

## HISTORICAL FORMS OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MUSIC AND VOCAL TEACHERS' TRAINING IN MODERN PR CHINA

### ІСТОРИЧНІ ФОРМИ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ В ПІДГОТОВЦІ ВЧИТЕЛІВ МУЗИКИ ТА ВОКАЛУ ДЛЯ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ В СУЧАСНІЙ КНР

У статті розглядається професійна підготовка вчителів мистецьких та музичних дисциплін (вокалу та музичного мистецтва) для молодших шкіл у Китайській Народній Республіці, приділяючи особливу увагу використанню різноманітних форм дистанційної освіти, що охоплює не лише комп'ютерне навчання, а й навчання за допомогою телебачення, радіо, кореспонденційне навчання та самонавчання з подальшою валідацією через державні кваліфікаційні іспити. Розуміючи ці різноманітні методи, які застосовуються в Китаї, Україна може отримати цінну інформацію та потенційні переваги для розбудови своєї власної освітньої системи. У статті наголошується, що означені форми дистанційного навчання переважно використовуються в КНР для підвищення кваліфікації викладачів, підготовки їх до іспитів та просування по службі, а не для початкової підготовки у вищих навчальних закладах. У цій статті «дистанційне навчання» визначається в широкому сенсі, як будь-яка форма освіти, яка не вимагає від учня постійної присутності в освітньому закладі та дозволяє реалізувати своє право на якісну освіту за індивідуальною траєкторією навчання, що також актуально для сучасної України. Відмінною рисою практики Китаю є продовження використання традиційних форм дистанційного навчання, таких як навчання через радіо, телебачення та кореспонденційне навчання. Ці форми надання освітніх послуг, які традиційно асоціюються з першою половиною ХХ століття, сьогодні повністю інтегровані в єдину систему державних освітніх послуг Китаю. Використана в статті методологія включає підходи, характерні для порівняльної педагогіки та історії педагогіки, із застосуванням загальнопедагогічних методів дослідження. Крім того, у статті зроблено висновки щодо доцільності та практичності впровадження означених китайських практик в Україні для вдосконалення освітнього інструментарію підготовки сучасних педагогів зокрема молодшої школи, особливо в умовах воєнного стану та обмежених онлайн-можливостей через російську агресію.

**Ключові слова:** КНР (Китай), система підготовки вчителів, навчальний підхід, дистанційне навчання, викладачі мистецьких та музичних дисциплін, початкова школа.

This article examines the professional training of music teachers (vocals and music) for junior high schools in the People's Republic of China, with a particular focus on the use of various forms of distance education. This encompasses not only computer-based learning but also TV learning, radio learning, correspondence learning, and self-learning validated through exams. By understanding these diverse methods employed in China, Ukraine can gain valuable insights and potential benefits for its own educational system. The article highlights that these distance learning methods are predominantly utilised for teacher professional development, exam preparation, and promotions, rather than for initial training in higher education institutions. In this article, "distance learning" is broadly defined as any form of education that does not require the learner to be permanently present at an educational institution, thereby allowing the realisation of their right to quality education through an individualised learning path, which is also pertinent for modern Ukraine. A distinctive feature of China's practice is the continued use of traditional forms of distance learning such as radio learning, TV learning, and correspondence learning. These methods, often associated with the early 20th century, are fully integrated into China's unified system of state educational services. The methodology used in this article includes approaches typical of comparative education studies and the history of pedagogy, employing general pedagogical research methods. Additionally, the article draws conclusions about the feasibility and practicality of adopting these Chinese practices in Ukraine to enhance the educational toolkit for training contemporary pedagogical specialists, especially under the constraints of state of war and restricted online opportunities due to Russian aggression.

**Key words:** PR China, teachers' training system, educational approach, elementary school, distance learning, art and music discipline teachers.

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**Introduction.** Distance learning has undergone significant transformations over the past century, with various methods emerging to cater to diverse educational needs. Historically, starting the end of 19th and up to mid-20th century, TV learning, radio learning, and correspondence learning were widely adopted as innovative solutions to educational challenges. These methods provided access to education for those who could not attend traditional schools due to geographic, economic, or personal constraints. However, as digital technologies advanced, many countries shifted

their focus to computer-based and online learning platforms, gradually abandoning the older methods. Unlike many other nations, China has maintained and integrated TV learning, radio learning, and correspondence learning within its state educational system, particularly for adult education. This integration is part of China's broader strategy to provide flexible and individualised educational opportunities to its population. For elementary school music and vocal teachers, these traditional forms of distance learning offer unique advantages and complement modern

online learning methods. The study of different forms of distance learning is vital for the training of elementary school music and vocal teachers in China. By embracing and integrating traditional methods like TV-learning, radio-learning, and correspondence learning into modern educational frameworks, China is pioneering a flexible and individualised approach to teacher education. This not only enhances accessibility and inclusivity but also fosters continuous professional development and innovative teaching practices. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the importance of these diverse learning modalities will only grow, ensuring that music and vocal teachers are well-equipped to inspire and educate the next generation of students.

This article **aims to** examine the professional training of elementary school music teachers (both vocal and general music education specialisation) in the People's Republic of China, with a particular focus on the use of various forms of distance education. Additionally, it seeks to draw conclusions regarding the feasibility and practicality of adopting these Chinese practices in Ukraine to enhance the educational toolkit for training contemporary pedagogical specialists.

**The novelty of the research** made for Ukrainian education science and practice can be defined through several key points. Preliminary, by exploring the continued use and integration of traditional distance learning methods such as TV-learning, radio-learning, and correspondence learning in China, this research highlights innovative ways to blend old and new educational technologies. This approach is relatively unexplored in Ukrainian educational practice, making it a novel contribution. Secondly, the research emphasises the concepts of “individual educational trajectory learning” and “flexible learning” as applied in China. These concepts are particularly relevant in today's educational landscape but have not been extensively studied or implemented in Ukraine's music education sector. Introducing these ideas represents a significant step towards modernising Ukrainian pedagogical practices. This study as well provides new perspectives on continuous professional development for music and vocal teachers through distance learning. By detailing how Chinese practices facilitate ongoing education and skill enhancement, the research offers novel strategies that can be adopted to improve the quality of elementary school teacher training in Ukraine.

**Research results.** China's educational system is undergoing significant transformation, with a strong emphasis on creating flexible and individualised learning pathways. The concepts of “individual educational trajectory learning” and “flexible learning” are at the forefront of this change. These concepts advocate for personalised education plans that cater to the unique needs and circumstances of each learner,

allowing them to progress at their own pace and in their own way [1]. For elementary school music and vocal teachers, this flexibility is particularly beneficial. Music and vocal education require not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and personal artistic development. Distance learning provides a platform for these teachers to access a wide range of resources, engage with diverse teaching methodologies, and receive continuous professional development without being bound by geographic limitations. Distance learning has a long history, with TV-learning, radio-learning, and correspondence learning being predominant forms until the late 20th century [5]. These methods provided education to those who could not attend traditional schools due to geographical, financial, or personal constraints. In the 1970s, the proliferation of these methods enabled widespread access to education, laying the groundwork for modern distance learning approaches. China, recognising the value of these traditional methods, has incorporated them into its current educational framework. The integration of these forms of learning into China's educational services for adults showcases the country's commitment to lifelong learning and educational flexibility. This historical continuity also emphasises the relevance of studying these methods in the context of modern educational needs.

Distance learning, a concept that has revolutionised education by breaking geographical and temporal barriers, has a rich history in China. It encompasses any form of education that does not require the learner to be permanently present at an educational institution. This includes various modalities such as online education, TV learning, radio learning, correspondence learning, and self-learning. In recent years, China has further expanded this concept by integrating it into the frameworks of “flexible learning” and “individual trajectory learning”, which emphasise personalised and adaptive educational experiences. Distance learning in China has evolved significantly over the decades, beginning with more traditional methods and gradually incorporating advanced technologies [2]. The traditional forms of distance learning in China mainly include:

**Correspondence learning** has a long and impactful history in China, serving as one of the earliest forms of distance education. Originating in the early 20th century, correspondence courses were designed to provide educational opportunities to those who could not attend traditional schools due to geographical, financial, or personal constraints. These courses involved the exchange of educational materials and assignments between instructors and students through the mail. In the 1950s and 1960s, correspondence learning gained prominence as a means to educate the vast rural population of China [5]. The government recognised its potential to reach learners in remote areas, where access to schools

was limited. Educational content was developed and distributed, allowing students to study at their own pace and complete assignments, which were then mailed back to the instructors for feedback and grading. This method was particularly effective in increasing literacy rates and providing basic education to the masses. In contemporary China, correspondence learning has evolved to include a blend of traditional and modern methods, often supplemented by digital resources when available. This hybrid approach ensures that learners in remote or underserved areas can still benefit from structured educational programs. [6] Presenting, how the correspondence learning is used for training elementary school music teachers today we should mention that mainly it is used in the form of supplemental resources (books, CDs, DVDs and USB drives with recorded lectures, musical pieces, and instructional videos can be sent to students by real postal letter to help bridge the gap between purely written materials and interactive learning) or written assignments (when students complete written assignments based on their study materials and mail them back to their instructors; these assignments are designed to test their understanding of music theory, pedagogy, and practical application). Also very actively such forms are used as a part of qualification validation process when a teacher is required to record their vocal or instrumental lessons with elementary school children and send these recordings to their instructors. This allows instructors to assess their practical skills and provide personalised feedback [3]. The corresponding education is seen in China as a part of state educational system and is highly integrated into the local educational initiatives of provincial and local levels [7]. For example, in Hunan Province, a notable initiative has been implemented to train elementary school music teachers through correspondence learning. Recognising the limited access to digital resources in rural areas, the Hunan Education Department has developed a Comprehensive Correspondence Program that includes:

- Detailed Course Packs, that contain textbooks, sheet music, and instructional guides tailored to the specific needs of elementary school music education;
- Regular Assessments made by Capital Music Academy (Beijing) teachers for which local students and young teachers enrolled for the course submit assignments and recorded performances every month, receiving detailed feedback to improve their skills;
- Bi-Annual Intensive Workshops that students attend in regional centres to participate in practical training sessions and interact with their peers and instructors.

This initiative has successfully trained numerous music teachers who now serve in rural elementary schools, significantly enhancing the quality of

elementary school music education in the region [3; 4; 6; 9].

**TV-learning** emerged as a significant component of distance education in China during the late 20th century. With the proliferation of television sets in the 1970s and 1980s, the Chinese government recognised the potential of TV as a medium to disseminate educational content widely. This method was especially effective in reaching rural and remote areas, where access to traditional educational institutions was limited [10]. During this period, educational television programs were developed to cover a wide range of subjects, including literacy, science, mathematics, and arts. These programs were broadcast on national and local television channels, providing structured lessons that students could follow from home. The approach aimed to complement existing educational resources and provide additional learning opportunities for students who faced barriers to attending regular schools. In contemporary China, TV-learning has evolved to include a blend of traditional broadcast methods and modern digital technologies. This hybrid approach ensures that TV-learning remains a vital tool in distance education, particularly for training elementary school music teachers. For providing educational services for elementary schools` music teachers are used dedicated educational channels of national level such as CCTV (China Central Television) – the national broadcaster where programs specifically designed for music education are aired regularly, covering topics such as music theory, vocal training, and instrumental practice. These programs are created in collaboration with leading music academies and education experts [11]. Many provincial and local TV stations also broadcast educational programs tailored to the needs of their communities. These programs often include segments on teaching methodologies, lesson planning, and classroom management for music teachers. Some educational programs both on national and local TV channels are broadcast live, allowing viewers to call in with questions or participate in real-time discussions. This interactivity helps bridge the gap between passive viewing and active learning. Many TV-learning programs are as well supplemented by online platforms where additional resources, such as lesson plans, instructional videos, and practice exercises, are available. These platforms enable teachers to review content and engage with interactive materials at their own pace [9].

A notable example of TV-learning for music teacher training can be found on Hunan Education TV. The channel broadcasts a series of programs aimed at training elementary school music teachers. These programs include *Weekly Music Education Shows* that cover a wide range of topics, from basic music theory and vocal exercises to advanced teaching techniques and curriculum development and

where viewers can send in questions via text or email to address the experts during the program; *Special Training Series* in form of set of programs that delve into specific areas of music education, such as choir direction, orchestration for young musicians, and the integration of music technology in the classroom and *Guest Experts` Shows* where renowned music educators and performers are invited to share their expertise and conduct masterclasses, offering teachers access to high-quality professional development. Hunan Education TV collaborates with local universities and music academies to produce content that is both academically rigorous and practically applicable. These partnerships ensure that the training provided is up-to-date and using the most current educational standards and practices [4; 7; 9; 10].

**Radio learning** has been a significant component of distance education in China, particularly in the mid-20th century. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese government recognised the potential of radio broadcasts to reach a broad audience. Educational programs were developed and aired, covering a variety of subjects, including literacy, health education, and vocational training. These programs were instrumental in increasing literacy rates and providing basic education to millions of people who otherwise had limited access to formal education. Radio learning was valued for its ability to disseminate information quickly and widely, making education accessible even to those in the most isolated regions. The format typically included lectures, storytelling, and interactive segments where listeners could write in with questions or participate in discussions [8]. In contemporary China, while digital technologies have become dominant in distance education, radio learning remains a valuable tool, especially in areas with limited internet access. Radio learning has adapted to modern needs and continues to be used effectively for training elementary school music teachers through various innovative approaches. China National Radio (CNR) broadcasts educational programs that include music education. These programs are designed to provide theoretical knowledge and practical skills for music teachers [7]. Many local radio stations as well have dedicated segments for educational content. These segments often include lessons on music theory, vocal training, and instrumental instruction tailored for elementary school teachers. Some radio programs incorporate listener interaction through call-ins, text messages, and social media. This interaction allows teachers to ask questions, share experiences, and receive real-time feedback from experts. Programs are often supplemented with printed materials and digital resources, such as CDs or online content, which provide additional context and practice exercises and can be ordered online from the radio station web-sites [10]. Recognising the ongoing need for accessible teacher training in rural

areas, Sichuan Radio and Television University has developed a series of radio-based programs aimed at training elementary school music teachers. In particular, this Initiative includes

- Weekly Educational Broadcasts that include lessons on music theory, vocal techniques, and the use of musical instruments in the classroom. The programs feature lectures and demonstrations by experienced music educators and performers, providing high-quality instruction and diverse perspectives. The content is designed to be practical and directly applicable to teaching elementary school students;

- Q&A Sessions for which teachers can send in questions via text message or social media, which are then addressed in live Q&A sessions after the main time and somehow influence the topic to be chosen for the discussion. This interactive component helps clarify concepts and provides personalised support.

- Peer Discussions: some segments of such programs are dedicated to discussions among teachers, where they share challenges and solutions related to music education. These discussions foster a sense of community and collaborative learning, as well as presenting different approaches to solving the concrete educational problem from different experts [6].

Alongside the radio programs, teachers can receive study packs containing textbooks, sheet music, and instructional guides and are encouraged to record their classroom sessions or individual performances and submit them to be discussed during the program.

For the training of elementary school music teachers, modern distance education methods provide accessible, high-quality, and flexible learning opportunities that cater to diverse needs and circumstances. Such forms as Massive open online courses (like XuetangX and Coursera), virtual classrooms (such as Tencent Classroom and DingTalk), specialised music education platforms (websites like iMusic-School and Yousician), music education apps (like Duolingo for Music and Simply Piano) and others more are at the forefront of modern distance education in China. These platforms offer comprehensive and interactive courses tailored to the needs of music teachers. Modern forms of distance education in China have revolutionised the training of elementary school music teachers. Through them China provides diverse and flexible educational opportunities that cater to the evolving needs of music educators. These methods combined with more historical ones ensure that teachers receive high-quality training, regardless of their location or circumstances, ultimately enhancing the quality of music education for elementary school students across the country.

**Conclusions.** For contemporary Ukraine, studying the different forms of distance learning used in

the PRC for training elementary school music and vocal teachers is essential. It ensures that educational opportunities are accessible to all, enhances the quality and flexibility of teacher training programs, and fosters innovation and continuous professional development. By learning from China's diverse distance learning methods, Ukraine can build a more inclusive, resilient, and effective educational system for its future elementary school music and vocal teachers. However, the presented research does not cover all aspects related to the specified topic. Prospective problems for further research in the chosen field include questions such as optimising resources through cost-effectiveness and resource efficiency of distance learning methods as part of Ukraine's educational services system. Additionally, exploring the cultural and educational exchange of practices between China and Ukraine can enrich both educational systems and contribute to a broader global dialogue on education. Adapting proven educational models from China to Ukraine and vice versa could lead to the development of hybrid models tailored to the specific needs of educators and students in both countries.

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