
Discovering the Vocal Identity: An Inquiry into Students' Viewpoints Regarding the SVP Training Curriculum in Popular Music

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Abstract

The multifaceted nature of popular music genres introduces complexities in delivering efficacious education in Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP). This research endeavors to scrutinize the instructional framework of SVP education by employing a conceptual paradigm grounded in a 4-dimensional matrix, in tandem with the quintessential principles of curriculum evolution. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the present investigation engages in dialogues with three students from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, which is the one of 11 China's national public conservatories and owns high level reputation in the field of popular music education domestically in the nation, aiming to elicit nuanced perspectives on the potency of the extant curriculum. The emergent themes underscore imperatives such as intensified genre-specific training and heightened accentuation of pragmatic proficiencies. Integrating a methodical analytical approach with an intricate exploration of a tangible scenario, this inquiry furnishes insightful observations and constructive recommendations for refining the curriculum and pedagogical approach, thereby enhancing the preparedness of students for the dynamic music industry landscape.

Introduction: The multifaceted nature of popular music genres introduces complexities in delivering efficacious education in Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP). This research endeavors to scrutinize the instructional framework of SVP education by employing a conceptual paradigm grounded in a 4-dimensional matrix, in tandem with the quintessential principles of curriculum evolution.

Methodology: Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the present investigation engages in dialogues with three students from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, which is the one of 11 China's national public conservatories and owns high level reputation in the field of popular music education domestically in the nation, aiming to elicit nuanced perspectives on the potency of the extant curriculum.

Results and discussion/Themes and findings: The emergent themes underscore imperatives such as intensified genre-specific training and heightened accentuation of pragmatic proficiencies.

Conclusion and/or recommendations: Integrating a methodical analytical approach with an intricate exploration of a tangible scenario, this inquiry furnishes insightful observations and

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constructive recommendations for refining the curriculum and pedagogical approach, thereby enhancing the preparedness of students for the dynamic music industry landscape.

Keywords: *Popular Music, Styles, Vocal Performance Education, Curriculum*

1. Introduction

Through a comparative analysis encompassing distinct musical genres such as classical music, art music, and traditional folk music, popular music can be classified as an overarching musical domain. As of 2023, the global landscape of pop music comprises an extensive array of over 2000 styles or sub-styles (Gracenote, 2022). These diverse styles are meticulously curated by record companies to cater to a myriad of audience segments with varying musical preferences. Moreover, certain styles, notably R&B, Pop, Hip-Hop, and Rock, have attained the status of mainstream genres across multiple nations. This prominence is exemplified within the esteemed Grammy Awards, an authoritative accolade within the realm of popular music. A perusal of the roster of Best Singers of the Year category at the Grammy Awards (Grammy Award, 2022) reveals the comprehensive representation of these aforementioned styles, underscoring their pervasive influence and ubiquity within the global music landscape.

The core objective of this study is to delve into the perspectives of students concerning the curriculum for stylistic vocal performance training within the realm of popular music, with a specific focus on its influence over their capacity to cultivate their distinctive vocal identity. Despite the plethora of available resources for vocal instruction within the popular music domain, there exists a noticeable dearth of scholarly inquiry addressing students' perceptions of these resources and the efficacy they contribute towards the development of an individualized artistic expression. This research, as cited, aims to investigate the lived experiences of students who have undergone stylistic vocal performance training (Bryant & Barrett, 2019), contributing to the academic discourse by bridging a scholarly gap and shedding light on the nuanced aspects of stylistic vocal training, further elucidating the ways in which this training has substantively shaped their creative articulation within the ambit of popular music.

2. Research problems and objectives

The study's objectives emanate from a triad of research concerns, thus conferring upon these research goals the role of foundational pillars for the current investigation. Presented below are the three research statements accompanied by their corresponding research objectives:

Research Statement 1:

Chen (2016) posits that the emergence of Stylistic Vertical Subdivision (SVS) constitutes a novel trend within China's popular music industry. However, it is evident that the prevailing curriculum at the China's National Public Conservatory of Music (CNPCM) may not align seamlessly with this burgeoning phenomenon. In light of this,

the identification of an exemplary case featuring a curriculum tailored to proficiently equip students specializing in vocal performance within the realm of popular music to effectively navigate the SVS landscape assumes paramount significance.

The following research objective (RQ) will address research problem 1:

To conduct an assessment of the curriculum of the chosen case and elucidate the interconnections among its constituent courses."

Research Statement 2:

The significance attributed to SVP within contemporary popular music vocal performance education underscores its exigency, as evident from the call for its incorporation (Wang, 2019). Nevertheless, in light of the existing ambiguity pertaining to the efficacy of curricula encompassing the design and substance of existing SVP courses within CNPCMs, an imperative arises to examine a paradigmatic exemplar for potential adoption by all Conservatories.

The following research objective (RQ) will address this research problem 2:

To discern the robust aspects of systematic SVP education within the context of CNPCMs through the analysis of the selected case study.

Research Statement 3:

As stipulated by Li (2018), notable disparities exist between education in style-specific popular singing and stylistic popular music singing. Consequently, the absence of an extant curriculum encompassing the conceptual framework and constituents of SVP necessitates thorough investigation. The research purpose for addressing this research problem 3 is:

To undertake a comprehensive analysis of the areas warranting enhancement within the selected case study pertaining SVP.

3. Literature Review

Within the context of a literature review, a theoretical framework serves as a structured foundation or system of principles underpinning the explored theories and concepts. It elucidates the fundamental notions, theories, and models germane to the research inquiry, while offering a conceptual roadmap for delving into the subject of investigation. This theoretical framework plays a pivotal role in guiding the selection of pertinent literature and facilitating the arrangement and examination of research findings. Undoubtedly, it assumes a critical role in a literature review, bestowing context, historical backdrop, and cognitive comprehension to the undertaken research.

In this vein, the theoretical framework presented by Cao (2022a, b, c), encapsulating the four-dimensional matrixes of teaching modes for Stylized Vocal Performance

education, can be employed to construct the theoretical underpinning for SVP pedagogy, as depicted in Figure 1. These four dimensions collectively furnish a comprehensive scope for consideration and analysis.

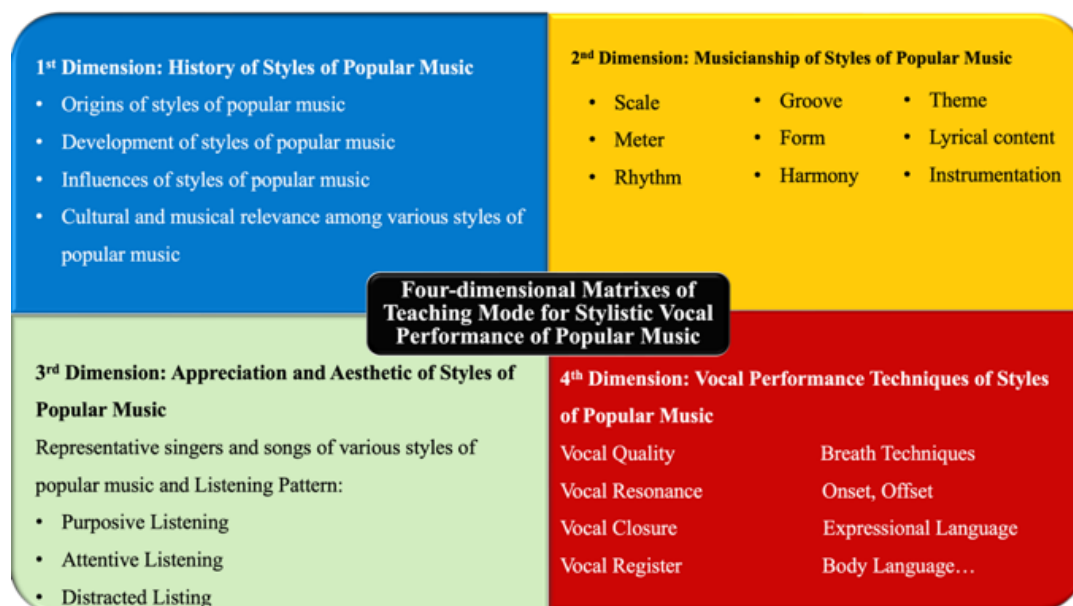


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of 4 Dimensional Matrixes of Teaching Mode for SVP of Popular Music

Burkholder's historical dimension constitutes the focus of Dimension 1 (2015), emphasizing the necessity for Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP) curriculum to encompass historical and sociocultural content. This inclusion exposes students to the contextual backdrop encompassing the origins, progression, and impact of SVP, facilitating a reasoned and perceptual comprehension of the diverse cultural underpinnings inherent within various popular music styles.

Dimension 2 undertakes an examination of distinctive attributes intrinsic to multiple genres of popular music. Each popular music style possesses unique characteristics encompassing scales, rhythms, grooves, harmonies, forms, instrumentation, and lyrical components. As the vocalists embody the principal melody and lyrics of a specific popular music genre, their proficiency must extend to encompassing all corresponding components to stylistically interpret the composition. Hence, the cultivation of students' musicianship necessitates comprehensive education and training, predicated upon a diverse amalgamation of elements inherent within various popular music styles.

In consonance with Green's assertion (2017), the third dimension accentuates the paramountcy of appreciating an array of popular music styles. This entails the incorporation of pertinent auditory concepts, including purposive listening, attentive listening, and distracted listening, within the framework. This appreciation process serves as a conduit for acoustically dissecting diverse attributes of representative performers and songs across a spectrum of popular music styles.

The fourth dimension of Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP) entails the application of vocal performance techniques. This dimension encompasses the utilization of specific techniques aimed at cultivating the intended singing style or genre. The chosen vocal strategies exhibit variations contingent upon the particular musical style being executed. Nevertheless, certain consistent elements are evident, encompassing aspects such as breath control, tone quality, vocal dynamic range, utilization of chest voice, head voice, and mixed voice, nuanced articulation, inflection, onsets, and offsets, among others (Soto-Morettini, 2014).

In conjunction with the framework delineated by the 4-dimensional matrix, this study incorporates 5 distinct concepts for curriculum development within SVP instruction. A comprehensive explication of these concepts is presented in the subsequent sections.

Principle 1: Personalization

A fundamental tenet within curriculum design is the principle of personalization and choice. This principle assumes paramount significance by aiding educators and educational institutions in their pedagogical endeavors, while also furnishing a foundational framework for the appraisal, assessment, and augmentation of the learning and instructional processes. The fulfillment of individual learners' distinctive requisites constitutes the cornerstone of this concept (Singer, 2000; Mohana Sundaram, 2018).

Principle 2: Breath

Within the purview of this principle, all learners are afforded the prospect of engaging in an array of heterogeneous learning scenarios (Apple, 1990; Oliver et al., 2010). This is underscored by the deliberate structuring and orchestration of their learning experiences, facilitating comprehensive growth and development across multifarious contexts, encompassing both the confines of the classroom and beyond

Principle 3: Relevance

An additional pivotal facet of curriculum design demanding unwavering attention is the principle of relevance. This principle assumes paramount importance by furnishing students with a cogent comprehension of the purpose underlying their learning endeavors and interconnected activities (Wiggins, 2005; Abeles et al., 2021). It is meticulously instituted to ascertain that students adeptly apprehend the significance encapsulated within their educational pursuits, subsequently discerning its pertinent implications across their present and forthcoming professional undertakings and life trajectories.

Principle 4: Challenge and content enjoyment

The fourth pivotal tenet governing the design and development of SVP curriculum is the principle of challenge and content engagement. This principle underpins the anticipation that learners shall encounter a learning journey marked by stimulating, enticing, and motivational aspects (Halpern, 1998; Anderson, 2022). This attainment is materialized through the cultivation of elevated aspirations and objectives for all

students, irrespective of their cognitive aptitude. Furthermore, learners are consistently immersed in an environment that endows them with an ample measure of challenge, thereby affording them the opportunity to attain their maximal potential.

Principle 5: Coherence

In accordance with findings by Schmidt (2005) and Mellizo (2020), this principle serves to amalgamate various facets of learning activities, culminating in a harmonized experience that amplifies the achievement of learning outcomes. This approach, as delineated by Schmidt (2005) and Mellizo (2020), synergistically converges the diverse elements of learning activities to generate a cohesive encounter, ultimately augmenting the realization of learning objectives.

Prior scholarly investigations have explored the significance of vocal training in the domain of popular music, along with the efficacy of distinct pedagogical approaches. Moore's study (2019) utilized qualitative methodologies to delve into the perspectives of six undergraduate students who were enrolled in a popular music vocal performance course. The interviews elicited insights regarding the participants' perceptions of the curriculum, their learning encounters, and the discernible influence of the training on their vocal development. The outcomes underscored the positive impact of the curriculum on enhancing technical prowess and musical expression. However, the study also underscored certain challenges associated with the course structure and individual variations in learning styles. These findings significantly contribute to the comprehension of vocal training's role in the realm of popular music education, emphasizing the pertinence of integrating student feedback within curriculum refinement. Thus, gaining an insight into students' perspectives on stylistic vocal performance training in popular music education assumes paramount importance.

4. Conceptual Framework

Aligned with the aforesaid 4-dimensional theoretical framework and the encapsulated 5 curriculum design and development principles, their integrative significance assumes a pivotal role in the establishment of a comprehensive conceptual framework for SVP curriculum. Consequently, these components collectively furnish the bedrock upon which this inquiry's conceptual underpinning is constructed.

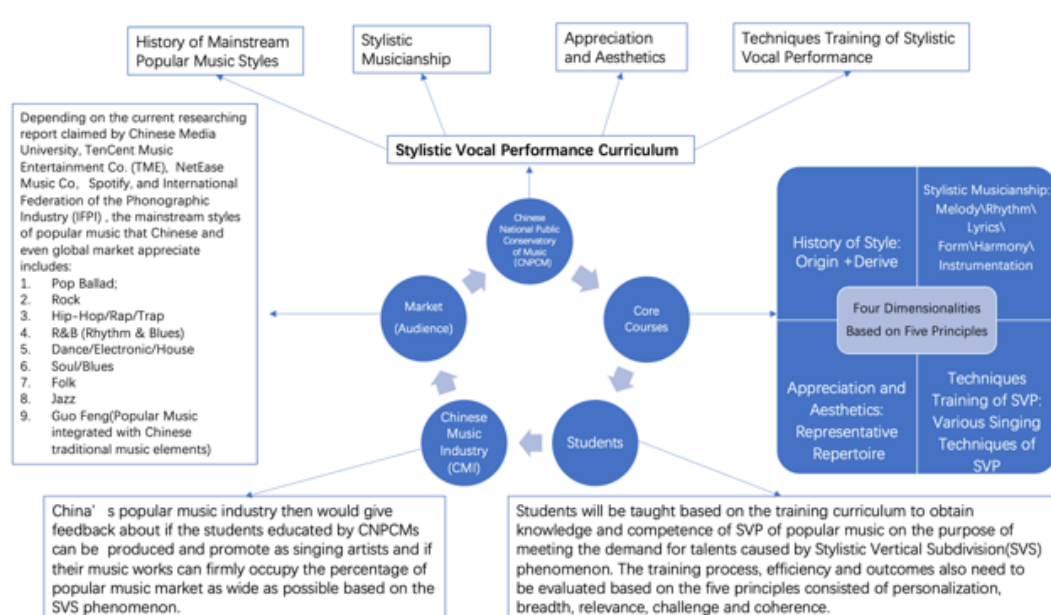


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of SVP Education

5. Methodology

The primary research methodology adopted in this study is the case study approach. A case study constitutes a prevalent research methodology utilized for the examination of music curriculum (Gage et al., 2020). Among the 11 CNPCMs, the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, renowned for its comprehensive curriculum structure within the realm of popular music vocal education, is selected as the focal case.

The proposed analytical framework for the case study encompasses qualitative data analysis, employing both thematic analysis and the software tool Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti stands as a robust software application designed for the organization and analysis of qualitative data. Meanwhile, thematic analysis operates as a qualitative research method aimed at discerning patterns, themes, and correlations within qualitative data.

Within the context of this music curriculum case study, thematic analysis is harnessed as a qualitative research method to unravel patterns or themes intrinsic to the data collected. This analytical approach seeks to shed light upon the experiences, perspectives, and attitudes of individuals engaged within the music curriculum. The insights garnered from this analysis hold the potential to inform the subsequent creation and implementation of curricula (Eliktas et al., 2022). The process of thematic analysis facilitated by Atlas.ti involves the following stages:

- 1. Transcription and Coding:** The first step involves the meticulous transcription of interview data, followed by a systematic coding process facilitated by Atlas.ti. This

coding endeavor serves to categorize the data into coherent and meaningful topics, thereby facilitating the organization and comprehension of the information.

- 2. Theme identification and definition:** Subsequently, a rigorous examination ensues to identify and elucidate data-driven themes. These themes encapsulate diverse aspects such as students' perceptions of the curriculum, employed pedagogical approaches, and the curriculum's discernible impact on vocal performance. Each theme is carefully defined, enhancing the precision of subsequent analysis.
- 3. Theme Analysis:** The ensuing stage delves into an in-depth theme analysis, designed to discern underlying patterns and interconnections intrinsic to the data. This comprehensive exploration fosters a heightened comprehension of the curriculum vis-à-vis Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP) education. The linkages and insights unearthed contribute to a more comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the curriculum's efficacy.
- 4. Reporting and Recommendations:** The culminating phase involves the lucid presentation of findings. This reporting is characterized by clarity and simplicity, emphasizing salient discoveries derived from the analysis. Furthermore, it entails the formulation of recommendations aimed at refining and enhancing future curriculum iterations. This integral component of the study serves to guide subsequent curriculum improvements, ensuring an ongoing cycle of growth and development.

Thematic analysis, combined with the utilization of Atlas.ti, provides a methodical and rigorous approach for identifying and interpreting stakeholders' experiences and perspectives within the training program. The study's outcomes hold potential for guiding future curriculum development and offering recommendations to enhance the stylistic vocal performance training program.

6. Findings

Through comprehensive interviews with students enrolled in the chosen institution, the study's outcomes are encapsulated in the subsequent exposition, framed by the three research questions. The interview data has been meticulously transcribed and subjected to rigorous coding, thereby identifying thematic patterns. Given space constraints, this article primarily features essential quotations and codes drawn from interviews centered on popular music stylistic vocal performance education, seamlessly interwoven with pertinent research question insights.

RQ1: What is the curriculum and the relatedness of the courses contained in the curriculum of the selected case on SVP education?

Themes of RQ1:

Theme 1: Significance of SVP education:

Code 2: Significant education between SVS phenomenon and SVP education.

Quote: Student 3: “Moreover, our instructor highlighted how artists management companies and record labels in China are actively recruiting, signing, and grooming artists with distinct stylistic attributes. This strategic move aims to command a substantial share of the expansive popular music market, thus accentuating the urgency for us to immerse ourselves in SVP education, aligning with the evolving landscape of China's music industry.”

Theme 2: 4-dimensional framework of SVP education in the curriculum:

Code 9: Course related to history dimension of SVP education.

Quote: Student 2: ““The inaugural year incorporates the course 'Popular Music Styles and History,' delving into the evolution of popular music. Commencing with the roots of Blues, the course navigates through subsequent genres like Jazz, R&B, Rock, New-Generation Pop, and electronic music, providing an enriching historical perspective...”

Code 10: Course related to musicianship dimension of SVP education.

Quote: Student 1: “The course titled 'Rhythm and Groove' imparts insights into the distinct rhythmic and groove attributes of various popular music styles. 'Popular Music Harmony' expounds upon the harmonic intricacies across diverse styles, while 'Music Production' delves into the instrumental arrangement nuances within each style. This comprehensive array of courses synergistically equips me with a profound comprehension of the cultural and musical underpinnings inherent to popular music styles. This cultivation of musicianship empowers me to vividly and authentically perform these styles with precision and authenticity.”

Code 11: Course related to appreciation and aesthetics of SVP education.

Quote: Student 3: “The course titled 'Popular Music Appreciation' imparts students with comprehensive insights into the intricate analysis and appreciation of popular music songs, encompassing their styles. In essence, every course integrated within the curriculum serves a pivotal role in nurturing our professional acumen for stylistic appreciation. The profound grasp of a song's historical context, theoretical underpinnings, and vocal techniques collectively form the bedrock that enables us to artistically and stylistically appreciate a song in its entirety.”

Code 12: Smelting function of private vocal course.

Quote: Student 1: “My private vocal course, deemed as the quintessential cornerstone, functions akin to a crucible. Here, the instructor's role extends beyond imparting vocal techniques in isolation; rather, it entails a deliberate amalgamation of theoretical insights and practical proficiencies gleaned from various courses, culminating in the

vocal interpretation of a specific musical style akin to a 'crystal forged through smelting'. Essentially, the private vocal course facilitates the attainment of mastery by orchestrating a holistic and in-depth exploration of SVP.”

Theme 3: Value of 4-dimensional framework of SVP education:

Code 4: Cultural and emotional acknowledgement obtained by history study for SVP education.

Quote: Student 3: “...Lacking an understanding of the historical underpinnings of a particular style render one unable to grasp its essence fully. Without comprehending its origins and evolution, a thorough and adept interpretation of the style becomes an elusive endeavor.”

Code 5: Analyzing and Interpreting abilities obtained by musicianship study for SVP education.

Quote: Student1: “...Subsequent to delving into courses such as "Music Theory," "Ear-Training and Sight Reading," and "Popular Music Harmony," I systematically scrutinize each popular music style from multifaceted dimensions encompassing intervals, harmonies, musical attributes, rhythms, and grooves. This concerted effort significantly elevates my aesthetic acumen, enabling me to proficiently analyze diverse styles. The multifaceted exploration fosters a comprehensive grasp of styles from various musical perspectives, ultimately enhancing my capacity for nuanced vocal interpretation.”

Code 6: Targeting appropriate benchmark by appreciation and aesthetic study for SVP education.

Quote: Student 2: “...The process of learning how to appreciate and analyze various styles of popular music entails amalgamating a comprehensive understanding of popular music styles as a cohesive whole. To effectively analyze a singer's vocal techniques and enhance one's aesthetic sensibilities towards a specific song within a particular style, an in-depth grasp of its attributes including rhythm, groove, melody, harmony, and instrumentation is imperative. The course "Popular Music Analyzation and Appreciation" assumes a pivotal role in consolidating and synthesizing the diverse stylistic knowledge acquired from other courses. This consolidation equips me with the capacity to appreciate and analyze songs stylistically. Moreover, this process also serves as a means to identify benchmarks within a style, singer, or song for further study. The significance of establishing benchmarks lies in preventing learners from losing their learning objectives and providing a clear direction for their studies.”

Code 13: Function of stylistic navigation and innovation of private vocal course.

Quote: Student 2: “The private vocal course instructor not only assists me in identifying the most suitable style for learning and practice but also guides me in forging a distinct and personalized performance style by integrating diverse stylistic knowledge and practical experiences.”

Theme 4: Relatedness among the courses contained in the curriculum:

Code 1: Relatedness and scientificity of curriculum

Quote: Student 1: “I chose Sichuan Conservatory of Music (SCCM) as my undergraduate institution primarily due to its comprehensive and well-structured curriculum in the field of SVP education.”

Code 7: Theoretical and practical connection among the courses contained in the curriculum for SVP.

Quote: Student 1: “...The courses within the curriculum are intricately interconnected, spanning from historical contexts and music theory to ear-training and sight-reading, rhythm and groove, harmony, music production, and vocal techniques. This curriculum strikes a balance between theoretical understanding and practical application. For instance, if we delve into the history of the Blues style in the "Popular Music Styles and History" course, the following week, the "Rhythm and Groove" course instructor will delve into the rhythmic nuances of Blues. Subsequently, in my private vocal course, the same week's lesson will encompass a comprehensive integration of all theoretical knowledge from various courses, aiding me in discovering my most suitable style and refining my practical skills.”

Code 8: Associative and progressive of the curriculum on SVP education.

Quote: Student 2: “The interconnection among all the courses is exceptionally cohesive, strategically designed to foster both associative and progressive learning. To illustrate, foundational courses such as stylistic history, basic theory, and rhythm are offered during the first year, establishing a strong grounding. Building upon this foundation, the second year introduces advanced courses in stylistic harmony and production, capitalizing on the knowledge and practical insights acquired during the initial year of study...”

Additional quotes and codes pertinent to RQ1 can be accessed through an online cloud storage platform. These supplementary materials offer further insights and are valuable for extended reading and in-depth research. Regrettably, due to constraints on page space, they have not been included in this article.

RQ2: What are the strengths of the case studied on the systematic SVP (SVP) education?

Themes of RQ2:

Theme 1: Efficiency of the curriculum on SVP.

Code 11: Abundant teaching materials blended with imported textbooks and lecturers' self-designed teaching materials.

Quote: Student 2: “The course textbooks are highly regarded and of professional quality, with many being translated from reputable foreign sources. In alignment with these textbooks, course instructors often create their own supplementary teaching materials,

which encompass presentations (PPT), lecture notes, audio exercise recordings, and more.”

Code 18: Positive efficiency of the curriculum on SVP.

Quote: Student 1: “The course textbooks exhibit a high level of authority and professionalism, with a significant proportion being translations of esteemed foreign textbooks. Drawing from these foundational resources, course instructors frequently take the initiative to craft and refine supplementary teaching materials, including but not limited to presentations PPT, comprehensive lecture notes, audio exercises, and other relevant resources.”

Theme 2: Coherence of the curriculum on the aspect of SVP

Code 1: Synchronization of the courses contained in the curriculum.

Quote: Student 3: “My experience of undertaking courses at SCCM has left me with a distinct impression of seamless synchronization across the curriculum. The instructors of class-based modules, such as "Popular Music History and Styles" and "Popular Music Harmony," adeptly guided us through the historical context and harmonic intricacies of various musical styles. Subsequently, in group-based courses like "Keyboard and Guitar Accompany" and "Acting," the focus shifted towards applying the theoretical insights gained from the class-based components to practical scenarios involving keyboard, guitar, and stage performance. This cumulative journey culminated in the private vocal classes, where the lecturer skillfully amalgamated the entirety of theoretical knowledge and hands-on encounters, derived from both class-based and group-based modules, to facilitate stylistic vocal performance. Evidently, the curriculum has been meticulously structured to impart a systematic and comprehensive education in the realm of popular music stylistic vocal performance.”

Theme 3: Enjoyment of the curriculum on the aspect of SVP

Code 2: Humor sense owned by lecturers makes students enjoy studying.

Quote: Student 2: “Each instructor brings their unique teaching style to the table, yet a common thread among them is their engaging and often lighthearted approach in the classroom. Infused with humor, their teaching methods are notable for incorporating elements such as music videos and weaving personal anecdotes into the presentation of seemingly mundane concepts. By skillfully intertwining their own experiences and narratives with academic content, they effectively infuse a sense of joy and enthusiasm into our learning journey.”

Code 14: Creating exchanged learning atmosphere among students by holding concerts.

Quote: Student 2: “The vocal performance department frequently organizes a variety of concerts, providing valuable opportunities for us to enhance our practical skills through collaborative rehearsals with music band members. These events not only

foster our enthusiasm for studying but also cultivate a strong passion for ensemble work, enabling us to proficiently interpret and perform a wide array of musical styles.”

Theme 4: Personalization of the Curriculum on the aspect of SVP Education

Code 3: Leading student find the most appropriate style of popular music to learn and train.

Quote: Student 1: “The lecturers adopt a non-coercive approach, refraining from imposing specific popular music styles upon us. Instead, they illuminate the distinct characteristics of various styles, guiding us through comprehensive analyses of each genre. Furthermore, they offer insightful recommendations regarding which styles might resonate or find acceptance within China's popular music market. This guidance is instrumental in steering us toward identifying the most suitable styles to nurture and shape our future music careers.”

Theme 5: Breadth of the Curriculum on the aspect of SVP Education

Code 5: Board range of experiences in SVP learning process.

Quote: Student 1: “The curriculum's courses afford us extensive opportunities to explore a broad spectrum of mainstream popular music styles, spanning not only China but also encompassing Asian nations like Japan and Korea, as well as Western countries including the United States and the United Kingdom. Through these courses, we delve into the origins of these styles, the emergence of their sub-styles, notable vocalists associated with each style, and the timeless classics that define and characterize these diverse musical genres....”

Theme 6: Challenge of the Curriculum on the aspects of SVP Education

Code 15: Creating competitive atmosphere among students by holding trials.

Quote: Student 3: “Throughout each semester, the vocal performance department arranges a variety of assessments, including the "Annual Excellent Students Trials." These trials evaluate our vocal performance prowess, with instructors grading us according to our chosen singing styles. Within each style, the student who garners the highest score is honored with the title of "Annual Excellent Student" for that specific genre. This practice fosters a healthy spirit of competition, motivating us to dedicate ourselves fervently to our studies and rehearsals, thus enhancing our skills and performance abilities within the dynamic environment of our campus life.”

Theme 7: Relevance of the Curriculum on the aspects of SVP Education

Code 12: Relevantly collecting information and updating teaching materials from popular music industry.

Quote: Student 1: “The conservatory regularly organizes enriching academic exchange events, inviting esteemed music experts spanning various domains, including renowned singers, music producers, songwriters, instrumentalists, and even record label managers.

These events, which encompass both online and offline masterclasses or clinics, occur approximately 7 to 8 times annually. This initiative proves immensely valuable, affording us insights into the sought-after professional skills and stylistic musicians sought by the actual music industry. Moreover, these occasions significantly broaden our horizons within the realm of the popular music market. Concurrently, the instructors at SCCM adeptly harness the wisdom gleaned from these experts, ensuring the continuous refinement and contemporary relevance of their teaching contents and materials.”

Similarly to RQ1, the remaining quotes and codes corresponding to RQ2 are accessible on a cloud storage platform. Additional and pertinent quotes are also accessible for more extensive exploration and research. However, due to constraints in page space, these supplementary materials are not presented in this article.

RQ3: What are the areas of improvement of the selected institution in SVP (SVP)?

Theme of RQ3:

Theme 1: More practical courses and contents needs to be designed and developed.

Code 1: Need of courses proving more opportunities to practice with bands on the performing stage outside campus.

Quote: Student 1: “In light of the current curriculum, I believe there is potential for the inclusion of additional courses that offer enhanced opportunities for practicing Stylistic Vocal Performance (SVP) skills. These courses could be conducted in live houses located beyond the confines of the campus environment, and might even encompass road shows. Engaging in these courses would provide students with the chance to hone their SVP abilities while collaborating with bands and performing before broader audiences on genuine stages. I am of the opinion that such courses would inject a sense of novelty and engagement into the teaching and learning environment, thereby enhancing the overall appeal to students.”

Theme 2: Improvement of Relevance

Code 2: Need of courses related to music industry and market.

Quote: Student 2: “With a focus on addressing the Stylistic Vertical Subdivision phenomenon, I propose the incorporation of a course dedicated to the analysis of the popular music industry and market within the curriculum. Additionally, the conservatory could extend invitations to a broader spectrum of experts, including record label managers and seasoned music producers actively engaged at the forefront of the music industry, to participate in this course. Their valuable insights and knowledge could enrich the curriculum by shedding light on the evolving trends within the popular music market.”

Theme 3: Improvement of Breadth

Code 4: Deeper and wider extension of theoretical teaching contents.

Quote: Student 1: “From my personal perspective, I believe there is room for enhancing the depth and complexity of theoretical courses like 'Music Theory' and 'Popular Harmony'. Drawing upon my interactions with fellow musicians within the music industry, I find that the knowledge acquired through SCCM's courses is somewhat foundational. I perceive a gap in my understanding of music theory and the intricate nuances of harmony across various styles. The theoretical content, though valuable, requires further expansion to facilitate more profound integration into my musical endeavors. Thus, a broader and more in-depth exploration of these subjects would be beneficial.”

Theme 4: Improvement of enjoyment

Code 11: Increasing enjoyment of theoretical courses by combing We-media recourses with lectures.

Quote: Student 3: “In the current era of We-media, a plethora of online streaming short video platforms such as TikTok, Kuai Shou, Bilibili, and others have become prevalent. On these platforms, numerous We-Media bloggers disseminate insights about popular music styles. Given that our student demographic predominantly falls within the 18-20 age range, we, as young individuals, are naturally drawn to the content presented in these short videos to satiate our thirst for knowledge. However, a challenge arises in verifying the accuracy of the information conveyed within these videos. If our lecturers could carefully curate and integrate select short videos into our lectures after thorough evaluation, I believe it could infuse a sense of enjoyment and engagement into theoretical courses such as 'Music History and Styles', 'Music Theory', and 'Popular Music Harmony’.”

Same as RQ1 and RQ2, the remaining quotes and codes pertaining to RQ3 can be accessed via the cloud storage. Additional quotes and related content are also available there for those interested in further exploration. Please note that, due to space constraints, they are not included within this article.

7. Limitation and Recommendation

The study acknowledges limitations in its scope, primarily stemming from the sample size and geographical constraints, which may impact the generalizability of findings. To address these limitations, it is recommended that future research endeavors incorporate larger and more diverse samples, as well as consider a broader geographical context to enhance the robustness and applicability of results. (Ryan, 2022).

8. Discussion and conclusion

RQ1:

Utilizing Atlas.ti., the process of coding has yielded a thematic map (refer to Fig. 3) that provides a visual representation of the prominent themes and corresponding codes derived from the analysis of SVP education data. The first discernible theme underscores the paramount significance of SVP education, particularly within the context of the SVS phenomenon. This thematic map serves as a valuable tool for comprehending the multifaceted aspects encapsulated in the data analysis, offering a comprehensive overview of the key themes identified in the study.

The second theme prominently showcases the 4-dimensional framework of SVP education ingrained within the curriculum. This encompassing framework comprises courses that span musicianship, appreciation, aesthetics, as well as the transformative function of smelting and innovation.

The third theme accentuates the inherent value embedded in the comprehensive 4-dimensional framework of SVP education. This encompassing framework encapsulates multifaceted aspects, including the essential pursuit of one's individual style, an immersion into the historical backdrop of SVP, the nurturance of a refined musicianship and appreciation, along with the navigational and innovative role played by the private vocal course.

The fourth and final theme accentuates the interconnectedness that binds the diverse courses housed within the curriculum. This intricate web of courses is characterized by its scientific rigor, harmonious blend of theoretical and practical education, as well as an intricately woven structure that thrives in both associative and progressive educational progression.

The collective findings of this study underscore the intricate nature of SVP education, revealing a tapestry woven from a diverse array of courses and methodologies. The 4-dimensional framework that underpins SVP education emerges as a valuable construct, offering a systematic blueprint to both organize and scaffold the curriculum, thereby furnishing students with a comprehensive grasp of SVP and its multifaceted facets. Furthermore, the interconnection among the curriculum's constituent courses assumes paramount significance, as it ensures exposure to a kaleidoscope of perspectives and methodologies in the realm of SVP education (Allsup, 2016; Eerola & Toiviainen, 2011). Recent contributions, such as Powell (2019); Wish (2020), also emphasize the evolving landscape of SVP education, providing contemporary insights into the interplay of diverse pedagogical approaches within this field. The implications gleaned from these findings resonate deeply within the realms of SVP education program design

and execution, as well as the holistic evolution of curriculum and pedagogical resources dedicated to SVP.

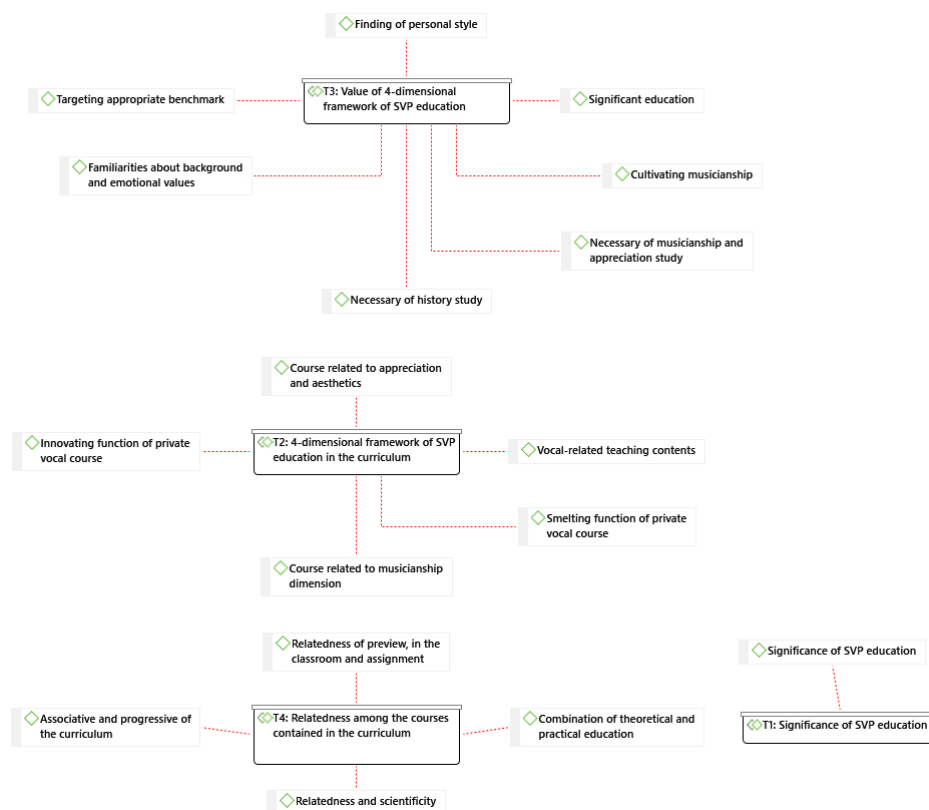


Figure 3: Theme map of research question 1

RQ2:

The study's findings, as depicted in Figure 4 generated using Atlas.ti version 8, unveil a tapestry of themes that illuminate the efficacy of the curriculum in fostering SVP education. Foremost among these is the theme of curriculum efficiency, underscored by the imperative of robust hardware and software support, instructors' adeptness in popular music, copious teaching resources, and positive curriculum outcomes. Coherence emerges as another pivotal theme, epitomizing the synchronization intrinsic to the curriculum's course offerings. The study underscores the necessity of a curriculum interwoven with courses that build sequentially, engendering a holistic grasp of SVP education. Pertinence, the third salient theme, accentuates the need to infuse industry insights and updated pedagogical materials from the popular music realm, with the course assessment intricately tied to students' cognizance of diverse music styles, resonant with industry requisites. The study's implications for SVP program design and implementation are multifaceted. Primarily, the findings advocate for a comprehensive, meticulously structured curriculum that embraces efficiency, coherence, and industry relevance (in consonance with Abril & Gault, 2018; Isbell, 2022). A personalized curriculum, secondly, acknowledges

students' unique vocal conditions and temperaments, empowering them to discern their optimal path in popular music exploration. The curriculum's dimension of challenge, thirdly, calls for an atmosphere of healthy competition via initiatives like auditions and concerts. Injecting enjoyment, fourthly, entails crafting a dynamic, humor-infused pedagogical milieu that engages students interactively (akin to Miksza & Hampton, 2019). Ultimately, breadth gains prominence, with the curriculum offering an expansive array of SVP experiences. In sum, the study's revelations furnish invaluable insights that can guide the design and execution of SVP education programs, fostering their enhanced efficacy moving forward.

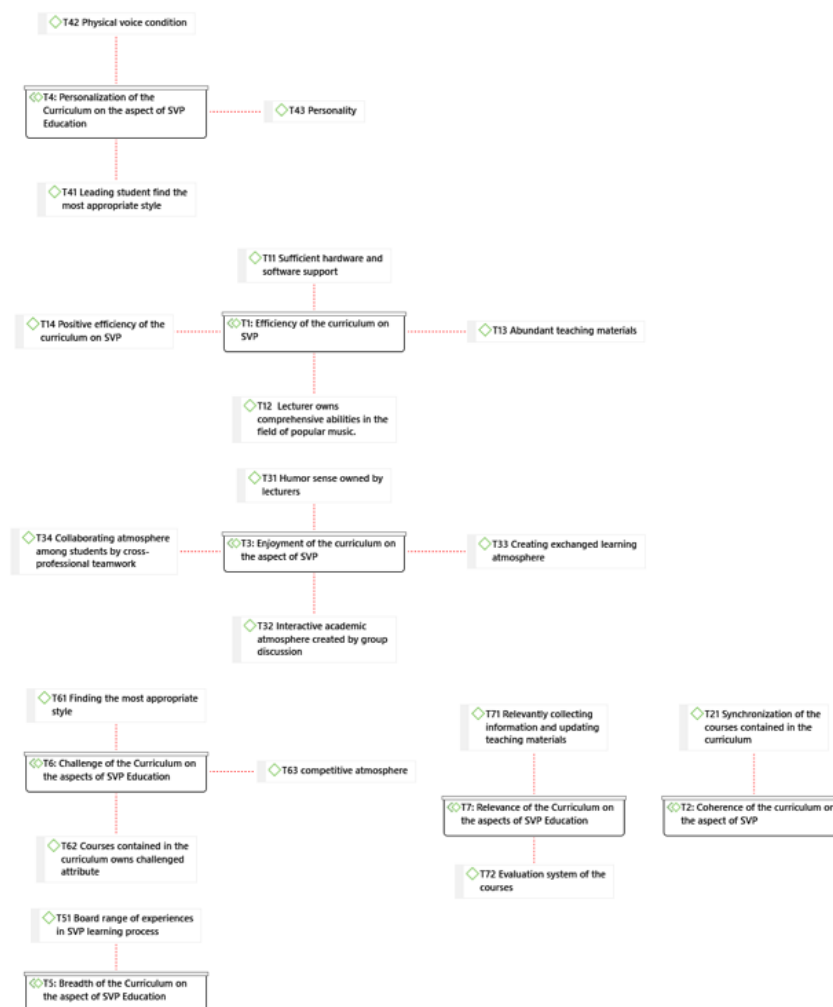


Figure 4: Theme map of research question 2

RQ3:

The findings pertinent to research question 3 (as depicted in Figure 5 generated using Atlas.ti) accentuate a compelling demand for augmented courses and content centering around music business, industry dynamics, and market trends. Evidently, students seek a deeper grasp of the intricate business and marketing dimensions intrinsic to the music realm, a testament to their aspirations for career success (echoing

the sentiments of Li et al., 2020). Moreover, the study underscores the pressing need for curriculum augmentation, specifically infusing it with contemporary content mirroring the current landscape of the music industry and market. This could encompass modules encompassing digital music dissemination, intricacies of music copyright legislation, and tactical marketing strategies tailored to independent musicians. Through this holistic approach, equipping students with a comprehensive comprehension of the music industry, the curriculum can deftly fortify them to navigate the intricacies, adversities, and prospects of the real-world terrain.

The outcomes underscore the imperative for curriculum enrichment, particularly within the dimensions of theoretical pedagogy, private vocal instruction, and modules pertaining to lyrical scrutiny, transcription, and psychological facets of vocal techniques. This study posits that a more extensive and comprehensive integration of theoretical content, coupled with heightened emphasis on psychological facets of singing, holds the potential to amplify students' musical acumen and proficiencies (aligned with Su & Huang, 2019). Furthermore, the findings accentuate the potential benefits of augmenting the allocation of class hours for private vocal instruction and introducing an autonomous course centering on lyrical analysis and appreciation. These enhancements stand to afford students augmented opportunities for immersive study and practical engagement. By bolstering the curriculum's scope and purview, the SVP education program stands poised to adeptly cater to the diverse spectrum of learners' requisites and passions.

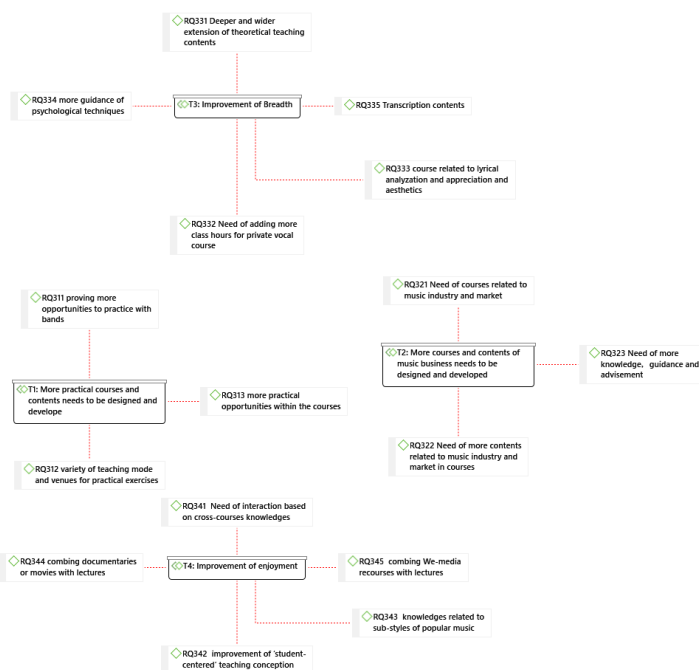


Figure. 5: Theme map based on research question 3

This study delved into the viewpoints of students regarding the curriculum for SVP in the domain of popular music. Employing a qualitative methodology, researchers conducted interviews with three undergraduate students who were part of a popular music program. The findings underscored students' perspectives that an ideal SVP training curriculum should strike a harmonious equilibrium between technical prowess and expressive capacities, underpinned by a pronounced focus on individuality and artistic ingenuity (Campbell, 2019). Moreover, participants accentuated the significance of imbuing the curriculum with cultural and historical cognizance, alongside the seamless integration of technological tools and interdisciplinary methodologies. This study furnishes valuable insights that can guide educators in crafting efficacious vocal performance training curricula tailored to the requisites and anticipations of students enrolled in popular music programs.

In conclusion, this study delves into the nuanced landscape of SVP education, revealing insights into the interconnectedness of curriculum components and emphasizing the paramount significance of diverse perspectives. These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse in the field, providing a foundation for future research endeavors aimed at refining pedagogical approaches and fostering a comprehensive understanding of stylistic vocal performance EDUCATION. (Cao & Goh, 2023).

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