

Constructing the Guidebook on Piano Techniques for College Students Majoring in Preschool Education at Xuzhou Kindergarten Teachers College, Jiangsu Province, China

Xu Yanyu and Panravee Pongvatnanusorn
Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand
Corresponding Author, E-mail: xuyanyuguo@163.com

Abstract

The objectives of this study were to construct a guidebook on piano techniques for college students in preschool education major and to experiment effectiveness of the guidebook. This research explores the application and effectiveness of the piano technique guidebook in enhancing the piano skills and music theory knowledge of first-year students majoring in preschool education at Xuzhou Kindergarten Teachers College.

Through the semester-long teaching experiment, the guidebook demonstrated positive impacts on students' piano proficiency, although challenges such as the difficulty of the improvisation section was noted. The study concludes by offering recommendations for improving the guidebook and its application in piano education.

Keywords: Piano Instruction; Preschool Education; Instructional Guidebook; Teaching Experiment; Music Theory; Skill Enhancement

Introduction

Preschool education is an important part of basic education structure in China. As part of this effort, the government has concentrated on the professional abilities and training of preschool teachers. In September 1995, The Education Law of the People's Republic of China established the requirement that preschools and associated educational institutions should have qualified teachers (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Teaching Guidelines for Preschool Education, issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in July 2001.

The piano is considered to be an important instructional tool in classroom teaching. More specifically, some researchers have found that the piano is the most widely used musical instrument in current pre-service preschool music education. Accordingly, piano skills training courses are essential for the preparation of preschool teachers. Chen (2000) pointed out that piano study should focus on functional skills that can easily be applied in classroom teaching.

Currently, many drawbacks have been identified in the teaching methods of teacher training colleges, such as the piano classes for preschool education majors. Teaching methods are predominantly conducted in group lessons rather than one-on-one sessions, as opposed to one-on-one sessions in music academies (Cui, 2023).

The education bureau stipulates the use of a uniform piano textbook, which is quite singular and must be supplemented with other materials (Ge, 2021). Students lack a foundational background, and with a heavy load of other courses, they are unable to achieve a level of proficiency by the time of graduation that would allow them to teach with ease. So, it is necessary for researcher to construct a guidebook on piano techniques and experiment effectiveness of the guidebook.

Research Objectives

1. To construct a guidebook on piano techniques for college students in preschool education major.
2. To experiment effectiveness of the guidebook .
3. To prove that guidebook is helpful in improving piano techniques
4. To find out what else this guidebook needs to improve

Research Methodology

This section details the Research and Development (R&D) methodology, encompassing literature review, surveys, expert interviews, teaching experiments, and content validity analysis. It explains the two phases of the research design: the research phase and the development phase, and describes the sample selection, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods.

Conceptual Framework

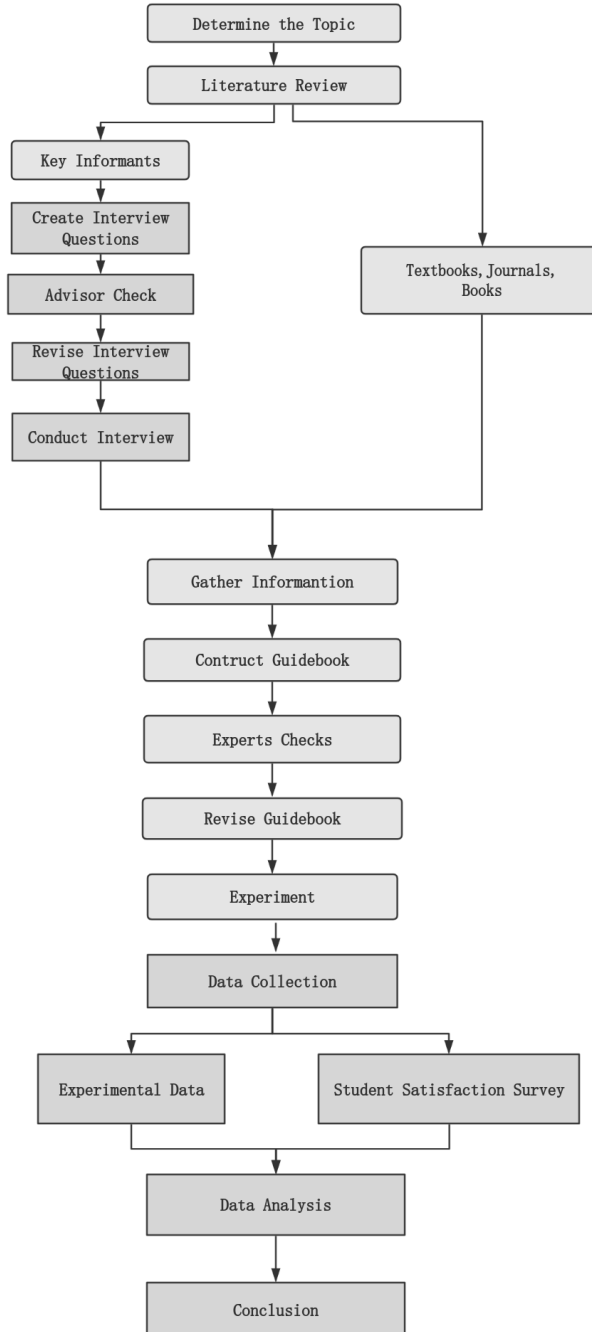


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Findings

This guidebook is designed to be used in conjunction with the existing piano teaching materials. The researchers have demonstrated that the guidebook was compiled based on in-depth research and expert consultation. Through experimentation, it was found to enhance students' piano skills and music theory knowledge, which also garnered interest and a high level of satisfaction from the students. The experiment took place during the first semester, with 25 first-year students divided into 16 classes, each lasting 90 minutes. The experimental test was conducted in the last week of the course, that is, week 16. The effectiveness of the guidebook in teaching was assessed through performance tests. The tests comprised three sections: performance of a musical piece, chord progression, and reading ability. Students were categorized into high, medium, and lower-scoring groups based on their potential performance. An analysis was performed to understand each student's musical performance capabilities and areas for improvement. After that, a survey was administered to gather feedback on the guidebook experience, aiming to enhance teaching quality and student learning. The teacher reflected on the effectiveness of the guidebook based on student feedback and test results.

The majority of students expressed satisfaction with the guidebook. Positive feedback was received for sections on posture and hand position, music staff knowledge, rhythm and beat, finger exercises, and scale learning. The improvisation section received lower satisfaction, indicating it as a more challenging area for students.

The analysis provided insights into students' musical performance abilities and their strengths and weaknesses in different assessment items. Identified issues in the teaching process, such as the need for more rhythm practice and the difficulty level of the guidebook's final chapter.

The guidebook is designed to be suitable for a semester's study, accurate, and helpful for students to avoid common mistakes in piano playing. It aims to assist students in learning piano by integrating music theory knowledge and through various exercises to improve finger flexibility and independence. With a systematic teaching plan and exercises, students can gradually improve their piano performance abilities.

Discussion

The study meticulously examines the effectiveness of the guidebook in enhancing students' piano proficiency, providing a comprehensive analysis of its impact on both the technical and theoretical aspects of piano learning. The guidebook's role in improving students' finger dexterity, understanding of music theory, and ability to perform complex pieces is thoroughly evaluated (Li, 2023). The research delves into the specific improvements observed in students' performance, such as enhanced rhythmic accuracy, refined fingering techniques, and a more nuanced interpretation of musical scores. Evidence from performance tests and student feedback is utilized to highlight the guidebook's strengths in fostering a deeper engagement with piano studies (Zhang, 2012).

However, the study also addresses the limitations and areas for improvement within the guidebook, particularly focusing on the improvisation section. It acknowledges that while the guidebook has been successful in structured learning environments, it falls short in nurturing students' creative skills (Guo, 2023). The improvisation section is identified as challenging for students, indicating a need for more scaffolded approaches that can guide learners through the process of creating music on the spot. The paper discusses the importance of improvisation in

developing a well-rounded musical education and suggests that the guidebook should incorporate more examples, exercises, and strategies to help students think musically and innovate.

Furthermore, the study explores how teaching methods can be adjusted based on individual student abilities. It emphasizes the importance of personalized learning paths that cater to the diverse needs, learning styles, and aptitudes of students. The paper proposes strategies for teachers to identify and bridge the gaps in students' understanding, using the guidebook as a flexible tool that can be adapted to various teaching scenarios. Additionally, suggestions are made to increase the interactivity and practicality of the guidebook. Ideas such as incorporating technology, designing interactive modules, and providing real-time feedback mechanisms are discussed (Zhang, 2019). These enhancements aim to create a more dynamic learning experience that keeps students engaged and motivated throughout their piano learning journey.

In conclusion, the study presents a balanced view of the guidebook's effectiveness and areas for refinement, advocating for a more student-centered approach to piano education. It underscores the need for continuous improvement and adaptation of teaching materials to meet the evolving demands of music education and the diverse talents of students (Yang, 2015). The insights gained from this research can inform future revisions of the guidebook, ensuring that it remains a relevant and valuable resource for piano students and educators alike.

Recommendations

1. Practical Recommendations

1. Revise the guidebook content based on student feedback, especially the improvisation section, to include more guidance and examples.

The guidebook will undergo a comprehensive review, incorporating student feedback to refine its content. A particular focus will be placed on the improvisation section, which students have identified as challenging. The revised section will feature more detailed guidance, outlining step-by-step approaches to improvisation, and a variety of examples that illustrate different improvisational techniques and styles. This will empower students to explore the creative aspects of piano playing with confidence and clarity.

2. Translate the guidebook into both Chinese and English to accommodate different professors' needs and improve its applicability in various educational settings.

Recognizing the diverse linguistic requirements of educators, the guidebook will be professionally translated into both Chinese and English. This bilingual edition will not only cater to the preferences of professors but also extend the guidebook's reach to an international audience. The translation will be accurate and culturally sensitive, ensuring that the pedagogical intent and content are faithfully conveyed in both languages.

3. Incorporate interactive elements such as online quizzes and self-assessments to enhance the learning experience.

The guidebook will be enhanced with interactive elements, such as online quizzes developed to test students' understanding of music theory and piano techniques, thereby providing instant feedback to reinforce learning. Self-assessment tools will also be integrated, allowing students to evaluate their progress and identify areas for improvement. These elements will promote active participation in the learning process and facilitate a deeper understanding of the material.

4. Ongoing Updates and Student Involvement.

The guidebook will be treated as a living document, with regular updates based on ongoing feedback from students and educators. This approach ensures that the content remains relevant and effective. Students will be encouraged to contribute their insights and experiences, fostering a sense of ownership and community around the guidebook.

5. Faculty Training and Support.

To maximize the effectiveness of the guidebook, professors will be provided with training sessions on how to best utilize the guidebook in their teaching. This will include strategies for integrating the guidebook with the interactive elements and other course materials. Additionally, a support system will be established to address any questions or challenges that may arise during the implementation.

6. Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms.

A robust assessment framework will be developed to measure the impact of the guidebook on student learning. This will involve both formative and summative evaluations, with regular checkpoints to gather student feedback. The feedback will be analyzed to inform future revisions and to ensure that the guidebook continues to meet the needs of its users.

7. Integration with Digital Platforms. Leveraging technology, the guidebook will be made available on digital platforms, allowing for easy access and integration with other educational tools. This digital version will also facilitate the inclusion of multimedia content, such as video demonstrations and audio examples, enriching the learning experience.

By implementing these practical recommendations, the guidebook will evolve into a more effective, accessible, and engaging resource for piano education. The focus on continuous improvement and adaptability will ensure that it remains a valuable asset for students, educators, and the broader music education community.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

1. Expanding the Research Scope:

Expand the research scope to include more students and samples from different educational stages to verify the wide applicability of the guidebook.

The initial phase of research involving the guidebook has demonstrated promising results, and the next logical step is to broaden the research scope. This expansion will encompass a more diverse group of students and samples from various educational stages. By including students from different levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced—the study will verify the wide applicability of the guidebook across a spectrum of proficiency. Additionally, incorporating a variety of educational contexts, such as public schools, private institutions, and conservatories, will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the guidebook can be effectively utilized in distinct learning environments. This expanded research will help in identifying any potential adjustments needed to make the guidebook universally beneficial.

2. Long-term Follow-up Studies:

Conduct long-term follow-up studies to assess the sustained impact of the guidebook on students' piano skills and its effectiveness in different teaching environments.

To determine the guidebook's long-term impact, it is essential to conduct follow-up studies that assess its sustained influence on students' piano skills. These studies will involve tracking the progress of students who have used the guidebook over an extended period, possibly spanning several years. The aim is to evaluate whether the guidebook's teachings have a lasting effect on students' abilities and whether they continue to improve or maintain their

piano skills beyond the initial learning stages. This will also shed light on the guidebook's effectiveness in reinforcing learning outcomes over time and its role in fostering a lifelong engagement with piano studies.

3. Investigating Different Teaching Methods and Technologies:

Investigate the application effects of different teaching methods and technologies in piano instruction, as well as their potential advantages when combined with the guidebook.

In parallel with the expansion of the research scope and long-term studies, it is crucial to explore the integration of the guidebook with various teaching methods and emerging technologies. This investigation will examine how the guidebook can complement traditional pedagogical approaches, as well as innovative techniques such as digital music instruction, virtual reality, and gamified learning experiences. The goal is to identify the synergies that arise from combining the guidebook with these methods and to assess the potential advantages they offer in terms of engagement, accessibility, and educational outcomes. By understanding these effects, educators can make informed decisions about how to best leverage the guidebook in conjunction with other tools and techniques to optimize piano instruction.

Through these expanded research endeavors, the guidebook will be positioned not only as a standalone educational aid but also as a versatile component within a broader ecosystem of piano education. The insights gained will contribute to a more holistic approach to teaching and learning, ensuring that piano instruction remains relevant, engaging, and impactful for students at all stages of their musical journey.

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