Q&A interaction, "part alternation" to group cooperative learning.

4.2.2. Collaborative Review Mechanisms

- Peer evaluation workshops: Analyzing facilitation videos focusing on "nonverbal cue effectiveness" and "improvisational adaptability."
- Expert feedback loop: Inviting specialists to annotate journals, marking connections between Drum Circle techniques and new curriculum core competencies (creative practice, cultural understanding).

4.3. Systematic Construction of Institutional Safeguards

4.3.1. Embedded Curriculum Integration

- Modular course design: Dividing into "basic rhythm training," "multi-part collaboration," and "improvisational creation" modules corresponding to "instructional design," "classroom organization," and "innovative thinking" competencies.
- Cross-disciplinary linkage: Collaborating with psychology courses to incorporate group dynamics theory.

4.3.2. Resource Support Platform Establishment

- Instrument sharing network: Building inter-campus sharing systems, designing "instrument-free Drum Circle" alternatives (body percussion).
- Instructor training system: Offering "Drum Circle Facilitator Certification," requiring mastery of at least 10 gesture cues and 3 differentiation strategies.

5. Conclusions and Prospects

5.1. Research Conclusions

This study systematically validates that Drum Circle activities significantly enhance normal university students' music teaching skills through dual-path transfer mechanisms. Key conclusions:

Dual-path transfer mechanism verified: Drum Circle activities effectively promote music teaching skill development through low-road and high-road transfer, with posttest scores significantly exceeding benchmarks.

Core teaching skill improvements significant: Systematic Drum Circle training yielded marked enhancements across key competencies, particularly improvisational guidance and teamwork, while effectively boosting emotional expression and alleviating teaching anxiety.

Transfer effectiveness influenced by multiple factors: Diverse musical styles, reflective practice, and progressive

difficulty design facilitated transfer, while resource shortages, instructor deficiencies, and evaluation gaps posed primary obstacles.

Targeted optimization strategies show promise: Proposed solutions-diversified situational design, metacognitive interventions, and institutional safeguards-demonstrated feasibility in addressing key challenges and improving transfer efficiency.

5.2. Research Prospects

Future research could deepen localization innovations by exploring integration paths with Chinese folk music elements like Leizhou folk music. Culturally, incorporating Leizhou Peninsula's distinctive "Leizhou music" elements (e.g., Leizhou drums, bronze drums, suona) and traditional rhythm patterns (e.g., compound meters in "Three-Fan Drumming") could build regionally characteristic Drum Circle teaching models. This would expand "cultural understanding" competency cultivation while providing educational vehicles for intangible cultural heritage preservation. Technologically, developing "virtual-physical" training systems using motion capture to analyze Leizhou drumming posture transfer effects could prove valuable. Establishing three-dimensional evaluation systems incorporating Leizhou music cultural cognition, rhythm teaching conversion rates, and cross-cultural adaptation metrics, along with comparative studies validating transfer differences across cultural contexts, could provide theoretical foundations and methodological references for innovative ethnic music education practices.

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