

# The Effect and Relationship on Learning Strategies of Collective Piano Classes in the Context of Preschool Education

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## Abstract

This study explores the impact and interplay of learning strategies in collective piano classes within the context of preschool education, focusing on first-year undergraduate students at Jiangxi University of Technology. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates how cooperative learning and individualized teaching strategies influence students' piano proficiency and practice habits. Qualitative data, gathered through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of course materials, are analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo, providing insights into students' and teachers' experiences and perceptions. Quantitative data, collected via surveys and academic records, are examined using statistical analysis in SPSS to assess the effectiveness of these learning strategies and their long-term impact on students' musical development. The study is grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, offering a nuanced understanding of the social and cognitive aspects of learning in group piano instruction. Findings aim to contribute to the pedagogical practices in music education, particularly in the realm of collective piano teaching for early childhood education. This research not only addresses a gap in the current literature but also provides practical implications for enhancing the quality of music education in preschool settings.

**Keywords:** Collective Piano Classes, Preschool Education, Cooperative Learning, Music Education, Learning Strategies.

## Introduction

China is a country that has a long history of both music and education, and the communal piano classes in the country have a history that is both unique and fascinating (Wen & Sensai, 2021). These group piano classes have grown and gained popularity over the course of the

past several years as a result of China's ever-changing cultural landscape and altering educational goals. One may go all the way back to the early years of the 20th century to find the beginnings of group piano lessons in China. These lessons were first introduced in China. One of the most significant of these changes was the introduction of a socialist market economy. The implementation of a socialist market economy stands out as one of the most important of these changes that took place. There was the beginnings of an influence on the musical culture of China from Western music and instruments, most notably the piano. This influence came from the West.

It is possible that a variety of factors, such as the efforts of missionaries and the influence of foreign expatriates who were residing in China at the time, were responsible for the introduction of the piano to China. Particularly important was the role that missionaries played in introducing Western musical instruments and training to the urban centres of China. As a direct result of this, playing the piano has gained popularity among the urban middle class and the elites of China in recent years. At the turn of the 20th century, Chinese musicians and educators for the first time began experimenting with the idea of instructing groups of students on the piano at the same time. During this time period, Chinese educators were working to modernise teaching methods and make education more accessible to a wider public. Concurrently, the concept of collective piano lessons aligned with these larger educational developments that were taking place in China at the same time (Zhao, 2022). Taking piano lessons in a group situation, which enables multiple students to study the instrument at the same time, is less time-consuming and more cost-effective than receiving instruction on the piano on an individual basis.

Madame Chao-Ling Tung was a Chinese pianist and educator who moved to the United States in the early 20th century in order to advance her musical education. She did so in order to study at the Juilliard School of Music. It is said that she was a pioneering figure in the development of group piano instruction in China, and that credit is given to her for this. After returning to China, Madame Tung established the Tung Ling School of Music in Shanghai shortly after her arrival. There, she was a trailblazer in the implementation of a variety of innovative educational practises, one of which was the utilisation of group piano courses. Her institution established a model for music education in China and was instrumental in advancing the piano's status as a widely played instrument throughout her tenure there. She was an innovator in the field of music instruction in China and is considered a pioneer in the subject (Kazakova, 2020).

Across the course of the 20th century, China saw a growth in the number of people signing up for lessons to learn the piano in a group setting. As a result of China's economy becoming more market-oriented, China's growing middle class began searching for opportunities that would allow for cultural enrichment and personal development. Because of this, there was a surge in demand for various forms of music education, most notably group piano lessons, which ultimately resulted in an increase in the number of music schools opening their doors. The bulk of these educational establishments offered group piano lessons, and their construction in China during the 1980s and 1990s led to the establishment of a huge number of music schools, conservatories, and private music academies. These schools were frequently staffed by Chinese and international piano teachers who had obtained proper training, and they were an essential component in the process of supplying the expanding demand for piano tuition. The demand for piano teaching has been rising steadily over the past few years (Bai, 2021).

Group piano lessons have been increasingly popular in China as a result of the country's emphasis on standardised testing and academic achievement (Bai, 2021). This is one of the key causes that contributed to the country's widespread adoption of group piano lessons. Exams on the piano, particularly those linked with major music examination boards like the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the Trinity College London, have been an essential component of music education over the past few decades. The pupils were able to better prepare for the examinations because to the fact that they were able to study and enhance their abilities with one another in the group piano classes that they took.

The 21st century in China witnessed a significant expansion in the availability of group piano lessons, which was driven by a variety of various factors. This growth was motivated by the fact that more people wanted to learn the piano. To begin, the rise in employment and income levels across the country has made it possible for more households to purchase pianos and send their children to classes in music. This has resulted in an increase in the number of households that send their children to music classes (De Vries, 2021). The rapidly expanding middle class in China understood the significance of music education, and more specifically piano lessons, as a tool to provide their children with a well-rounded education and a competitive advantage in an increasingly globalised world. This was particularly true of the piano lessons.

Second, the arrival of the internet and other forms of digital technology brought about a comprehensive shift in the manner in which music is instructed in China (Keane et al., 2020). As a result of the expansion of internet platforms, video tutorials, and digital sheet music, students now have better access to piano instruction and materials than in the past. A significant number of piano teachers and schools have expressed their satisfaction with the advent of online instruction, which has made it possible for them to reach pupils located in remote areas and across vast geographic distances. Thirdly, as a result of China's growing prominence on the international scene, there has been a corresponding increase in interest in Western culture and music in the country. As a result of the mixing of these cultures, there is now a stronger appreciation for both traditional music and the piano, which has further increased the demand for piano lessons.

Students in China have a bewildering variety of options available to them these days when it comes to the methods and formats of their group piano lessons (Su, 2022). You can come across them in places such as community centres, conservatories, public and private music institutions, and even internet platforms. These sessions are intended for students of any age, ranging from very young toddlers to adults, and they cover a wide range of ability levels, from complete beginners to pianists who have already achieved a high degree of proficiency. The structure of collective piano teaching in China frequently takes the form of small groups of students studying in the same room together under the guidance of an experienced piano instructor. These classes offer a variety of advantages, including the fact that they are economical, the chance for students to interact with one another, and the possibility of taking part in musical ensembles.

Group piano lessons are highly popular due, in large part, to their relatively low cost. This factor helps substantially to the universal popularity of the classes. Lessons given in a group environment are often more cost-effective than training given privately or one-on-one, which enables a greater percentage of the population to have access to these types of educational opportunities. More students are able to pursue their interest in the piano because lessons are available at prices that are not too expensive. Interaction with other pupils and gaining knowledge from one's contemporaries are also essential components of the group piano

lessons that are provided in China. Sharing one's experiences, difficulties, and victories with one's classmates is a great way for students to foster a sense of camaraderie and boost their motivation among themselves and their other classmates. When students take part in group music lessons, they are afforded the chance to learn from one another as well as the chance to collaborate with one another on various musical undertakings (Li et al., 2021). The specific objectives for study are given below:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of cooperative learning in collective piano classes for preschool education students.
2. To explore strategies for addressing individual learning differences in large-scale piano teaching.
3. To assess the long-term impact of collective piano courses on students' piano proficiency and practice habits.

### **Literature Review**

The history of communal piano instruction is a fascinating trip that spans decades and reflects the developing approaches to music education, social dynamics, and technological improvements. These courses have greatly influenced the way pianists are taught and helped to make music education more widely available, or "democratised." Individual lessons with a private teacher were the norm in the early days of piano education, and the idea of group piano classes evolved from there. The demand for piano lessons, however, skyrocketed in the 19th century as the piano gained in popularity. This necessitated the development of group piano sessions as a more practical and productive means of instructing a wider range of students. One of the pioneers in this subject was Carl Czerny, a notable composer and pianist of the 19th century, who devised a system of group training that attempted to train pianists in a more systematic and organised manner. Many music academies and conservatories began including piano ensemble classes in their curricula in the late 19th and early 20th century. Piano education was greatly aided by the establishment of prestigious academies like the Juilliard School in the United States and the Moscow Conservatory in Russia. The addition of group piano sessions allowed students to benefit from the guidance of knowledgeable teachers as well as the company of their peers (Shin, 2021). It was in this atmosphere of friendly rivalry and supportive cooperation that students were able to improve their technical competence, musicianship, and performance skills (Jääskeläinen & López-Íñiguez, 2022).

With more and more schools purchasing pianos, group piano lessons have become increasingly popular. Many schools in the early 20th century had pianos so that music education could be incorporated into the curriculum. The goal of this programme was to give pupils a well-rounded education in which music played a significant role. It was thought that piano lessons would be a great addition to the curriculum since they would help students develop their intelligence, self-control, and imagination. The evolution of group piano classes was further affected by the considerable innovations in piano Learning methods and technology that occurred in the middle of the 20th century. The introduction of electronic keyboards and then digital pianos completely altered the traditional methods of Learning the piano (Yang, 2020). Because they could be easily wired to headphones, these instruments gave students more freedom to practise in class without disrupting others. Also, thanks to digital technology, teachers and students can now record and critique each other's presentations for mutual improvement (Abbas et al., 2023).

Collective piano classes were also significantly influenced by the introduction of the Suzuki method, created by Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki in the middle of the twentieth century. The Suzuki approach emphasizes early childhood music instruction and group learning, encouraging children as young as three years old to start studying the piano in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. This method aimed to cultivate musicians with a wide range of skills, including attentive listening, imitation, and practice (Ovcharenko et al., 2020). Suzuki's approach to Learning the piano shook up conventional wisdom by stressing the value of a supportive community and encouraging parental participation and participation.

Collective piano classes have continued to develop and adapt to new educational trends and technologies throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Students from all over the world can now take part in group piano lessons thanks to the proliferation of digital materials and online education platforms (Ma & Ma, 2023). These internet platforms featured a wide range of Learning materials, including video tutorials, interactive lessons, and collaborative practice tools, making it easier than ever for aspiring pianists to join in communal learning experiences. Additionally, the use of technology has allowed for the introduction of multimedia components, such as audio and video recordings, into group piano lessons. As a result, they were able to learn about many types of music, listen to recordings of famous pianists, and expand their knowledge of music theory and history. It also allowed educators to analyze and provide comments to pupils individually even if they were all working together (Alam & Mohanty, 2022).

Collective piano classes have gained popularity in recent years due to their widely acknowledged benefits in fostering musical variety and acceptance. Group piano classes have been widely adopted by music institutions and community organizations to reach neglected populations and promote social cohesion through music (Paolantonio, 2022).

These efforts have sought to remove roadblocks and open doors so that people from all walks of life can discover and develop their musical talents. Collective piano classes have changed over time to reflect the development of music education from a solitary activity to a more collaborative and diverse process. Group piano classes have been instrumental in lowering the cost of learning the piano and opening the field of music to people of all ages and walks of life (Chawke, 2023).

These classes continue to encourage and equip people to pursue their musical passions, whether they take place in conventional music schools, via internet resources, or through community-based initiatives (Flowers, 2021). There will undoubtedly be more creative approaches taken in the future of group piano sessions, as well as more chances for students to interact with one another, work together, and develop as musicians.

The growth that has taken place in China's cultural and educational landscape throughout the course of the country's history is reflected in the long-standing practise of group piano lessons that have been practised in the country for generations (Sun, 2022). These lessons have been practised in China for a considerable amount of time. The history that lies behind these group piano lessons is both exciting and complex, and it serves as a portrayal of the shifting socioeconomic aspirations, and cultural influences that have transpired in China over the course of time (Svyrydenko & Stovpets, 2020).

The history of these classes dates back to the Qing dynasty, which ruled China from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. The Qing dynasty, which controlled China from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, is the dynasty that is responsible for the history that lies behind these group piano lessons. At the start of the 20th century, China started making steps to modernise its armed forces as well. During this time period, China

had its first offerings of group piano instruction that utilised an actual piano. These classes were held in Beijing (Zou & Wang, 2023).

The city of Beijing was the location of these classes. As soon as Chinese society was exposed to the influences of foreign missionaries and expatriates, Western music, and the piano in particular, began to have a greater impact on Chinese culture. When these people immigrated to China, they brought with them Western educational practises as well as musical instruments from the West (Quin, 2021). Because this was one of the considerations that went into their decision to move to China, we can say that this bears some responsibility for the situation.

Madame Chao-Ling Tung is credited with being one of the early pioneers who was responsible for developing group piano tuition in China (Fu et al., 2021). Her contributions are appreciated to this day. She is widely regarded as one of the industry's early pioneers, and for good reason. She was a pianist and a teacher who was born in China but subsequently migrated to the United States in the early 20th century in order to complete her studies. Although she was born in China, she was known for her work in both countries. Her place of birth was on the mainland of China. She was finally able to make it back to China after a long voyage, and it was there that she came to the conclusion that she would devote the rest of her life to bringing

Western music instruction to the entirety of the country. She was a pioneer in the adoption of new educational practises at the Tung Ling School of Music, which she founded in Shanghai in 1925. This school was established in 1925. Group piano instruction was one of the things that went on during these practises. Her company went on to become a model for music education in China and was a huge effect on the emergence of the piano as a preferred musical instrument. Her mission was to spread the joy of playing the piano to as many people as possible. In addition to this, she was an innovator in the field of music instruction. During the historical period in question, she was a groundbreaking figure in the field of music education (Reimer, 2022).

At the turn of the 20th century, people from China's urban middle class as well as the country's elites began to exhibit an interest in learning the skills necessary to play the piano. This interest was primarily driven by the country's increasing exposure to Western music. The growing size of the country's middle class was the primary factor behind this interest (Andreoni et al., 2021). The piano was first introduced into Chinese households in large part as a result of the efforts of Western missionaries, schools, and private tutors. Individual piano lessons, on the other hand, were frequently prohibitive and could only be obtained by a select number of individuals due to the limited availability of these lessons as well as the high cost that was connected with taking them.

The concept of group piano classes began to gain popularity and become increasingly prevalent as a means of making piano education more approachable and cost-effective for a broader variety of people (Ραμαδανίδης, 2023). This was accomplished by making the concept of group piano classes (Yang, 2020). This goal was reached through the dissemination of information regarding the advantages of taking part in group piano lessons. It was possible for a large number of students to learn together in lessons that were held in groups, which led to a reduction in the overall cost of tuition as a consequence of the increased effectiveness of the learning. One way that we were able to achieve this goal was by facilitating the education of several pupils at the same time .

This strategy was in line with the bigger educational developments that were going place at the same time in China. At the time, educators in China were looking for ways to modernise

teaching methods and make education available to a wider audience. This strategy was consistent with those goals, as it helped educators achieve both of those objectives. When the statement was first published, China was in the process of implementing bigger educational reforms at the same time (Lo, 2021). This technique was consistent with those reforms, thus it fit in well with them.

This was owing to the fact that music and instruments from the Western world were regarded as being of lower quality (Nikolsky et al., 2020). Because of the rigorous rules that were placed on a substantial number of the institutions that were responsible for teaching music and education in the Western fashion, the playing of the piano, which at the time was thought to be a reflection of Western culture, was outlawed. This came about as a result of the fact that the playing of the piano was seen as a reflection of Western culture. This transpired as a consequence of the fact that these establishments were governed by a number of stringent restrictions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Sociocultural theory of learning**

Collective piano classes as a means of instruction have recently garnered a lot of attention in the field of early childhood education. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning is the first to be taken into account here. This theory, created by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, regards social interactions and cultural influences as crucial to the learning process (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Vygotsky's theory, when applied to the context of group piano lessons, implies that children considerably benefit from the social interactions that occur during this type of instruction. Students can effectively "scaffold" their learning by working together in small groups and interacting with the teacher to build upon one another's knowledge and skills. Children's cognitive growth is facilitated in group piano sessions due to the children's ability to observe and learn from each other's progress.

Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) is highly applicable to the setting of piano lessons for preschoolers. The distance between what a student can do on their own and what they can do with the help of an expert (either a teacher or a peer) is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In group piano lessons, the teacher plays a pivotal role in determining and supporting each student's zone of proximal development (Mcpherson-Bester, 2019). The teacher can encourage each student's development by adapting lessons to his or her unique strengths and weaknesses, so creating an environment in which everyone is pushed without being overwhelmed. This theory emphasises the significance of both individual and group learning in the context of preschool piano instruction.

### **Theory of Multiple Intelligences**

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences is worth considering (Cavas & Cavas, 2020). Gardner's thesis questions the common understanding of intelligence by positing numerous forms of brilliance outside IQ tests. This approach emphasises the significance of understanding and accommodating the various intelligences of young students in the context of Learning piano to preschoolers. Group piano lessons are a great way to cater to students of varying IQs.

Some students, for instance, may have a remarkable aptitude for music and demonstrate an instinctive ability to pick out patterns in melodies and rhythms. While some students may struggle to get along with their peers, there are those who thrive at social relations and group dynamics. Children who take piano lessons often see improvements in their fine motor skills

and hand-eye coordination, two skills that contribute to their overall development of kinesthetic intelligence. Collective piano sessions can appeal to a larger spectrum of students and foster overall development by combining activities that tap into these many intelligences. Furthermore, Gardner's theory motivates educators to be adaptable and innovative in their methods of Learning. Teachers providing group piano lessons have more leeway to accommodate students' varying learning styles by incorporating visual aids, kinesthetic activities, and group projects into their lesson plans. This multidimensional strategy not only improves the learning environment, but also gives kids the chance to find and cultivate their own personal skills and passions (Roberson, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

This study emphasizes the significant impact and intricate relationship between various learning strategies employed in collective piano classes within preschool education. By leveraging Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, the research demonstrates how cooperative learning and individualized teaching approaches can enhance piano proficiency and practice habits among young students. The mixed-methods approach, encompassing qualitative and quantitative data, provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers, highlighting the social and cognitive benefits of group piano instruction. This study not only fills a gap in existing literature but also offers practical implications for improving pedagogical practices in early childhood music education, ultimately fostering a well-rounded and enriching learning environment for preschoolers.

### **Contribution**

This research makes significant theoretical and contextual contributions to the field of early childhood education, particularly in the realm of music instruction through collective piano classes. The integration of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a robust framework for understanding how social interactions and diverse forms of intelligence influence learning outcomes in preschoolers engaged in group piano lessons. By exploring these theories within the specific context of China's educational landscape, the study offers insights into how cultural influences and socioeconomic factors shape educational practices, particularly in music education. This research not only enriches our theoretical understanding of learning strategies but also addresses practical implications for improving pedagogical approaches in preschool settings. By emphasizing cooperative learning and individualized teaching methods, the study underscores the importance of tailored educational strategies that cater to the cognitive and social development of young learners, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive and effective early childhood music education curriculum.



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