



# STUDY PIANO TEACHING METHOD FOR MUSIC EDUCATION MAJOR STUDENTS IN SICHUAN NORMAL UNIVERSITY, SICHUAN PROVINCE

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## Abstract

The purpose of the research was to study the piano teaching method for music education major students studying piano at the College of Music, Sichuan Normal University students, in Sichuan Province. The method of the study is qualitative research, collected data from three key informants, the 3 key informants were invited to interview. To verify the interview and observation form the researcher found out three experts to do Index of Item-Objective. Through the study and research of the literature and a lot of books, the interview form was constructed the questions to interview 3 key informants as the following. Data Collection: 1) The information was obtained through interview and observation from three key informants. 2) All data of interview and observation were collected prepared for analysis. Data Analysis: Descriptive analysis was used to describe all information.

Results shown that the piano teaching method is a comprehensive process that integrates reading music notation, understanding tone, mastering fingering techniques, controlling dynamics and speed, and developing listening skills. The

piano teaching method involves a comprehensive evaluation of several key factors, including teaching objectives, content, methods, tools, teacher professionalism, and student participation. Observing and assessing these aspects, it is possible to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the teaching process is effectively meeting the needs of the students. Teachers who demonstrate flexibility in their methods, use appropriate and engaging teaching tools, exhibit professionalism, and foster active student participation create a rich and dynamic learning environment.

**Keywords:** Piano teaching; Music education students; Sichuan normal University

## Introduction

In piano teaching, it is important to develop students' musical expressiveness. Musical expressiveness refers to the musician's ability to convey his or her emotions, thoughts, and understanding of the work to the audience through playing (Zhang, H., 2020). For university students, cultivating musical expressiveness can not only help them better understand and master piano skills but also improve their artistic cultivation and aesthetic ability. Music education has always been an important topic of concern in the field of education. With the continuous progress of society and people's pursuit of a better life, the demand for music education is growing. As a traditional and important musical performance tool, the piano plays an important role in the teaching of music colleges. However, the selection and practice of piano teaching methods are crucial to students' learning effectiveness and the cultivation of musical literacy. The current situation of piano teaching: With the increasing emphasis of society on art education, piano teaching has become one of the important courses in many colleges and music training institutions (Liu, F., 2019). Today's piano teaching general focuses on cultivating students' technical skills, musical understanding, and performance expression. However, there are differences in piano teaching methods in different teaching environments and cultures, and some teaching methods may be better suited to the needs of particular groups of students.

Children's desire to become musicians and pianists: Many children show a strong interest in music as they grow up, and they aspire to become musicians and pianists when they grow up, to study music intensively, and ultimately to enter a professional conservatory. This love and yearning for music prompt them to put more effort into the learning process, and make the choice and practice of piano teaching characteristics of the College of Music of Sichuan Normal University: As an important music college, the School of Music of Sichuan Normal University has rich musical resources and an excellent teaching team. The college focuses on cultivating students' comprehensive musical literacy, not only on the improvement of technical skills but also on students' understanding of music theory and history, as well as their exploration and practice of the art of music performance (Zhao, J., 2021). Therefore, the researcher is a musicology graduate interested in being a piano teacher and wants to study music teaching methods in conservatories.

## **Research Objective**

1. To study the piano teaching for First Year Students at the college of Music, Sichuan Normal University of China.

## **Literature Reviews**

The origins of the piano can be traced back to ancient keyboard instruments. During the ancient Greek and Roman periods, there were already some simple keyboard instruments, such as the monochord. These instruments used a single string as a sound source, and the length of the string was changed by pressing keys to produce different pitches. Over time, more complex keyboard instruments such as the harpsichord and organ appeared during the medieval period. These instruments differed in structure and sound, but all provided the basis for the development of the piano.



**Figure1:** (Ancient Greek and Roman monochord Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search>.)



**Figure 3:** (Organ) Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search>.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Italian master luthier Bartolomeo Cristofori invented the precursor to the piano, known as the “fortepiano” or “classical piano”. Cristofori, a Florentine technician and instrument maker, designed the



fortepiano as a revolutionary instrument that allowed dynamic tonal variations by controlling the speed and force of the strings struck by the force of the keys. This mechanism allowed the piano to make tonal transitions from soft to strong, greatly enhancing expressive playing. The piano not only plays an important role in the field of music, but also reflects the human pursuit and exploration of the art of music. Today, the piano remains one of the favorite instruments for musicians and audiences around the world, bringing endless musical beauty to people.



**Figure 4:** Vintage Piano Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search>.

The main form of the piano is: Grand pianos, also known as grand platform pianos, with shell lengths ranging from 1.3m to 5m, have high acoustic quality and performance. Its volume is large, its sound quality is pure and full, and its modelling is beautiful and imposing. It is generally used in college, recital halls, theatres, grand theatres and other professional occasions. (Jiang Xue, Hu Shao Lin, 2018).

The grand piano lies flat on its back to strike the keys, and it is superior to the upright piano in speed and stability. In the pedal mechanism, the left pedal is pressed down and the keyboard and mallets move to the right, so that the mallets strike not three but two or one strings; the middle pedal is a special sustaining pedal, which is used when playing if you only need to prolong a certain note and do not need the pedal to prolong the other notes (it is mostly used in playing impressionistic works); the right pedal is also known as the sustaining pedal. (Zhou Shen Zu.2017)

Upright Piano, the upright piano was invented to solve the problem of grand pianos taking up space. Upright pianos adopt a design scheme of staggered string installation, which solves the problem of space requirement and the balance of tone and volume, upright pianos, also known as upright pianos, usually have a height of 1.1~1.3m from the top edge of the body to the ground, and are mainly used for teaching, family entertainment and playing practice. (Jiang Xue, HuShao Lin, 2018).

The development of music education in China has a long history, undergoing a continuous evolution from ancient to modern, from traditional to modern. Its development process profoundly reflects the historical changes and cultural processes of Chinese society, as well as the changes in educational concepts and methods. (Li, Y. (2018). The selection will elaborate on the development of Chinese music education and its characteristics: the origin of Chinese music education can be traced back to ancient times. (Xiao Youmei, 1920s) as early as the Zhou Dynasty, music had already been incorporated into the national ritual system, becoming an important tool for training gentlemen and governing the country. The Book of Rites and Records of Music recorded: “Music is the harmony of heaven and earth.” This shows that in ancient China, music was regarded as an important means to harmonize heaven and earth and to stabilize people’s hearts. In the Ming Dynasty, the Department of Education was established, responsible for the management and education of court music and folk music. In the Qing Dynasty, the “Pear Garden” was established to cultivate talents in opera music, and opera music became an important part of music education in this period. In addition, with the improvement of the imperial examination system, the literati class focused on the comprehensive cultivation of qin, chess, calligraphy and painting, and the education of traditional musical instruments such as the Guqin was emphasized (Zhao, J. (2021)). Music was also taught in folk academies and private schools, and music education was popularized at all levels of society.

## Research Methodology

This study is qualitative research at Sichuan Normal University. The 3 key informants were invited to interview. 1) Graduated in musicology and music performance. 2) more than six years of piano teaching experience. 3) Prizes in the field of piano performance. To verify the interview and observation form the researcher found out three experts to do Index of Item-Objective. Requirements of the three experts 1) Rich experience in piano teaching and performance in Sichuan in the past 10 years. The tools are (1) Interview form, (2) Observation form and (3) Verification form. Through the study and research of the literature and a lot of books, the interview form was constructed the questions to interview 3 key informants as the following. Data Collection: 1) The information was obtained through interview and observation from three key informants. 2) All data of interview and observation were collected prepared for analysis. Data Analysis: Descriptive analysis was used to describe all information.

## Results

The piano teaching method is a crucial part of music learning that focuses on developing key skills such as reading music notation, understanding the tone of the keyboard, mastering fingering techniques, controlling dynamics and speed, and improving listening abilities. These five components work together to enhance a student's overall musical literacy and performance capability.

In piano instruction, reading music notation is essential for learners to interpret musical scores accurately. By mastering the ability to read music, students can better understand the structure and emotional meaning of the compositions they are performing. Reading notation helps to connect visual symbols with physical actions on the keyboard, enabling students to play pieces with precision and expression. Understanding music notation allows pianists to approach music with a deeper insight into its rhythm, harmony, and thematic content.

The tone of the keyboard is another important element in piano education. Teaching students how to produce varying tonal qualities through proper key pressure and touch enables them to bring out the full expressive range of the instrument. The piano offers a wide spectrum of tonal colors, and developing the ability to control the tone allows learners to interpret the emotional nuances of the music. A student's sensitivity to tone quality helps them create a more engaging and expressive performance.

Fingering training and technique are vital in developing technical proficiency on the piano. Proper fingering allows students to navigate the keyboard efficiently, ensuring smooth transitions between notes and chords. It also plays a crucial role in achieving accuracy and speed in playing. Training in fingering and technique builds the foundation for more complex pieces, enabling students to play with greater dexterity, control, and confidence.

Dynamic control and speed are key aspects of musical expression and interpretation. Teaching students to manage the dynamics (loudness and softness) of their playing and adjust their tempo enhances their ability to convey the emotional depth of a piece. Mastering dynamic control helps learners add contrast and variation to their performance, while controlling speed ensures that the music flows smoothly and naturally. Speed and dynamics, when used effectively, elevate a performance, making it more compelling and expressive.

Finally, listening training is an integral part of piano teaching. Through ear training, students develop a keen sense of pitch, rhythm, and harmony, which allows them to better understand and interpret the music they play. Listening skills also help pianists become more aware of how their playing fits into the larger context of a piece, whether playing solo or in ensemble settings. By honing their listening abilities, learners can improve their musical perception, making them more skilled in identifying mistakes, understanding musical structure, and expressing the intended emotion of a composition.



In conclusion, the piano teaching method is a comprehensive process that integrates reading music notation, understanding tone, mastering fingering techniques, controlling dynamics and speed, and developing listening skills. Through focused training in these areas, students can significantly improve their musical literacy, enhance their technical abilities, and gain a deeper understanding of the music they perform.

**The conclusion from the observation:** The piano teaching method is a critical aspect of music education, designed to develop students' technical skills, musical perception, expressiveness, and overall performance ability. In order to comprehensively evaluate and optimize the effectiveness of the piano teaching method, it is necessary to assess it across six key areas: teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, teaching tools, professional quality of teachers, and student participation.

By observing piano lessons, the specific content of the teaching objectives can be understood by consulting teaching plans, lesson outlines, and other relevant documents. These documents provide clear insights into the teacher's goals for the lesson and offer a framework for assessing the effectiveness of the lessons. Practical activities during the teaching process provide tangible evidence of whether these objectives have been achieved. For instance, when observing a piano lesson, it is important to see how well the teacher can implement their objectives and whether the students can meet those goals through performance and practice. By evaluating the teaching objectives, one can determine whether they are appropriately tailored to the students' skill levels and whether they encourage the development of both technical abilities and musical expressiveness.

The teaching content must be scientifically and pedagogically sound. It should be carefully chosen to align with the age and cognitive level of the students, allowing them to understand and grasp key musical concepts. For piano students, the content must cover a balance of foundational technical skills, such as sight-reading, rhythm, fingering, dynamics, and hand coordination, as well as more advanced concepts like articulation, expression, and musical interpretation. The content should foster a deeper understanding of music, allowing students to not only perform technically but also interpret the emotional depth of the music.

they play. Through careful observation, one can assess whether the content of the lessons is suitable for the students' developmental stages and cognitive abilities, ensuring that it remains engaging and relevant to their growth as pianists. Furthermore, effective teaching content should introduce students to a variety of musical styles and genres, broadening their musical experiences and enhancing their versatility as performers.

Teaching methods used in the piano classroom play a pivotal role in optimizing learning outcomes. The methods employed should be flexible, diverse, and engaging, encouraging active student participation and maintaining their interest throughout the lesson. It is essential that the teacher utilizes a variety of instructional strategies, such as direct instruction, demonstration, guided practice, collaborative exercises, and student-centered activities. For instance, a teacher might demonstrate the correct fingerings for a particular passage, and then allow students to practice it individually, providing real-time feedback as needed. Additionally, teachers can incorporate discussion sessions where students reflect on their learning experiences and share challenges, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The ability to switch between different teaching strategies ensures that the lessons remain dynamic and caters to various learning styles, ensuring that all students can benefit from the instruction. Observation of the teaching methods will reveal how effectively the teacher adapts their approach to the students' progress, needs, and learning preferences, which is crucial for fostering a positive and motivating learning environment.

The use of teaching tools is another key aspect of optimizing piano lessons. Effective teaching tools can significantly enhance the learning experience by providing additional support and clarity. For piano instruction, teaching tools such as musical instruments (the piano itself, of course), instructional software, sheet music, audio recordings, and visual aids are indispensable. Teachers can use audio recordings to demonstrate different interpretations of a piece, or use software to help students practice sight-reading and rhythm exercises in an interactive manner. Technology, such as metronomes and recording devices, can assist students in developing a sense of timing and accuracy. Visual aids, such as diagrams of hand positions or scales, can reinforce technical instruction. These

tools not only help make abstract musical concepts more concrete but also provide students with various ways to engage with the material outside of class time. Observation of the teaching tools used in the lesson will provide insight into how well they complement the teaching content and how effectively they support student learning. A well-integrated use of teaching tools makes the lesson more effective and accessible, enabling students to practice at their own pace and in different settings.

Teacher professionalism is a fundamental factor in ensuring the effectiveness of piano teaching. Teachers should possess a solid foundation of music theory knowledge, technical expertise, teaching skills, and a genuine passion for teaching. Their ability to convey complex musical concepts clearly and efficiently plays a critical role in the success of the lessons. A teacher's attitude and sense of responsibility significantly affect the quality of the learning experience. Teachers who are attentive, patient, and responsive to students' needs help create a positive and supportive learning environment. Moreover, teachers should constantly strive to improve their own teaching methods, staying up-to-date with new pedagogical practices and continuously refining their skills. The professionalism of a teacher also extends to their communication skills, as they must be able to provide constructive feedback and guidance to help students improve. Observation of the teacher's professional qualities, including their approach to classroom management, their expertise in the subject matter, and their ability to engage students, will provide an accurate picture of their teaching effectiveness. A teacher who displays enthusiasm, dedication, and a clear understanding of how to foster student growth will undoubtedly create an environment conducive to learning and development.

Student participation is a key indicator of the success of any piano teaching method. Active participation reflects the students' engagement with the material, their level of motivation, and their commitment to the learning process. In a piano lesson, students' participation can be measured by their involvement in class discussions, their willingness to ask questions, their engagement in practical activities, and their initiative in practicing outside of class. Observation should focus on how students interact with the teacher and each other, whether they actively contribute to the learning process, and how they respond to feedback.

High levels of student participation are often associated with better retention of skills, increased motivation, and a deeper connection with the music. Students who are encouraged to express themselves, share their challenges, and take ownership of their learning are more likely to thrive in the piano classroom. The teacher's role in fostering student participation cannot be overstated, as a supportive and engaging environment leads to students feeling more comfortable and confident in their musical abilities.

## **Discussions**

This paper discusses the importance of piano teaching method in music learning and its training methods from five aspects: Teaching reading music notation, Teaching tone of keyboard keypad, Teaching fingering training and techniques, Teaching dynamic and speed, Teaching listening training. Teaching reading music notation in the piano method refers to the ability to accurately interpret and understand the musical symbols on a score. Students need to be able to identify and comprehend the different notes, rhythms, and other musical symbols in order to perform the piece correctly. In practice, teachers can gradually increase the complexity of the music students read, helping them improve their sight-reading abilities. Teachers can also guide students in understanding how to analyze music scores, allowing them to interpret the work's structure and emotional intent. Effective reading skills lay a solid foundation for students, enabling them to read music confidently and efficiently, which enhances their overall performance.

Teaching tone of the keyboard focuses on helping students master the sound production and tonal control of the piano. Understanding tone quality is vital for students to produce the desired sound and achieve expressive performances. Through exercises that emphasize touch, students can learn how to control dynamics, produce a rich and balanced tone, and adjust their touch for different types of music. Teachers should provide exercises that encourage students to explore different tonalities and make adjustments in their playing, based on the piece's emotional content. By practicing on the keyboard, students



can gain an understanding of tone production and develop their ear for musical color and texture, which is fundamental for expressive playing.

Fingering training and techniques are crucial for developing students' technical ability on the piano. Fingering affects both the ease of playing and the precision of the performance. Proper fingering techniques allow students to play more efficiently and without unnecessary tension, which is essential for performing complex pieces. Teachers should guide students through finger exercises that promote proper hand positioning, fluid finger movements, and effective finger independence. In the early stages, students may practice basic scales and simple pieces, focusing on consistent and correct finger placement. As student progress, they can move on to more advanced pieces, requiring greater dexterity and control. The development of proper fingering skills is essential for playing difficult passages smoothly and without fatigue, which supports overall technical proficiency.

Teaching dynamics and speed is key to helping students develop their ability to express music through changes in volume and tempo. Dynamics refer to the volume levels in a musical performance, and students need to understand how to vary dynamics appropriately to match the character of the music. Teachers should teach students how to control the volume of their playing, using techniques such as pedal use, finger pressure, and wrist control. Additionally, students need to master the control of speed, ensuring they can perform pieces at the correct tempo and with the right rhythmic accuracy. Teachers can use exercises that focus on playing at different tempos and varying dynamics to improve students' expression and timing. As students become proficient in managing dynamics and speed, they can achieve a more expressive, polished, and nuanced performance.

Listening training is an essential part of the piano teaching method, aiming to improve students' musical ear and ability to perceive and interpret the various elements of music. Effective listening skills allow students to better understand the structure of the music, its rhythm, melody, and harmony. Teachers can incorporate listening exercises into lessons, where students are asked to identify different musical elements, such as intervals, chords, and rhythmic patterns. By training students to recognize these elements, they can develop a deeper

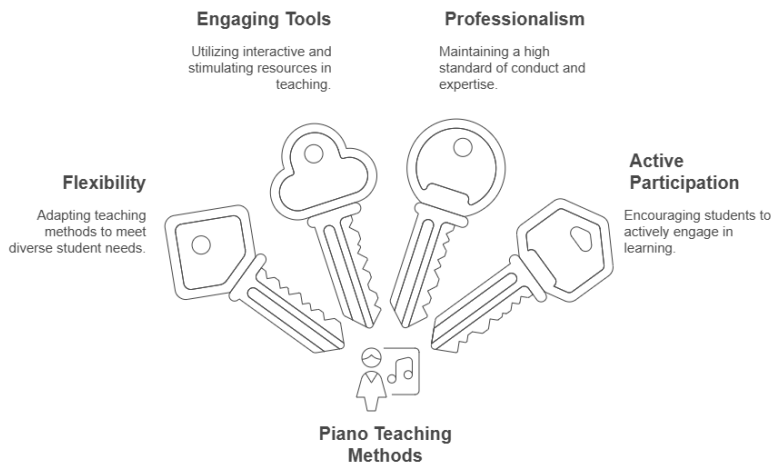
understanding of how the music works. Furthermore, inner hearing is critical for developing musical imagination and interpretation. Teachers can encourage students to visualize the music in their minds and “hear” the piece even before they play it. A well-developed sense of hearing supports students’ ability to perform music more expressively and accurately.

The piano teaching method is an integrated and comprehensive process that involves reading music notation, mastering the tone of the keyboard, developing proper fingering techniques, understanding dynamics and speed, and improving listening skills. These aspects support each other and work together to create a cohesive system of piano education. By focusing on these five key areas, teachers can enhance students’ technical proficiency, musicality, and overall performance skills, providing a solid foundation for future musical growth.

To further improve the quality of piano teaching, it is essential to focus on optimizing the teaching content, refining teaching methods, and providing continuous professional development for teachers. Teachers should regularly evaluate the teaching materials and make necessary adjustments to suit the students’ cognitive levels and abilities. Additionally, teachers must actively engage students and encourage their participation by making lessons more interactive and motivating. Feedback from students is also crucial in understanding their needs, ensuring that the teaching approach is effective and relevant. Furthermore, regular assessment of the teaching outcomes will help identify areas for improvement, allowing for timely adjustments to be made. By implementing these strategies, teachers can ensure that piano teaching remains dynamic and effective, improving students’ musical abilities and preparing them for continued success in their musical journey.

## New Knowledges

### Enhancing Piano Teaching Through Flexibility and Engagement



**Figure 1:** Diagram showing the Study Piano Teaching Method for Music Education.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the piano teaching method involves a comprehensive evaluation of several key factors, including teaching objectives, content, methods, tools, teacher professionalism, and student participation. By observing and assessing these aspects, it is possible to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the teaching process is effectively meeting the needs of the students. Teachers who demonstrate flexibility in their methods, use appropriate and engaging teaching tools, exhibit professionalism, and foster active student participation create a rich and dynamic learning environment. This comprehensive approach helps students develop not only technical proficiency on the piano but also a deep understanding of music, making them more expressive, confident, and well-rounded musicians.

## **Suggestions**

Piano teaching methods should also emphasize the integration of ear training, rhythm training, and improvisation with the traditional curriculum. Rather than limiting piano education to theoretical and technical exercises, combining practical performance scenarios with ear training will help students develop a more comprehensive understanding of music.

For example, incorporating techniques such as piano sight-reading or rhythm dictation exercises can help students strengthen their overall musicality and ability to perform expressively.

The use of modern technologies, such as online learning platforms and interactive piano software, can further enrich students' practice sessions by providing instant feedback and engaging materials that promote active participation.

Piano education could also benefit from interdisciplinary collaborations with other areas of music such as composition, conducting, or music theory. By integrating lessons from other disciplines, students can gain a more holistic understanding of music, which will contribute to their development as versatile musicians.

These collaborative efforts could involve designing comprehensive, cross-disciplinary teaching programs that expose students to different aspects of music creation and performance, which would ultimately strengthen their overall musical foundation.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

One of the primary challenges in piano teaching is the variation in students' ability levels.

To address this, a more flexible and dynamic approach to class grouping could be adopted, such as creating detailed class divisions based on skill levels or implementing mixed-age teaching strategies. For example, certain institutions have successfully used personalized class arrangements, where lessons are tailored to the students' proficiency, allowing for a more targeted approach to piano education.



Additionally, dynamic class adjustments based on the individual progress of students will help ensure that they are always learning at an appropriate level.

In terms of piano teaching content, it is important to combine technical exercises with real-world performance scenarios.

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