



Research Article

An Integrated Approach to Professional Music Education in Russia as a Quality Guarantee

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Abstract

The professional music education system in Russia, which has existed for just over 160 years, began to develop from higher education and gradually evolved into a three-tier system: school - college - university. During its crystallization, two fundamental trends emerged that enabled the necessary quality of musical training, ensuring the competitiveness of university graduates and their high level of musical development. The first is connected with the historical process of crystallization of the music education system – the creation of a three-stage system of music education, which allows for the achievement of the necessary professional training of a musician. It is well known that the foundations of music education in Russia are laid in the preschool period, when children are most receptive to learning through playful activities. This period can also have a general developmental nature. The second stage of education, in this case, selects those focused on further musical professional activity. It allows for a deeper understanding of the fundamentals of the musical profession and the acquisition of fundamental knowledge. The final stage of training is reaching a qualification level, allowing the student to become a bearer of a unique professional "genetic code," passing on their skills to future generations of aspiring musicians. Another key feature of the training of professional musicians is the comprehensive approach to the educational system. The opportunity for comprehensive cultural and musical development for future performers allows them to avoid narrowly focused training, while also offering ample opportunities for career advancement in their post-graduate years. The aim of this study is to identify the sources of productivity in music education and understand the learning mechanisms that guarantee its effectiveness. The methods for studying this phenomenon include the historical specifics of the system's creation, as well as an analysis of the internal content of the educational structure.

Keywords

Professional Music Education, Three-tier Education System, Comprehensiveness, Competency-based Approach, Rating System, Quality Assurance of Education, Provision of Personnel to the Employer

1. Introduction

The effectiveness and, consequently, the competitiveness of a higher education institution directly depend on the demand for graduates in a given field. For several decades, the policy of guaranteeing the quality of education for students admitted to Russian universities has been determined by compliance

with the fundamental Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" [1]. In addition to this law, educational activities are based on the developed federal state requirements, abbreviated as FGT [2], which outline the minimum require-

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ments for the content, structure, and implementation conditions of the educational program at the level of children's music schools. For the second and third stages of musical education, federal state educational standards for secondary vocational and higher education apply: the Federal State Educational Standard of Secondary Vocational Education (FSES SPO) for music colleges [3] and the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education (FSES VO) for higher educational institutions [4]. Unlike the requirements for music schools, which define the minimum conditions for learning, the standards serve as a foundation for defining mandatory program requirements: which disciplines to study, in what volume, and what competencies graduates must develop. According to the approved requirements, the performance of universities must not fall below the standards set for each area of study.

The next step in achieving higher education quality in the country, after "leveling" universities to meet the acceptable threshold of the established standard, was the introduction of a unique rank ladder among universities, allowing for the firsthand identification of exemplary and illustrative educational institutions [5]. One such indicator of their effectiveness is the competitive admissions process, which ensures that applicants, in turn, are guaranteed employment upon admission to a given educational institution and after completing their studies.

It should be noted that while the system of educational standards was developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science and monitored by its structure, the Russian Educational Supervision Authority (Rosobrnadzor), the issue of a university's competitiveness is entirely the responsibility of independent rating agencies. Furthermore, the accreditation procedure itself, in this comparison, is changing from a mandatory format to a declarative one.

Based on the results of such independent professional and public international accreditations, the Moscow State P. I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory has repeatedly demonstrated top results and taken a corresponding position in the national aggregator's ranking ladder¹. Among the five ranking parameters that propelled the conservatory to the top are "First Mission" based on the "Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia" project, the Hirsch index ranking, and the "International Recognition" nomination. All of this has enabled the university to achieve a level of education that exceeds national standards. Having established the evidence base for the official status of a well-known level of the educational process at the Moscow Conservatory, we would like to analyze which characteristics are key to guaranteeing educational quality and how this process has evolved.

The goal of this study is to identify the sources of produc-

tivity in music education and understand the learning mechanisms that guarantee effectiveness. The relevance of this research lies in its ability to identify the criteria that ensure the leadership of universities among a large number of conservatories, music academies, cultural institutes, and art institutes.

To study this phenomenon, we should consider the historical context of the system's creation, as well as an analysis of the internal content of the educational structure.

2. Analytical Section

2.1. Historical Background

The development of professional music education traditions in Russia began just over 160 years ago with the founding of the St. Petersburg (1862) and then Moscow (1866) Conservatories. The principles of education at the conservatories were consistent with Western European traditions, as the first teachers at Russian conservatories were foreign professors. Interestingly, the first meetings of the Moscow Conservatory's Council of Professors, chaired by its founder, N. G. Rubinstein, were held mostly in German and French, rather than Russian [6].

Developed from higher education, the education system gradually evolved by the mid-1930s into a unique, interconnected three-tier system: school (7 grades) - college (4 years) - university (5 years). It is well known that the foundations of music education in Russia are laid in preschool, when children are most receptive to learning through play. This period can also have a general developmental nature. The second stage of education in this case selects those destined for further professional musical activity. It allows for a deeper understanding of the fundamentals of the musical profession and the acquisition of more in-depth fundamental knowledge. And the final stage of training is reaching a qualification level, allowing one to become a bearer of a unique professional "genetic code," passing on their skills to future generations of aspiring musicians.

As the educational system crystallized, another variation emerged: "specialized music school (11 years) - university (5 years)," where the school combined the first two stages of initial professional training by selecting gifted children with outstanding musical talent at the early development stage. This allows both versions to achieve the necessary musical training, ensuring the competitiveness of university graduates and their high level of musical development. The similarities and differences in the educational systems of these two pre-university educational structures—children's music school and special music school—are explored in another article by the author [7].

¹ In 2019, a joint international review declared the Moscow Conservatory fully compliant with the European Standard for Quality Assurance (ESG-ENQA) in music education, and its educational programs were awarded a 5-star rating and the "EXCELLENT QUALITY" distinction. It also took first place in the 2021 National

Aggregated Ranking among creative universities in Russia. According to the 2021 Global Aggregated Ranking, the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory entered the top 10% of universities worldwide for the first time.

2.2. Improving the Three-stage System at the Moscow Conservatory

Over the sixteen years of musical training, students not only acquire excellent instrumental skills, perfect technique, and master the repertoire of their specialization, but also grow in their overall musical development, acquiring all the necessary background information about the musical heritage of world music culture and beyond. This kind of comprehensive musical education is linked to a comprehensive approach to the educational system. The opportunity for comprehensive cultural and musical development for future performers allows them to move away from narrowly focused training, while also offering ample opportunities for self-fulfillment in their post-graduate studies.

Another important trend is the deep immersion of students in the "gene pool" of the national performing school—the unification of all three stages of development under a single "school." This happened not only with the Moscow Conservatory: leading educational institutions such as the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, and others have created their own three-tier systems of professional music education. The essence of this unification into a kind of "workshop for producing high-quality musicians" is that university professors are also involved in the work of specialized schools and music colleges. This method of cultivating talented musicians from an early age has borne fruit in the form of world-renowned performers (among them Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Viktor Tretyakov, Vladimir Spivakov, Nikolai Lugansky, Denis Matsuev, and many others).

2.3. Disciplinary Concentricity of Education in a Three-tier System

Analysis of the curricula and their changes provides an excellent picture of the constant deepening of students'

knowledge. Let's look at historical facts. When the Moscow Conservatory was founded, instrumental students (pianists, violinists, cellists, etc.) studied, in addition to their specialization, music theory subjects such as solfeggio, music theory, and harmony. Within a special class (for example, piano), a division was made between those virtuoso students who clearly aspired to concert performance, and those who were better suited to the role of teacher of a given instrument. The latter formed a cohort of pedagogical classes. The tradition that was established from the outset and has remained relevant throughout its subsequent development is the practical training of student performers in two guises: performance practice (on concert stages) and pedagogical practice. Initially, due to the underdevelopment of the "system," this consisted of classes between senior students and junior pedagogical students. This decision was made by the Council of Professors of the Conservatory.

In the subsequent era, with the emergence of a new state striving to systematize everything, and the creation of two- and three-tier systems of professional music education, music subjects were developed at each stage of students' development. These subjects allowed for a deeper immersion, level by level, in the musical and general cultural history of global cultural development, imbuing students with data that enabled them to gain a profound understanding of a vast body of knowledge concerning a wide range of phenomena, from styles and the development of genres to the specifics of interpreting intonation in the works of a particular composer [14, 15]. As an example, we could examine the general development trends of a future musician using a three-stage education system. Music education is based on three cycles of subjects, closely interconnected to enrich students' knowledge and skills depending on their age. The following diagram shows the changes in the core knowledge of each stage.

Table 1. Comparison of basic disciplines of three levels of musical education.

Complexity of the three components of music education by level		
1. Specialty (tool)	2. Music theory	3. History of music
Music school		
Individual lessons in your specialty with a teacher	Solfeggio, music literacy Rhythmics Choral singing	Listening to Music (Grades 1-3) Foreign Musical Literature Domestic Musical Literature
Music College		
Individual lessons in your specialty with a teacher	Solfeggio Elementary Music Theory	Foreign Musical Literature
Ensemble performance	Harmony Analysis of Musical Works	Domestic Musical Literature
Higher education institution		

Complexity of the three components of music education by level

<i>1. Specialty (tool)</i>	<i>2. Music theory</i>	<i>3. History of music</i>
Individual lessons in your specialty with a teacher	Harmony	History of Foreign Music
Ensemble performance	Polyphony	History of Russian Music
Orchestral performance (for non-pianists)	Analysis of Musical Works	Contemporary Music

Of course, the example we're using is based on core curriculum subjects, which at the college and especially university levels are supplemented by a large number of additional developmental and advanced courses.

Thus, this model demonstrates the cyclical nature of the learning format, where at each level, only age-appropriate knowledge is acquired.

2.4. Substantive Centrifugality in the Three-Tier System of Professional Music Education

The results of the analysis of the substantive aspects of instruction in the three main musical areas of study at each level of education are intriguing. Thus, the aforementioned minimum level of federal state requirements for the first level of education is striking in its maximalism. Among the requirements for mastering educational programs, one can find extremely complex ones, requiring remarkable analytical observation and reflection.

Let us cite some examples. For example, in lessons on a specialized instrument, in addition to the understandable requirements—the ability to independently learn musical works of various genres and styles, independently overcome technical difficulties in learning simple pieces, and competently perform musical compositions—there are also more complex requirements for children's learning. Among these, we note: knowledge of the characteristic features of musical genres and basic stylistic phenomena, the ability to create an artistic image when performing musical works, knowledge of musical terminology, and basic skills in the theoretical analysis of performed works [2].

It's also interesting to observe the historical layers of the musical material being mastered, which is used at each stage of training. For example, school music training for pianists is primarily focused on classical music. Young children may perform, for example, minuets by J. S. Bach, sonatinas by M. Clementi, easy etudes by Czerny, and so on. By the end of the first stage of training, this includes two- and three-part inventions by J. S. Bach, sonatas by J. Haydn and A. Mozart. In music college, this includes more complex classical music and music from the Romantic era. The core repertoire of required works includes preludes and fugues by J. S. Bach, etudes by

F. Chopin, F. Liszt, and S. Rachmaninoff, and sonatas and concertos by A. Mozart, L. Beethoven, and others. The university repertoire is distinguished by its omnivorous nature, with a wide inclusion of concertos for instrument and orchestra. Here, the most complex works, both in technical performance and genre (multi-movement works), are presented in a diverse range.

It is clear that such centrifugal development, with the gradual inclusion of increasingly broader and more complex material, must be accompanied by a significant increase in knowledge, both in the study of the musical material being performed and in an understanding of the historical and cultural background of the works being performed, in order to interpret each piece as accurately as possible. Therefore, lecture-concerts, where performers comment on the works they perform in a popular and educational manner, have become a know-how of contemporary performance.

2.5. Versatility in Types of Professional Activity

Finally, another aspect of the scale of acquired performance skills should be mentioned: the types of professional performance. One of the principles of a comprehensive approach to a musician's professional development during education is their versatility and breadth of competencies. For example, a pianist who has completed all stages of training can later apply for work as a soloist (solo concerts or performances with a symphony orchestra), ensemble musician or accompanist (chamber instrumental ensembles), and a specialty teacher at all levels of music education. This kind of versatility in the capabilities of a university graduate who has completed all stages of training allows them to be competitive and in demand in the labor market. The conflict between such a broad profile of training and the student's development as a fully-fledged professional is that, having experienced all types of professional activities in internships, expectations for future professional work do not always align with the field into which the university graduate is invited. And despite the fact that during their undergraduate or postgraduate studies, students have already been involved in at least teaching, their aspirations are more inclined toward concert performance. However, statistical studies show that only a small percentage of graduates are involved in concert performances as soloists or ensemble players. The majority of graduates find employment

in educational institutions or successfully pursue careers in related music fields, which is also quite acceptable.

2.6. The Role of a University Ranking System in Guaranteeing Quality Education

The question remains: how does a university's ranking status influence the quality of training for a broad-based music specialist? After all, essentially all music universities, to varying degrees, meet standard requirements, which, in particular, outline the approximate level of competencies to be mastered. Moreover, the list of disciplines has been historically proven and has already become traditional.

However, the university ranking system created in Russia, following the example of foreign universities, was able to divide single-profile universities into flagship, exemplary, and other institutions based on a hierarchy of strengths. Unfortunately, the domestic ranking system does not differentiate between students' backgrounds. The mathematician who laid the foundations for the aggregate ranking of universities in Russia was V. G. Navodny. A series of his publications, co-authored with like-minded colleagues, illustrates the process of creating a domestic system. The approach to creating a system for monitoring the quality of educational activities of a university, based on an independent assessment of educational programs [8], was thought out step by step, then a new methodology for comparative analysis of the activities of educational organizations was presented [9], an objective assessment of which can be obtained by combining data from ten authoritative public Russian ratings [10]. In this regard, the concept of "quality assurance" prevails, ensuring not just competitiveness but high competitiveness among different universities. Of course, gradations of distinguishing characteristics for such universities have already been developed and described in the domestic system. Its creation could not ignore the experience of assessing and guaranteeing the quality of education that has developed abroad. It was precisely comparative analysis that allowed the creation of a relevant system in Russia, as demonstrated in G. N. Motova's book "Accreditation of Educational Systems.". The author emphasizes that "the accreditation procedure for the domestic educational system is *an innovative function of education quality management...*" [4, 11]. However, beyond academic characteristics, factors that influence the quality of graduates include such factors as the high-quality content of educational programs, the use of modern teaching technologies, a practical focus on practice, the faculty and staff, their involvement in research and development involving students, and much more. Furthermore, the central location of the Moscow Conservatory, which influences graduates' concert activities, the availability of its own concert halls, modern instruments, advanced teaching techniques that appeal to the best traditions of Russian performance, and the curriculum, contribute to the success of the institution. The concert experience of a specialized professor, traditions passed down from teacher to student, original courses that incorporate the best scientific achievements and existing experience in a specific field

of study, extensive opportunities for additional professional training for students, and so on—these are the factors that significantly distinguish one higher education institution from another. The Moscow Conservatory was one of the first music universities to conduct institutional international accreditation, the results of which "contributed to both the improvement of the educational programs themselves and the development of the educational organization as a whole." [12]. However, the ultimate "usefulness" of any university for employers today lies in a practice-oriented approach to the educational process as a whole. Perhaps the next step in achieving the best quality of specialist training for a future employer would be the introduction of an individual learning path for students? "Well-established in the university systems of foreign countries, this opportunity gives impetus to a specific level of training of an individual student, allowing him to improve in a specific direction" [12, 13]. In this regard, the P. I. Tchaikovsky Moscow Conservatory remains an unrivaled example of high-quality training for encyclopedically educated, multi-functional musicians.

3. Conclusion

The above analysis of the performance of one specific university - the Moscow P. I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory - which has received recognition for the quality of its graduates' education, demonstrates a wide range of components of international recognition. Among them, we highlight the following:

- 1) Preservation and enhancement of national cultural traditions;
- 2) Support for deep professional development from an early age;
- 3) Emphasis on key marker disciplines, which are concentrically revisited at each subsequent stage of education with a more in-depth immersion in knowledge (analytical skills play a significant role here);
- 4) Broad specialized training ensures employability in all situations;
- 5) Active integration of innovative technical capabilities into the educational process to improve student training;
- 6) The university's commitment to success, demonstrated by professional and public accreditations.

Of course, this is far from a complete list of what could be done to make the university competitive, allowing its graduates to be confident in their professional careers.

Abbreviations

FGT	Federal State Requirements
FGOS SPO	Federal State Educational Standard of Secondary Vocational Education
FGOS VO	Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education

Author Contributions

Lola Aburavifovna Dzhumanova: Data curation, Resources, Conceptualization, Methodology

Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflicts of interest.

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