

# Development and Research on Piano Application Ability of School Music Teachers--Teaching Theory of New System of Music Education in Quality-based Schools

Yikun Sun<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Music Education, Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, 100031, China

\*Corresponding Author.

## Abstract

*Piano lesson is a compulsory course for music education majors, and are an integral part of the professionalism of music teachers in schools . In recent years, the new system of school music education advocated by the School of Music Education of the Central Conservatory of Music is a kind of music education system in mass quality-oriented schools, which is different from the previous music education model in primary and secondary schools. The new system advocates the concept of "moving people with emotion", "moving people with beauty" and "educating people", which puts forward more innovative requirements for music teachers' piano skills. In addition to the ability to play the piano, music teachers must also have the experience to use the piano in school music teaching. In other words, music teachers should enrich students' musical experience through piano playing and enhance students' ability to experience music emotionally, so that the piano can play its true value and function in the school music classroom teaching. The development of the piano skills of music teachers in schools is different from the piano teaching of other professions, and has its own unique direction and path, which is determined by the professional direction, professional characteristics, and employment direction of the music education discipline.*

**Keywords:** *Piano skills, New music education system in quality-oriented schools, Music teachers in schools*

## I. Introduction

Piano lesson is a compulsory course for music education majors, and are an integral part of the professionalism of music teachers in schools . Piano lessons have been part of the training curriculum for music teachers in schools since the establishment of the piano curriculum at the Beijing Women's Higher Normal School, the first institution of higher music teacher education in China, in the 1920s. Since the first national symposium on piano teaching syllabus of higher teacher training was held in 1980, there have been many symposiums on piano teaching in higher teacher training throughout the country to discuss the problems of piano teaching system. According to the statistics of "CNKI", hundreds of articles have been published in the past 10 years specifically on piano teaching in music education. These discussions and studies generally agree that the professional piano teaching model that has been in place for many years is no longer appropriate for the curriculum of music teachers in schools. Music educators coincidentally see problems in the piano lessons of music teachers in schools. For example, "teaching in a professional piano mode gives little help in practical use to students with varying degrees of piano proficiency and a weak foundation [1]". "Piano teaching should enable the student to develop fully not only in playing technique but also, and more importantly, in musical understanding, expressiveness and independent improvisational accompaniment, through the entire course of instruction [2].""The goal of music education is to train music teachers, and the richness of the musical expression in performance is an important criterion for measuring whether a music teacher is 'qualified' or not [3]."

## II. Development status of piano skills of music teachers in schools

### 1. Urgent need for clear development goals for piano skills

In the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Extensively Strengthening and Improving the Aesthetic Education in Schools (No. 71 [ 2015] of the General Office of the State Council), it is proposed that "aesthetic education is aesthetic education, as well as education of sentiment and mind, which can not only improve people's aesthetic quality, but also influence people's emotion, interest, temperament and broad-mindedness in a subtle way, inspire people's spirit and warm people's heart". The document puts forward clear objectives for the teaching of art in China's schools and the cultivation of art teaching talents closely related to it, taking aesthetics as the essential embodiment of an art, focusing on leading students to gain emotional experience through art activities and ultimately achieving the educational goal of nurturing people. At the same time, the document also suggests that the direction and goal of the development of music education profession is to cultivate music teaching talents with comprehensive music literacy. Therefore, we should take the national policy as the guide, pay close attention to the actual development of music education in schools, and establish a professional, practical, scientific and complete development system for the teaching ability of music teachers in schools.

### 2. The one-sidedness of the development of piano skills

Piano skills specifically mean that music teachers use piano in school music teaching with high quality, organizing students to sing, listen, move, play and engage in other music practice activities, enriching students' music experience through piano playing, so that students can get spiritual pleasure and emotional satisfaction. As Mr. Liao Naixiong, a famous music scholar in China, said, "Throughout the teaching process, teachers should try every possible means to cultivate students' keen sense of sound and music through inspiration and induction. The teacher's sensitivity to the music he or she plays is one of the fundamental prerequisites for playing well and infecting others through playing [4]."

### 3. The lack of teaching materials development

The development of teaching materials is one of the important measures for piano skills development of music teachers in schools. Under the new situation that piano skills development is constantly innovating and the teaching mechanism is rapidly changing, the development of appropriate teaching materials is undoubtedly an indispensable and important task in the process of piano teaching reform, and it is also a necessary part to urge music teachers to put their piano skills in practice. Looking back at the development of piano lessons in music education in recent decades, there have been many piano teaching materials published in relation to it. The common features of these materials are mainly in the development of piano playing ability, and these materials have been developed and studied by piano education scholars for a long time and have become mature. However, the materials developed specifically for the development of piano skills for music teachers are confusing and are based on individual teachers' understanding and preferences of the curriculum. There are only a few mature materials available for teachers to use, and they are far from meeting the standards and requirements needed to acquire piano skills. It can be said that at this stage, the teaching materials for piano use are still only sporadic, only as a supplement or embellishment to the teaching content that focuses on the development of piano playing ability.

## **III. Development of piano skills based on the education theory in the new music education system in quality-oriented schools**

### 1. Definition of the development goals of piano skills based on the education theory in the new system

The new system aims to train researchers and music educators for quality-oriented music education. By providing popular and quality-oriented music education for all students, it can meet the educational expectations and needs of most students for music, thus realizing the music education ideal of "making music for everyone [5]". As a means, tool and carrier of art education, the piano, with its rich musical expression, carries the role and function of

transmitting, expressing and communicating musical emotions with students in music teaching.

## 2.2. Establishment of evaluation criteria for piano skills based on the education theory in the new system

For a long time, the piano teaching of music education majors has been subject to the evaluation standards of professional piano teaching, and generally lacks a comprehensive and objective evaluation standard for the professional piano lessons from the specific situation of the major. It has inevitably had a negative impact on the clear perception of piano teaching philosophy and independent character.

### (1) Piano instruction and use to evoke students' need for musical autonomy.

The need for musical autonomy is an intrinsic motivation for ordinary people to love, learn and use music, and it is also the main condition for obtaining musical value in musical activities [6]. One of the most important criteria for evaluating a music teacher's ability to use piano teaching is whether the teacher can evoke students' independent musical needs and promote their active attitude and conscious pursuit of music learning and practice through the use of piano teaching. Specifically, first, by playing the piano in the music classroom or in school music activities, teachers can enhance students' interest in music and make them feel spiritually happy and satisfy their aesthetic experience. Second, teachers should help students master the expressive elements of music and be able to use music as a language to express and communicate emotions. Third, teachers should enhance students' motivation to actively participate in music activities. Finally, teachers should encourage students to fully understand music works and their artistic value, and take music as a way to improve their self-cultivation.

### (2) Enhancement of students' musical practice through the use of piano teaching.

Music practice is a necessary ability for students, which generally includes the ability to perceive, express, express and create music [7]. In music teaching activities, music teachers use the piano as a "teaching tool" to express and communicate musical emotions with students. Not only can music teachers use the piano to create musical situations, to appreciate music, and to organize musical games to develop students' emotional expression, but they can also use the piano to arouse students' love and enthusiasm for music and to promote students' enthusiasm to participate in musical practice, thus further developing their ability to express their emotions through music.

### (3) Stimulation and communication with students about their emotional experience of music through the use of piano instruction.

In a quality-oriented and experiential music teaching system, the core goal of music teaching is to enable students to have correct, positive, quality, effective, and comprehensive emotional experiences in music activities. Music teachers can use piano playing to accompany songs, organize ensembles, and set music and dance to music. Through each form of music activities, teachers can communicate with students about musical emotional experience with different characteristics through music, and establish students' interest in music. Music teachers can communicate music emotion with students through piano, strengthen the depth and intensity of emotional experience, and gradually develop their good aesthetic taste, which is also the basis to measure the piano practice ability of music teachers.

## 3. Teaching materials development based on the education theory in the new system

Combining the three major international music education systems (Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodaly's music teaching systems) with Chinese music culture is the fundamental concept of the new system that roots its teaching ideology, teaching content, and curriculum materials deeply in Chinese folk music. As a language for people to express and communicate emotions, folk songs can be said to be one of the most important music materials in the new system of music teaching, which is widely used in the training of quality music teachers and in the practice of school

music teaching in ordinary primary and secondary schools. In order to make the development of piano skills of music teachers in schools more accurately reflect the professional characteristics and development rules of the subject of music education itself, the School of Music Education of the Central Conservatory of Music has summarized and organized the piano solo pieces and four-hand pieces composed by modern composers in China according to the melodies of folk songs. Moreover, in this process, a set of outlines for the development of piano skills of music teachers was gradually formed, which was adapted from Chinese folk songs.

Collaborative piano performance in the music classroom is a process in which the teacher and the students work together. The teacher conveys music to the students through singing, movement, speech, and instrumentation and other means, while students also use language, singing, body and other media to respond to music, and have music exchanges in the interaction with the teacher. In the school classroom, it is especially important for the piano, as an instrumental instrument, to communicate and collaborate with students through sound, whether in accompanying songs, in shaping musical situations, or in conveying certain emotional motivations. It is only when we communicate with each other in the music that the sound of the piano can move the heart and soul, and the music expressed by the piano can be fuller and more harmonious. The use of collaborative piano performance makes it easier for the performer or singer to feel and understand the semantic meaning of the song, and to further develop an empirical emotional experience of the work based on its content-based emotional experience [8]. The music teacher can achieve the purpose of enhancing the emotional experience of the music and stimulating the emotional expression of the music through high-quality collaborative piano performance, both in terms of musical form and musical expression, which can be homogeneous with the musical content. The teacher can create a variety of opportunities for the students to practice singing, ensemble playing and chamber music through song playing, accompanying songs and playing in ensembles, which is a necessary tool for the development of collaborative piano skills.

#### 4. Music situation creation

Music situation creation is the most practical, most widely applied and most flexible part in the development of piano skills for a music teacher. As a form of piano improvisation and performance, music situation creation also has the most comprehensive requirements for teachers' musical literacy.

##### (1) Music situation creation around music practice

Based on the music education theory of the new system, music situation creation mainly aims at stimulating and arousing students' musical emotional experience in the process of singing, listening, moving, creating and other musical activities, and promoting students to accumulate musical perceptual experience with interest, motivation and effectiveness as the main content. Music teachers use the piano to create musical situations, which can easily have a strong emotional impact on students' music, and is a very suitable form of piano use for school music teaching practice. For example, the piano piece "Walking in the Rain", composed by Professor Zhang Zheng of the School of Music Education of the Central Conservatory of Music, is based on the song "When Will the Rain Stop" [9] from the new system of internship course materials, and it is an example of how to help students experience the "difficulty of walking" in the rain through the creation of piano situations. The composition of the musical situation starts with an introduction, using the ostinato formed by syncopated rhythm, which vividly depicts the slow and tottering steps of people walking in the rain

##### (2) Music situation creation using music synaesthesia

"Music sense is the door for music to enter the heart and brain, and music sense ability is the basic musical quality of people. Synesthesia effect, which is formed by the simultaneous production and joint action of multiple musical sensations, can greatly enhance the effect of musical sensations [10]." In school music teaching, music teachers can make full use of the "isomorphic and synesthetic" experience of musical synesthesia, which is superimposed on

each other to carry out music situation creation on the piano. Not only does it greatly enhance students' single-sensory emotional experience of music, but the listening experience they gain from the sound of the piano accompanying musical activities can also further contribute to their emotional experience of music through hands-on musical practice. For example, in the practice teaching material of the new system for primary one students (Volume 1), teachers play the greeting "hello" (S-M) with different frequencies on the piano, requiring students to sing and move under the drive of the piano sound, and experience the changes of different rhythm patterns. In addition, the teacher also makes use of the changes in the high, medium and low ranges on the piano to portray different musical situations such as "picking apples" and "apples falling to the ground when they are ripe" through the piano, and through the repeated acoustic and kinesthetic sensations, students can feel the changes in the highs and lows of the tones and develop dynamic synesthesia in music listening.

### (3) Promotion of the emotional experience of music through music situation creation

The creation of music situation is a teaching tool to expand musical horizons, gain musical perception, and enhance musical understanding, so that the initial musical acoustic representations that students acquire in music activities gradually become clear, accurate, complete and strong as they expand on the same type of music works, thus making the experience of musical emotions in piano situation creation clear and vivid. The music teacher needs not only comprehensive and skillful piano playing skills for music situation creation, but also the rich and colorful experience of music expression in the player's heart. A "piano story" with a high degree of infectiousness, vitality and imagination can not only bring students a deep aesthetic experience and artistic enjoyment, but also stimulate students' enthusiasm and motivation to explore music; on the contrary, a dull and rough performance may make students lose their interest in music.

## 5. Training model for piano use with professional characteristics

The cultivation of quality-oriented music teachers under the new system is a comprehensive music teaching mode based on the formation of comprehensive music accomplishment and centered on the practical application of music teaching. The practice of piano in teaching methods should not only reflect the depth of music aesthetic ability and music emotional experience, but also take into account the breadth of music teaching ability, and eventually form a systematic and effectiveness training mode of piano use that is in line with the development characteristics of this major.

### (1) Establishment of the correct career ideal

Professor Gao Jianjin of the School of Music Education of the Central Conservatory of Music, in his article "Career Aspirations and Career Design for Music Education Students", begins with the statement that "students in the School of Music Education are expected to be music teachers in the future [11] ". It is hoped that students can set up ideals and pursue them in the course of their studies, and make it their lifelong goal to become an excellent and qualified music teacher. For piano teachers of music education majors, they also need to establish the right professional ideal, understand the role of piano teaching in the reform of music education in quality-oriented schools, and truly clarify the development of piano application courses in music education majors that are different from that of other majors. Only in this way, they can give full play to the practical function of piano application course in teaching, as well as the musical emotional expression value of piano in music classes in schools.

### (2) Performance ability stratification and group lesson structure

Small group lessons based on a tiered structure of playing ability is a form of teaching that is applicable to the development of piano skills of music teachers in schools. The history of piano group lessons dates back to the 1950s at Columbia University [12] and was aimed at piano learners who did not play piano as a profession. The structure of the course uses the optimized sequence to combine into a teaching system, and its biggest characteristic is to enable students to learn in music practice activities such as listening, singing, playing and

thinking. This format not only allows the teacher to select appropriate pieces for students with similar playing abilities, but also facilitates collaborative playing in the classroom, such as four-handed playing and song accompaniment. In addition, the teacher can use group lessons to encourage students to share their gains and experiences in learning and teaching practice in the classroom. In addition, the teacher can conduct simulations, demonstrations, and discussions on various aspects of piano practice to help them learn in a multidimensional way through observation, reflection, and practice, and to benefit from different perspectives of teaching and learning, thus creating a teaching atmosphere where teaching benefits teachers as well as students.

### (3) Integrated teaching structure

The main goal of the music education major is to "train excellent teachers for music education and social aesthetic education at all levels and in all types of general schools in China [13]". Comprehensive music literacy is the key factor to determine whether a music teacher is excellent or not, because only when a music teacher has an overall understanding of the function of music art, can she or he think about appropriate teaching content and explore effective teaching approaches in the face of specific students. At present, the various courses of music education are often scattered into disparate parts, showing a disorderly situation of independent development of each part, which hinders the development of music education discipline. "Music education" is an integrated and unified teaching structure that includes multiple disciplines, multiple courses, and comprehensive knowledge and skills. Each course should not only run independently according to its own professional development track, but also closely follow the practical needs of quality-oriented and application-oriented talent training to carry out a fairly perfect integration, so as to develop a teaching community with education and personnel training as the core, presenting "curriculum integration".

The new music education system in quality-oriented schools regards piano as an important carrier and teaching tool in the process of music and art education, and uses piano to communicate the educational concept of music emotion with students so as to promote the pedagogical need to adapt piano learning to music teaching. It reflects the correlation between music teachers' piano playing ability and music teaching practice, and proposes new ideas for the development of piano lessons in music education in higher music colleges and higher teacher training colleges. The development and study of piano teaching skills of music teachers in schools should, first of all, clarify the nature and development direction of music teaching in schools from the perspective of music teaching practice, and make it a priority to understand the development goals, teaching contents and teaching methods of piano skills with the characteristics and features of the profession. Moreover, teachers should think about the development of piano skills in a more comprehensive and holistic way, and in a rigorous and detailed way. At the same time, it is necessary to establish a model of piano skills development for music teachers based on a comprehensive understanding of the new system's human-centered educational purpose, the educational goal of developing emotions, the educational method of realizing music emotions, and the assessment requirements of perceptual music experience as the main learning outcome. In view of the various aspects of the development of piano skills, we should explore the appropriate curriculum, develop curriculum standards, establish appropriate evaluation mechanisms, work together for innovations and gather their consensus, and build a new pattern for the development of piano skills for music teachers in schools.

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