# **Innovation Approaches to Developing Music Literacy through Clarinet Instruction**

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**Abstract:** This study explores innovative approaches to developing music literacy through clarinet instruction. The objective is to enhance students' musical literacy in three key areas: score recognition ability, visual singing ability, and playing ability. To achieve this, the observation method was utilized to gather data on students' skill development systematically. The study was conducted from September 2022 to July 2024, involving all 160 students from Wenxi Town No. 1 Middle School. The primary research tool is an observation table, and data analysis was carried out using t-test software to ensure a rigorous statistical evaluation of the findings. The lightweight and user-friendly design of the clarinet made it particularly suitable for classroom teaching, inspiring students' interest in music while addressing core areas of musical literacy.

The findings highlight the clarinet's potential to enhance students' technical proficiency, musicality, creativity, and appreciation for the arts. This approach demonstrates the instrument's unique ability to bridge the gap in music education in rural settings, fostering a deeper engagement with and understanding of music among students

Keywords: The clarinet, Music literacy, Score recognitionability, Visual singing ability, Playing ability,

#### 1. Introduction

In the ongoing music curriculum reform, instrumental music integration into classroom instruction has garnered increasing recognition, as highlighted in the 2011 edition of the Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards. Instrumental music plays a pivotal role by stimulating students' enthusiasm for music and enhancing their comprehension, expressive abilities, and creativity. In alignment with the objectives of basic education reform, which seeks to elevate the quality of music education at the junior high school level, there is a proposal to incorporate clarinet instruction into the music curriculum.

The clarinet, deeply rooted in the European musical tradition, is renowned for its pure and pleasant tone, often likened to the gentle timbre of the "soft flute." Its fixedpitch and compact design make it a prominent feature in music education across primary and secondary schools. To comprehensively strengthen classroom instruction, it is advocated that clarinet teaching be integrated into music courses. This initiative aims to transcend traditional pedagogical approaches and foster student development through innovative exploration and practical application.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the integration of clarinet instruction into music classroom teaching, with a focus on enhancing students' abilities in score recognition, sight-singing, and sight-playing through practical training during the teaching process. This will be achieved through a comprehensive examination of existing literature, observation of students' learning experiences, and the application of various instructional methods by teachers. Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to the holistic improvement of students' musical literacy and the cultivation of musical diversity.

#### 2. Literature Review

#### ${\bf 2.1\ Music\ Curriculum\ Standards\ (Ministry\ of\ Education\ of\ the\ People's\ Republic\ of\ China,\ 2022\ )}.$

The "Music Course Standards" emphasize the pivotal role of instrumental music teaching within the broader music curriculum, highlighting its significance in fostering aesthetic education and cultivating students' musical literacy and aesthetic sensibility. Instrumental music instruction not only enhances students' ability to perceive, experience, and understand music, but also nurtures their musical expression, creativity, teamwork, and self-confidence. The standards outline key elements of instrumental music education, including objectives, teaching methods, evaluation strategies, and implementation suggestions.

In particular, the curriculum sets specific requirements for junior high school students' musical abilities in three core areas: score recognition, visual singing, and instrumental playing. By grades 7 to 9, students are expected to:

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Score Recognition: Demonstrate the ability to read and recognize musical scores fluently.

Visual Singing: Follow the sound of a piano or a recorded score to perform visual singing.

**Playing Ability:** Actively participate in performance activities, develop good playing habits, choose an instrument, and express the emotional content of music through appropriate playing techniques, aiming to perform 2 to 3 pieces per academic year.

These requirements reflect the curriculum's focus on fostering students' practical musical abilities and emotional expression through music. The standards aim not only to enhance students' technical skills but also to cultivate their core competencies in aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and creative practice. Overall, the "Music Curriculum Standards" provide clear guidelines for instrumental music education, seeking to improve students' musical literacy, aesthetic abilities, and holistic development.

#### 2.2 The current situation of clarinet teaching in schools.

This study examines the integration of the clarinet into music education and its role in enhancing students' musical literacy. The following literature review explores the current state of clarinet instruction in schools and its impact on improving musical literacy: Luo Ning (2014), in Research on the Cultivation of Music Literacy through clarinet Instruction in Primary School Students, highlights the increasing emphasis on music education at the primary school level. Luo argues that as a simple, easy-to-learn instrument with a beautiful tone, the clarinet is increasingly being introduced into primary school music classrooms. The study discusses the specific effects of clarinet instruction on the musical literacy of primary school students and offers practical guidance and theoretical support for music educators. Gao Yiming (2019), in Auxiliary Exploration of the Music Classroom in Score Recognition Instruction, posits that the clarinet serves as an effective auxiliary tool in music education, particularly for teaching musical notation. Gao suggests that through the strategic use of the clarinet's performance characteristics and teaching methods, students' ability to recognize musical scores and their overall musical literacy can be significantly enhanced. He Fenglong (2010), in Practical Exploration of the clarinet School-Based Course, asserts that clarinet-based courses are an indispensable component of primary and secondary school music education. He emphasizes the importance of such courses in improving students' musical literacy and in promoting the professional development of music teachers Yang Ziting (2020), in Case Study on Instrumental Music Teaching in Junior High School, explores the role of instrumental music teaching in primary and secondary education. Yang demonstrates that through diverse teaching content, flexible methods, and active student participation, students' musical literacy and comprehensive abilities can be effectively improved. This study also provides a useful reference for other schools implementing instrumental music instruction. Relevant journals include Luo Yunzhong (2020), Brief Discussion on the Role of Clarinet Teaching in the Musical Literacy of Primary and Secondary School Students (1); Yang Rong (2013), Cultivation of Musical Expression in Primary School Clarinet Instruction; and Li Yangyang (2024), The Role of the Clarinet in Middle School Music Education.

Overall, clarinet instruction has a positive impact on enhancing musical literacy in several ways. It aids in consolidating students' basic musical knowledge, improving their musical perception and expressive abilities, fostering musical aesthetics and appreciation, and stimulating innovative thinking and creativity. Furthermore, clarinet teaching contributes to the development of teamwork and communication skills among students. Therefore, clarinet instruction should be regarded as a vital component of music education in primary and secondary schools.

#### 2.3 Current situation of foreign instrumental music teaching (clarinet teaching)

In recent years, with the evolution of global educational paradigms and the continuous advancement of music education, instrumental music teaching in foreign countries has exhibited a range of new characteristics and trends. Internationally, there is a widespread emphasis on instrumental music instruction, which is integrated into the primary and secondary school curricula as a key component of fostering students' overall competencies. Many nations also view instrumental music education as a vital direction within art education, driving the popularization and expansion of instrumental music programs. Within this context, the clarinet, a common woodwind instrument, holds unique value and function in instrumental instruction. A review of relevant literature reveals numerous studies on the application of the clarinet in primary school music classrooms. For instance, Chen Y. (2014), in Reading Aloud Teaching Effective Strategy of Low Period of Primary School Chinese Reading, notes that there is a shortage of professional music teachers in primary schools, with many educators lacking the necessary teaching skills, thereby limiting the development of instrumental music education. Johnas JT (2014), in Teachers' Use of Play as a Teaching Strategy in Pre-Primary Schools in Mwanga District, emphasizes that many primary schools currently do not give adequate attention to clarinet instruction in music classrooms, which hinders the development of instrumental music teaching and the

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cultivation of students' musical literacy. Cirenlamuz (2014), in Word Teaching Strategy in the Primary School High Grade Chinese, suggests that primary school music education is often hampered by limited teaching resources, simplistic teaching methods, and poorly structured content. The study calls for an increased recognition of the importance of instrumental music education, better curricular design, and more varied teaching approaches to ensure that instrumental music instruction becomes an integral part of every primary school's curriculum, thereby laying a solid foundation for students' musical learning.

The application of clarinet instruction is also discussed in several textbooks. For example, European Clarinet Teaching and Learning provides a detailed account of teaching methods and playing techniques in European clarinet instruction, with sections covering clarinet overview, teaching strategies, fundamental playing skills, solo pieces, and ensemble works. Additionally, The Application of Clarinet Teaching in Music Education explores the role and value of the clarinet in music education, highlighting its advantages as an entry-level instrument, such as its ease of learning and affordability. The text also examines the impact of clarinet playing on stimulating students' interest in music and enhancing their musical literacy, emphasizing the importance of integrating clarinet performance with music education.

Since the 1950s, the international community has increasingly prioritized the research and practice of instrumental music education. Among the most influential pedagogical approaches are the Kodály, Orff, and Dalcroze methods, often referred to as the "world's three major music teaching methods." These methodologies have been widely adopted and adapted by various countries, significantly shaping the development of global music education systems.

#### 2.4 Current situation of domestic instrumental music teaching. ( clarinet teaching)

Several papers emphasize the importance of instrumental music teaching. For instance, Cui Xiao (2016) in Application and Significance of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary School Classroom highlights the critical role of instrumental music instruction in the intellectual development, physical coordination, aesthetic cultivation, and creativity enhancement of primary and secondary school students. Xu Hongshuai (2007) in Research on the Development of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in China proposes appropriate developmental strategies to restore instrumental music teaching to its essential purpose. Ma Ziqiang (2011) in Research on the Effectiveness of Middle School Classroom Instrumental Music Teaching identifies existing issues in junior high school instrumental music education and suggests effective solutions and implementation measures, which are pivotal for improving the effectiveness of such instruction. Similarly, Zhou Shibin (2012) in Instrumental Music Teaching That Should No Longer Be Ignored examines the challenges and reform strategies for instrumental music education in China's primary and secondary schools. Other notable works include Peng Junjun (2011) The Status and Efficacy of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary School Music Education, Zhu Zeping (2012) Basic Music Teaching Should Be towards Instrumentalization, and Ge Qinghua (2010) A Brief Discussion on the Status and Influence of Instrumental Music Teaching in Primary and Secondary School Music Education.

Important studies on the application of clarinet teaching in music education include Li Guohua (2014) A Brief Discussion on the Educational Value of Junior High School Clarinet, which explores the distinctiveness of clarinet instruction in junior high school music classes. Li argues that clarinet teaching can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning music theory and enhance their musical abilities. Moreover, clarinet instruction can promote the development of students' vocal skills and contribute to the formation of healthy personality traits. Wei Hua (2018) in Exploration of Primary School Clarinet Teaching Strategies underscores the importance of instrumental music teaching in primary school music curricula, particularly the clarinet. Huang Ying (2002) in Modern Educational Concepts and Instrumental Music Teaching advocates for a philosophical shift that prioritizes musical thinking and emotional expression over mere technical proficiency, encouraging students to engage with music both intellectually and emotionally. Wang Yueping (1998) in Strengthening Instrumental Music Teaching to Maximize the Educational Value of Music emphasizes that instrumental music teaching is an essential element of music education, aligning with practices in Western countries. With the implementation of quality education reforms in China, there has been a growing recognition of the need to enhance instrumental music teaching.

#### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 The population and Sample Group the Population

#### The Population

160 students from Wenxi Town No.1 Middle School participated in the flute teaching course.

#### The Sample Group

All 160 students from Wenxi Town No.1 Middle School participated in the flute teaching course.

## **3.2** Research Instruments Observation Method

In this study, the observation method was employed to gather data on students' skills development through a structured process. The researchers designed observation tables aligned with the study's objectives, utilizing both sensory perception and auxiliary tools to directly observe the subjects. The method was implemented in three primary steps: 1. Pre-Test Administration: Students underwent pre-tests to evaluate their baseline skills across various dimensions. 2. Instructional Intervention: The flute was incorporated as a key teaching tool within the instructional framework. 3. Post-Test and Data Analysis: A final test was administered, followed by a comparative analysis of the pre-test and post-test data.

The creation of the observation table involved several key steps:1. Literature Review and Table Design: Relevant literature was reviewed to inform the construction of the observation table, which was tailored to align with the research objectives. The observation focused on three specific areas:

- Improvement in score recognition ability (Items 1-6).
- Enhancement of visual singing ability (Items 7-13).
- Advancement in playing ability (Items 14-20).

#### 3.3 Data Collection

To gather relevant data for this study, the following methodological steps were undertaken:

- 1. Test Administration and Scoring Standards: Both pre-tests and final tests were administered to the students. Scoring standards were meticulously formulated to ensure consistency and accuracy in evaluating students' performance.
- 2. Observation and Sampling: An observation table was created for the students, and a random sampling method was employed to select participants. The selected students were informed of the sampling process and its purpose. Observations were then recorded systematically using the designed form.
- 3. Data Collection and Validation: The collected data were meticulously organized and reviewed to verify their validity. A total of 160 data entries were obtained and subjected to a thorough validity check to ensure their reliability for subsequent analysis.

This systematic approach ensured the collection of high-quality data, providing a robust foundation for the study's conclusions.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

This study focuses on the students of Wenxi Town No. 1 Middle School as the research subjects. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data, video recordings were made using an observation tool camera. These recordings were then meticulously reviewed, and the collected data were organized and analyzed before being used to complete the observation forms. A total of 160 observation forms were collected. For data analysis, t-Test software was employed, providing a rigorous statistical framework for evaluating the research findings.

#### 4. Results of Analysis

According to the research objectives of this study, the researchers present the results of data analysis, which are divided into the following three parts:

- 1. Score Recognition Ability
- 2. Visual Singing Ability
- 3. Playing Ability

**Table 4.1** Shows the score recognition ability of students before and after teaching.

	Perfect score	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Percentage
After teaching	30	20.88	2.224	69.9
Beforeteaching	30	17.91	2.197	59.7

The total score recognition ability assessment is 30 points. Before flute instruction, the average score was 17.91, representing 59.1% of the maximum score with a standard deviation of 2.197. Following the flute instruction, the average score increased to 20.88 corresponding to 69.9% of the total possible score, with a standard deviation of 2.224.

 Table 4.2 Analysis of Changes in Student Ability

Pairing difference							
After teaching	n	df	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	SD.	t	P	
Before teaching	160	159	2.975	1.081	34.802	< 0.001	

The analysis compares the changes in students' flute skills after completing the course, which included 160 students. The average score after the instruction was 2.975 points higher than before the course, with a standard deviation of 1.081. A t-test was conducted, yielding a calculated t-value of 34.802, significantly exceeding the typical critical value. This indicates that the difference between the pre-and post-instruction scores is statistically significant. The p-value was found to be less than 0.001, further supporting the result and allowing us to confidently reject the null hypothesis.

**Table 4.3** Shows the score visual singing ability of students before and after teaching.

	Perfect score	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Percentage
After teaching	35	23.52	2.323	67.2
Beforeteaching	35	21.24	2.236	60.69

The total score visual singing ability assessment is 35 points. Before flute instruction, the average score was 21.24, representing 60.69% of the maximum score with a standard deviation of 2.236. Following the flute instruction, the average score increased to 23.52 corresponding to 67.2% of the total possible score, with a standard deviation of 2.323.

**Table 4.4** Analysis of Changes in Student Ability

Pairing difference							
After teaching	n	df	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	SD.	t	P	
Before teaching	160	159	2.282	0.891	32.371	< 0.001	

The analysis compares the changes in students' flute skills after completing the course, which included 160 students. The average score after the instruction was 2.281 points higher than before the course, with a standard deviation of 0.891. A t-test was conducted, yielding a calculated t-value of 32.371, significantly exceeding the typical critical value. This indicates that the difference between the pre-and post-instruction scores is statistically significant. The p-value was found to be less than 0.001, further supporting the result and allowing us to confidently reject the null hypothesis.

**Table 4.5** Shows the score playing ability of students before and after teaching.

	Perfect score	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	S.D.	Percentage
After teaching	35	21.58	2.629	61.65
Before teaching	35	10.57	1.399	30.2

The total score playing ability assessment is 35 points. Before flute instruction, the average score was 10.57, representing 30.2% of the maximum score with a standard deviation of 1.399. Following the flute instruction, the average score increased to 21.58 corresponding to 61.65% of the total possible score, with a standard deviation of 2.629.

Table 4.6 Analysis of Changes in Student Ability

Pairing difference							
After teaching	n	df	$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	SD.	t	P	
Before teaching	160	159	11.006	1.875	74.250	< 0.001	

The analysis compares the changes in students' flute skills after completing the course, which included 160 students. The average score after the instruction was 11.006 points higher than before the course, with a standard deviation of 1.875. A t-test was conducted, yielding a calculated t-value of 74.250, significantly exceeding the typical critical value. This indicates that the difference between the pre-and post-instruction scores is statistically significant. The p-value was found to be less than 0.001, further supporting the result and allowing us to confidently reject the null hypothesis.

#### **Results of Data Analysis**

In alignment with the research objectives, the results of the data analysis are categorized into three key areas: score recognition ability, visual singing ability, and playing ability. Detailed findings are as follows:

#### 1. Score Recognition Ability

The assessment for score recognition ability consisted of a total score of 30 points.

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Before Instruction: The mean score was 17.91, representing 59.7% of the maximum score, with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.197.

After Instruction: The mean score increased to 20.88, representing 69.9% of the maximum score, with an SD of 2.224.

Statistical Analysis:

A paired t-test was conducted, comparing pre- and post-instruction scores for 160 students.

The mean difference was 2.975 points (SD = 1.081).

The t-value of 34.802 was highly significant (p < 0.001), indicating a statistically significant improvement in students' score recognition ability after instruction.

#### 2. Visual Singing Ability

The visual singing ability assessment had a total score of 35 points.

Before Instruction: The mean score was 21.24, representing 60.69% of the maximum score, with an SD of 2.236.

After Instruction: The mean score increased to 23.52, representing 67.2% of the maximum score, with an SD of 2.323.

Statistical Analysis:

A paired t-test revealed a mean difference of 2.281 points (SD = 0.891).

The t-value was 32.371, which was statistically significant (p < 0.001), confirming significant enhancement in visual singing ability after instruction.

#### 3. Playing Ability

The assessment for playing ability also had a total score of 35 points.

Before Instruction: The mean score was 10.57, representing 30.2% of the maximum score, with an SD of 1.399.

After Instruction: The mean score increased significantly to 21.58, representing 61.65% of the maximum score, with an SD of 2.629.

Statistical Analysis:

The paired t-test showed a mean difference of 11.006 points (SD = 1.875).

The t-value of 74.250 was statistically significant (p < 0.001), indicating a substantial improvement in students' playing ability post-instruction.

The analysis reveals significant improvements in all three assessed areas—score recognition ability, visual singing ability, and playing ability—following clarinet instruction. The results demonstrate the effectiveness of the teaching intervention in enhancing students' musical competencies, with all observed changes being statistically significant at p < 0.001.

#### 5. Conclusion

Wenxi Town No. 1 Middle School, situated in a rural area, faces challenges such as students' limited musical foundations and underdeveloped musical literacy. However, the clarinet, renowned for its beautiful tone and ease of learning, has emerged as a practical and popular choice for enhancing music education in such settings. Its lightweight design and accessibility make it particularly suitable for classroom teaching, where it stimulates students' interest in music and strengthens their core musical literacy in three key areas: score recognition ability, visual singing ability, and playing ability.

#### 1. Score Recognition Ability

Research indicates that clarinet instruction significantly improves students' score recognition ability, with average scores increasing by 2.975 points after instruction. Flute practice bridges the gap between theory and application, allowing students to internalize key musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, and dynamics through hands-on engagement. However, traditional teaching methods often lack variety and are overly theoretical, which may dampen student interest and hinder deeper comprehension. While clarinet lessons enhance practical recognition skills, supplementary strategies are needed to solidify the theoretical foundation of score reading.

#### 2. Visual Singing Ability

Clarinet instruction has also enhanced students' visual singing ability, with scores improving by 2.281 points. This skill, which combines accurate pitch and rhythm reading while singing from a score, develops gradually and is influenced by individual differences and the teaching environment. Some students progress rapidly, while others require more time and practice. Although visual singing ability improves more slowly than other musical skills, clarinet teaching provides an engaging and effective platform for fostering this capability

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over time.

#### 3. Playing Ability

The clarinet's simplicity and ease of operation make it an ideal instrument for music education. Its structure allows students to quickly master basic techniques, such as posture, breathing, and fingering while providing immediate auditory feedback that accelerates learning. Research reveals a significant improvement in students' playing ability, with scores increasing from 10.57 to 21.58 points over two years. This rapid progress is attributed to the practical and accessible nature of clarinet instruction, which integrates theoretical knowledge with hands-on practice.

Clarinet lessons also enhance students' coordination by engaging multiple sensory inputs, including hand, eye, and mouth movements, and they cultivate students' interest in music, motivating sustained practice. Structured curricula, focusing on essential techniques and simple repertoire, further support skill development. Additionally, accessible resources, such as online tutorials and professional courses, enrich the learning experience.

Beyond technical proficiency, clarinet instruction fosters a deeper understanding of music theory, enhances stage presence, and promotes cooperative and innovative thinking. These experiences contribute to students' overall musical literacy and personal growth. By participating in ensemble activities and performances, students gain confidence and develop a greater appreciation for the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of music.

The findings underscore the clarinet's potential to transform music education in rural schools. As a practical classroom instrument, it bridges the divide between theoretical learning and practical application, creating an engaging, dynamic, and interactive learning environment. The clarinet not only improves students' technical abilities but also nurtures their musicality, creativity, and appreciation for the arts.

While challenges remain, such as sustaining student interest, addressing diverse learning needs, and providing adequate teaching resources, these obstacles can be mitigated with innovative teaching methods and targeted support. By integrating instrumental instruction like clarinet teaching into music curricula, educators can foster holistic musical development and cultivate a lifelong appreciation for music among students.

#### Recommendations

This study demonstrates that incorporating clarinet instruction into the music curriculum significantly enhances students' musical literacy, aesthetic appreciation, and confidence. While the primary goal was not to train professional musicians, the experience provided a solid foundation for students to engage with music on a deeper level and develop a lifelong appreciation for its beauty and complexity. The practical integration of instrumental teaching offers a balance between nurturing technical skills and fostering an enjoyment of music that can last a lifetime.

The findings of this study offer several important recommendations for improving clarinet teaching practices and student engagement, which can be applied by educators, schools, and other stakeholders:

- 1. Strengthen Continuous Learning: To sustain students' interest and motivation, it is vital to diversify teaching methods. This could involve integrating other instruments, creating varied performance contexts, and utilizing interactive teaching strategies. These approaches will help keep students engaged and enthusiastic about their musical education.
- **2. Diversify Teaching Approaches:** Teachers should continually innovate and adapt their teaching methods to enhance student engagement. Techniques such as multimedia instruction, rhythmic exercises, and collaborative group learning can make lessons more dynamic and accessible, ultimately increasing student participation and interest.
- **3. Optimize the Evaluation Mechanism:** Developing a clear and structured evaluation system is essential to monitor student progress effectively. A standardized clarinet score sheet, with quantifiable learning milestones, along with competitive activities between students and classes, can motivate students to achieve specific goals and track their progress.
- **4. Enhance Teaching Resources:** To improve the overall quality of instruction, educators should have access to ongoing professional development opportunities. By attending training sessions and staying updated on new pedagogical methods, teachers can continually enhance their teaching practices and provide students with the best possible learning experience.

These recommendations aim to foster a more comprehensive and effective learning environment for flute students, thereby enhancing their skills, motivation, and overall musical development. By addressing these areas, educators can create a supportive and dynamic classroom where students can thrive in their musical education.

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