



IMPROVING PERFORMANCE COMPETENCE IN FOLK INSTRUMENTS IN CHILDREN'S MUSIC AND ART SCHOOLS

Sharipov Sherzod Maqsudovich

Head of the Department for Coordination of Education

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18844335>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 26th February 2026

Accepted: 27th February 2026

Online: 28th February 2026

KEYWORDS

folk instruments, performance competence, children's music and art school, repertoire, ensemble, stage culture

ABSTRACT

In children's music and art schools, the folk instruments program not only develops students' instrumental performance skills but also cultivates national cultural memory, aesthetic taste, stage culture, and socio-communicative competencies. As this type of education is defined within the system of lifelong learning as non-compulsory supplementary education, the mission of these institutions extends beyond merely "teaching how to play an instrument." Rather, it encompasses the identification of talent, its systematic development, and the creation of conditions conducive to creative growth [1].

This thesis proposes a conceptual model for enhancing performance competence in folk instruments. The model integrates the following interrelated components into a unified system: technical competence, musical literacy, interpretative thinking, ensemble and accompaniment skills, stage-psychological stability, self-regulated practice, digital reflection, and awareness of national traditions and stylistic identity..

Introduction

Education in the field of folk instruments is often mistakenly reduced to the idea of "increasing finger speed." In reality, instrumental performance represents a multidimensional complex of competencies: producing a clear and stable tone, maintaining rhythmic accuracy, perceiving stylistic nuances, comprehending the semantic content of a musical work, demonstrating appropriate stage behavior, listening attentively within an ensemble, engaging in self-monitoring and correction, and exercising creative initiative. None of these competencies emerge automatically from "talent" alone; rather, they are systematically formed through a well-structured methodological framework within the educational process.

Children's music and art schools function as foundational laboratories in this regard. It is within these institutions that two essential trajectories begin simultaneously: preparation for a professional musical career and the cultivation of lifelong engagement with music as an amateur creative practice [1].

In Uzbekistan, the state program adopted to improve the functioning of children's music and art schools outlines key priorities, including enriching schools with qualitatively new

educational content, enhancing students' musical and general cultural development, creating a new generation of textbooks and music collections, and strengthening the system of teacher training [2]. The substance of this policy document clearly indicates that the issue of competence development extends beyond in-class technical instruction. It requires the coordinated alignment of resources, repertoire policy, methodological support, personnel training, and institutional management.

Therefore, improving performance competence should not be approached at the level of merely "adding one more exercise," but rather at the level of redesigning educational practice in accordance with the principles of the competency-based approach [6].

Main part

From a practical perspective, performance competence is defined as a student's ability to demonstrate stable and reliable results in real performance situations. In the context of folk instruments, this competence may be structured into seven principal blocks:

1. Technical-performance block (fingering, striking techniques, articulation, tuning, intonation, speed, and accuracy);

2. Musical literacy block (note reading, rhythmic dictation, understanding of form and mode);

3. Interpretation block (phrasing, dynamic planning, agogics, stylistic interpretation);

4. Ensemble competence (accompaniment skills, listening culture, performing "in one breath");

5. Stage competence (pre-performance preparation, stress management, the ability to continue without disruption after mistakes);

6. Self-regulation competence (practice planning, time management, goal setting, reflection);

7. Cultural-identity block (knowledge of folk music traditions, regional styles, and the aesthetic essence of maqom and folk melodies) [5].

These blocks function as a diagnostic map for teachers in identifying specific areas of difficulty. For instance, if a student plays rapidly but produces a "dull" tone, the issue may not be speed alone but articulation and auditory control. Similarly, if a student performs confidently from memory yet loses coordination in ensemble settings, the challenge lies not in technique but in listening skills and collective rhythmic sensitivity.

The first condition for enhancing competence is transforming the practice process from "playing more" to a cyclical model of "accurate execution + analysis + reattempt." Instruction in folk instruments often relies on a demonstrative method: the teacher performs, and the student imitates. While necessary, if used exclusively, this approach may weaken the student's independent monitoring mechanisms. Therefore, three micro-technologies should be systematically integrated into lessons:

- a) micro-goals (e.g., stabilizing the rhythm of a single phrase or refining fingering in a specific passage);
- b) immediate feedback (teacher commentary, metronome usage, audio recording);
- c) student reflection (identifying what succeeded, what did not, and determining corrective strategies for home practice).

Digital reflection is particularly effective, as short audio-video recordings enable students to hear themselves “from the outside,” thereby accelerating the development of inner hearing and intonational control [5].

The second condition involves aligning repertoire policy with competence-based logic. In folk instrument education, repertoire selection is often guided by aesthetic preference (“which melody is beautiful”), which disrupts pedagogical sequencing. A systematic approach requires each musical piece to serve a clearly defined competence-building purpose. At the initial stage, simple melodies should strengthen rhythmic and striking stability; at subsequent stages, works requiring nuanced phrasing and breath-like dynamic shaping are introduced; later, ensemble-oriented compositions develop collaborative sensitivity; at advanced levels, stylistically complex interpretations with ornaments and intricate transitions are incorporated. The state program’s emphasis on creating new textbooks and music collections reflects the necessity of a structured repertoire bank; without such a sequential system, teachers rely on personal archives, reducing standardization and quality stability [2].

The third condition is recognizing ensemble and accompaniment not as secondary activities but as core competencies. The tradition of folk instruments extends beyond solo performance; accompaniment, musical dialogue among performers, and the ability to “grasp” melodic flow collectively occupy a central place. Ensemble instruction cultivates three essential qualities: listening, adaptation, and responsibility. Listening implies perceiving the collective sound rather than focusing solely on one’s own part; adaptation requires synchronizing tempo, dynamics, and phrasing; responsibility fosters healthy discipline, as individual errors affect the entire group. UNESCO documents emphasize the socially integrative and communicative functions of arts education, thereby reinforcing the pedagogical significance of ensemble practice [4].

The fourth condition is the deliberate teaching of stage competence. Many students perform successfully in class yet experience tension on stage. Labeling this as mere “shyness” overlooks pedagogical solutions, as stage stress is a manageable skill. Lessons should incorporate mini-concerts, two-minute peer performances, single-take video recordings, and exercises that train students to continue playing even after recognizing mistakes. Such strategies normalize performance as a routine professional activity rather than an exceptional event. The new UNESCO framework on culture and arts education highlights not only quality and access but also empowerment and self-expression; stage competence directly contributes to strengthening students’ inner confidence [5].

The fifth condition is transforming assessment from a “final examination” model into a process-oriented system that guides learning. Within a competency-based framework, assessment does not merely record outcomes but regulates instruction by clarifying what the student knows, what they can perform, and where further development is required. Accordingly, assessment in folk instrument education should operate on three levels: formative assessment (micro-results within each lesson), interim assessment (monthly or quarterly repertoire tasks), and summative assessment (end-of-semester or annual evaluation). Rubrics serve as practical instruments, defining criteria such as intonation, rhythm, dynamics, style, and stage presence across four proficiency levels. When students clearly understand evaluation criteria, their practice becomes purposeful. The core principle

of competency-based education is thus the prioritization of practical outcomes and the ability to apply knowledge rather than knowledge alone [6].

The sixth condition concerns the systematic renewal of teacher competence. Many challenges in folk instrument instruction arise not from students but from methodological inertia: repetitive exercises, identical explanations, and unchanged repertoire. The state program outlines measures such as developing new-generation textbooks and music collections with the involvement of leading professors and establishing admission quotas in teacher training programs [2]. However, without integration into teachers' practical professional development, these initiatives risk remaining formal. Practically, each school should implement internal "mentor-apprentice" systems, organize at least two masterclasses annually, conduct methodological seminars, maintain a shared repertoire bank, and agree upon standardized assessment rubrics. When teachers move beyond routine repetition and engage in didactic experimentation, students' progress accelerates correspondingly.

Conclusion and discussion

Enhancing performance competence in folk instruments within children's music and art schools cannot be achieved through a single method or lesson; it requires a systemic approach. Such a system entails a clearly articulated competence model, a sequential repertoire policy, reflective practice methodologies, deliberate instruction of ensemble and stage skills, and assessment transformed into formative and portfolio-based monitoring. The institutional status of these schools as supplementary education establishments, as defined in normative documents, provides a regulatory foundation for constructing educational content based on effectiveness criteria [1].

As a practical recommendation, a "six-step" concept is proposed:

1. diagnosing performance competence according to the seven-block model;
2. defining minimum and optimal indicators for each block;
3. planning repertoire in alignment with competence objectives;
4. institutionalizing the micro-goal and reflection cycle in every lesson;
5. systematically organizing ensemble and stage experiences throughout the academic year;
6. managing teachers' methodological growth through masterclasses and internal mentoring.

The explicit emphasis in state programs on methodological support, music collections, and teacher training demonstrates the institutional foundation for implementing this approach [2]. The ultimate outcome should be that students learn not merely to play melodies but to think musically; when stepping onto the stage, they do not become overwhelmed by fear but communicate their artistic intentions through their instrument. In this way, folk instrument education becomes not only a means of technical mastery but also a living continuation of cultural heritage

References:

1. Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Resolution No. 144 of May 5, 2016. On Approval of the Regulation on Children's Music and Art Schools. Electronic resource (LexUZ). Accessed: 01.03.2026.

2. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Resolution No. PQ-2435 of November 20, 2015. On the State Program for Further Improvement of the Activities of Children's Music and Art Schools for 2016–2020. Electronic resource (LexUZ). Accessed: 01.03.2026.
3. Official Website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. On Further Development of the Culture and Arts Sector (including information on the provision of national musical instrument collections). February 2, 2022. Electronic resource. Accessed: 01.03.2026.
4. UNESCO. Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education. 2010. Electronic resource (UNESDOC). Accessed: 01.03.2026.
5. UNESCO. UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education. Paris: UNESCO, 2024. 10 pages. Electronic resource. Accessed: 01.03.2026.
6. Qorayev, S. B. Main Aspects of Competency-Based Education. Electronic scientific source. 2022. Electronic resource. Accessed: 01.03.2026.

