

# **Pop Music Writing guidebook for teaching Third Year Students at Shandong University of Arts, Shandong province**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study are: 1) To study pop music writing method for third years student.2) To study a pop music writing guidebook method. 3) To Construct pop music writing guidebook for third years student. 4) To use pop music writing guidebook to teach students. 5) To evaluate a result of teaching. This study aims to explore and develop a teaching guide for pop music composition tailored for third-year music students at Shandong University of the Arts. By integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study seeks to enhance students' capabilities in pop music composition and improve the quality and effectiveness of music education. The research begins with interviews with experts in the field of pop music composition to capture essential elements and teaching methods, followed by the development of teaching strategies and material content suitable for third-year students based on the results of these expert interviews. In the quantitative phase, the study conducts experimental teaching with 38 students from Shandong University of the Arts, using formative and summative assessments to test the learning effects of using the teaching guide.

The results indicate that the pop music composition teaching guide developed in this study covers key areas such as the theoretical foundations of pop music, composition techniques, lyric writing guidance, and analysis of pop music works. By incorporating modern educational methods like multimedia teaching and team cooperation into traditional teaching approaches, the guide not only increases students' motivation and interest in creation but also demonstrates its effectiveness in enhancing students' pop music composition skills through empirical research. The teaching experiment results show that students significantly improved both in theoretical knowledge and practical composition abilities after using the teaching guide.

**Keywords:** Pop Music Writing; Guidebook; Shandong University of Arts; Shandong province

## **Introduction**

In the Music Education program at Shandong University of Arts, an important course for third-year students is Composition. This course aims to develop students' music composition abilities, enabling them to understand and apply various musical elements to create artistically valuable works. The Composition course involves not only basic music theory and composition techniques but also includes analysis of musical styles, methods of creative development, and skills in musical expression. The course emphasizes the integration of theory and practice, aiming to enhance students' abilities in music composition and analysis. It is noteworthy that this Composition course currently lacks formal textbooks (Liu, 2018). The course content mainly relies on oral instruction by teachers, including concepts of

music composition, analysis of composers and their works from history, and practical guidance in music creation. Although this teaching method can flexibly adjust content to meet students' needs and interests, it also has certain limitations, such as the lack of systematic knowledge transfer and learning resources. Therefore, developing a systematic set of teaching materials specifically for pop music composition is not only a complement to the existing teaching methods but also a key step in improving teaching quality and effectiveness.

The development of pop music in China has profound historical significance. Initially introduced as part of Western culture, it gradually incorporated unique Chinese cultural elements over time, forming a distinctive Mandarin pop music genre. Since the mid-20th century, especially after the reform and opening-up, Mandarin pop music has rapidly developed, giving rise to many famous singers and classic songs. These songs are popular not only in Mainland China but also in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and across East Asia. Pop music has become an important part of Chinese youth culture and modern life, reflecting social changes and cultural diversity (Huang, 2023).

In China, the style and methods of pop music composition have undergone significant evolution. From initial imitation and absorption of Western pop elements to gradually forming a composition style with Chinese characteristics, this process signifies the maturation and independence of Chinese pop music composition. Modern pop composition not only emphasizes melodic fluidity and lyricism but also the literary quality and depth of lyrics. Experts like Lv Xiaoli have pointed out in their research that pop music composition in China is an art form that blends traditional and modern, Eastern and Western elements, promoting musical innovation while carrying the responsibility of cultural heritage (Chen, 2019).

Pop music guidebooks play an important role in the field of music education in China. These guidebooks provide music teachers with the theories and techniques to teach modern pop music and offer students guidance in learning and practicing pop music composition. In the current context of diversified music education, these guidebooks act as a bridge between traditional music education and modern pop music creation, helping to cultivate a new generation of musicians with innovative thinking and practical skills. Guidebooks specifically created for undergraduates or academic music education are rare.

This thesis, titled "Creating a Pop Music Composition Textbook for Third-Year Undergraduate Students of Music Education at the Shandong University of Arts," is of significant importance in the current educational and cultural context. Firstly, it addresses the need for pop music composition education in contemporary music education, fostering students' understanding and creative skills in pop music culture. Secondly, this research contributes to the development of Chinese pop music by nurturing more innovative and globally-minded music creators through education. Lastly, the study reflects the trend of music education keeping pace with the times, showcasing a teaching philosophy that combines traditional and modern, local and international elements (Chang, 2019).

## Research Objectives

1. To study pop music writing method for third years student
2. To study a pop music writing guidebook method
3. To Construct pop music writing guidebook for third years student.
4. To use pop music writing guidebook to teach students.
5. To evaluate a result of teaching.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology is mixed method research and experimental research that consists of document studies, interview, and teaching.

Qualitative research method : Data is collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires.

Quantitative research method : This research approach often includes interviews, observations, text analysis, etc., with results that are descriptive, emphasizing depth over breadth.

### Key informants

Criteria of the key informant: the key informant must meet with the following criteria:

- Possesses over 10 years of experience in pop music composition in Shandong Province.
- Experts must have an academic rank higher than Assistant Professor or higher.
- Has published pop music compositions.
- Possesses over 10 years of university teaching experience.
- Holds a doctoral degree in music.

### Population

This study targets third-year music major students at Shandong University of Arts. Shandong University of Arts has 28 are in their third year.

### Sample

Student in Shandong University of arts by systematic random sampling as follow:  
Sample: Systematic random sampling resulting in 14 students from 28 students. Randomly assign numbers 1, 2, 1, 2 to the 28 students, and select all students with the number 1 as the sample.

## Conceptual Framework

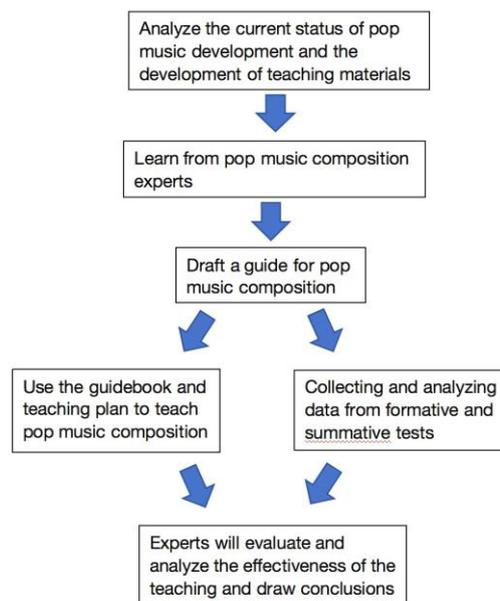


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

## **Research Findings**

### **To study the pop music writing method for third-year students:**

In the process of exploring the methods of pop music composition, we delved into related literature, expert interviews, and teaching practices with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of strategies in teaching pop music composition and student learning feedback. The research identified that teaching content for pop music composition not only includes lyric writing, melody arrangement, harmony skills, but also involves the cultivation of music production and performance techniques, aiming to help students enhance their composition abilities and musical understanding.

In reviewing literature on teaching pop music composition, we noted that most research focuses on the compositional skills and theoretical foundations of pop music, with few studies addressing how to apply these theories in actual teaching. Therefore, this research hopes to provide a systematic method of teaching through the development and practice of the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide," contributing to the field of pop music education and stimulating students' passion for composition and enhancing their skills.

Learning pop music composition from experts requires students to have an open and exploratory mindset. Collaborating with experts who have extensive experience in pop music composition allows students not only to learn the basic skills of pop music creation but also to deeply understand the cultural background and creative philosophy of pop music. Moreover, personalized guidance and feedback from experts can help students identify their deficiencies in the creative process, prompting continuous improvement and refinement of their work.

### **To study a pop music writing guidebook method.**

The development and application of a comprehensive teaching guide for pop music composition represent a significant advancement in educational resources in the field of music education at Shandong University of the Arts. This section of the discussion focuses on the methodology behind creating the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide."

In this study, we employed a multi-level approach to design this teaching guide, aimed at meeting the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Initially, through an extensive review of literature and interviews with experts, we gathered information on the theoretical foundations, techniques, historical background, and current trends of pop music composition. This process not only helped us to define the scope and depth of the teaching content but also revealed key challenges and opportunities in pop music education.

Next, based on the information collected, we drafted the initial version of the teaching guide, including modules on lyric writing, melody writing, harmony theory, and music production. To ensure the practicality and effectiveness of the teaching guide, we invited a group of pop music experts with extensive teaching and composition experience to review it and made adjustments based on their feedback.

Through the realization of this research objective, we have not only provided a systematic and comprehensive method for teaching pop music composition but also contributed a practical teaching resource to the field of pop music education. The successful development and application of this teaching guide demonstrate the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with practical skills in music composition education, offering valuable reference for future pop music education.

### **To use pop music writing guidebook to teach students.**

In the current field of music education, using the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide" to teach third-year students at Shandong University of the Arts aims to achieve systematic and effective teaching, while simultaneously igniting students' passion for creation and their innovative abilities. Following the content of Chapter 4 of the thesis, here is a detailed discussion on how to utilize this teaching guide.

Implementing the teaching process with the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide" requires a student-centered approach, emphasizing guiding students to understand and master various aspects of pop music composition, including lyric writing, melody construction, harmony techniques, and the music production process. The theoretical knowledge and practical exercises contained within the guide assist students in gradually deepening their learning from basic to advanced levels, ensuring they comprehensively master the skills of pop music composition. During the teaching process, students should be encouraged to actively participate by consolidating and applying the knowledge gained through practical exercises and project tasks. For example, organizing students to compose songs around specific themes or using music production software to complete music pieces not only enhances students' practical abilities but also fosters interaction and communication among students, stimulating their creative thinking.

Furthermore, teaching with the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide" requires teachers to adjust the content and methods of teaching flexibly based on the students' progress and feedback. This demands that teachers not only have an in-depth understanding of the guide's content but also possess the ability to flexibly utilize teaching resources and tools to meet the individualized learning needs of students.

Assessment and feedback are indispensable parts of the teaching process using the guide. Through formative and summative assessments, teachers can understand students' learning outcomes and creative abilities, providing timely, specific, and constructive feedback. This helps students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement, thereby promoting continuous growth and development in the field of pop music composition.

Teaching third-year students with the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide" not only enhances the systematic nature and effectiveness of teaching but also stimulates students' passion for creation and innovation, laying a solid foundation for their future music composition and career development. By achieving this research objective, we have made a positive contribution to the development of pop music education and provided valuable teaching experiences and resources for other music education institutions.

### **To evaluate a result of teaching.**

In the process of implementing the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide," a clear observation of overall student progress was made through the comparison and analysis of scores at four different stages within the teaching cycle. These scores include the baseline test scores before the teaching began, mid-term formative assessment scores, late-term formative assessment scores, and finally, the summative assessment scores. Comparing these four sets of scores clearly shows a significant improvement in students' skills and understanding of pop music composition.

The progress of the students was not only reflected in the mastery of theoretical knowledge but, more importantly, in the enhancement of their practical composition abilities. This outcome validates the effectiveness of the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide" in improving students' pop music composition skills and reflects the success of teaching methods and practical activities. Through such evaluation results, we can confirm that the teaching guide has played a positive role in stimulating students' creative potential and encouraging their progress in music composition.

## Discussion

After completing the first formative test, the students' scores indicate improvement to some degree. The average total score increased from 1.95 in the pre-test to 3.0, demonstrating significant progress among all students throughout the learning process. In this assessment, no student was rated as "Lowest," marking a positive change compared to the pre-test.

In this test, the highest scores were achieved by students number 5 and number 11, with total scores of 3.57 and 3.53, respectively, rated as "High" level. Both students excelled in all evaluation contents, especially in "Production" and "Listenability," indicating their talents and understanding in music production and melody creation.

Conversely, the lowest score was held by student number 8, with a total of 2.46, rated as "Low" level. The reason might be lower scores in "Production" and "Listenability," suggesting a need for more practice and guidance in music production and presenting a complete piece.

For the student with the lowest score, it is recommended to adopt similar strategies previously suggested, such as reinforcing personalized tutoring and practical opportunities, especially in the practical application of music production. Providing more case studies, increasing interaction exercises with music production software, and including feedback and revision phases could help them improve in their weak areas (Zhang, 2021).

Overall, the results of the first formative assessment have shown students' progress after learning, particularly in enhancing their knowledge of music theory and skills in music production. In future teaching, we should continue to employ targeted teaching strategies aimed at further improving students' abilities in pop music writing and production, especially offering more attention and support to students with lower scores to promote their comprehensive development. This result is similar to the research about ethnic vocal music and Henan Opera students. On the basis of literature knowledge, expert interviews and student questionnaires, the researchers began to construct the teaching guidebook of national vocal music and Henan opera in Zhoukou Vocational and Technical College. The designed teaching guide requires students to master various abilities besides basic singing skills, including analytical skills, course requirements, improvement of students' creativity, demonstration of practical ability, etc. According to the suggestions of experts, teachers should use the corresponding teaching framework and theory combined with practical teaching to improve students' learning efficiency. In addition, rational use of interdisciplinary elements can enrich tutors' teaching strategies, increase students' ability to integrate disciplines, and provide a theoretical research basis for going to work (Wang & Charoensloong, 2023).

## Recommendation

### 1. Practical Recommendations

Based on the results of our research and the experience of compiling the "Pop Music Composition Teaching Guide," we offer the following recommendations to ensure the guide achieves the best effect in teaching practice:

**Teacher Training:** Provide training and lectures for music educators to ensure they have a clear understanding of the guide's use and teaching methods, enabling them to apply it correctly in teaching practice.

**Student Participation:** Encourage students to engage in pop music performances, competitions, and workshops to enhance their practical experience and identification with pop music.

**Discipline Integration:** Promote the integration of pop music teaching with history, literature, and cultural studies to broaden students' understanding of the cultural background behind pop music.

**Community Publicity:** Spread the value of pop music within the community through public performances and activities, increasing public awareness and interest in pop music.

### 2. Recommendation for future research

**Continuous Improvement:** Regularly evaluate the teaching effectiveness of the guidebook, listen to feedback from teachers and students, and continuously improve and perfect the guidebook's contents and teaching methods.

In summary, by compiling this teaching guide, we have provided a valuable teaching resource for music educators and students at Shandong University of the Arts and made positive contributions to the development of pop music education. We hope this guidebook will help students deeply understand the charm of pop music composition and promote their skill enhancement and innovative development in this field.

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