

Integration of Competition and Education: Exploring New Pathways in Music and Dance Education at Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology

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Abstract: The integration of competition and education (hereafter referred to as “Competition-Education Integration”) is a growing trend in modern education, especially in arts disciplines like music and dance. Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology (ZUST) has been actively exploring this innovative model to foster well-rounded talent in an era of rapid cultural and technological development. This paper investigates the role of competition-education integration in enhancing students’ artistic skills, creativity, and social engagement in music and dance education. Furthermore, it explores the policies, practical platforms, and resources that ZUST has put in place to support and sustain this model, with particular focus on the achievements of students in various competitions.

Keywords: Competition-education integration; Music and dance education; Innovative education; Talent development; Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology

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1. Introduction

The development of higher education in China has increasingly focused on cultivating well-rounded, application-oriented talent capable of meeting the demands of a fast-evolving society. In this context, Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology (ZUST) has made significant strides in innovating educational practices, particularly in the field of arts education. Since 2021, ZUST has embraced the concept of “building an innovation and entrepreneurship-oriented university with distinctive application features” and introduced a series of educational reforms that emphasize practical and entrepreneurial skills. Among the innovative teaching paradigms, Competition-Education Integration stands out as a pivotal approach that connects theoretical learning with real-world competition and practice, especially in fields such as music and dance.

This paper explores the importance of integrating competitions into music and dance education, highlighting how this strategy helps students enhance their artistic abilities, develop critical thinking, and gain valuable exposure to both academic and professional environments. In doing so, we will also examine the policies, infrastructure, and collaborative partnerships that ZUST has implemented to facilitate this integration, along with the results demonstrated by students

through their outstanding achievements in various competitions.

2. The concept of competition-education integration

Competition-Education Integration refers to the educational model that combines classroom learning with extracurricular competition and practice. It involves incorporating real-world challenges into the academic curriculum, allowing students to not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also apply their skills and creativity in practical settings. This approach is especially relevant to disciplines like music and dance, where performance and artistic expression are integral components of learning^[1].

In music and dance education, the integration of competition provides students with a platform to showcase their skills, build confidence, and gain feedback from experts. Competitions serve as both motivation and a performance benchmark, pushing students to hone their technical abilities, artistic expression, and team collaboration skills^[2]. At ZUST, this model has been embraced not only as a teaching tool but also as an avenue for promoting holistic education that nurtures creativity, leadership, and problem-solving abilities.

3. Significance of competition-education integration in music and dance education

3.1. Enhancing artistic skills and performance

Participation in competitions is a powerful way to refine students' artistic abilities. At ZUST, students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of local, regional, and even international music and dance competitions. Through these events, students push themselves to reach higher levels of proficiency, applying the techniques and theories learned in the classroom to real-world settings^[3]. The intense preparation for competitions enables students to deepen their understanding of the artistic form, refine their skills, and grow as performers.

For instance, in 2021, the students guided by faculty members participated in the "Guangdong Province Higher Education Art Exhibition and Performance" and won the first prize in the vocal music category. This victory was not only a testament to their artistic talent but also a direct result of the rigorous training and preparation that integrated competition with daily learning. Competitions like this give students tangible goals and outcomes, which motivate them to strive for excellence^[4].

3.2. Fostering creativity and innovation

The competitive nature of events compels students to think outside the box, encouraging them to innovate and explore new artistic expressions. For example, at the 2023 Brahms International Winter Choral Festival, ZUST students won first place by showcasing their ability to blend traditional choral techniques with contemporary interpretations, an effort that was highly praised by judges and peers. Such achievements demonstrate how the integration of competition nurtures creativity^[5], allowing students to experiment with new approaches and artistic forms that might not be fully explored in a traditional classroom setting.

3.3. Building confidence and social engagement

Competitions also provide an opportunity for students to gain confidence in their abilities. By performing in front of an audience or a panel of judges, students learn how to manage performance anxiety, communicate effectively, and handle pressure—skills that are invaluable both in the arts and in life. Furthermore, competitions foster a sense of camaraderie among students, as they collaborate with peers to prepare for these events. This builds teamwork skills and promotes the spirit of cooperation^[6].

The 2023 Guangdong University Student Choir Competition is a prime example of how students can demonstrate

these skills. The team won second place in the professional category while working together to deliver an inspiring and harmonious performance that resonated with both the audience and the judges. Through such experiences, students not only develop their artistic capabilities but also build life skills that will support their future careers^[7].

4. ZUST's support for competition-education integration

ZUST's commitment to the integration of competition and education is reflected in the comprehensive policies, infrastructure, and resources that support this model^[8].

4.1. Policies and administrative support

ZUST has established clear guidelines and policies to promote student participation in competitions. The ZUST University Student Innovation and Technology Competition Management Measures (Revised 2024) provides a systematic framework for the organization, guidance, and evaluation of student projects^[9]. These policies ensure that students are not only encouraged to participate in competitions but also provided with the necessary support throughout the process. From the initial project selection to coaching and mentoring, the university offers structured guidance to ensure that students can succeed in competitions^[10].

4.2. Educational resources and facilities

The university's music and dance department is well-equipped to support the practical aspects of competition preparation. The Music and Dance College boasts state-of-the-art facilities, including standard piano practice rooms, professional music halls, recording studios, and multifunctional performance rehearsal spaces^[11]. These resources allow students to practice and refine their performances in professional settings that simulate actual competition environments.

The availability of these facilities plays a critical role in enhancing the quality of education and performance. Students can rehearse with high-quality sound systems, record their performances, and receive real-time feedback from instructors, all of which contribute to their overall development as artists^[12].

4.3. Collaborative partnerships and external opportunities

ZUST has also forged strong collaborations with external institutions, organizations, and professional artists, further enriching the learning experience for students. The university's approach to "classroom + stage + society" integrates classroom education with practical stage performance and social engagement. By connecting students with industry professionals, alumni, and external organizations, the university provides valuable networking opportunities that can help students transition into professional careers^[13].

For example, the Art Practice Month initiative, led by the Music and Dance College, features a variety of events such as master classes, expert lectures, and competitions that engage students with professional artists and educators. These events bridge the gap between academic training and professional practice, helping students prepare for the challenges they may face in their future careers^[14].

5. Achievements in competitions

ZUST's students have demonstrated outstanding results in various competitions, which highlight the effectiveness of the competition-education integration model. These achievements are not only a reflection of the students' individual talents but also of the university's commitment to fostering a competitive, creative, and supportive environment^[15].

In October 2021, students under the guidance of faculty won first place in the Guangdong Province Higher Education Art Exhibition and Performance in the vocal music category.

In December 2021, they secured first place in the “Youth Songs for the Party” Guangdong Private University Students Choir Competition, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

In January 2023, students excelled at the Brahms International Winter Choral Festival, winning first place with their performance.

In July 2023, ZUST students won second place in the Guangdong University “Welcome the 20th National Congress” Campus Choir Competition.

In December 2023, they earned first place in the Seventh Guangdong University Student Art Exhibition in the vocal music group.

These awards underscore the success of ZUST’s approach to integrating competition with education, creating an environment that nurtures student potential and prepares them for professional challenges.

6. Conclusion

The integration of competition and education at ZUST has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing the quality of music and dance education. By providing students with the opportunity to apply their skills in competitive settings, the university fosters not only technical proficiency but also creativity, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Through clear policies, world-class facilities, and strong partnerships with industry professionals, ZUST has established a robust support system for students pursuing excellence in both academics and extracurricular activities.

As competition-education integration continues to shape the future of music and dance education at ZUST, the university’s commitment to developing well-rounded, innovative, and socially engaged artists is evident in the impressive achievements of its students. Moving forward, ZUST is poised to continue leveraging this model to cultivate the next generation of talented professionals in the arts.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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