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## **Pedagogical choice-making and transformation: A longitudinal study of Chinese preservice guzheng teachers in the U.K.**

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## **Abstract**

A longitudinal study over 12 months with three Chinese preservice guzheng teachers, all of whom were students on an MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching programme at a U.K. university, revealed their pedagogical transformation across cultures. Three rounds of semi-structured, online interviews were facilitated by a video-stimulated interview (VSI) technique: the *reflective* VSI collected the student-teachers' retrospective descriptions of their recorded guzheng lessons, while the *interpretive* VSI gained their espoused pedagogical beliefs about guzheng teaching through discovering their views concerning screen-shared videos of expert guzheng performances. Findings suggest that the student-teachers' pedagogical choices were influenced by: 1) their concurrently received U.K. teacher training, enabling an enhanced understanding of pupil-centred and process-engaged pedagogy; 2) their previously experienced guzheng tuition in China, featuring teachers' dominance and external expectations from Chinese parents / employers / audience; and 3) regional stylistic features within the guzheng repertoire.

## **Key words**

Chinese-instrument pedagogy, cross-cultural context, pedagogical transformation and challenges, preservice instrumental teachers, video-stimulated interview (VSI)

## Introduction

Developments within instrumental teaching have increased the demands on both performing expertise and the pedagogical knowledge of instrumental teachers, collectively embodied in the shift towards mentorship as a means of facilitating pupils' engagement and independence (Creech & Gaunt, 2012). Fredrickson et al. (2013) recognise that many conservatoire / college music students give private lessons in the West; in China, the situation is similar (Qin & Tao, 2021). Nonetheless, limited specialist instrumental teacher training is evidenced in the U.K. (Haddon, 2009; Mills, 2004; Norton et al., 2019); the extant research indicates a variety of influences on university music students' teaching (Haddon, 2009) and conservatoire students' perspectives on delivering Western instrumental/vocal (I/V) lessons (Mills, 2004; Perkins et al., 2015). By contrast, how Chinese music students, specifically those working with Chinese traditional instruments, establish their teaching practices, has remained largely unexplored.

In the U.K., taught Master's programmes on I/V teaching offer systematic and research-based pedagogical training, which attract Chinese students (Haddon, forthcoming, 2023). To date, however, no research has concentrated specifically on Chinese instrumental teachers on Western MA programmes who teach Chinese instruments (e.g. guzheng), exploring their pedagogical decisions for teaching Chinese instruments and their perceptions of U.K. I/V teacher training that may impact upon their pedagogical development. Through video-stimulated and semi-structured interviews, this instrument-specific longitudinal

investigation of preservice trainee teachers encountering instrumental pedagogy across China and in the U.K. aimed to explore: 1) the factors that influence guzheng student-teachers' teaching decisions; and 2) manifestations of transformation reflected in both their actions and espoused beliefs in guzheng pedagogical practice during their U.K. teacher-training. The research outcomes in relation to pedagogical differences in instrumental teaching across cultures, and the effects of U.K. I/V teacher training, could serve to inform instrumental teachers worldwide who wish to develop teaching expertise cross-culturally, as well as proving of benefit to instrumental (teacher) educators in China.

### **Teaching Chinese instruments in China**

'A long apprenticeship with a master' historically characterises the transmission mode of Chinese instrumental teaching and learning (Schippers, 2010, p. 71). Jørgensen (2000) identifies that the teacher generally represents the dominant authority in a master-apprentice model, whereby the student's role is to imitate the teacher. Yung (1987) details a student's phrase-by-phrase imitation of the teacher's guqin (seven-string zither) performance, as well as the teacher-pupil simultaneous playing of the same piece, whereby the pupil 'inherits the nuances of the music, especially its rhythm and phrasing, from the teacher' (p. 85) due to an aural transmission tradition that preserves the 'metrical, rhythmic, and phrasal aspects of the music' (p. 84). This aural approach has been recognised as a vital means of passing on Chinese

instrumental music, as notation systems in Chinese music mostly record important skeletal notes (see Thrasher, 2008 for details of ‘*gongche*’ notation and ‘simple notation’, Yung, 1987 for tablature notation, and Chow-Morris, 2010 for ‘*jiahua*’ (加花), the technique of adding improvised ornaments to the original music to melodically or rhythmically enrich skeletal notation). Regional stylistic differences between North and South Chinese instrumental repertoire, as they relate to musical forms, interpretations, and the application of techniques (Thrasher, 1989), may also impact Chinese instrument transmission.

Such vague notated instructions concerning the dynamics and rhythm of the music should offer spaces for performers to produce diversified yet personalised interpretations (Yung, 1987). However, the authority of Chinese master-musicians within the master-apprenticeship norm appears to challenge this, leading to questions of how Chinese instrumental teachers deploy teaching dominance. For example, in contrast to the highly-valued personal expression of individual performers within the Western musical tradition (Meissner et al., 2021), the reproduction of inherited musical interpretation is prioritised by instrumental teachers in China (Zheng & Leung, 2021a). Moreover, an exam-oriented hierarchical pedagogy, alongside the domination exerted by the teacher, has been revealed within the Chinese context (Bai, 2021; Haddon, forthcoming, 2023), in which Chinese instrumental preservice teachers consider that their teaching rarely engages pupils’ autonomy and is significantly affected by inherited practices from their previous teachers

(Haddon, forthcoming, 2023). In addition to prior learning and teaching experiences, concurrently received pedagogy also shapes teachers' teaching practice (Haddon, 2009; 2019).

### **Teacher training and pedagogical transformation across cultures**

The master-apprenticeship model is not exclusive to the Chinese context. While it historically dominates instrumental tuition (Jørgensen, 2000; Burwell, 2013), a pedagogical transformation from apprenticeship to mentoring – facilitating learner independence, confidence, and creativity – has also been identified in Western educational contexts (Creech & Gaunt, 2012). This is embodied in the U.K. I/V teacher training curricula, as acknowledged by Chinese trainee teachers in the U.K. who have gained an understanding of pupil-centredness and supporting pupils' self-efficacy through dialogic and interaction-oriented strategies (Haddon, forthcoming, 2023). Kleickmann et al. (2013) also affirm the constructive role of teacher preparation programmes in preservice teachers' ongoing development of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) through a combination of subject-specific expertise and the knowledge of how to strategically teach it (Bauer, 2020).

Pedagogical changes impact teachers' motivation and consciousness of their routinised behaviour and perceptions of teaching, awakened by new or unusual circumstances that stimulate discursive awareness to develop their practices (Burrige, 2018). This appears

to align with psychological and behavioural adjustment in cross-cultural contexts. Ang and Van Dyne (2015) indicate that a new cultural setting influences self-identity and self-enhancement; adaptation actions operate cognitively and metacognitively, and are driven by motivation. Accompanied by reflective practice, trainee teachers' adaptability to changing transmission contexts that reflect societal changes should be cultivated through teacher preparation (Conway & Hibbard, 2019). Engaging with I/V teacher training in a cross-cultural context from China to the U.K. is likely to help Chinese preservice instrumental teachers become aware of their habitual, China-domiciled teaching procedures and promote the necessary degree of pedagogical transformation. The ensuing challenges, to which they are returning are, nonetheless, reflected in their actual pedagogical implementation and re-adaptation to the Chinese cultural and educational environment (Haddon, forthcoming, 2023).

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study aligns closely with the social constructivist interpretive framework, supporting multifaceted realities as constructed by research participants' interpretations of their lived experiences and the researcher's understanding of the issue being debated (see Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ritchie et al., 2013). A longitudinal investigation (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010) over 12 months, comprising three rounds of semi-structured, one-to-one

online interviews with the first author, was employed to explore changed and unchanged aspects in guzheng teaching identified by a sample of Chinese preservice guzheng teachers in the U.K., alongside the pedagogical impact of the University of York's one-year MA Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching programme which they studied. A technology-assisted research method – video-stimulated interview (VSI) – was adopted to facilitate the interviewees' self-revealing cognitive processes, including a *reflective* and *interpretive* process (Van Braak et al., 2018). Gazdag et al. (2019) recognise the benefits of applying this approach within teacher training, including the degree to which it aids an understanding of patterns between preservice teachers' pedagogical beliefs and actions. This research, therefore, utilised recordings of the MA student-teachers' guzheng lessons in order to explore their teaching actions via the *reflective* VSI (e.g., asking *why* they applied specific approaches at certain points in their teaching), whilst also using online videos of guzheng performances so as to gain an understanding of their espoused teaching beliefs through the *interpretive* VSI (e.g., asking *how* they would teach the music that was being performed) as Chinese instrument teachers with cross-cultural pedagogical experiences. Ethical approval was granted by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee at the University of York. Considering the relationship between participants' responses and the researcher's interpretation of those from an epistemological standpoint (Ritchie et al., 2013), the authors' backgrounds should be noted. The first author was a guzheng learner and teacher in China and had completed the same



MA programme; she had been studying and practising Western instrumental pedagogical approaches before and during her doctoral study at the same U.K. university, supervised by the second author.

## **Participants**

Three participants engaged in all three rounds of interviews (i.e. nine interviews in total, averaging 63 minutes each). Table 1 details the participants' abbreviations, their guzheng learning and teaching experiences prior to and during their U.K. MA study, and provides information about their pupils and their envisaged employment as Chinese returnees.

The participants, all female, learned the guzheng one-to-one in private music studios before and during their school years. This training was arranged by their parents and was undertaken with guzheng teachers employed by Chinese conservatoires in order to support the students' preparation for the *Yishu Zhuanye Gaokao* (艺术专业高考; simplified as *Yikao* 艺考), 'The University Arts Entrance Examination' (UAEE) in China (Bai, 2021). They started teaching the guzheng part-time during and after their undergraduate studies.

**Table 1** *Participant information*

Student-teachers' MA course enrolment	Instrument; years spent learning; years spent teaching	Learning contexts prior to MA study	Teaching contexts prior to and during MA study	Pupils	Envisaged employment situation as returnees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ST1</b></li> <li>• Cohort A, September 2020 – September 2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guzheng</li> <li>• 15</li> <li>• 3</li> </ul>	<p>Learning 1-1 before and during conservatory study in Northern China</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group teaching in a primary school (part-time) and 1-1/small group teaching at a private music institution in China (full-time)</li> <li>• Private teaching in the U.K. (for the MA course assessments, not regularly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly Chinese (taught 1 non-Chinese pupil in China)</li> <li>• Mostly school students and a few adult pupils at beginner / intermediate level</li> <li>• Taught 2 Chinese pupils (including 1 course mate) during their MA</li> </ul>	<p>Private, part-time guzheng teacher (considering this as a full-time job)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ST2</b></li> <li>• Cohort A, September 2020 – September 2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guzheng</li> <li>• 10</li> <li>• 5</li> </ul>	<p>Learning 1-1 before and during study at a comprehensive university in Southern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private teaching at a music studio in China (part-time)</li> <li>• Private teaching in the U.K. (for the MA course assessments, not regularly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Chinese</li> <li>• Mostly school students and some adult pupils at beginner / intermediate</li> </ul>	<p>Full-time school music teacher and private guzheng teacher at home outside working hours</p>

		China		level •Taught 2 Chinese pupils (including 1 course mate) during their MA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•ST3</li> <li>•Cohort B, January 2021 – January 2022</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Guzheng</li> <li>•10</li> <li>•5</li> </ul>	Learning 1-1 before and during study at a conservatory in Southern China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Private teaching at a music studio in China (part-time)</li> <li>•Private online 1-1 teaching in the U.K. (regularly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•All Chinese</li> <li>•Mostly school students at beginner / intermediate level and some adult pupils</li> <li>•Taught 5 Chinese pupils (including 1 course mate) during their MA</li> </ul>	Private guzheng teacher (full-time) or pursuing further study

## Materials

One-to-one guzheng lessons, video-recorded by the participants before each interview, and three expert guzheng performance videos on ‘YouTube’ were used as prompts in the reflective and interpretive VSI processes. The ‘YouTube’ videos were selected by the first author for the interpretive VSI process based on the literature on regional contexts of Chinese instrumental

music (e.g., Chow-Morris, 2010; Thrasher, 1989), the focus being on the inclusion and representativeness of repertoire from the Northern and Southern guzheng genres and the reputation of the performers in China: Video 1 – *Yu Zhou Chang Wan (Fisherman's Song at Night; Northern genre)*<sup>1</sup>; Video 2 – *Feng Xiang Ge (Song of the Flying Phoenix; Northern genre)*<sup>2</sup>; Video 3 – *Fen Hong Lian (Pink Lotus; Southern genre)*<sup>3</sup>. Four guzheng lesson recordings with an average duration of 31:22 were received from the participants, instead of nine as expected by the authors, due to the limited availability of the student-teachers' pupils and the practicability of simultaneous research participation and completion of the MA course assignments. ST1: no lesson recordings; ST2: 1 lesson recording (LR1: ST2); ST3: 3 lesson recordings (LR2/3/4: ST3).

### **Data collection procedure**

Each interview with the first author included questions on the videos and a semi-structured interview (SSI), which used pre-designed, open-ended questions and related to the participants' guzheng learning and teaching experiences in China, as well as their perceptions of acquiring and applying the pedagogical knowledge obtained during their MA. Before each reflective VSI, observation notes were made by the first author by repeatedly reviewing the

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<sup>1</sup> Link to Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuj7kY4QCr8>.

<sup>2</sup> Link to Video 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBh3gghgZuo>.

<sup>3</sup> Link to Video 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3MonhzOfp4>.

participants' lesson videos in order to generate interview questions based on timestamps of specific instructional points (see Table 2 for an example). The three 'YouTube' videos were prepared for screen-sharing in the corresponding interpretive VSI, as summarised in Table 3.

**Table 2** *Sample of two of the interview questions generated with timestamps from LR2: ST3*

<b>Timestamp</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Interview questions</b>
<b>02:02</b>	ST3 asked their student to practise an etude of fingerings before playing the piece.	- What do you think of the fingering practice? - Why did you choose this kind of approach?
<b>04:19; 21:55</b>	ST3 emphasised the student's hand shape and the skill of using their finger joints to exert force when flicking the strings.	- Why did you emphasise these techniques?

**Table 3** *Interview timeline and procedure with abbreviations*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Round: March 2021, Spring term</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Round: July 2021, Summer term</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Round: October 2021, Post-MA</b>
<b>ST1</b>	SSI	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Videos 2, 3 used)
<b>ST2</b>	Reflective VSI (with ST2: LR1) + SSI	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	SSI + Interpretive VSI (Videos 2, 3 used)
<b>ST3</b>	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR2) + SSI	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR3) + SSI + Interpretive VSI (Video 1 used)	Reflective VSI (with ST3: LR4) + SSI + Interpretive VSI (Videos 2, 3 used)

### **Data Analysis**

The data included nine interviews and four videoed lessons analysed thematically based on the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) after transcription and a member check process enabling participants' verification (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Adoption of those authors' '*in vivo* codes' (the actual words of the participants) and the use of researcher-assigned codes, to convey the meaning of the chosen segment, combined with observation notes, were conducted by the first author using the software MAXQDA. Whilst definitive conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small sample of instrument- and context-specific international preservice teachers learning to adjust their teaching to cross-cultural pedagogical influences, this study nevertheless offers a starting point for research on Chinese instrumental teachers and instrumental pedagogical learning across cultures.

### **Findings**

The findings of the study are considered within the following sections: teacher-centredness and exam-focused guzheng tuition in China, teacher-training inspired pedagogical choices and beliefs, and the influence of musical features within the guzheng repertoire, together with pedagogical and performance constraints.

### **Teacher-centredness and exam-focused guzheng tuition in China**

All the participants expressed their opinions concerning the guzheng tuition they had received in China, much of which was dominated by their teachers: ‘Both teaching and teaching content are teacher-centred’ (ST2); ‘I feel that this kind of teaching is a matter of convention ... I would learn whatever the teacher taught, because my teacher wouldn’t ask me what I wanted to learn’ (ST1). ST3 indicated that ‘the single mode’ of teacher-led delivery should be enriched in China. Specifically, ‘Jiahua’, the means of imparting semi-improvisational skills, exhibited their teachers’ dominance, relying on demonstration and direct intervention relating to the sheet music: ‘My teacher would do a demonstration of their improvised ornaments and then ask me to take notes on the score’ (ST3); ‘My teacher helped me to mark on the score, such as where I should add *vibrato* and where I should add a *portamento* or change the fingerings and repeat some phrases’ (ST2); ‘[The teacher demonstrated where] I could add an extra *glissando* to this phrase and add some *vibrato* to some notes’ (ST1). However, as noted by Hallam (2012), trials and ‘musical doodling’ are needed to cultivate students’ improvisational skills, as this requires the ability to play aurally and the flexible use of mastered techniques (p. 652) unconstrained by ‘effortful, conscious control’ (Ayerst, 2021, p. 68). Although the semi-improvisation technique in guzheng performance is different from improvising completely new material, enabling students’ autonomous and creative attempts in acquiring such capability might be a productive first step.

Specific strategies were adopted by the participants when teaching in China, learned from their received guzheng tuition. All participants expressed their reliance on demonstration, as used by their former teachers, due to its 'direct' (ST1) and 'time-saving' (ST3) effect: 'If the student's performance is not as ideal as expected, I give a demonstration' (ST3). Verbal instructions concerning musical dynamics (e.g., 'stronger' or 'weaker') were simply stated by ST1 and ST3. When it came to adding ornaments, ST2 followed her teacher's method of marking them on the pupils' scores. Additionally, singing the melody before playing it was applied by both ST2 and ST3. As ST3 explained, 'My teacher said you can't play it correctly if you can't sing it correctly'. These utilisations appear to indicate the subliminal impact of experienced, teacher-centred pedagogy on student-teacher practice.

In order to succeed in the UAEE, all three participants recalled the significant emphasis given to the technical and expressive aspects of guzheng performance by their previous teachers. ST1 thought that their technical skills had been notably improved during the preparation for the UAEE, thanks to their teacher's demands:

... everything was for the UAEE ... how the techniques should be practised to achieve the required tempi on the scores and how fast the *allegro* should be. The metronome must be used to assist in the practice and [I] must achieve the tempi.

Similarly, ST3's teacher 'paid attention to the way the fingers exert strength and the emotional processing of the music', while the teacher of ST2 'mainly emphasised how to deal with the



expression of the music'. Nevertheless, there is room for further diversification of those dimensions that can be explored together by the teacher and student within music pedagogical contexts, including 'the relationships between the detailed honing of stylistic expression and technique on the one hand, and personal expression, spontaneity and risk-taking on the other, while also pursuing and exploiting possibilities for co-creation and experimenting with audience interactions' (Gaunt, 2017: 31).

Interestingly, after achieving the UAEE, ST1 discovered that the same teacher empowered them with more autonomy:

I felt that my teacher's ideas and foci were completely different compared to preparing for the UAEE ... [The teacher] gave us a lot of freedom to enjoy the music ... and didn't rigidly stipulate how we should play ... the teacher just guided us from the side or gave us some inspiration.

This situation reflects the impact of examinations on teaching. In a context with considerable consequences if the student fails the exam, deploying a directive pedagogical approach may ensure faster progress and greater success in the exam.

Owing to the importance placed on passing graded examinations by parents in China (Bai, 2021), an exam-focused guzheng tuition philosophy was common to all the participants: 'An important goal for school students learning an instrument is to take the graded exams for certificates' (ST3). This tendency affected ST2's teaching priorities: ' ... for children, I paid

more attention to the basics of hand shape and fingerings ... because they have to take the exams' and influenced teaching content: 'I chose teaching materials according to the requirements of those institutions that organise the graded exams. They have different requirements for the repertoire and textbooks' (ST1). This exam-focused tuition, with its implications for parental influence, teaching materials and teachers' perceived value, contrasts with some of the alternative tuition priorities encountered within the U.K. MA course, e.g., teaching those students who learn for pleasure and do not wish to take exams.

### **Teacher-training inspired pedagogical choices and beliefs**

The teaching approaches facilitated by the MA course influenced the student-teachers' pupil-centred pedagogical transformation, inasmuch as they believed that pupils should be encouraged to create their own musical interpretations. Before demonstrating a particular part of the piece in LR4, ST3 commented: 'My interpretation of the music is not the only answer. I'm just sharing my understanding of the music with you.' (9:34, ST3: LR4). During the interview, ST3 explained further:

Many students think that what the teacher demonstrates is completely right, and they imitate exactly what the teacher does ... [the pupil] doesn't need to imitate my playing because everyone has different ideas [of interpretation], and I don't want [my demonstration] to limit their performance.

Likewise, in the interpretive VSI, ST2 stated ‘I won’t tell the pupil directly how they should play [the piece] because I don’t want to dominate their learning anymore’.

Open-ended questioning was one of the learned strategies from the MA course, acknowledged by all participants as effective: ‘... I can feel that the student actually thinks more on their own than before since I employed this method’ (ST1). For example, ST2 asked their pupil, ‘How do you feel this time when playing?’ (12:44, ST2: LR1), while ST3 asked, ‘What are you struggling with in practising this piece?’ (11:47, ST3: LR2). Those answering such questions are unlikely to respond with a single word, suggesting that using questions strategically to create dialogue in music teaching is ‘an invaluable tool’ for engaging pupils’ cognitive thinking (Allsup & Baxter, 2004: 33). Both ST2 and ST3 appeared to understand the mechanism of this approach and used the questioning technique purposefully: ‘I want the pupil to proactively think and analyse [their playing]’ (ST2); ‘[The pupil] can have a sense of participation [by pointing out challenges], which enhances their impression’ (ST3). By contrast, ST2 mentioned a lack of questioning in their teaching before the MA, ‘.... because at that time I didn't realise that asking questions was a very important part of teaching’.

Another aspect of the transformation in the relationship between the students and the teachers was revealed in their balancing of teacher-driven progress-making and pupil-engaged learning processes. This was embedded in their attention to pupil-selected learning materials and an increased general awareness of their pupils’ wellbeing, rather than

being focused solely on outcomes. They also made a conscious effort to avoid physical contact with their pupils, considering appropriateness and the importance of learners understanding how to achieve technique without physical intervention, although physical touching might be a straightforward way to make corrections in teaching and was used more freely in the China context: ‘My teacher would correct my hand shape through touching my fingers’ (ST3); ‘I didn’t realise that this [physical contact] was inappropriate ... my teacher taught me the same way’ (ST1); ‘My teacher would directly grab my hands and instruct me to play’ (ST2). Additionally, all participants expressed their intention to create a mentor-friendly environment for their pupils, inspired by the MA tutors; ST2 and ST3, in particular, demonstrated an encouragement-oriented teaching technique in their recorded lessons.

As also disclosed by the participants, changes in their pedagogical practices during the MA were related to the positive effects of the teaching approaches demonstrated by their tutors, which in turn consolidated the practical role and value of these styles with their students (ST1; ST3). In addition, familiarity with the PCK learned in the training (reinforced by completing the course tasks and assessments (ST2; ST3)), and time spent on trialling strategies helped with confidence-building in pedagogical implementation (ST1; ST2). Given that change is not guaranteed within the framework of a longitudinal study (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010), the student-teachers’ consistent attention to background knowledge of

the guzheng repertoire and consideration of sociocultural expectations in China displayed signs of some continuing practices within their subsequent guzheng tuition.

### **Influence of musical features within the guzheng repertoire, pedagogical and performance constraints**

Based on the musical and technical features contained within the music, all the participants were able to recognise which region and guzheng genre the pieces belonged to after watching the three performance videos in the interpretative VSI ST1 mentioned the division of different guzheng genres in the North and South, leading to the development of representative musical characteristics and techniques, while ST3 identified the distinction, from a technical perspective, between the repertoire pertaining to the two regions:

... in the Southern guzheng genres, they emphasise the variation notes using *vibrato*, but they don't press the strings as heavily as the Northern genres do. Their action of applying the *Huayin* [*portamento*] is more subtle compared to the Northern genres.

A similar regional stylistic impact on the different application of semi-improvisational techniques between the Chinese regions was acknowledged by ST2; these techniques help to enhance the musical characteristics in order to show the grandeur of the Northern and the mildness of the Southern guzheng repertoires, respectively. Based on their previous and current practices, and envisaged teaching practices of the material within all three videos, the

participants consistently concentrated on introducing background knowledge (e.g., region / genre) of the pieces to their pupils to support their stylistic understanding of the music.

The pedagogical context of guzheng tuition in China, characterised and understood by the participants as an efficiency-led ideology with expectations on the part of both parents and employers, appears to challenge the prevailing notions of pupil-centredness and process-engagement. ST1 expressed her frustration of providing ‘a kind of service profession’ when working in a private institution in China, where only ‘recognised’ progress was important for the learners and parents; consequently, she would ‘subconsciously speed up the pace of teacher dominance’ in order to avoid pupil attrition. The ability to retain students was likewise valued by ST2’s previous employer. Concerns relating to a greater reliance on pupil autonomy were raised by ST2, who found that her pupils in China were used to learning passively without being asked for active responses; similarly, pupils’ lack of participation and an inactive expression of ideas resulted in a hesitation of ST3 to using a pupil-directed pedagogy. From a cultural perspective, ST1 and ST2s’ perceived expectations regarding the default musical styles and advanced techniques of the guzheng repertoire that the audience was familiar with had a subliminal effect on their teaching focus. For example, ST2 pointed out that an audience’s stereotypical views concerning the repertoire that ‘must’ be learned by guzheng players could limit the diversification of repertoire choices.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that a range of multidimensional factors, comprising previously and concurrently experienced educational environments in China and the U.K., combine to play a role in preservice instrumental teachers' context-specific pedagogical decision-making and transformation. By way of an example, teacher training heightened the guzheng student-teachers' awareness of pupil-centred instrumental pedagogy and their reflections on tensions between accomplishing external objectives (e.g., expectations of parents / employers and graded exams) and exploratory musical engagement within pupil-teacher interactions. That being said, teaching is not exclusively either teacher-led or student-centred. Rather, it is flexible, deliberative, and context-based (Chan, 2008). However, while the student-teachers' pedagogical implementation shows their proactivity in terms of adjusting teaching approaches, several aspects nevertheless serve to challenge pedagogical transformations, including the regional stylistic features that impact upon repertoire teaching, parents' / employers' focus on effectiveness, pupils' passive learning styles, and the Chinese audience's expectations. This aligns with Haddon's (forthcoming, 2023) findings regarding Chinese returnees' re-adaptation to pedagogical practice in the China-domiciled setting, elicited by the result-driven and hierarchical cultural norms that manifest the default control of parents and employers over pedagogical practice. Compounding the issue, professional support in China to cope with the gap in the returnees' expectations generated by the changing

sociocultural environment is lacking (ibid). Further research should explore the perspectives of in-service and experienced / master-teachers who teach Chinese traditional instruments in China, focusing on the delivery of regional stylistic knowledge and dealing with the expectations generated from parents, audiences, and society.

Those musical explorations as presented by the participants' guzheng tuition in the Chinese context appear to be limited to considerations of technical issues and the expected interpretation of the stipulated material by teachers / audiences / the exam syllabus). Borel (2019) observed that conservatoire students in China are used to being trained as soloists; perfection of technique and in performance is demanded through teachers' strictness and authority, a factor that may inadvertently shape the ensuing teaching practice style of students as teachers. As revealed by the participants, guzheng graded exams remain the prime focus of school-aged pupils and their parents, a finding consistent with students taking graded piano exams in China (Bai, 2021). However, Chinese returnee piano teachers pointed out the inexplicit marking criteria and lack of aural and sight-reading tests in the Chinese graded exams (Haddon, forthcoming, 2023); this appears to be similar to graded guzheng exams, organised by varied organisations, each of which have their own syllabus. These skills appear not to have been widely included within instrumental pedagogical development in the Chinese context, in which formal training for instrumental teachers remains underdeveloped (Lee & Leung, 2022). Compared to the increased amount of research concerning creative



piano pedagogy and performance in relation to Chinese settings (Zheng & Leung, 2021b), less attention has been paid to the practices and practitioners of Chinese traditional instruments, either in China or elsewhere.

The development of I/V pedagogy requires ‘both evidence-based accounts of its effectiveness, and ways to improve its practice’ (Carey & Grant, 2015: 19). However, empirical studies on the pedagogies and beliefs underpinning the teaching of Chinese instruments in China, including their establishment, the sociocultural context in which they are conducted, and the people who implement them, are currently lacking. Given that building collaborative, interdisciplinary communities of practice has been recognised as invaluable to facilitating connection-making and transformative learning among practitioners (Creech & Gaunt, 2012), instrumental teachers in China may benefit from further research that investigates the potential for such specialist support.

### **Conclusions**

This study explored the impact of U.K. I/V teacher training on the pedagogical transformation of Chinese preservice guzheng teachers. The findings indicate a variety of student-teachers pedagogical changes aimed at enhancing pupils’ learning engagement, including the interactive approach of asking open-ended questions, caring about their pupils’ wellbeing, and creating an encouragement-oriented atmosphere. The positive effect of the research-informed

strategies, familiarity with the learned PCK, and the frequency of the practical application of pedagogical practice all serve to stimulate the transformation, while the consistency exhibited in the valuing of background repertoire knowledge may be due to the student-teachers' consistent perception of the regional stylistic characteristics that influence guzheng performance. The study also identified a number of challenges relating to the practicability of implementing pupil-directed approaches in China due to the exam and efficiency-oriented teaching context experienced by the participants prior to their U.K. study; future research on simultaneously developing pupils' learning autonomy and working with external expectations (e.g., from parents / employers) in the Chinese context is suggested as being of pedagogical value. Overall, this small-scale study serves to provide a starting point for the further investigation of Chinese instrumental teachers and related pedagogies as they concerns master-apprenticeship influences, pedagogical developments, and Chinese instrumental teacher training.

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