



Exploring the Status of Blended Piano Teaching in Colleges and Universities from Students' Perspectives

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Abstract. Since 2020, during China's Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia outbreak protection, China's colleges and universities have been practicing a hybrid teaching model for some time. During piano teaching in music education, online teaching, as a new teaching mode, has brought challenges to teachers and students of piano education in colleges and universities. Therefore, this study aims to explore the current status of blended piano teaching in colleges and universities from students' perspectives. This study explored the current status of blended piano teaching in colleges and universities in the form of a case study. The participants in this study were five junior students majoring in music in a city in China. Data were collected through face-to-face, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews. Data collection mainly adopts the method of content analysis. This study found that students have different attitudes toward blended piano instruction. From the students' point of view, the online and offline modes of blended teaching have their advantages and disadvantages for piano teaching. The students also made suggestions for blended piano teaching. The findings of this study can provide a reference for the development of blended piano teaching in the post-epidemic era.

Keywords: College piano, Online and offline mixed education, Advantages and disadvantages, Traditional Piano Education

1 Introduction

During the New Crown epidemic, Chinese colleges and universities experimented with blended teaching. Blended teaching is a relatively new endeavor for college piano education. The traditional offline piano teaching in the era of Internet+ is no longer able to meet the needs of the times, and the research related to Internet+ piano education is in a state of insufficiency, both in theory and in practice. The blended teaching mode integrates traditional teaching and modern information technology, breaking through the limitations of traditional teaching. This study explores the advantages and disadvantages of the blended teaching mode learned after trying blended teaching in college piano education and provides a reference for the development of blended teaching in college piano.

2 Literature review

2.1 Piano Education in Higher Education

Piano education and teaching is a practical subject that emphasizes the cultivation of students' aesthetic and hands-on skills. [1] Piano learners in the learning process will carry out a large number of piano performance-related musical activities (such as performance, appreciation, communication, and observation, etc.), in these activities, the learner will continue to be stimulated by music information from the outside world, and the external information resources through their internal information processing and ultimately transformed into their knowledge of the ability to have the ability to learn the piano. Piano learning ability belongs to the category of overall learning ability, which is a kind of comprehensive ability covering understanding, cognition, and acquisition specifically in the subject area of piano. [2] Compared with other subjects, the study of piano subjects has the characteristics of emphasizing practicality. [3] In instrumental music contexts, popular demonstrations include clapping rhythmical patterns, humming, singing, and performance musical themes by emphasizing or specifying a key feature or features of the work.[4] Therefore, piano education emphasizes providing students with valuable knowledge through movement, such as direction, position, amplitude, strength, and the sound or tone quality required Piano education can have many positive effects on students, developing their aesthetic ability and improving their intellectual level. At the same

time, reduce costs to improve the advantages, stimulate a relaxed atmosphere, observe each other, rich in content and diverse forms, the pace is always moderate and other advantages [5]

In the context of this study, the piano program for music education majors in colleges and universities, piano education is a required course for music education students in colleges and universities. Students not only learn professional piano theory and techniques but also grow up to be professional music teachers. According to the specific situation of different schools, generally speaking, the piano courses of music education majors in colleges and universities are usually concentrated in the first two to three years of students' enrollment, and the class schedule is mostly one session per week, while a few schools have one session per week for both individual and group classes. This shows the importance of the piano course in the curriculum of music education majors in colleges and universities [6].

2.2 Piano Teaching, Online Teaching, Offline Teaching and Hybrid Teaching

The traditional piano teaching in colleges and universities is offline mode. Piano professional teaching has been using "one-on-one" oral teaching methods for teaching students in the class for independent practice. Offline piano teaching can help students intuitively learn to play skills, and better grasp the piano learning performance in the movement, beat, rhythm strength, and weakness. This can provide a face-to-face communication platform for teachers and students. Teachers can also understand the learning situation and learning progress of students through face-to-face teaching. Due to the wider application of the offline teaching mode, teachers are more experienced in offline teaching, so they can carry out targeted and flexible guidance. However, traditional offline teaching has certain limitations. For example, due to the limitation of teaching space and time, it is difficult to provide students with a flexible and convenient teaching space. [7]. At the same time, the one-to-one teaching form of piano teaching and the mode of students practicing independently in the classroom also lead to fewer exchanges and ensembles between students. In addition, due to the limited lesson time of the piano course, it is difficult for students to fully master the content taught by the teacher in the limited classroom teaching time, and in the process of practicing the piano on their own after class, once the deviation of understanding will lead to the deviation of playing, and it is difficult to be corrected in time. Moreover, offline learning is more dependent on the existing

teaching materials and lacks the flexibility of expanding and updating the teaching materials, which may lead to the problem of outdated teaching materials and narrow knowledge. Students may also have difficulty accessing informatization tools and resources, which to a certain extent limits teachers' and students' access to Internet teaching resources [8].

With the development of online education in recent years, online piano teaching has also gradually gained the attention of scholars, and the value of online teaching for students' piano learning in terms of broadening students' vision of piano learning and strengthening communication between teachers and students has gradually been recognized. Therefore online learning is believed to be able to make up for the shortcomings of offline piano learning to a certain extent. First of all, some researchers believe that Internet technology can help us break through the limitations of practice and space to communicate and learn with teachers and classmates anytime and anywhere. While improving learning efficiency, it provides more communication opportunities for teachers and students. Internet-based microclasses and flipped classrooms can promote the innovation of piano teaching methods[9]. Secondly, teachers can provide students with more teaching resources through the Internet, including access to information, watching expert performance demonstrations and lectures, and so on. This can broaden students' horizons and improve their performance level. [10] At the same time, the rich resources and multiple teaching communication methods of online teaching also greatly enrich the teaching activities, avoiding the single and boring traditional one-to-one offline piano teaching.

Although online teaching has certain advantages, compared with traditional offline education, online education has the problems of shorter time, less development experience, difficulty in measuring the teaching effect, online teaching resources account for a smaller proportion of all the resources, relatively few teaching experiences that can be referred to and controlled by the first-line teachers, and the teachers' informatization level is not high. This prevents the advantages of online teaching from being fully explored and smoothly utilized in frontline teaching classrooms. Therefore, teachers' information literacy needs to be improved [11].

In addition to online and offline learning modes, the blended learning mode, which combines the characteristics of online and offline learning, has also received attention from researchers. Blended learning is a new teaching mode that combines the advantages of traditional teaching and online learning. Teachers flexibly choose different teaching environments and teaching methods according to the type of

knowledge and the requirements of the teaching day standard and give full play to learners' autonomy to realize teaching according to the learners' original cognitive level and general characteristics, to achieve the optimization of the learning effect. [12] Blended teaching facilitates the interaction between online and offline education and improves the autonomy of students' learning, as well as optimizing the teaching and learning process and sharing of resources[13]

For piano teaching, the researcher proposes to adopt an online + offline hybrid teaching mode to carry out piano teaching for education majors, extending the teaching process from classroom to before and after class. At the same time, a diversified piano teaching evaluation system for preschool education majors is designed to promote construction through evaluation, better grasp the effect of piano teaching, mobilize students' enthusiasm for learning piano, and achieve twice the result with half the effort. [14]Piano teaching needs to break through the limitations of traditional piano teaching in teaching time and teaching space using the Internet, realize the organic combination of online and offline teaching, and the organic combination of individual teaching and collective teaching, to better improve students ' piano learning efficiency.

However, online and offline blended education also face some challenges. First of all, the integration of blended teaching started late and the supporting facilities are not perfect. From the perspective of students, in the usual offline education, students can completely have no communication equipment, which will not affect the effect of learning, and the integration of mixed teaching puts forward higher requirements for students ' supporting learning equipment; From the perspective of teachers, they need to have online teaching aids such as computers, microphones, and handwritten boards to carry out online teaching more smoothly, but how to ensure that every teacher can obtain these online teaching aids? At present, there is no good solution. In summary, the difficulty of the configuration of supporting facilities is another reason why the advantages of blended teaching integration have not been taken seriously. Secondly, teachers have a weak awareness of informatization, inadequate training in informatization ability, and low enthusiasm for active learning. Some teachers ' cognition of educational informatization still stays at the level of mastering the use of live broadcast software and has not excavated its essence. At the same time, there are also limitations in the choice of informatization tools, such as most teachers usually only apply PPT or download courseware resources on the webpage, etc., and seldom apply new informatization tools. As a result, they cannot make good use of online

teaching resources to serve the deep integration of blended teaching. Good informatization ability is a prerequisite for blended teaching integration, but at present, most teachers can only apply informatization teaching methods in the course introduction or lecture process, and very few teachers can apply informatization teaching methods to the blended teaching integration. Finally, teachers' teaching evaluation orientation is too one-sided. Due to the limitations of online teaching, the teaching evaluation in classrooms tends to evaluate the knowledge points and neglects the evaluation of skills and abilities. Therefore, teachers' evaluation ability needs to be improved. [15]

In a study conducted by a Chinese university on the differences between online and offline blended piano teaching, the researchers found that offline and online teachers play different roles in the process of student learning during the online and offline blended learning process. By comparison, students believe that the common role that online and offline instructors have in the blended learning process is to provide students with guidance on learning methods. The difference is that offline teachers mainly provide face-to-face knowledge (82.86%) and emotional communication with students (68.57%), whereas the main task of online teachers is to provide students with learning resources and tools (50%) and to carry out learning assessment (50%) [16]. The roles of online teachers and offline teachers in students' piano learning process have their focuses, with online teachers focusing on providing students with rich piano learning resources and offline teachers focusing on face-to-face teaching and emotional communication. Thus, there is still some room for progress in the practice of mixed piano teaching in Chinese colleges and universities. At the same time, both online and offline modes play a role in promoting piano teaching in different aspects.

In 2020, a study of online and offline blended learning for piano performance majors in a university was conducted, and it was found that the study of online piano teaching showed a rising trend year by year, and online piano teaching is gradually becoming an important aspect of the development of the piano teaching in the future, which is also regarded as an important value and significance for the solution of the problems existing in traditional piano teaching. Piano online teaching has a unique value in broadening students' horizons and strengthening learning communication among students. At the same time, the researcher found the following problems in the blended learning process through questionnaire and interview surveys: (1) Analyzing from the aspect of the value of piano online teaching, piano online teaching has a

unique value in broadening students' horizons and strengthening the learning exchange between students. However, there are fewer studies about students' piano online learning;(2) In terms of research methodology, most researchers have mainly adopted empirical summaries to explore the impact of online teaching and learning, and lack empirical studies to support their proofs;(3) Analyzed from the content of piano online teaching, piano online teaching has become an important aspect of the development of piano teaching in the end, and it has an important value and significance in solving the problems existing in traditional piano teaching.

Meanwhile, it brings challenges to the traditional piano.

To summarize, the existing literature focuses on the different roles played by teachers in the blended teaching of college piano lines and also discusses the overall development trend of the blended teaching of college piano lines. However, no study explores the current teaching situation of college piano blended teaching from the perspective of student learning. Thus, this study aims to fill this research gap.

3 Research Questions

Based on the discussion in the previous chapter, the article points out that the research related to blended piano teaching in colleges and universities has not yet explored the relevant characteristics and teaching status quo from the perspective of student learning. To address this research gap, the study poses the following research question: what is the current status of blended piano teaching in colleges and universities from the perspective of students? To answer this research question, the study listed three sub-questions:

- 1) Students' perceptions of the blended teaching model of college piano and the reasons (benefits and disadvantages);
- 2) Students' suggestions for blended teaching of piano in colleges and universities.

4 Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that explores the current status of blended piano teaching in colleges and universities in the form of a case study. The participants in this study were junior students, one male and four females, totaling five, majoring in piano performance and music education in a city in China. Data were collected through face-to-face, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix I for

interview questions). Data collection mainly adopts the method of content analysis. This study mainly adopts the method of member checking to ensure the validity of the data and adopts the method of interview recording to ensure the reliability of the data. This study strictly abides by the relevant requirements of moral considerations, ensures the privacy of participants, and obtains the consent of participants.

5 Findings

By analyzing the data, the following findings were made in this study. For research question 1, "Students' perceptions of blended piano instruction in higher education and the reasons (benefits and drawbacks), first, the participants' online piano education experiences were all from the period of 2020-2022 COVID-19. As required by the outbreak protection policy, the university had to change the traditional offline program to a blended one. It is worth mentioning that this online teaching is the first time that students have received piano teaching in online and mixed forms.

Participants' attitudes towards blended learning in music-related majors are mainly divided into positive and negative. The students who have a positive attitude towards blended piano education believe that online learning has three benefits: (1) to help ease the pressure and tension in the face of the camera; (2) the study can also come into contact with the rich teaching resources; (3) No time and space constraints, can save time, more flexible. And (3) offline education can provide more intuitive teaching, such as one-on-one guidance between teachers and students, and is also more suitable for theoretical knowledge. Therefore, blended teaching, which synthesizes the advantages of online and offline learning, has the following advantages: (1) In blended teaching, students can use the time saved by online teaching to practice the piano and absorb knowledge. (2) Through the network course playback, students can fully learn the important and difficult content. (3) Occasional online teaching is also conducive to the improvement of self-control. (4) More flexible teaching time also makes students feel convenient.

However, participants who held negative views on blended piano education believed that (1) hands-on teaching was necessary and offline teaching could provide more intuitive learning, e.g., the teacher and students could observe the point of finger pressure when teaching offline. While online teachers and students can not get such an experience; (2) offline learning has the teacher's supervision, and may learn more seriously. While online learning requires more self-control from students. In addition

to this;(3)Online teaching can also have equipment problems, for example, network delay, sound distortion, etc., thus limiting normal piano teaching. ;(4) Online teaching is often limited by the network, which can hinder communication between teachers and students.Therefore, participants who held this view believed that piano teaching was more suitable to be conducted in an offline format rather than blended teaching. At the same time, participants also raised the disadvantages of blended teaching.(1) The frequent switching of teaching methods makes it difficult for students to maintain a good learning state and takes time to adapt, which also leads to a decrease in students' motivation.(2) Due to the limitations of online teaching, students feel that their piano playing ability is not as improved as it is when they are taught completely offline.(3) Students have difficulties in rationally arranging the time saved by online teaching time;(4) The online mode in blended teaching relies on electronic devices, which tends to make students feel tired. (5) Students thought that online learning lacked a learning atmosphere and they were easily distracted.

For Research Question 2: Students' suggestions for blended teaching of piano in colleges and universities. Students believe that when teachers teach theory and knowledge online and give visual instruction offline, this is an acceptable way of teaching.Participants also wished to obtain more audio resources related to piano playing, videos of teachers' lectures, video resources of piano playing, image materials of website linking resources, text materials (related articles and essays), and other online learning materials during the blended learning process.In addition to this, students felt that the role of the teacher in blended teaching was considered to be more enriching and comprehensive, and was to be respected. Specifically, regarding the roles of teachers in online, offline, and blended teaching, participants generally agreed that online teachers mainly assume the roles of guiding learning methods, providing learning resources and tools, and conducting learning assessments. In offline teaching, teachers take on the roles of face-to-face teaching, emotional communication with learners, providing learning resources and tools, and carrying out learning assessments. The role of teachers in blended teaching, on the other hand, synthesizes all the characteristics of online and offline.

6 Conclusions

Based on the description in the findings section, this study found that students have different attitudes toward blended piano teaching. Meanwhile, from the student's point

of view, the online and offline modes of blended teaching have their advantages and disadvantages for piano teaching. Some students think that blended teaching can combine the advantages of online and offline learning to promote piano teaching. Other students think that the switching teaching mode characteristic of blended teaching makes students need to adapt to different piano teaching modes frequently, which makes students less motivated to learn piano.

Overall, the addition of the online mode in blended teaching makes the rich Internet resources join traditional online teaching, which is conducive to the student's access to more teaching resources in piano teaching [17]. However, how to utilize the benefits of blended teaching in piano teaching while avoiding the disadvantages of blended teaching is a problem that college teachers need to solve. At present, due to the teachers' less experience in online education, many teachers' understanding of education informatization is still at a more superficial level, and some teachers' informatization ability is insufficient. On the other hand, it is that the training of teachers in schools is not done [18]. Good informatization ability is a prerequisite for blended teaching integration. Therefore, in the future, piano education and piano teachers in colleges and universities should further explore the methods and strategies of blended piano teaching. For example, schools can further analyze and understand students' learning abilities, hobbies, and interests, respect students' individuality, provide different teaching methods for different students according to the characteristics of blended education, and make personalized learning suggestions for different students. [19]

Appendix I

Interview questions:

1. Have you ever received blended piano instruction? When and why did you take blended piano lessons?
2. Do you think piano teaching is suitable for blended learning? What do you think about it? Why do you think so?
3. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of blended piano teaching?
4. What do you think is the teacher's role in blended piano teaching?
5. What are your suggestions for blended piano teaching?

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