

Exploring Teaching Pathways for Han Chinese Folk Songs in Primary Schools under the Guidance of Large Unit Instruction

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Abstract

Han Chinese folk songs are not only an important component of traditional Chinese musical culture but also one of the main channels for music education in primary schools. Currently, the teaching of folk songs in primary schools suffers from issues such as fragmented and superficial content, cultural disconnection, and a lack of continuity across grade levels, resulting in the educational value not being fully realized. The concept of large unit teaching is guided by the design principles of cultural relevance, aesthetic focus, structural coherence, and grade-level appropriateness. It integrates unit content through two main threads—regional culture and genre function—and proposes differentiated implementation strategies according to different school stages. This approach aims to shift students from “learning a single song” to “understanding a type of culture,” providing a concrete practical framework for the implementation of core competencies.

Keywords

large unit teaching, primary school music education, Han Chinese folk songs, cultural inheritance, teaching strategies

1. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of the “Double Reduction” policy and the optimization and reform of basic education curricula, the focus of primary school music education has shifted from previous single-skill training to the cultivation of aesthetic experience and cultural identity. The Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) explicitly advocate the concept of “highlighting curriculum integration,” elevating the interdisciplinary and practical nature of music courses to a new level. Its essence is to guide students to achieve profound cultural understanding, strong national pride, and innovative artistic expression through artistic practice. In this process, Han Chinese folk songs, with their profound historical and cultural depth as well as distinctive regional characteristics, play a significant role in helping students understand the national spirit and establish cultural confidence.

From the perspective of large unit instruction, music teaching should be designed holistically by integrating teaching content through core concepts, enabling students to develop an overall understanding of musical cultural connotations while learning musical elements (Wu, 2022). This large unit teaching model,

characterized by theme-led organization and structural integration, aligns well with the new curriculum standards' emphasis on "strengthening interdisciplinary connections and promoting comprehensive curriculum implementation." It effectively addresses current problems in primary school Han Chinese folk song teaching, such as fragmented content and discontinuities between grade levels. Furthermore, it provides a systematic teaching framework for bringing traditional culture into campuses under the guidance of core competencies in Han Chinese folk songs, serving as an effective pathway for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture.

2. The Practical Dilemmas and Causal Analysis of Han Chinese Folk Song Teaching in Primary Schools

At present, the teaching of Han Chinese folk songs in primary schools faces structural contradictions. On the one hand, its mission of cultural inheritance is receiving increasing attention; on the other hand, traditional teaching methods can no longer meet the requirements of content integration and in-depth cultural exploration. As a result, a clear contradiction has emerged between actual teaching effectiveness and educational goals. Only through a calm examination and profound analysis of the current situation can we identify the starting point for genuine transformation.

2.1 Fragmented and Superficial Characteristics in Textbooks and Classroom Instruction

The most direct manifestation of the dilemmas in primary school Han Chinese folk song teaching is the disconnect between the arrangement of textbook content and actual classroom implementation. Although various versions of compulsory education music textbooks include classic Han Chinese folk songs, their arrangement is predominantly "scattered" or "star-point" in style. For example, the Jiangnan tune *Jasmine Flower* appears in Unit 1 "Fragrant Jasmine" of the People's Music Publishing House sixth-grade Volume I, while the northern folk song *Weaving Flower Baskets* appears in Unit 4 of the People's Education Press second-grade Volume I. There is no clear cultural lineage or musical logic connecting these songs. Such an arrangement detaches folk song teaching from specific lesson contexts, leaving students with isolated musical pieces rather than a coherent cultural community.

In classroom teaching, the instructional process is largely fixed into a standardized model: "listening to model singing, rhythm practice, sentence-by-sentence instruction, and emotional processing." Teachers tend to focus heavily on skill-based objectives such as pitch accuracy, rhythm, and articulation. When teaching the Sichuan folk song *Cowherd's Mountain Song* from Unit 4 "Herding" in the People's Music Publishing House third-grade Volume I, most teachers devote the majority of class time to practicing the high-pitched, resonant melody and characteristic interjections such as "yo sha, yo wei" and "ge'er luo wei." However, they often fail to explore in depth the cultural connotations embedded in this mountain song, which originated in the rural areas of Sichuan.

Cowherd's Mountain Song is a children's song sung by rural children in Sichuan while herding cattle. It depicts scenes of herding cows, driving cattle, and gathering firewood. The interjections derive from Sichuan dialect and reflect the life wisdom of local people in expressing emotions and coordinating rhythms during labor. Yet in classroom practice, teachers mostly concentrate on pitch, rhythm, and mastering the singing style of mountain songs. Few guide students to explore the intrinsic connection between the soaring melody and the mountainous environment of eastern Sichuan, where bright, prolonged voices are needed in the valleys to call companions and transmit information. Even fewer teachers connect the improvisational singing in the fields to the local ballads that form part of a generation's childhood memories, helping students appreciate the deep, inseparable relationship between the simple lyrics—such as "The sun rises and shines on the northern cliffs" and "Driving the cattle up the mountain"—and the local production and daily life.

By isolating folk songs from their original cultural context for teaching, the originally vivid and lively music is reduced to a flat, mechanical "music textbook," rendering students' learning experiences singular and superficial. Effective folk song teaching should focus on the dialect and vocal style characteristics of the songs, guiding students to learn singing in connection with the dialect, thereby enriching their experience of its rhythmic charm. This approach helps students understand the relationship between folk songs and real life, and feel the unique earthy emotions and authentic local flavor of the songs. Teachers should use core

concepts to guide teaching content, enabling students to form an overall understanding of musical cultural connotations while grasping musical elements (Wu, 2022). However, in current widespread teaching practice, this dimension remains the weakest.

2.2 The Deep Contradiction of Cultural Disconnection and Lack of Continuity Across Grade Levels

Behind the above teaching methods lie three interrelated problems. The first is the phenomenon of excessive fragmentation in teaching content. Folk songs are not isolated artistic works; they are holistic art forms born from and reflecting specific regional, historical, and ethnic life contexts. Current teaching often fragments them into isolated pieces, preventing students from recognizing the symbiotic relationship between the desolate and far-reaching quality of northern Shaanxi “Xintianyou” and the gully-filled landscape of the Loess Plateau as well as its history of migration. Similarly, students fail to understand how the gentle and delicate Jiangnan tunes were nurtured by the warm, humid climate and everyday urban life of the water towns. This fragmented approach results in students lacking a systematic picture of Han Chinese folk songs.

The subsequent problem is the overly superficial transmission of culture. Teaching largely remains at the level of “being able to sing,” with insufficient exploration of the rich cultural codes embedded in folk songs. When learning *Lullaby* from the People’s Education Press first-grade Volume II, students may feel the gentle and peaceful melody, yet they are rarely guided to appreciate the family ethics, parent-child affection, and universal human care it contains. As a result, students find it difficult to achieve genuine improvement in the core competency dimension of cultural understanding. When learning *Dragon Boat Rowing* from the People’s Music Publishing House fourth-grade Volume I, students may master its sonorous “one lead, all respond” rhythmic pattern, but few teachers trace the deep connections between this Anhui Dangtu folk song and Dragon Boat Festival customs, such as dragon boat racing and commemorating Qu Yuan. Consequently, aesthetic perception remains superficial, and artistic expression lacks inner emotional support. Such superficial cultural contact fails to touch students’ spiritual world, making it difficult for the core competencies of cultural understanding, aesthetic perception, and artistic expression to be truly implemented in teaching. Cultural inheritance thus becomes an empty slogan. This indicates that the problem of superficial cultural transmission in current teaching still exists and needs to be overcome through in-depth instructional design, so that core competencies can take root and flourish in folk song classrooms. Folk song teaching should rely on rich ethnic cultural resources to create diverse classroom scenarios, using engaging and dynamic methods to enable students to closely experience and feel classic musical works of various ethnic groups. Through singing, students’ souls are nurtured, promoting the practical implementation of core competencies (Zhang, 2024).

The third major problem is the phenomenon of teaching discontinuities between different grade levels. There is no top-level design or vertical articulation in folk song teaching across lower, middle, and upper primary school stages. Teaching objectives are unclear and overlap mechanically; teaching content repeats the same knowledge points rigidly or fluctuates sharply in difficulty without being arranged according to students’ cognitive development; and teaching methods fail to progress in line with students’ cognitive growth. For example, when teaching narrative *Xiaodiao* (small tunes), lower grades can only engage with the story through listening and appreciation, middle grades fail to conduct in-depth analysis of its musical narrative techniques, and upper grades lack tasks for creative adaptation based on such analysis. In the teaching design of minority folk songs, four progressive levels—perception, expression, creation, and sublimation—are used to guide students in experiencing different ethnic folk song styles (Liu & Ma, 2022). The same progressive approach is also suitable for Han Chinese folk song teaching. However, the discontinuities between grade levels prevent students’ learning from producing cumulative effects and spiral progression, thereby weakening the overall synergy of long-term teaching.

2.3 Causal Analysis: Lag in Teaching Philosophy and Evaluation System

From the perspective of teaching philosophy, many practices have not yet fully broken free from the mindset of “music skills as the core.” Under the influence of this concept, folk songs are easily narrowed down to materials for training pitch and rhythm, while their deeper significance as carriers of ethnic culture is marginalized. As a result, students find it difficult to understand the national essence embedded within

them. If teachers lack sufficient cultural awareness, it is hard to shift the teaching focus from “teaching techniques” to “cultivating people through culture.”

Another deep-seated constraint lies in the deficiencies of the evaluation system. For a long time, music teaching evaluation in practice has followed an inertial path dominated by summative and skill-based approaches. Assessments at the end of a unit typically focus on whether students can accurately sing prescribed songs from memory and master technical indicators such as pitch and rhythm. While this evaluation method is convenient to implement and produces clear results, it invisibly directs the teaching focus toward the “visible outcomes” of skill training. However, aspects such as whether students truly understand the cultural implications of folk songs, can perceive their aesthetic qualities, or develop emotional resonance are often excluded from formal evaluation because they are difficult to quantify and assess. This is not merely a matter of individual teachers’ cognitive bias, but a path dependence formed over time by the evaluation system. When “measurability” becomes the primary consideration in evaluation design, those competency dimensions that cannot be easily quantified are easily overlooked. One of the important reasons why core competency-oriented teaching reform has been difficult to advance is that the evaluation system has not shifted synchronously. If the “baton” of evaluation continues to operate on the old track, deep-level changes in teaching will struggle to receive institutional support.

In addition, the lack of systematic supporting resources constitutes an objective limitation. On the one hand, teachers’ own traditional music cultural literacy varies greatly; many feel inadequate when encountering the dialect, historical, and folk custom knowledge behind folk songs. On the other hand, there is still a shortage of systematic, high-quality teaching resource banks that are convenient for frontline teachers to use. As a result, even when teachers have the willingness to reform, they are often constrained by resources and time, preventing them from conducting in-depth instructional design. Large unit teaching oriented toward core competencies requires teachers to possess strong cultural interpretation and curriculum integration abilities (Zhang, 2024). The cultivation of these abilities still has a long way to go.

3. Constructing a Large Unit Teaching Pathway: Systematic Innovation of Teaching Methods

To fundamentally resolve the practical problems existing in primary school Han Chinese folk song teaching, it is necessary to achieve systematic innovation through structured teaching thinking. Large unit teaching is precisely the instructional model that responds to this requirement. Unlike traditional “lesson-hour units,” a large unit is not a simple superposition of several folk songs. Rather, it is an integrative teaching unit centered on a core theme that structurally reorganizes scattered teaching content to form a complete learning cycle. Within this framework, students are no longer confronted with isolated knowledge points, but with a meaningful world that is interconnected by a core theme and can be perceived and explored. Core competency-oriented large unit teaching requires reorganization and planning around unit knowledge and skills as well as lesson-hour content arrangement, thereby constructing a closely linked, interlocking, and progressively advancing teaching system (Zhang, 2024). This provides an effective theoretical framework and practical pathway for condensing scattered folk song knowledge points into a culturally profound whole.

3.1 Core Principles of Integrative Unit Teaching

To implement large unit teaching, the core design principles must first be established to ensure that the direction of reform does not deviate from the essence of education. The primary principle is the principle of cultural immersion. This means that unit design should restore folk songs to the cultural soil in which they grew. Teaching should not begin with abstract musical scores, but rather from the cultural contexts that nurtured the folk songs—such as life scenes, labor practices, festival rituals, dialects, and local languages. For example, when designing a unit on labor work songs (*Haozi*), the first step is to create an atmosphere of collective collaboration and heavy physical labor, helping students understand that *Haozi* originally existed as a practical tool for coordinating movements and boosting morale in production, and only later evolved into a form of musical art. Music is a form of human cultural expression deeply rooted in specific cultural soil, embodying the thoughts, emotions, and values of a particular group of people. Music teaching detached from its cultural background is pale and powerless. Therefore, large unit teaching should create cultural

fields so that while exploring musical forms, students naturally come to understand the lifestyles and values behind them, achieving subtle cultural identification.

The second principle is the principle of aesthetic symbiosis. The primary pathway of music education is aesthetic experience, and cultural understanding must be realized through aesthetic activities. Unit design should fully leverage the unique formal beauty and emotional beauty of folk songs, fostering refined appreciation and perception of elements such as the undulation of melodic lines, the tension and relaxation of rhythmic patterns, the charm of dialect pronunciation, and the enduring imagery of lyrics. For instance, in the “Water Town” unit of the People’s Music Publishing House fourth-grade Volume I, students should be guided to experience the intrinsic connection between the smooth and graceful melody of *Tea-Picking Dance* and the language of the Jiangnan water towns. This song skillfully integrates the singing style of Yue Opera with the flavor of Jiangnan folk music. Its melodic lines rise and fall with twists and turns, clear and lively. The opening line “The stream is clear and long” has a melodic contour that closely matches the tonal inflections of Wu dialect, transporting listeners to the misty springtime of the tea mountains in southern Zhejiang. The melismatic, drawn-out phrases in the middle section resemble the nimble movements of tea-picking girls’ fingertips dancing over the tea bushes, vividly presenting the labor life of the Jiangnan water towns. During listening and singing, teachers can guide students to notice how the melodic progression imitates the light and rhythmic movements of tea picking, helping them feel how the Jiangnan water towns gave birth to such a fresh and natural musical language. By using cultural threads to connect folk song teaching, culture becomes audible and visible, and the unique charm of folk songs can be genuinely felt. Aesthetic experience serves as a bridge between students’ emotions and folk song culture. The profound aspects of cultural connotations must be grasped through keen aesthetic perception, allowing students to naturally enter the folk songs nurtured by local environment and life while appreciating musical beauty.

The principle of structural integration distinguishes large unit teaching from traditional single-lesson teaching. It breaks through the inherent lesson-hour boundaries and unit divisions of textbooks, taking a powerful core theme as the logical starting point for teaching organization and incorporating learning activities spanning several weeks into the same cognitive framework. Themes such as “Songs of the Mountains and Wilds” or “Poetic Sounds of the Water Towns” do not merely name teaching content; they provide an inner spiritual thread for integrating multiple folk songs, connecting musical knowledge, embedding cultural background, and unfolding diverse practical activities. Under the guidance of such a theme, folk song works scattered throughout the textbook, key skill training points, and cultural background materials are reorganized into logically coherent and progressively layered learning units. Students are no longer faced with isolated fragments of knowledge, but with a meaningful world connected by a central theme—one that can be perceived and explored. This process of structural integration constitutes an important pathway for students to move from fragmented cognition to systematic understanding, and from superficial perception to deep appreciation.

Finally, there is the principle of grade-level appropriateness. Large unit design must follow the cognitive development patterns and musical ability foundations of primary school students at different stages. Units for lower grades should be game-oriented, story-based, and situational, emphasizing sensory immersion; units for middle grades should strengthen comparison, analysis, and preliminary cultural connections, focusing on rational construction; and units for upper grades should encourage inquiry, critique, and creative expression, emphasizing cultural understanding and transfer application. Units across the three grade levels should demonstrate a spiral upward trend in objectives, content, and methods, ensuring continuity and developmental progression in learning, and effectively overcoming the phenomenon of grade-level discontinuities.

3.2 Integration of Textbook Content and Curriculum Resources under the Guidance of Core Themes

Based on the principles outlined above, the key to constructing large units for Han Chinese folk songs in primary schools lies in establishing core themes that can unify learning content and stimulate students’ interest in inquiry. There are two main pathways for determining such themes.

The first pathway takes regional cultural circles as the main thread. China has a vast territory, and different geographical environments and lifestyles have given rise to folk songs with distinct styles and

colors. Units can be designed such as “Entering the Loess Plateau: The Passion and Sighs of Xintianyou,” “Strolling through the Jiangnan Water Towns: The Grace and Wisdom of Xiaodiao,” and “Listening to the Bashan and Shushui Regions: The Power and Echoes of Chuanjiang Work Songs.” Taking the Loess Plateau unit as an example, teachers can integrate *Yellow River Boatmen’s Song* and *Driving the Pack Animals* from the People’s Education Press music textbooks, and supplement them with the extracurricular piece *Thirty-Mile Shop*. While learning to sing these works, students need to understand the influence of northern Shaanxi’s unique geographical environment on the musical style of Xintianyou. The Loess Plateau is crisscrossed with gullies; standing on one ridge, one can see people on the opposite side, yet it may take half a day to reach them. Therefore, people are accustomed to singing with full-throated voices, using high-pitched and prolonged tones to convey messages and express emotions. Gradually guiding students to ponder the sorrow of parting in *Thirty-Mile Shop* and to feel the hardships of the pack drivers in *Driving the Pack Animals* as they head westward, students can gradually touch the tenacious vitality of the people on this land and understand that these musical works are things that have grown directly out of life.

The second pathway takes folk song genres and their social functions as the main thread. Over its long history, Han Chinese folk songs have developed traditional genres such as work songs (*Haozi*), mountain songs, and small tunes (*Xiaodiao*), each possessing specific social functions and artistic characteristics. Units can be designed such as “The Rhythm of Life: Collaboration and Spirit in Labor Work Songs,” “Lyricism of the Mountains and Wilds: Styles and Emotions of Mountain Songs from Different Regions,” and “Pictures of Everyday Life: Stories and Customs in *Xiaodiao*.” Taking the “Labor Work Songs” unit as an example, *Military and Civilian Great Production* from Unit 6 of the People’s Music Publishing House sixth-grade Volume I can serve as core material. At the same time, video resources of work songs from different labor scenes can be introduced, such as the log-lifting work song *Ha Yao Gua* from the northeastern forest areas and fragments of boatmen’s work songs from the Chuanjiang River basin. Students are guided to conduct inquiry through comparative listening. *Military and Civilian Great Production* is an adapted work based on the widely circulated tamping work song *Tui Chao Mian* from the Longdong region of Gansu. Its interjections such as “he ke” and “xi li li li cha la la la” vividly recreate the labor scenes of military and civilians reclaiming wasteland in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region during that era. The song employs a “one lead, all respond” singing form: the leader’s part is high-pitched and powerful, while the chorus part is sonorous and forceful. The call-and-response style seems to recreate the bustling and fervent labor scenes of the time. Through comparing work songs from different regions and labor types, students will discover a common pattern: although the content of labor differs, all work songs employ the “one lead, all respond” singing method, with rhythmic patterns adapted to labor movements, jointly serving to boost morale and coordinate collective labor. In folk song teaching, students can be guided to learn and perform following the steps of listening to work songs, learning work songs, singing work songs, and enacting work songs. In simulated labor situations, students experience the singing form of labor work songs and their isomorphic relationship with labor rhythms. This teaching method can help students form an understanding of the essential connection between musical form and social production, realizing that folk songs naturally arise from labor and daily life.

It should be noted that the two main threads of “regional culture” and “genre function” can also permeate and encompass each other. Regional culture is the soil from which folk song styles emerge, while genre function is the way folk songs exert their roles in social life. Specific geographical environments give rise to particular modes of production and lifestyles, thereby generating folk song genres with corresponding functions. The reason Xintianyou prevalent in the Loess Plateau of northern Shaanxi exhibits a high-pitched, prolonged, and freely unrestrained form is determined by the social functions it performs. Due to the gully-filled geographical environment, people need penetrating voices to transmit information and express emotions, which has shaped a singing style of “singing to the sky and living according to heaven.” Moreover, the migratory life that occurred against the specific historical background of “walking to the western pass” has imbued Xintianyou with an emotional undertone of parting sorrow and unyielding tenacity. It is thus evident that genre function is determined by regional culture; the two are two sides of the same coin and together constitute the complete picture of folk songs. When designing units, teachers should intentionally integrate the two threads: on the one hand, guiding students to understand the origins of folk song styles from the perspective of geographical environment; on the other hand, leading students to explore the social functions and life wisdom embedded within them. This “dual-thread integration” design concept can effectively prevent regional culture units from becoming mere introductions to geographical knowledge or

genre function units from turning into dry analyses of musical forms, thereby returning folk song teaching truly to culture and to music itself.

A complete unit should not be a simple accumulation of several folk songs, but rather a series of interconnected learning activity sequences. From the immersion and perception of cultural context, students encounter folk songs in concrete scenarios; next, they study classic works through listening and singing to form initial impressions; on this basis, teachers guide students to explore the musical characteristics, formal patterns, and stylistic codes of folk songs; afterward, they enter the stage of creative practice and expression, allowing students to dialogue with folk songs through singing, adaptation, and performance; finally, through diversified presentation and evaluation of outcomes, learning achievements are displayed and reflected upon. These five links support one another and progress layer by layer, forming a closed learning loop from situational immersion to ontological inquiry, and from content deepening to creative expression. Only such a structured design can fundamentally break the shallow traditional classroom model of “teaching one song and singing one song.”

3.3 Gradient Teaching Implementation Strategies by Grade Level

The successful implementation of large unit teaching ultimately depends on refined execution that aligns with students’ developmental levels. Different unit formats must be designed according to the psychological and ability differences of students in lower, middle, and upper primary grades.

For the lower grades (Grades 1–2), implementation should be positioned as “game-based immersion and intuitive awakening.” At this stage, children’s thinking is dominated by concrete and imagistic cognition. They have short attention spans, strong curiosity, and a love for imitation, games, and role-playing. The main purpose of folk song teaching at this stage is not systematic knowledge acquisition, but to plant emotional seeds of affection for ethnic melodies in children’s hearts through pleasant sensory experiences. Content selection should be closely related to children’s life experiences. Teachers can design engaging Han Chinese folk song units in which teaching activities take the form of music games. Music games can concentrate children’s attention and allow them to perceive the charm of music through interaction. At the same time, lower-grade music teaching should integrate different modes of expression such as rhythmic movement and performance to cultivate students’ comprehensive musical abilities. For example, when learning *Counting Frogs* from the People’s Education Press second-grade Volume I, students can role-play the characters in the song, performing and singing simultaneously within a story context to achieve the goal of teaching through enjoyment. When learning the extracurricular lullaby *The Moon Is Bright and the Wind Is Still*, students can hold a doll and imitate a mother’s gentle rocking motions and soft singing tone. At this stage, abstract cultural explanations should be completely avoided. Instead, children should naturally accumulate pleasant auditory and bodily memories while “playing” with folk songs and using them, thereby establishing the initial emotional connection with ethnic melodies.

For the middle grades (Grades 3–4), implementation should focus on style perception and cultural connections. At this stage, students’ logical thinking abilities are just beginning to emerge. They have strong curiosity, possess certain abilities in comparison, classification, and induction, and are starting to develop a sense of group cooperation. The main purpose of folk song teaching should shift from sensory accumulation to rational construction, enabling students to consciously discover stylistic differences among folk songs from different regions and genres, and then explore the connections between these differences and cultural elements such as geographical environment, lifestyle, and dialect pronunciation. The unit objective is for students to be able to distinguish representative folk song style characteristics and understand the preliminary relationship between musical forms and cultural backgrounds. Content selection should include representative regional folk songs with distinct stylistic contrasts from the textbooks, such as Jiangsu’s *Jasmine Flower*, Sichuan’s *The Sun Comes Out Bright and Cheerful*, and Shandong’s *Yimeng Mountain Tune*. Teaching activities should incorporate numerous comparative listening and inquiry tasks. For instance, placing *Jasmine Flower* and *The Sun Comes Out Bright and Cheerful* together for comparison allows students to create short “folk song profile cards” covering aspects such as melodic lines, rhythm, lyrics content, and singing style. By combining maps, landscape images, and short videos introducing local customs and culture, students can gain intuitive impressions of the graceful charm of *Jasmine Flower*, nurtured by the soft mountains and waters of Jiangnan, and the bright, spicy vigor of *The Sun Comes Out Bright and Cheerful*, shaped by the mountainous terrain and humid, hot climate of the Sichuan Basin. In the

teaching design of minority folk songs, a progressive teaching approach of perception, expression, creation, and sublimation is used to guide students in experiencing the stylistic characteristics of different ethnic folk songs (Liu & Ma, 2022). This progressive approach also holds referential value for Han Chinese folk song teaching. Conducting overall unit teaching with folk songs as the theme, through studying curriculum standards, organizing textbook content, understanding students' learning conditions, and reorganizing units, can better enable students to grasp the main knowledge and skills of the music discipline (Shao & Li, 2023). At this stage, group cooperation can be encouraged to complete simple data collection and classroom sharing reports.

For the upper grades (Grades 5–6), implementation should achieve “in-depth understanding and creative expression.” At this stage, students' abstract thinking levels have improved, their values are beginning to form, and they possess critical thinking and artistic creativity. Unit objectives should enable students to truly grasp the cultural connotations and social significance of folk songs and engage in meaningful creative practice using folk song elements. Content can include more richly connotative and artistically sophisticated pieces, such as the representative classic folk song *The Little River Flows* from the People's Music Publishing House sixth-grade Volume I. When learning the Yunnan folk song *The Little River Flows*, in addition to analyzing its beautiful and fluent melody as a representative mountain song of Yunnan, and feeling the graceful tenderness of its *yu* mode and the pure simplicity of its pentatonic scale, students can also be guided to explore the intrinsic connections between this musical style and the highland mountainous environment of Yunnan as well as the life of horse drivers along the Ancient Tea Horse Road. Midu is located on the western Yunnan plateau. Horse drivers have long traveled through towering mountains and ridges; in moonlit valleys, they rely on long, bright singing voices to transmit messages and express emotions. The expansive, undulating melodic lines of *The Little River Flows* are precisely a natural imitation of valley echoes. The metaphorical and evocative technique used in the lyrics “Brother is like the moon walking across the sky” realistically reflects the situation of horse drivers venturing far from home while also concealing a younger lover's deep longing for her beloved. Teachers can guide students to imagine the scene: a horse driver departing under moonlight, while the girl left in the mountain village expresses her longing toward the little river. In such restored situational contexts, students can understand that this folk song, praised as an “Oriental serenade,” was not created out of nothing, but emerged from a specific natural environment and humanistic foundation. It is a powerful testimony to the intersection of humans and nature, labor and emotion. On this basis, the most important component is creative practice. Students can be encouraged to attempt simple melody composition or lyric adaptation for a modern poem or a campus life scene, applying the characteristics of a learned folk song genre. They can also work in groups to plan a small folk song concert, using methods such as a cappella, simple instrumental accompaniment, or incorporation of modern rhythms to perform fashionable adaptations of traditional folk songs while respecting their core essence. Core competency-oriented primary school music folk song teaching should focus on the macro requirements of core competencies, promoting culture while cultivating musical skills, fostering national spirit, and establishing correct values. Large unit teaching in the upper grades is precisely intended to build such a practical platform for students to transition from cultural consumers to cultural participants and creators.

4. Conclusion

The dilemmas in primary school Han Chinese folk song teaching stem from the fact that traditional skill-oriented models cannot undertake the comprehensive task of cultural inheritance. Large unit teaching is not a simple methodological improvement; it is a systematic transformation centered on theme-led organization, structural reorganization, cultural immersion, and vertical articulation across grade levels. It transforms folk songs from isolated pieces into meaningful media through which students explore culture, construct aesthetics, and express themselves. This shifts the learning pathway from superficial skill mastery to deep cultural understanding, and from passive knowledge reception to active meaning construction and creative expression.

To implement this pathway, it is necessary to systematically develop a replicable database of large unit teaching cases that fully present the entire process from theme determination to evaluation implementation, providing frontline teachers with directly usable operational models. In addition, the teacher training system should be optimized through specialized teaching and research activities, university-primary school

cooperation, and other forms to enhance teachers' cultural literacy and curriculum integration abilities, enabling teachers to truly become deep interpreters and explainers of ethnic music culture. This is a crucial hub for moving reform from concept to practice. On this foundation, a comprehensive evaluation system aligned with core competency objectives should be constructed, incorporating dimensions such as cultural confidence, language application, thinking ability, and aesthetic creation into the evaluation framework. Using methods such as portfolios and performance-based tasks, the evaluation process itself can become an internal driving force for promoting students' deep learning and competency development, thereby advancing teaching reform comprehensively from resource construction and teacher training to evaluation orientation.

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