



**MEE 2.0: ICLT2022**  
International Virtual Colloquium on Multi-Disciplinary Research Impact (3rd Series)  
**International Conference of Logistics and Transportation**  
Best Western i-City Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, 05-06 Oct2022



## Exploration and Reflection of Online Piano Teaching Practice in Normal Universities in China

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### Abstract

At the beginning of 2020, due to the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, education in China was disrupted. The Chinese government has strongly supported online education, while the music education industry has also adopted a "Suspension of class but no suspension of learning" plan. Universities have also carried out online classroom practices, which has also opened a new door to online piano teaching in universities in China. The feasibility of online piano teaching in daily classrooms of universities in China is something worth researching.

Keywords COVID-19; Online education; Online piano teaching

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iS19.3955>

### 1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, the piano education discipline in colleges is mainly aimed at the talent training of teachers in education in China. This part of students' discipline and professional education positively affect society and national music education. Hence, the piano classroom in colleges is essential. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown traditional piano teaching in schools into a dilemma. Due to the large-scale suspension of the education system, there is a market demand for online piano teaching but a significant shortage of teaching resources. To deal with this dilemma, we need to break the traditional "face-to-face" and "one-to-one" piano teaching methods and explore the new model of online piano learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the advantages of online education are gradually emerging, and the development trend of related industries is also apparent. Online piano classes in universities also show certain benefits, which bring a lot of exploration and thinking to piano education.

### 2.0 The characteristics of traditional piano teaching in normal universities in China:

Traditional college piano education has uniquely positioned in the Chinese art education system. It is different from the professional piano teaching mode in music colleges. Piano teaching has unique qualities, mainly reflected in its educational resource background, student training direction, and students' skill characteristics.

The piano education in colleges is different from that in professional music colleges. The most prominent feature of universities is teacher education and educational science, relying on the teaching resources of comprehensive subjects and highlighting the role of education.

Compared with professional music colleges, regular universities have broader educational resources and offer more diversified and comprehensive course options for students in the piano major. In addition to the required courses of the primary major, students also have the choice of a second major, such as choral conducting, instrumental performance, musicology theory, composition, dance performance, etc. Furthermore, students can also choose

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courses in other disciplines, such as psychology, education, linguistics, management, etc. Due to the differences in educational resources and backgrounds, primary piano students in regular universities have more diversified choices in the learning process.

The training direction of piano majors in universities and colleges lays more emphasis on the cultivation of compound talents, focusing on the cultivation of high-level skills engaged in piano teaching, piano performance, music theory, music editing, etc. In recent years, it has become the goal and orientation of regular universities to cultivate humanistic, comprehensive, and compound artistic talents with "one speciality and many abilities." The different training directions also give students majoring in piano in regular universities a more comprehensive career path in employment.

The overall level of piano foundation and piano stage playing skills of students majoring in piano in regular university is weaker than students in piano in Music college. Still, their music theory knowledge, scientific research ability, and comprehensive ability are stronger than students in piano in music college. Compared with the piano education in music college, the piano education in a regular university is focused on the comprehensive ability of students; in addition to piano playing, students also have the power of theoretical analysis and writing, improvised accompaniment, piano teaching skills, chorus conducting, and so on.

Therefore, piano teaching in colleges and universities cultivates students with a more profound cultural heritage and connotation, more comprehensive professional skills, a broader global vision, and a more comprehensive ability to serve society.

Given the differences between the three aspects above, university piano teaching aims to cultivate students with cultural heritage, connotation, and comprehensive professional skills. Therefore, it is highly integrated into educational resources and diverse in curriculum settings for primary piano students in regular universities. Students are expected to meet society's needs for music talents after graduation.

### **3.0 The Overall situation of online piano teaching in Normal universities in China during COVID-19:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, piano teaching in regular universities cannot achieve the traditional classroom teaching model. As the piano is one of the auditory arts, piano teaching is mainly taught using the sense of touch and hearing, which requires higher clarity and is at a more advanced level for the supervisor's acoustic sound. Therefore, online teaching is challenging for teachers and students majoring in piano.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, online piano education was mainly in the form of after-school tutoring, which did not cover the curriculum system of piano education in regular universities. However, online piano classrooms also become an innovative method of exploration and trial during the epidemic, ushering in a new situation of piano teaching in universities.

The exploration of online piano teaching in a regular university depends on the various resource of online education platforms and cloud technology. In the case of Yongzhou Normal University in Hunan, the institute provided the technical training for piano teachers and used the "Super Star Learning APP" to facilitate teachers to provide online live courses or video recording classes; and implemented "Cloud Class" to ensure the learning progress of students during the epidemic.

Due to the characteristics of piano teaching, there are higher requirements for the sound and network stability of online teaching platforms. However, teachers and students of piano majors in universities reported that ordinary online platforms could not support smooth and high-quality piano teaching after testing.

First and foremost, most online platforms cannot accept high-frequency sound, resulting in online attendees being unable to receive the wide-range sound. Besides, the number of online users is limited on most online platforms. When the number of online users reaches the limitation, timbre distortion and more noise will occur, affecting the clarity of the teaching process. Online piano teaching is prone to sound delay and being out of sync in the unstable network environment, disrupting teacher-student knowledge transfer and interaction.

In the practice of online piano teaching in regular universities, the writer has conducted the following teaching presentation:

In the early stage of online teaching, teachers and students frequently switched network platforms for testing, including Wechat video, BB platform, Super Star learning app, Tencent conference, Dingding, and other media. These network platforms are constantly updated and upgraded in a short period, and their audio-visual effects are gradually improved.

Online piano teaching in regular universities can mainly be divided into "theory explanation" and "performance of works." As the online piano course breaks the limitation of time and space, the traditional teaching model of "one to one" has also been changed in piano teaching in most normal universities. This enables more students to participate in the piano class's remote online auditing and discussion.

In the "theory explanation" section, the theoretical knowledge of the spectrum is explained. The content, such as harmony, musical form, and music theory, is designed; so that the student's understanding is broadened. This process generates "teacher-student communication," "student-student communication", and other multi-directional communication and learning methods.

In the "performance of works" section, due to the short duration of time and the number of students, works recording, video recording and other methods are used. After an offline recording, students can choose the best version and send it to the teacher. The teacher will comment on the work with the students and explain the critical and challenging points through text description, voice calls, video calls, etc. After reviewing with the teachers, the students can make the necessary corrections and contact the teacher online.

### **4.0 The difference and analysis between online piano teaching and traditional piano teaching in regular universities**

We can see that online and traditional piano teaching in frequent regular colleges has undergone tremendous changes in teaching mode, teaching methods, teaching tools, procedures, and other aspects.

The characteristics of a traditional piano teaching classroom: "one-to-one" teaching mode, offline teaching, physical contact, straightforward teaching process, weak flexibility, and courses that cannot be repeated.

The characteristics of online piano teaching are as follows: "one-to-many" teaching model, online and offline simultaneous education, no physical contact, complicated teaching process, flexibility, and repeatable courses.

### **5.0 Analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of online piano teaching in regular universities during COVID-19**

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, regular universities have actively tried a new model of the online piano classroom. While overcoming the obstacles of teaching techniques and innovating the teaching path, we can also see the advantages and disadvantages of online piano teaching and generate some thoughts.

During the outbreak of Covid-19, universities adopted the method of online piano teaching. This new teaching method highlights several unprecedented advantages, which are listed below:

(1) Online piano teaching in regular colleges breaks the limitation of time and space, not only realising the possibility of a small piano class; but also realising the possibility of teachers and students communicating any time after class.

(2) Piano students in regular universities objectively pay attention to their performance when completing their recording and video assignments. In this process, they can find their problems more intuitively. This is different from the usual process of judging the rhythm and speed of works directly with their hearing. Students also experience and think about ways and methods of piano education in this process.

(3) Through audio and video recording, the content presented by teachers can achieve teaching repeatability. This can enable students to repeat the teaching content emphasised by the teacher after class and repeated research and thinking. For students with a low level of piano skills, the key to classroom teaching is to help them find out the problems in piano learning and teach students the methods to consolidate learning results, rather than just the traditional piano teaching mode and performance will reduce learning efficiency. The form of repeatedly watching and listening to their videos and recordings is different from the conventional piano courses in universities. It enables students to repeat learning, consolidate knowledge and improve learning efficiency, which is difficult to achieve in university piano teaching.

(4) Online piano teaching in universities reduces the distance and time cost of "face-to-face teaching" in traditional piano classes. Teachers and students have more time and experience to devote themselves to piano teaching and learning.

(5) Online piano classes in colleges are conducive to training students' ability to perform under the camera. It is beneficial to exercise students' self-consciousness about piano performance; it is helpful to make up for the weak performance ability of piano students in colleges.

(6) The atmosphere of online piano teaching in regular universities is more relaxed. It is easier for students in the classroom to achieve a joint discussion and encourage them to put forward learning suggestions to other classmates to practice piano teaching.

(7) Online piano teaching in regular colleges breaks the traditional "one-to-one" single piano teaching mode, which is convenient for more teachers and students to participate alongside and discuss classroom teaching. In addition to the communication between teachers and students, students can also study in online groups or interest groups to increase the fun of learning.

(8) Online piano teaching in regular universities strengthens students' ability to learn independently and gradually shifts from teacher-centred to "student-centred", enabling students to participate in class actions and develop their creativity.

(9) Nowadays, students live in the network information age. Online education highlights the functional advantages of integrating resources and sharing resources. Students should learn to use sources to assist their learning and growth.

In this digital age, online education has apparent advantages. However, there are some shortcomings in online piano teaching in regular universities, as below:

(1) Physical contact and communication between teachers and students cannot be realised in online piano teaching in regular universities. For example, in traditional piano teaching, teachers need to correct the hand shape of students, including posture correction, movement demonstration, and so on. While in the online piano teaching, it is difficult to reach the same teaching achievement.

(2) Online piano teaching has special requirements on the network platform. Due to the particularity of piano performance, there are higher requirements on the authenticity of timbre and pitch frequency in the online network platform.

(3) In the teaching process of work performance, students may encounter problems such as a lack of piano, electronic piano, or keyboard at home, which makes it difficult for students to practice playing. In this case, online piano teaching will be reduced to a purely theoretical course, with a slight improvement in students' playing skills.

(4) The unstable network and signal, the poor quality of communication equipment, and the noisy environment of teachers and students easily hurt the quality of online piano teaching.

(5) In online piano teaching in regular colleges, the teaching atmosphere may be too relaxed due to distance teaching, and students are prone to slacker psychology.

## 5.0 Suggestions and prospects of online piano teaching in regular university

During the COVID-19 epidemic, regular universities started a new online piano teaching model and gained many advantages that traditional piano teaching cannot achieve. Although advantages and disadvantages coexist, the benefits are more prominent, and we believe that most of the disadvantages of online piano teaching can be gradually overcome. Therefore, the writer has the following suggestions for online piano teaching in regular universities:

(1) Choosing a suitable online platform, good network environment, and equipment for the online piano class is necessary. Therefore, the support from relevant departments and social institutions to develop a suitable network platform for the online course is indispensable.

(2) With the gradual popularity of online piano education, piano teachers can flexibly combine the traditional piano teaching mode with online piano teaching. They can summarise the experience of online piano education and teaching, explore the hybrid online and offline piano teaching mode, and use the advantages of the Internet to preview online classes and expand their knowledge to realise the development of piano teaching.

(3) Students majoring in piano in regular universities should be encouraged to make after-class piano practice plans according to their conditions and use the advantage of repeatable teaching content from online piano classes wisely to reinforce their piano playing skills.

(4) Teachers should enhance the teaching atmosphere of the online classroom while encouraging students to communicate.

(5) Online interest groups can be established to enhance students' learning enthusiasm for online teaching aims. By forming groups with the same score or music types of interests, collaborative practice is carried out among groups systematically so that the students can have more enthusiasm and expectations for piano learning. In interest groups, members quickly reach a consensus on selecting all repertoire because of the preference for the expected standard. Through the practice of selected songs, discussion and communication between group members can also deepen the understanding and cognition of the work.

(6) The construction of the teaching team should be strengthened. The form of online piano teaching is not a small challenge to the piano teaching team in regular universities. In addition to putting forward higher teaching methods requirements, traditional universities' concepts should also be changed. The teaching team required by online piano teaching includes online course recording, online course processing personnel, teaching platform management, and maintenance personnel. The new approach involves building a teaching team that can adapt to the unique combination of online and offline teaching.

The application of internet technology to realise online piano teaching is undoubtedly the best solution when offline teaching cannot be carried out. Under the background of increasingly developed internet technology in China, software and platforms such as online piano teaching or training partner

have already appeared on the market. After online piano teaching has entered the classroom of regular universities, it has injected new possibilities into the traditional piano classroom; and brought impact.

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Innovation in education is essential, but without the inheritance of tradition, the invention will become water without a source. In the past, the traditional way of piano education was one piano room, one piano, one teacher, and one student in a 45-minute lesson. However, with the continuous development of the internet, cloud computing, mobile terminal, and network technology, traditional piano education has opened up a new way of teaching methods. Teachers' teaching and students' learning are no longer restricted by region, and students are not limited by number. Under the educational environment of new technology, mode, and concept, the traditional piano teaching model should conform to the trend and progress in innovation.

For the long history, every progress and reform of human beings is often accompanied by natural disasters or wars. Breakthroughs and innovation under challenging situations are inevitable processes of the development of human society. The epidemic should not only bring us thinking about medicine and human health. How one combines the development of science and technology with social needs, the value of resources will play a significant role in promoting online piano education and even other disciplines.

It is believed that with the gradual improvement of the hardware technology environment and the excellent use of online teaching resources by teachers and students, online art education will gradually become globalised, universal, intelligent, and professional and create a new era for piano education in regular universities.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, Malaysia, for the support and ReNeU UiTM, for the publication incentive provided.

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