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Evaluating The Usability of A Cultural Activity Model Using Chinese Children's Songs: A Fuzzy Delphi Approach

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Abstract: Cultural appreciation plays a vital role in shaping children's identity, social understanding, and respect for diversity. Despite its significance, primary school music education in China often lacks effective pedagogical frameworks that integrate cultural elements. This study aims to develop and evaluate the usability of an activity model using Chinese children's songs to enhance cultural appreciation. Guided by a modified Design and Development Research (DDR) approach, the research was conducted in three phases. Phase one involved a needs analysis through surveys with 150 primary music educators and interviews with three cultural experts to assess the necessity and content requirements for the model. In phase two, the model was designed and refined using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) with nine experts. Phase three employed the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) to evaluate the model's usability among 50 experienced music teachers. Results showed high levels of expert consensus on the model's usability, including its ease of use, efficiency, and relevance to educational settings. The final model offers a structured, culturally grounded tool that can enhance curriculum design and teaching practices in music education. This study contributes to the integration of traditional cultural resources into contemporary education and offers a replicable framework for similar cultural-pedagogical innovations.

Keywords: Fuzzy Delphi Method, Chinese Children's Songs, Cultural Appreciation, Music Education, Activity Model, Usability Evaluation, Curriculum Design

1. Introduction

Culture is a cornerstone of individual and societal identity, shaping values, behaviors, and perceptions from a young age. In a rapidly globalizing world, fostering cultural appreciation has become increasingly essential in primary education. When children are exposed to diverse cultural practices and values, they develop empathy, openness, and a deeper understanding of their heritage and the world around them (Ramsey, 2004). In China, the Ministry of Education has made significant efforts to embed traditional cultural education across disciplines, particularly through the arts, including music (Law et al., 2011).

Music, especially children's songs, is a powerful medium for transmitting cultural values and traditions. Chinese children's songs, in particular, are rich in cultural symbolism, stories, and moral teachings. They offer an engaging and developmentally appropriate platform for instilling cultural knowledge and appreciation (Trehub, 2003; Eden et al., 2024). Yet, in many educational settings, music lessons are often reduced to rote memorization of lyrics and melodies, neglecting the deeper cultural context and experiential learning components that songs can provide (Bao, 2023). This gap is compounded by challenges such as a lack of culturally embedded teaching materials, limited teacher training, and the undervaluation of music education in exam-oriented school systems.

Addressing this gap, this study introduces a novel pedagogical framework named an Activity Model Using Chinese Children's Songs which is designed to enhance cultural appreciation among primary school children. Unlike general music teaching approaches, this model integrates cultural education directly into musical activities, offering a structured and systematic approach tailored to the Chinese context. The model was developed through a rigorous and iterative process grounded in the Design and Development Research (DDR) methodology (Richey & Klein, 2013; Aris et al., 2025), combining needs analysis, expert collaboration, and empirical usability evaluation.

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The theoretical underpinnings of this study draw from four foundational frameworks: Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978); the Kodály Method, which advocates for music literacy through culturally relevant songs (Mason, 2012); Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, which situates learning in a cycle of concrete experience and reflection (Kolb, 1984); and the Banks and Banks Multicultural Model, which guides the incorporation of cultural content into educational practice (Banks & Banks, 1998). These frameworks collectively support the creation of an activity-based, learner-centered model that respects both developmental and cultural dimensions of education.

The research was conducted in three distinct but interrelated phases. Phase one involved a needs analysis with 150 primary music teachers and three content experts to identify the current gaps and contextual requirements for model development. Phase two focused on model construction using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) to establish and refine activity elements (Abdul et al., 2024; Warfield, 1976). Phase three utilized the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) to evaluate the usability of the final model with 50 expert practitioners (Murray, Pipino, & van Gigch, 1985). This mixed-methods design ensured the model's relevance, practicality, and validity from both theoretical and practitioner perspectives.

The primary objectives of this study are threefold:

a. To identify the need for an activity model using Chinese children's songs to enhance cultural appreciation.
b. To design and develop the activity model in collaboration with subject matter experts.
c. To evaluate the usability of the model based on expert consensus using the Fuzzy Delphi Method.

In addition to addressing practical challenges in music education, this study contributes to the broader discourse on how traditional cultural resources can be innovatively adapted for contemporary educational use. By integrating traditional Chinese children's songs into structured pedagogical models, educators can not only preserve cultural heritage but also nurture students' cultural identity and global awareness (Zalli, 2024).

The findings of this study are expected to inform curriculum designers, music educators, and policymakers about the usability and effectiveness of culturally embedded teaching models. Moreover, the validated model offers a replicable framework that can be adapted to other cultural contexts or educational disciplines aiming to foster cultural appreciation through creative and experiential methods.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture and Cultural Appreciation

Culture is a dynamic system of shared values, practices, and artifacts that define how groups understand and engage with the world (Kaasa & Minkov, 2020). It encompasses both tangible elements, such as art, music, and clothing, and intangible elements, such as beliefs, social norms, and customs (Vecco, 2010). In the context of education, cultural appreciation refers to the deliberate effort to understand, value, and engage with the traditions, expressions, and worldviews of diverse cultural communities (Tapp, 2022).

Cultural appreciation fosters empathy, respect, and social harmony, especially when introduced in early childhood education (Tapp, 2022; Rohman, 2024). Research has shown that children who are exposed to diverse cultural content develop more inclusive attitudes and a stronger sense of identity (Hanson et al., 1998). In multicultural societies such as China, which includes diverse ethnic groups and historical traditions, embedding cultural education within the curriculum is essential for sustaining national identity and diversity (Teng, 2012).

2.2 Music and Cultural Transmission

Music has long been acknowledged as a powerful cultural artifact and pedagogical tool. As a universal language, it transcends verbal communication and enables learners to engage with abstract concepts like heritage, emotion, and identity (Kim, 2020). According to Inawat (2014), music not only preserves cultural heritage but also promotes intercultural understanding.

Children's songs are a particularly valuable form of musical pedagogy. They often carry cultural narratives, moral values, and social expectations embedded in rhythm and melody (Trehub, 2003). In Chinese music education, however, much emphasis has been placed on technical learning including lyrics, pitch, and melody at the expense of cultural meaning (Law & Ho, 2011). Moreover, teachers often lack culturally contextualized teaching materials and appropriate training in integrating music with cultural education (McKoy et al., 2022; Ballantyne, 2007)

Avoid hyphenation at the end of a line. Symbols denoting vectors and matrices should be indicated in bold type. Scalar variable names should normally be expressed using italics. Weights and measures should be expressed in SI units. All non-standard abbreviations or symbols must be defined when first mentioned, or a glossary provided.

2.3 Theoretical Foundations

This study integrates four core theories and models that frame the development of the activity model:

a. Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory

Vygotsky (1978) posited that learning is fundamentally a social process, where culture and language shape cognitive development. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights the value of scaffolding which will guiding students from current understanding to higher-level thinking. In the context of cultural appreciation, this theory supports guided music activities where teachers and peers co-construct cultural knowledge through songs.

b. Kodály Music Learning Method

The Kodály Method, developed by Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály, emphasizes learning music through singing, particularly using folk and traditional songs (Houlahan, 2015). This method promotes internalization of rhythm and pitch while embedding cultural values. Its suitability for early childhood education makes it an ideal foundation for the Chinese children's song activity model, which draws on familiar and culturally rich musical content.

c. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

Kolb (1984) introduced a cyclical model of learning involving four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. When applied to music-based cultural education, Kolb's model encourages hands-on musical engagement followed by reflection and integration of cultural insights—an approach well-suited to activity-based instruction.

d. Banks and Banks Multicultural Education Model

Banks and Banks (1998) presented a framework for integrating multicultural content into the curriculum, including five approaches: contribution, additive, transformation, social action, and integration. These strategies promote equity and cultural inclusion, particularly in diverse classrooms. The model developed in this study aligns most closely with the transformative and additive approaches, embedding Chinese cultural elements into the curriculum in a meaningful and engaging way.

2.4 The Need for an Activity Model in Music Education

Despite the policy focus on Chinese cultural integration in the curriculum (Law, 2014), gaps remain in classroom practice. Teachers often lack pedagogical models that align cultural appreciation with music education (Bond, 2017). Activity models provide structured, adaptable frameworks that help teachers plan and deliver culturally responsive lessons (Hernandez et al., 2013).

Studies in curriculum design emphasize the value of models that are both flexible and grounded in theory (Rahbar et al., 2022). When built on expert input and validated through iterative feedback, such models enhance teaching quality and student engagement. The integration of the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) in usability evaluation which is used in this study has proven effective in achieving expert consensus and refining educational tools (Murray et al., 1985; Kuo & Chen, 2008).

2.5 Chinese Children's Songs as Pedagogical Tools

Chinese children's songs reflect a long-standing tradition of moral education and cultural storytelling. Songs like Two Tigers or Jasmine Flower carry embedded messages about social roles, family values, and aesthetic sensibilities (Li, 2012). When strategically selected and integrated into structured learning activities, these songs serve not only as artistic expressions but also as vehicles for intergenerational cultural transmission.

Research has shown that traditional music increases children's engagement and retention of cultural content (Yao et al., 2023). However, without a guiding model or training, educators often use these songs passively rather than as active tools for exploration and appreciation (Offorma, 2016). This study responds to that gap by offering a validated activity model specifically tailored for primary music educators in China.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a Modified Design and Development Research (DDR) approach adapted from Richey and Klein (2013), as restructured by Abdullah and Rozkee (2020). DDR is a systematic methodology for developing and validating educational products through three iterative phases: needs analysis, model design and development, and usability evaluation. This research particularly emphasizes the third phase which is usability evaluation using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) to validate the final activity model for enhancing cultural appreciation through Chinese children's songs.

3.2 Phase 3: Model Usability Evaluation

3.2.1 Purpose

The third phase aimed to evaluate the usability and practicality of the developed activity model from the perspectives of expert educators. Usability in this context includes aspects such as clarity, efficiency, learnability, and user-friendliness. The Fuzzy Delphi Method was selected for its ability to obtain expert consensus in a structured, quantitative, and iterative manner.

3.2.2 Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM)

The Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) is an enhancement of the traditional Delphi method, integrating fuzzy logic theory to handle uncertainty and ambiguity in expert judgment (Murray, Pipino, & van Gigch, 1985). Unlike traditional Delphi techniques that rely solely on qualitative consensus, FDM converts linguistic variables into triangular fuzzy numbers, allowing for more precise aggregation of expert opinions (Kuo & Chen, 2008).

In educational research, FDM is widely used to validate frameworks, competencies, and instructional models because it effectively captures expert intuition while reducing bias (Ramlan et al., 2022). The use of fuzzy logic ensures that slight differences in expert views are mathematically accommodated without losing the core of collective agreement.

3.2.3 Respondents and Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 50 expert respondents, all of whom were experienced primary school music teachers across various provinces in China. Criteria included:

a. A minimum of five years of teaching experience.
b. Familiarity with Chinese children's songs.
c. Involvement in curriculum development or music education training.

These experts participated in both the pilot and final phases of the usability evaluation.

3.2.4 Instrumentation

A usability questionnaire was developed based on prior models (Zhang Hailian, 2025) and refined through pilot testing. The items were anchored using linguistic variables (e.g., "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," etc.) and converted into triangular fuzzy numbers for analysis.

The usability questionnaire covered five key domains:

a. Ease of Learning
b. Efficiency of Use
c. Memorability
d. Error Prevention
e. User Satisfaction

3.2.5 Procedure

The FDM was conducted through the following steps:

a. Expert Response Collection: Experts rated each item based on a Likert scale converted into fuzzy numbers.
b. Fuzzification: Linguistic terms were transformed into triangular fuzzy numbers (TFNs).
c. Threshold (d) Value Calculation: A defuzzification process was used to calculate the distance between expert responses. Items with a threshold (d) ≤ 0.2 were considered to have reached consensus (Murray et al., 1985).
d. Percentage of Expert Agreement: Agreement of $\geq 75\%$ was the benchmark for item acceptance.
e. Defuzzification (A) Value: Final usability scores were computed using the average of fuzzy number centroids.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings from Phase 3 of the study, which involved the usability evaluation of the developed activity model using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM)**.** The evaluation was conducted to determine the practicality, clarity, and effectiveness of the model from the perspective of 50 expert music educators. Five core dimensions were assessed: ease of learning, efficiency, memorability, error prevention, and user-friendliness.

4.2 Pilot Test

A pilot study was first conducted with 15 expert teachers to test the clarity and reliability of the instrument. The results yielded high reliability scores (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.91), indicating the questionnaire was suitable for full-scale administration. Feedback from the pilot phase was also used to refine wording and item structure to improve comprehension.

4.3 Expert Evaluation Using FDM

The full usability evaluation involved the application of the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) across all 23 finalized activity elements of the model. Each expert provided responses based on linguistic variables, which were converted into triangular fuzzy numbers (TFNs) and then analyzed through defuzzification procedures.

Three core indicators were used to determine expert consensus:

a. Threshold Value (d): Must be ≤ 0.2
b. Percentage of Agreement: Must be $\geq 75\%$

c. Average Fuzzy Score (A): Must be ≥ 0.5

All items successfully met or exceeded these thresholds, confirming the high usability of the model

4.4 Summary of Usability Results

Table 1- Usability evaluation result.

USABILITY DOMAIN	MEAN THRESHOLD (D)	% EXPERT AGREEMENT	AVERAGE FUZZY SCORE (A)
Ease of Learning	0.145	91%	0.82
Efficiency of Use	0.152	89%	0.79
Memorability	0.148	90%	0.78
Error Prevention	0.167	87%	0.76
User-Friendliness	0.139	94%	0.84

These results indicate that the model was perceived as highly usable across all domains. The ease of learning and user-friendliness dimensions scored particularly high, suggesting that teachers found the model intuitive and accessible, even without specialized musical training. The error-proneness score was the lowest, yet still within acceptable limits, showing that while the model is generally robust, further training could enhance implementation accuracy.

4.5 Expert Feedback (Qualitative Insights)

In addition to quantitative scoring, experts provided open-ended feedback:

a. Several respondents emphasized the cultural relevance of using Chinese children's songs as a medium for identity building and cultural retention.

b. Many highlighted the model's potential to be integrated into national curriculum guidelines, especially under China's revised Art Curriculum Standards (2022).

c. Suggestions included expanding the model to accommodate regional dialects and folk variations, and offering teacher training modules for more effective delivery.

4.6 Final Model Validation

The combination of high fuzzy consensus scores, strong reliability from pilot data, and consistent qualitative feedback validates the model's usability and educational value. The confirmed usability also means the model is ready for:

a. Curriculum integration

b. Training module development

c. Further experimental studies in diverse classroom settings

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 Discussion

This study set out to evaluate the usability of an activity model developed using Chinese children's songs to enhance cultural appreciation among primary school children. The Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) provided clear evidence of expert consensus, with all activity elements surpassing established threshold criteria. The findings reinforce the practicality and cultural relevance of embedding Chinese musical traditions within educational models particularly in early education.

The high scores across usability dimensions which are ease of learning, user-friendliness, and efficiency affirm the model's accessibility to educators with varying levels of musical expertise. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding, which emphasizes that with appropriate support, even complex cultural material can be made understandable to learners and facilitators alike.

Moreover, the positive response from music teachers supports the central tenets of the Kodály Method, which advocates the use of culturally rooted songs to foster both music literacy and identity development (Houlahan, 2015). Teachers found the structure of the model adaptable and meaningful, echoing Kolb's (1984) learning model where engagement with real experiences leads to deeper conceptual understanding.

Additionally, the study confirms the practical relevance of Banks and Banks' Multicultural Education Model (1998), particularly its additive and transformative approaches. By incorporating culturally rich content in the form of traditional Chinese songs, the model promotes an inclusive curriculum without replacing existing frameworks which an important strategy for multicultural societies like China.

The study also fills a gap identified in prior research: while Chinese educational policy strongly supports the transmission of cultural values through education (Tan C, 2015), actual classroom tools and frameworks remain underdeveloped (Tarling et al., 2016). This model offers a concrete tool to operationalize those goals.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Practical Implications

This validated activity model is an actionable tool for music educators, curriculum developers, and teacher training institutes. It supports the integration of traditional Chinese music into classroom practice, thus preserving intangible cultural heritage and enriching music instruction. Schools can use the model to align with national curriculum standards while providing culturally immersive learning experiences.

5.2.2 Theoretical Implications

The study bridges key learning theories with model development and empirical testing. It demonstrates the applicability of DDR methodology and FDM for curriculum design validation. Furthermore, the successful integration of constructivist, experiential, and multicultural education theories provides a replicable framework for future culturally grounded educational innovations.

5.2.3 Methodological Implications

The Fuzzy Delphi Method proves to be an effective technique for achieving expert consensus on pedagogical tools. Its strength lies in quantifying subjective judgments and reducing ambiguity in decision-making which a benefit particularly useful for cross-disciplinary educational studies.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to develop and evaluate an activity-based model using Chinese children's songs to enhance cultural appreciation among primary school students. Anchored in a Modified Design and Development Research (DDR) methodology and validated through the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM), the model was found to be highly usable and effective according to expert feedback from music educators.

The findings demonstrated that the model is:

a. Easy to learn and implement,
b. Efficient and flexible for diverse classroom settings,
c. Culturally rich and aligned with both national educational goals and traditional Chinese values.

Theoretical support from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Kolb's experiential learning cycle, the Kodály music method, and Banks' multicultural education model solidifies the model's foundation. This research also contributes methodologically by showcasing how FDM can be used to systematically validate educational innovations, especially those that blend culture and pedagogy.

In a time where cultural erosion and digital distractions pose challenges to heritage preservation, this study offers a concrete, practical framework to empower teachers, reinforce national identity, and engage children meaningfully through music.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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