

JOB SATISFACTION, CAREER COMMITMENT, AND PERFORMANCE OF COLLEGE MUSIC TEACHERS IN CHINA: AN ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Music education in higher education occupies a distinctive space where artistic creation intersects with academic responsibilities. In China, college music teachers navigate a professional environment shaped by evolving institutional expectations, policy reforms, and rapid technological change. This paper examines the interrelationship between job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance among college music educators, situating the discussion within both China's rich musical traditions and global higher education trends. Drawing on literature and theoretical models, it examines how intrinsic motivators—such as artistic fulfillment and cultural pride—interact with extrinsic factors—such as institutional resources, career pathways, and evaluation systems. The analysis identifies challenges, including workload intensification, limited career progression, and undervaluation of artistic output, as well as opportunities afforded by China's musical heritage and supportive cultural policies. Recommendations are offered for institutional strategies that align with the dual academic–artistic identity of music educators, fostering sustainable career development and strengthening the vitality of music education.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Career Commitment, Performance, Music Education, Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

The music education sector within Chinese higher education represents a distinctive academic field where artistic creativity intersects with pedagogical responsibilities and administrative expectations. In recent decades, higher education globally has undergone rapid transformation, influenced by economic restructuring, technological innovation, and internationalization. These developments have profoundly shaped the role of music educators in China, who must simultaneously fulfill teaching obligations, contribute to institutional governance, and sustain professional artistic output. Unlike many other disciplines, music education requires a balance between one-on-one studio instruction, ensemble leadership, and ongoing performance or composition activities. Such multidimensional responsibilities create specific challenges in maintaining job satisfaction, professional engagement, and long-term career commitment. Against this backdrop of global educational reform and cultural change, it becomes essential to investigate how systemic factors influence the working conditions and professional outcomes of music educators in Chinese higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Satisfaction in Higher Music Education

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of fulfillment educators derive from their work, shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include artistic engagement, creative autonomy, and meaningful student interaction, whereas extrinsic factors encompass workload, institutional support, remuneration, and career progression opportunities. Recent studies (2020–2025) in China and other Asian countries indicate that music educators face unique challenges compared with faculty in more standardized disciplines. For instance, performance and artistic output carry substantial weight in evaluations and promotion criteria, sometimes leading to tension between creative pursuits and institutional expectations. International research also highlights that recognition of artistic achievements, supportive peer networks, and equitable workload distribution are critical determinants of job satisfaction, while misalignment between institutional priorities and educators' artistic identities can increase burnout and turnover risk.

Career Commitment and Professional Identity

Career commitment captures the emotional and cognitive attachment educators feel toward their profession and is closely linked to professional identity. High career commitment is associated with resilience, sustained engagement, and improved teaching and artistic outcomes. Conversely, when institutional policies undervalue creative work or restrict autonomy, even highly committed educators may experience reduced engagement and job satisfaction. Recent empirical studies (2021–2024) show that career commitment in music education is often reinforced when educators can integrate personal artistic goals into institutional objectives, such as community-based projects, cultural preservation initiatives, or innovative teaching programs. The dual role of music educators as both academic professionals and cultural custodians highlights the importance of aligning institutional goals with personal and cultural values.

Performance Metrics and Influencing Factors

Performance in higher music education is multidimensional, encompassing instructional effectiveness, artistic output, scholarly research, and community engagement. Optimal performance occurs when intrinsic motivation is supported by adequate institutional resources, including access to rehearsal spaces, instruments, performance opportunities, and professional development programs. Recent studies (2020–2023) suggest that music educators who successfully integrate personal artistic goals with academic responsibilities achieve higher overall performance and satisfaction. Comparative research also indicates regional differences: for example, Western conservatories may prioritize artistic output and international recognition, whereas Chinese universities increasingly balance research publications, teaching quality, and cultural contribution. Despite these insights, research exploring the interaction of job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance—particularly in the Chinese context and in light of evolving global trends—remains limited, highlighting the need for empirical investigation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study integrates several established theories to examine the interplay between job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance among music educators. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory distinguishes hygiene factors—such as salary, workload, and working conditions—from motivators, including achievement, recognition, and personal growth. In higher music education, hygiene factors include access to rehearsal spaces, instruments, and administrative support, while motivators relate to artistic fulfillment, cultural contribution, and creative autonomy.

Meyer and Allen’s Three-Component Model of Commitment identifies affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation). Applied to music education, affective commitment reflects educators’ passion for teaching and cultural work, continuance commitment captures considerations of career stability, and normative commitment involves professional duty and social expectations.

Self-Determination Theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential for sustained motivation. For music educators, autonomy relates to repertoire choices and teaching methods, competence to performance and pedagogical skills, and relatedness to collaborative networks and student relationships. Social Identity Theory highlights the importance of belonging to valued professional and cultural groups, reinforcing educators’ sense of purpose and identity as both teachers and cultural custodians.

Integrating these frameworks, the study posits that intrinsic motivators and affective commitment are strong predictors of performance, while inadequate hygiene factors or institutional support can undermine job satisfaction and engagement. This theoretical foundation guides the examination of how Chinese higher education institutions can support music educators’ professional well-being and effectiveness within a complex cultural and policy environment.

JOB SATISFACTION

Local Context and Influences in China, job satisfaction among music educators is shaped by both cultural heritage and institutional structures. Rich musical traditions, including folk operas, regional ensembles, and classical performance practices, provide intrinsic rewards that enhance engagement and fulfillment. These traditions allow educators to integrate cultural content into teaching and performance, supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness as highlighted in Self-Determination Theory.

At the same time, high teaching loads, multiple course levels, and administrative obligations limit time for artistic development and research. Contract-based employment, limited tenure opportunities, and promotion systems that prioritize scholarly publications over artistic output further constrain satisfaction. Similar patterns have been observed internationally, where faculty in creative disciplines face “creative time poverty,” balancing teaching, research, and performance.

While cultural heritage reinforces educators’ sense of mission, systemic support—including transparent promotion criteria, balanced workloads, recognition of artistic contributions, and adequate institutional resources—is essential to sustain long-term job satisfaction. Addressing these factors ensures that music educators can maintain engagement, preserve cultural practices, and achieve professional fulfillment within China’s evolving higher education environment.

CAREER COMMITMENT

Identity and Alignment the professional identity of music educators in China merges the roles of artist, teacher, and cultural custodian. Career commitment is strengthened when institutional values align with educators’ personal missions, enabling affective commitment and sustained engagement. Faculty who can integrate traditional music or regional repertoire into curricula often experience higher emotional attachment to their profession, reflecting both intrinsic motivation and alignment with Social Identity Theory.

International research demonstrates that alignment between institutional priorities and individual values is crucial for career commitment. Educators with autonomy to pursue community-based artistic projects or innovative pedagogical initiatives report higher retention and engagement compared to those constrained by rigid institutional expectations. Conversely, restrictive administrative policies, limited professional development, and undervaluation of artistic contributions can erode commitment, reducing both motivation and performance.

Addressing these gaps requires leadership that supports creative autonomy, cultural engagement, and flexible evaluation systems. By fostering environments where music educators’ professional identities are recognized and aligned with institutional goals, higher education institutions in China can enhance affective and normative commitment, ultimately supporting instructional quality, artistic output, and sustained professional development.

PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

Performance in China’s higher music education encompasses multiple domains, reflecting global standards and local cultural missions. Instructional effectiveness involves student-centered pedagogy, adaptive curriculum design, and innovative teaching methods. Educators

who incorporate traditional music into contemporary curricula meet academic objectives while contributing to cultural preservation, aligning with Self-Determination Theory.

Artistic output—including concerts, recitals, recordings, and compositions—serves both personal milestones and institutional prestige while promoting national musical heritage. Scholarly research, ranging from publications to curriculum innovation, balances creative and academic contributions. Community engagement, such as workshops, ensemble direction, and cultural festivals, extends educators' influence beyond the classroom and reinforces professional identity, consistent with Social Identity Theory.

High levels of job satisfaction and career commitment across these performance dimensions enable innovative teaching, sustained creativity, and meaningful institutional impact. Conversely, insufficient recognition of artistic achievements, limited resources, or excessive administrative duties can hinder performance outcomes, highlighting the need for policies that balance institutional expectations with intrinsic motivation.

CHALLENGES IN CHINA'S HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

Music educators in China face a convergence of challenges shaped by both global trends in higher education and local cultural and institutional conditions. One major challenge is workload intensification: faculty are often expected to teach multiple course levels, supervise ensembles, coordinate performances and events, and fulfill administrative duties, frequently without proportional recognition or reward. This high workload can limit time for personal artistic development, professional research, and creative exploration, thereby undermining intrinsic motivation and affective commitment.

Technological shifts present another set of challenges. The rapid adoption of hybrid and online teaching, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has created both opportunities for broader engagement and stressors associated with learning new platforms, adapting pedagogy, and maintaining student interaction in virtual spaces. Without adequate training and ongoing technical support, these shifts may exacerbate stress and reduce instructional effectiveness.

Funding and resource constraints further complicate educators' work. Limited access to specialized instruments, rehearsal spaces, and travel funding for performances, competitions, or academic conferences can restrict both artistic and scholarly development. This is particularly significant for music educators tasked with preserving and transmitting local cultural heritage, which often requires unique resources not easily funded through standard institutional budgets.

Finally, shifting student demographics pose long-term strategic challenges. Declining enrollment in arts programs, driven by societal emphasis on STEM education and vocational fields, threatens the sustainability of music departments and may lead to reduced institutional investment in faculty support, curriculum development, and program innovation.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted institutional approach: implementing workload management strategies, providing technical training and support, ensuring equitable access to resources, and developing evaluation and reward systems that recognize both academic and artistic contributions. By doing so, higher education institutions in China can help music educators maintain high levels of engagement, professional satisfaction, and performance excellence while preserving the nation's rich musical heritage.

OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES IN CHINA'S HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

China offers strategic advantages to enhance music educators' job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance. Its rich musical heritage—including folk traditions, regional styles, and classical repertoire—provides abundant content and inspiration for teaching, aligning with Social Identity Theory and Self-Determination Theory by fulfilling educators' sense of pride, competence, and relatedness.

Governmental support for intangible cultural heritage and arts education enables funding, program development, and international exchange opportunities. Rising global interest in Chinese music offers platforms for cross-cultural collaboration, enhancing educators' professional skills and autonomy. Interdisciplinary trends—integrating music with digital media, cultural studies, or community engagement—provide innovative avenues to strengthen institutional relevance and faculty engagement.

With targeted policies and institutional support, music educators can navigate challenges while maximizing artistic and academic contributions. By leveraging cultural resources, interdisciplinary approaches, and global collaborations, higher education institutions can foster sustainable professional development and enhance the vitality of music education in China.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the intertwined nature of job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance among college music educators in China. While challenges such as workload intensification, resource constraints, and technological adaptation are observed globally, China's cultural and institutional context adds unique dynamics. Local musical traditions provide motivation and rich content for teaching, positioning educators as both instructors and cultural custodians. These factors influence instructional innovation, curriculum design, and community engagement, illustrating the complexity of balancing academic and artistic responsibilities.

From Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, adequate institutional resources and balanced workloads act as essential hygiene factors, whereas artistic autonomy and cultural engagement serve as strong motivators. Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model indicates high affective commitment is linked to cultural pride, continuance commitment is shaped by job stability, and normative commitment is reinforced by social expectations. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key to sustaining motivation, while Social Identity Theory highlights the role of professional and cultural affiliation in reinforcing educators' sense of purpose.

Internationally, similar patterns exist, but Chinese educators must navigate the dual mandate of preserving local traditions while maintaining global competitiveness. Flexible pedagogy, cross-cultural collaborations, and strategic engagement with domestic and international communities are essential. Institutional policies and administrative support play a pivotal role in aligning intrinsic motivations with extrinsic demands, shaping satisfaction, commitment, and performance among music educators in China.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To support music educators in China, higher education institutions should adopt strategies that balance academic and artistic demands. Performance evaluation systems should recognize both scholarly output and artistic achievements, ensuring that faculty contributions in teaching, performance, and cultural preservation are valued equally. Targeted professional development—covering hybrid teaching, technological skills, artistic workshops, and peer mentoring—can help educators adapt to evolving pedagogical and technological demands.

Resource allocation should prioritize access to rehearsal spaces, specialized instruments, and funding for performances, competitions, and cultural projects, complemented by governmental grants and international exchange opportunities. Workload management and well-being initiatives, such as structured time for research and artistic activities and reduced administrative burdens, can prevent burnout and sustain engagement. Finally, promoting interdisciplinary and international collaborations can expand faculty skills, institutional visibility, and opportunities for cultural exchange.

Collectively, these strategies enable music educators to maintain motivation, enhance performance, and contribute to the vitality of higher music education in China while supporting both academic excellence and cultural heritage preservation.

CONCLUSION

Job satisfaction, career commitment, and performance among college music educators in China are shaped by the interplay of intrinsic motivators—such as artistic fulfillment, cultural pride, and engagement with local traditions—and extrinsic factors, including workload, institutional support, and evaluation criteria. Recognition of both academic and artistic achievements, targeted professional development, and adequate resources enable educators to manage dual responsibilities effectively. Leveraging cultural assets and promoting interdisciplinary and international initiatives further strengthen faculty engagement and institutional impact. Ultimately, sustaining high-quality music education in culturally rich regions of China requires strategies that honor tradition while fostering innovation, ensuring that educators can thrive professionally while preserving and advancing the nation's musical heritage.

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