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### **INVESTIGATION ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF PRESCHOOLERS' PIANO LEARNING IN HUNAN PROVINCE, CHINA**

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#### **Abstract**

As an musical instrument, the piano gains an really high level of concerns around the world. In recent years, piano learning has featured rapid growth among younger people among whom preschool children have become an important part. This article aims to investigate the difficulties faced by preschool children in piano learning in Hunan province, China. The results reveal, 1) The quality of children's piano learning is in the middle and low levels. 2) The difference in quality of piano learning between children of different genders and ages was not statistically significant. 3) The total time and frequency of piano practice by preschool children contribute to the piano learning effect of preschool children in Hunan Province. 4) Teachers' instruction and parental involvement has an impact on the quality of preschoolers' piano learning in Hunan Province. 5) There are many deficiencies in the piano learning process of preschool children in Hunan Province, which are embodied as: Teacher teaching does not follow the principle of "child-centred"; The parental participation process does not grasp the principle of "moderation"; Students lack persistence in learning. Based on the results of the survey, problems in the piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province was discovered, and corresponding solutions were proposed.

#### **Keywords**

Piano Learning; Preschool children; Teachers' Instruction; Parental Involvement; Hunan Province

#### **1 Introduction**

Music affects people's character, personality, etc (Lin, 2020). Piano learning is one of the important ways in music to improve the quality of preschool children, which promotes the overall development of children's body and mind. According to data from a survey conducted by the Chinese Musicians Association in 2017, there were more than 30 million piano students in China, while only about 200,000 students enter music colleges as professionals. By 2020, there were more than 40 million Chinese children learning piano, accounting for 80% of the global total.

There are numerous kindergartens and preschool children's music training institutions in Hunan Province, among which piano education enjoys the highest popularity. Through the investigation on teachers and parents in those institutions and the analysis of the information obtained, the author can effectively command the current situation of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province. Only when problems are found can we find ways to solve them and promote piano preschool children learning.

This article mainly aims to achieve four objectives, 1) to explore the quality of preschoolers' piano learning in Hunan province. 2) to conclude that the current situation and influencing factors of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan province. 3) to reveal concrete issues existing in the piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province. 4) to give some practical suggestions for promoting piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province. Therefore, the author adopts a mixed research methods combining qualitative research with quantitative research, taking preschool piano learners, teachers and parents in Hunan Province as the research objects. It applies documentary research method, observation method, interview method and survey questionnaire method and etc., to collect relevant information and data needed.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Research on the Historic Evolution and Development of the Piano Learning Curriculum for Preschool Children**

As a Chinese proverb goes "present is made of past". The purpose of studying history is to better understand the current situation. Only on the basis of history can we make better decisions and seek the path of development. After experiencing a series of major events such as the *Cultural Revolution* and reform and opening up, the art education of children in New China gradually moved on to a scientific and forward path, based on learning from the former Soviet Union. Some scholars (Li, 2017; Wang, 2012) summarized the development process of Chinese preschool art education in chronological order, by digging into the history of art education, they analyzed the factors affecting the development of art education in China, and proposed reform ideas. At the same time, some other scholars (Acer, 2014; Beatty, 1995; Choi, 2007; Kiilu, 2011; King, 2021; Lancaster-Thomas, 2020; Launonen, 2021) have done research on the historical development of piano learning for preschool children in their countries.

In general, researchers from different countries have made a lot of exploration and contributions on piano learning for preschool children, which provides a large number of references for later researchers to understand and study the history and development of preschool piano learning in the world. Additionally, through the study and exploration of history, the entire preschool children's piano learning and development process can be better understood, as well as the trends and developments of the world's art education reforms.

### **2.3.2 Related Research on Piano Learning and Teachers' Teaching of Preschool Children**

In an era when human society is facing profound changes, the role of teachers is being rediscovered, research on teacher and teacher's instruction is more and more active in different countries around the world. And the professional development of teacher becomes one of the key themes in education reform (Tang, 2013), and preschool piano teachers are no exception. Tan, Y. K. (2010) divides teachers' professional quality structure into five aspects: educational belief, professional knowledge structure, professional skills, professional attitude and professional development consciousness. Tang, J. Y. (2013) concluded in her doctoral thesis *Study on Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Preschool Teachers* that the components of the preschool teacher's pedagogical content knowledge are content knowledge (what), knowledge of children (who), knowledge of instructional methods (how). she mentioned that her integration of these three elements is not high, and the development of these three elements is uneven.

### **2.3.3 Related Research on Piano Learning and Family Education of Preschool Children**

"As the first enlightenment tutor of preschool children, the level and quality of family education will more or less affect preschool education has a greater impact. Therefore, family education is related to the overall healthy growth of preschool children" (Wang, 2021, p.43). Family is a child's first school (Ma, 2018; Zou, 2020). The impact of family education on a child is intangible, but parents do play an important role in the piano learning process of preschool children. Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., Willems, P. P., & Doan Holbein, M. F. D. (2005) wrote *Examining the Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Student Motivation*. The results showed that parental Involvement benefits children's learning and academic success. But the specific nature of parent involvement demonstrated in this study are not clarified.

Some studies (Ma, 2011; Park & Kwon, 2009; Wang, 2020) have mentioned the problem of parents' participation in preschooler's learning. They blindly pursue the expectation of "let children win at the starting line", which leads to the children who bear the pressure of learning are younger than before. At the same time, they expect the learning effect of preschooler to be immediate, which has caused the

teachers to put more and more pressure on teaching.

### 2.3.4 Related Research on Piano Learning and Psychology of Preschool Children

Grasping the psychological characteristics, psychological phenomena and psychological activities of preschool children can effectively discover the various problems that appear in the piano classroom for preschool children. Adjusting teaching policies and strategies according to the characteristics of preschool children can better teach preschool children piano. Ruckmich, C. A. (1914) mentioned that learning to play the piano is a learning process which involves acquisition of certain associations, which become habitual with repetition.

After accessing a lot of materials related to piano learning for preschool children, the author noticed that most of these existing literature and research focused on the cultivation of preschool teachers' teaching, the influence of family education and the functionality of piano learning for preschool children. Therefore, the author will stand on the shoulders of predecessors and continue to conduct a more detailed and comprehensive research on the present situation of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province from the perspective of teachers, parents and preschool children.

Through consulting and searching related literature and using statistical methods to computer related data and information, the author designed the research conceptual framework as follows:

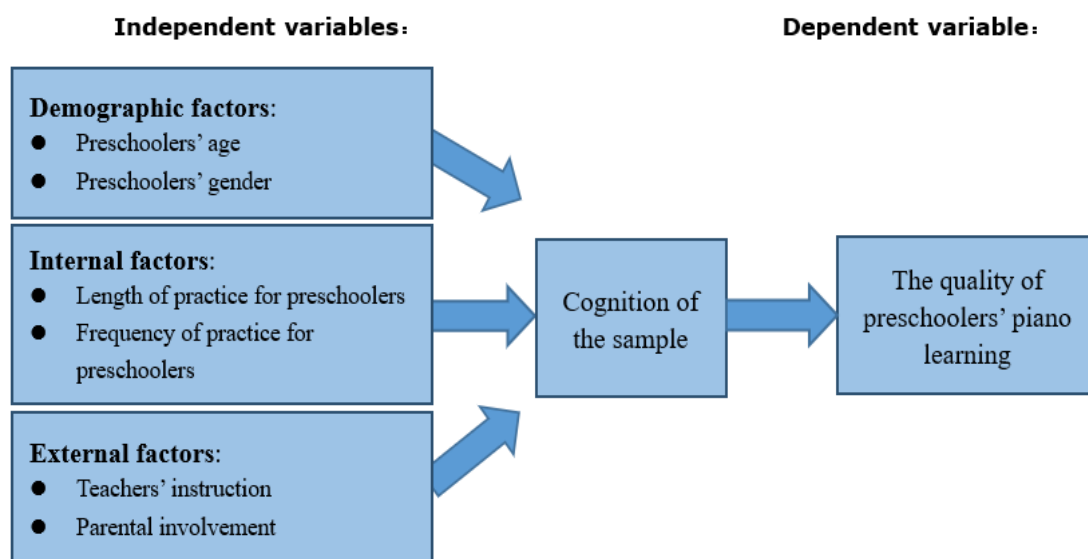


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

### 3 Research Methodology

This article apply a mixed method research combining quantitative and qualitative research. The data collection methods are chosen in this study mainly

include survey questionnaire, documentary research, observation and interview. Since it is impossible to obtain exact data on the total number of participants in the piano learning process in Hunan Province, the sample size of the quantitative study will use the formula of W.G. Cochran (1977), and a minimum of 384 responses (teacher,384; parent,384) are sufficient.

**Reliability Test:** The author used SPSS26.0 to test the reliability of the data collected by the questionnaire, and used the index generally accepted by the academic circle, that is, the internal consistency coefficient (also known as the Cronbach Alpha coefficient). The reliability test of each variable in the questionnaire are all above 0.6.

**Validity Test:** Since the questionnaire used in this study refers to mature research and its scale, the content validity is relatively high. Structure validity deals with whether the questionnaire can measure the desired variable, which usually uses KMO and Bartlett Sphericity Test. The results shows that through the validity test of each variable in this study, the KMO values of related aspects are all above 0.5 and Bartlett’s sphericity tests are all at the level of 0.001.

#### 4 Research Result

##### 4.1 Results of Investigation on the Quality of Piano Learning for Preschool Children

The parent-level survey results on the quality of children's piano learning, and the teacher-level survey results on the children's piano learning quality were descriptive statistics. The specific results are shown in Table 1.

Table1. Descriptive

Items	Means	Standard Deviation
(Parents Volume) Piano Learning Quality	3.18	0.63
(Teacher Volume) Piano Learning Quality	3.49	0.65

##### 4.2 Results of Investigation on the Current Situation and Influencing Factors of Piano Learning for Preschool Children

###### 4.2.1 Gender differences in the quality of children's piano learning

An independent sample t-test was performed on the differences in the quality of piano learning in children's gender, and the specific results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender differences in the quality of children's piano learning

Items	Gender	Means	Standard Deviation	t	Significance
Piano learning quality	Boy	3.11	0.50	-0.881	0.379
	Girl	3.20	0.67		

#### 4.2.2 Age Differences in Children's Piano Learning Quality

One-way ANOVA was performed on the difference of piano learning quality in children's age, and the specific results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Age Differences in Children's Piano Learning Quality

Items	Age	Means	Standard Deviation	F	Significance
Piano learning quality	Under 3 years old	3.74	1.09	1.475	0.223
	3-4 years old	3.23	0.60		
	4-5years old	3.13	0.57		
	5-6years old	3.24	0.86		

#### 4.2.3 The difference of Children's Piano Learning Quality in Practice Time

One-way ANOVA was performed on the difference of children's piano learning quality in practice time. The specific results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The difference of children's piano learning quality in practice time

Items	Practice Time	Means	Standard Deviation	F	Post Hoc Comparison
Piano learning quality	Under 30 minutes	3.41	0.55	8.059***	4>1,4>2 4>3,1>3 2>3
	30-60 minutes	3.18	0.57		
	60-120 minutes	2.76	0.86		
	Over 120 minutes	4.75	0.35		

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; 1=less than 30 minutes, 2=30-60 minutes, 3=60-120 minutes, 4=more than 120 minutes

#### 4.2.4 Differences in the Quality of Children's Piano Learning in Relation to the Frequency of Practice

The author conducted a one-way analysis of variance on the differences in children's piano learning quality and practice frequency. The specific results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Differences in the Quality of Children's Piano Learning in Relation to the Frequency of Practice

Items	Practice Frequency	Means	Standard Deviation	F	Post Hoc Comparison
Piano Learning Quality	1-2 times	2.82	0.91	8.655***	2>1 2>3
	2-3 times	3.49	0.61		
	3-5 times	3.02	0.50		
	5-7 times	3.26	0.84		

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; 1=1-2 times, 2=2-3 times, 3=3-5 times, 4=5-7 times

### 4.3 Correlation and Regression Analysis

#### 4.3.1 The Correlation between Parental Participation and the Quality of Piano Learning of Preschool Children

##### Correlation analysis

The author tested the correlation between parental participation and piano learning quality. The specific results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlations

	Parental Participation	Piano Learning Quality
Parental Participation	1	
Piano Learning Quality	0.232**	1

Note: \*\*The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

##### Regression Analysis

The author conducted a regression model test, using parental participation as the predictor variable and piano learning quality as the dependent variable. The specific results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Constant	2.149	0.322		6.666	0.000
Parental Participation	0.313	0.097	0.232	3.228	0.001
R <sup>2</sup>	0.054				
F	10.420				0.001

In the significance test of regression coefficient, parental participation ( $b=0.313$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) has a positive predictive effect on piano learning quality. In other words, parental participation has a positive impact on the quality of piano learning.

#### 4.3.2 The Correlation between Teachers' Teaching and the Quality of Piano Learning for Preschool Children

##### Correlation Analysis

The author has tested the correlation between teacher teaching and piano learning quality. The specific results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Correlations

	Teachers' Teaching	Piano Learning Quality
Teachers' Teaching	1	
Piano Learning Quality	0.641**	1

Note: \*\*The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

### Regression Analysis

The author conducted a regression model test, taking teacher teaching as the predictor variable and piano learning quality as the dependent variable. The specific results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Constant	1.572	0.168		9.357	0.000
Parental Participation	0.590	0.050	0.641	11.687	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.411				
F	136.597				0.000

Through the significance test of the regression coefficient, it is concluded that the teacher's teaching ( $b=0.590$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) has a positive predictive effect on the piano learning quality, that is, the teacher's teaching has a positive effect on the piano learning quality.

#### 4.4 Results of Investigation on Concrete Issues existing in the Piano Learning for Preschool Children

Because of this research adopts the convergent design, which is one of the three core mixed method designs, the author have to discuss combing or comparing he two forms of data, including quantitative (survey questionnaire) data and qualitative (documentary, observation and interview) data.

##### 4.4.1 Teacher Teaching does not Follow the Principle of "Child-Centred"

From the observation results, it is found that teachers in Hunan Province present model teaching, and mainly focus on one-way output, which is a typical teaching characteristic of novice teachers (Zhang, 2015). Most of the teachers in 1-3 years of teaching experience lack teaching experience, and the interview results are consistent with the conclusion that teachers cannot change from student status to teacher status well. From the interviews and questionnaire results, it was found that both teachers and parents believed that teachers' teaching contents could refer to parents' opinions and should be adjusted according to the preschool children's own situation. The ideal principle of "student-centeredness" was not well implemented.

##### 4.4.2 The Parental Participation Process does not Grasp the Principle of "Moderation"

In the interviews, most of the parents indicated that they would participate



and accompany their preschoolers in the lessons. However, during the observation of the piano class of preschool children, it was found that very few parents would accompany their children in class or even communicate with teachers after class, so it can be inferred that there is a situation in which the parents are not truthful. In the classroom, classroom discipline is often disrupted and children's attention is distracted. It can be seen that the excessive participation of parents can also lead to low efficiency of piano learning for preschool children. Therefore, parents need to control the "degree" of parental involvement, not too much and not too little, after all, parents are not professionals. Parents are not professionals, but they have to play a supporting role to the teachers. In the interview results, most of the parents expressed their willingness to trust the teacher's teaching because they have not received professional training and have not studied piano, which is in line with the results of the questionnaire that 74.7% of the parents have not received music education. This could also explain side-by-side the finding in the interviews with teachers that many parents are too utilitarian and eager to get results in their involvement in piano learning for preschool children.

#### **4.4.3 Students lack Persistence in Learning**

From the interviews with parents and preschoolers, it is clear that most parents and preschoolers choose to learn piano as a hobby and to cultivate their emotions, but this is likely to cause preschoolers to learn the piano "for three minutes" and to give up halfway. This was confirmed by the teachers in their interviews, which showed that it is difficult for preschoolers to keep learning piano. The results of the questionnaire show that a significant number of teachers focus on the piano skills of their preschoolers, which is also confirmed by the results of the interviews with parents. Teachers and parents pay attention to the cultivation of preschoolers' skills and techniques, but lack the importance of preschoolers' qualities, and rush to irrigate students with knowledge, which, on the contrary, can cause students to lose their interest in learning prematurely, thus causing a lack of learning initiative and even aversion to piano learning, thus interrupting piano learning.

### **5 New knowledge**

**Firstly**, on the basis of referring to the relevant mature scales, the author designed the "Investigation Paper on the Status of Preschool Children's Piano Learning in Hunan Province" (Teacher's Edition) and (Parent's Edition). At the same time, the author presets an outline of interviews with teachers, parents and preschool children, which provides a reference for the subsequent research on preschool children's piano learning. **Secondly**, through the interdisciplinary integration of preschool pedagogy theory and art theory, the author investigated the piano learning of preschool children, laying a theoretical foundation for multi-angle exploration of related research. **Thirdly**, for the first time, the piano learning

of preschool children in Hunan Province was taken as the research topic, and the current situation of preschool children piano learning in Hunan Province was investigated and concluded, from the perspectives of preschool piano teachers, parents and preschool children. The author find that the effect of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province is at the middle and lower level, which also manifests that the piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province needs to be paid attention to. Through questionnaires, observation methods and interview methods, the author found that the duration and frequency of preschool children's practice, teacher teaching and parent participation have a huge impact on preschool children's piano learning. Also, the author discovered the specific problems and deficiencies in the piano learning process of preschool children, which provided a scientific basis and reference for how to improve the piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province.

## 6 Conclusion

This research mainly focuses on the theme of "Preschool Children's Piano Learning Status in Hunan Province", and mainly discusses three aspects, namely "what", "why" and "how". The "what" answers the questions of "what stage are preschool children at", "what is piano learning for preschool children", and "what is the quality of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province", "What is the quality of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province?", "What are the problems faced by teachers, parents and students in the process of piano learning for preschool children", and the documentary research method, questionnaire method, interview method and observation method were adopted. The answer to "why" is the reason of the topic chosen and "factors affecting preschool children's piano learning", the reason of the topic is documentary research method, "factors affecting preschool children's piano learning" uses literature research method, questionnaire method, interview method and observation method. The question "how" was answered by "how to improve the quality of piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province", and the documentary research method and interview method were used.

## 7 Discussion and Suggestions

The findings of this study show that the quality of piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province is at a relatively low level, and the three parties, preschool teachers, parents, and preschool children, are influencing each other to improve the quality of piano learning of preschool children in Hunan Province. Therefore, it is necessary to propose some improvement and promotion measures. Based on the results of the study and the existing research, the author will propose some practical suggestions and measures to improve the quality and level of piano learning of preschool children from the three levels of teachers, parents and preschool children. **For teachers**, Teaching is a very complex activity and there is

no unique teaching goal or teaching guideline, but the overall development of students is the only criterion to evaluate classroom teaching (Zhang, 2015). Preschool children are at a special stage where their physical and mental development is not mature, and teachers should set teaching goals for preschool children according to their physical and mental development characteristics. Therefore, instead of just playing a piece of music in its entirety as the ultimate goal for teaching preschoolers piano, teachers should teach in a way that constantly considers how to nurture preschoolers into more well-rounded individuals, break through traditional teaching ideas, and use music to shape preschoolers' spiritual strength. **For parents**, it is necessary for parents to establish a scientific view of children, and too compulsively suppress preschool children from learning the piano or practicing the piano, which is not conducive to the physical and mental development of preschool children. Pay attention to the way of communication, use a calm tone and a patient attitude to communicate with preschoolers. With the continuous development of the market economy, the values of many of our parents have also been affected by diversification. **For children**, The results of this study indicate that gender and age of preschool children are not statistically significant for preschool children's piano learning, which is consistent with the findings of some existing studies (Cheng, 2013; Xu, 2014). Also, this study found that the length and frequency of practice were positively associated with the quality of piano learning, suggesting that children's persistence and stamina positively influenced piano learning, which is consistent with existing studies (Duncan et al., 2007; Xu, 2014). Therefore, in the preschool piano initiation phase, preschoolers can practice regularly for the piano.

Even though this article selected preschool children, preschooler's parents and piano learners in Hunan Province as a sample, it failed to cover all the areas of Hunan Province and could not present the full picture of piano learning for preschool children in Hunan Province because the researcher is lack of time and energy. In addition, due to the existence of researchers' own prejudice, the observation method of this study also lacks objectivity. Moreover, the author mainly adopts horizontal follow-up investigation, but lacks longitudinal follow-up investigation of the investigated objects. In terms of the limitations of the research population and research methods mentioned above, there are still many shortcomings in this study. The author hope that the majority of peers and experts will put forward criticisms. In the future, the author will devote more efforts and time to how to improve the piano learning quality of preschool children.

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