

Needs, Challenges and Prospects of Blended Learning in Music Education at the Higher Education Settings

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Abstract

The evolution of music education faces transformative shifts through blended learning, presenting challenges and promising opportunities in higher education settings. The study aims to recognize students and educators needs for blended learning in music education, challenges in blended learning for music education, explore the potential prospects of blended learning in music education, and formulate recommendations to address challenges and harness prospects in the context of higher education settings. This study employs library research methods to investigate and analyze relevant literature on the subject of blended learning in music education. Research indicates that blended learning adapts to students' needs with flexible paths, diverse resources, and engaging environments. Educators, too, require continuous development, advanced tech resources, and collaborative platforms for optimal success in blended learning. Blended learning in music education faces challenges such as constrained virtual communication, high costs, and uneven work distribution. Conversely, it offers prospects like flexible learning, personalized experiences, and creative technological integration. The integration of blended learning in higher music education brings forth transformative shifts, unveiling challenges such as constrained virtual communication and high costs, alongside promising prospects like flexible learning and creative technological integration. To navigate this evolving landscape, comprehensive library research methods are employed. In conclusion, strategic recommendations are crucial, emphasizing investments in technology infrastructure, educator training, and clear policies to optimize blended learning's benefits and address challenges effectively in the realm of higher music education.

Keywords: Challenges, Prospects, Blended Learning, Music Education, Higher Education

Introduction

Higher education institutions are embracing a blended learning approach that combines online and offline teaching methods. Leveraging modern educational technology enables the optimization and integration of educational resources, facilitating students in mastering knowledge and skills through online learning. In the increasingly competitive societal landscape, the demand for talent has reached new heights. The nurturing of students in higher education music programs should aim for comprehensive growth, ensuring that online education complements and enhances the innovation and integrity of traditional offline education. This synergistic blend of online and offline education strives to perfect the educational process, meeting the evolving demands of a dynamic educational landscape (Chen & Loy, 2023a; 2023b; Li, 2023; Suflan et al., 2022).

The main problem in the context of the needs, challenges, and prospects of blended learning in music education at the higher education settings revolves around the effective integration of traditional and online components. Balancing the demands of providing flexible learning paths, access to technological resources, and collaborative platforms while maintaining the integrity of music education poses a significant challenge. Ensuring that the blend enhances the educational experience rather than detracting from it is crucial, and finding this equilibrium remains a central concern in higher education settings for music education (Zhang, 2019; Jiang & Wu, 2023; Xia, 2023; Sevim & Ali, 2023).

This paper explores the needs of students in higher education for blended learning in music education, addresses the requirements of educators in the same context, examines challenges associated with blended learning in music education, explores the prospects of this approach, and provides recommendations for its effective implementation.

Student's Needs in Higher Education for Blended Learning in Music Education

As higher education undergoes transformative changes, a critical focus emerges on meeting students' distinct needs in the domain of blended learning for music education. With ongoing shifts in educational methodologies, it becomes essential to identify and prioritize students' specific requirements. This introduction lays the foundation for an exploration into the nuanced facets of student needs in the context of blended learning. The aim is to comprehend how this adaptive approach can effectively cater to the diverse and evolving educational demands of higher education students in music education (Guo, 2023; Lanlan et al., 2023; Li, 2023). These needs encompass flexible learning paths, access to diverse learning resources, and interactive and engaging learning environments.

(i) Flexible music learning paths

Higher education students in music programs benefit from blended learning when provided with flexible learning paths. Tailoring the pace and mode of instruction to individual student needs allows for a more personalized educational experience. This flexibility accommodates diverse learning styles and schedules, empowering students to engage with course materials at their own pace.

(ii) Access to diverse music learning resources

Blended learning should meet the need for access to a diverse range of learning resources. Incorporating online platforms, digital libraries, and multimedia materials enhances the depth and breadth of music education. Students can explore a variety of musical genres, historical perspectives, and instructional content, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

(iii) Interactive and engaging music learning environments

Higher education students in music programs thrive in blended learning environments that prioritize interactivity and engagement. Incorporating collaborative online platforms, virtual rehearsals, and interactive assignments fosters a sense of community among students. This not only enhances the learning experience but also encourages active participation, discussion, and the development of practical music skills.

In response to transformative changes in higher education, the crucial focus on meeting students' specific needs in blended learning for music education. Emphasizing the importance of flexible learning paths, access to diverse resources, and engaging environments, the adaptability of blended learning to cater to the evolving educational demands of higher education students in music programs.

Educator's Needs in Higher Education for Blended Learning in Music Education

Educators in music face evolving demands, particularly in the realm of blended learning. This introduction delves into the critical needs of these educators, focusing on three key aspects (Beirnes & Randles, 2023; Sevim & Ali, 2023). Firstly, the necessity for ongoing professional development opportunities tailored to the nuances of music education. Secondly, the essential requirement of access to cutting-edge music technological resources to enhance the quality of blended learning. Lastly, the significance of collaborative music platforms, fostering networking among educators for idea exchange and continuous professional growth. Exploring these needs is pivotal in shaping a conducive environment for higher education music educators engaging with blended learning methodologies.

(i) Music professional development opportunities

Higher education educators in music require robust professional development opportunities to effectively navigate and implement blended learning strategies. Continuous training on digital tools, online pedagogy, and innovative teaching methodologies is essential to enhance their proficiency in delivering quality music education through a blended learning approach.

(ii) Access to music technological resources

Educators need access to cutting-edge technological resources that support blended learning in music education. This includes reliable digital platforms, software for virtual rehearsals, and interactive tools for engaging online music lessons. Adequate technological infrastructure ensures seamless integration of online and offline components, enriching the overall learning experience.

(iii) Collaborative music platforms for educator networking

Building a community of educators engaged in blended learning is crucial. Higher education music educators benefit from collaborative platforms that facilitate networking, idea exchange, and the sharing of best practices. These platforms contribute to a supportive professional environment, fostering continuous improvement and innovation in blended music education.

Three critical needs for these educators: the imperative for continuous professional development opportunities tailored to music education nuances; the essential requirement of access to cutting-edge music technological resources for enriched blended learning experiences; and the significance of collaborative music platforms fostering networking and idea exchange. Addressing these needs is pivotal in creating a conducive environment for higher education music educators navigating the complexities of blended learning methodologies.

Challenges of Blended Learning in Music Education

Blended learning faces several challenges in higher education level music education (Alvarez, 2022; Deegan, 2021; Lanlan et al., 2023). Firstly, virtual music teaching encounters limited communication, impeding effective interaction between students and teachers and hindering practical music skill development. Secondly, the high costs associated with establishing blended learning platforms present uncertainties in achieving a favorable cost-benefit ratio, impacting the economic efficiency of education. Lastly, there are issues with the distribution of tasks for music teachers, leading to a burdensome workload for offline teaching and potentially affecting instructor engagement in blended learning, thereby influencing student learning outcomes.

(i) Limited communication in virtual music teaching

Applying blended learning to music courses can offer new support tools for teaching. In the current shortage of high-quality teaching resources, this approach effectively alleviates educational challenges. However, online teaching presents strong virtual characteristics, making it challenging to effectively control the ultimate teaching outcomes. On one hand, relying on online instruction, teachers struggle to comprehensively understand students' knowledge mastery and classroom adaptability, hindering genuine feedback. On the other hand, the hybrid online and offline teaching model faces challenges in smooth integration, leading to a lack of cohesion in knowledge transfer and impacting overall teaching quality. To ensure teaching quality, instructors should establish interactive bridges between online and offline education, utilize classroom time to assess student learning, and adjust teaching methods through careful analysis and reflection.

(i) High costs and uncertain returns in music education

Implementing a blended learning in music education management requires support from various hardware and software resources. Higher education aiming to establish an integrated teaching approach must allocate personnel for maintenance while ensuring the availability of professional equipment and suitable environments. However, this increases the overall cost of education, and many institutions struggle to provide effective financial support for online education. To promote the advancement of hybrid teaching in higher education, it is essential

to secure financial backing from government entities, optimize and enhance online teaching equipment, and leverage institutional strengths to cultivate more outstanding professionals, thereby attracting financial support from businesses.

(ii) Unreasonable work distribution music teachers

Implementing a blended learning in music involves teachers conducting instruction mainly through online education. The offline teaching components need to complement online instruction, with teachers addressing students' learning issues promptly. The workload is often heavy, with one to two offline teachers managing the implementation of online classrooms. Teachers invest substantial time and effort to cater to each student's needs, facing a demanding workload that, if sustained, could adversely affect teaching effectiveness. To address this, universities should clarify roles in hybrid teaching, ensuring synchronization between online and offline instruction to maintain a balanced workload.

Blended learning in music education faces challenges primarily related to limited communication in virtual teaching, which hampers effective interaction between students and teachers, potentially impeding the development of practical music skills. Additionally, the high costs associated with establishing blended learning platforms present challenges in achieving a favorable cost-benefit ratio, impacting the overall economic efficiency of the education provided. Unreasonable task distribution further complicates matters, leading to a heavy workload for offline teaching and potentially affecting both instructor engagement in blended learning and student learning outcomes. Addressing these issues is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness and economic viability of blended learning in music education.

Prospects of Blended Learning in Music Education

Embracing the changing landscape of education, the potential of blended learning in music education unfolds transformative opportunities. This progressive method harmonizes traditional classroom teaching with online tools, offering heightened flexibility, personalized learning, and creative exploration through technology integration. As music education evolves in the digital era, these prospects hold the promise of cultivating a dynamic and enriching environment for aspiring musicians (Acquilino & Scavone, 2022). Firstly, flexibility in music learning opportunities emerges as a key benefit. Blended learning facilitates a personalized pace and schedule, enhancing accessibility for students. Secondly, personalized music education experiences are made possible, tailoring feedback and content to individual needs, fostering a deeper understanding. Lastly, technological integration fuels creativity in music education by incorporating virtual instruments, collaborative platforms, and innovative tools.

(i) Flexible for music learning opportunities

Blended learning in music education brings flexibility to learning opportunities. This approach seamlessly integrates traditional classroom instruction with online components, allowing students to engage with content at their own pace. Digital resources, virtual instruments, and collaborative platforms enhance accessibility, enabling exploration of diverse musical genres. While fostering creativity, it's crucial to address challenges like effective virtual communication and technology costs. Overall, blended learning offers a dynamic and personalized approach, enriching music education by combining tradition with innovation.

(ii) Personalized music education experiences

Blended learning in music education offers personalized experiences by tailoring instruction to individual needs. Students can progress at their own pace with online resources, engaging with diverse musical content aligned with their interests. Technology enables individualized feedback, while collaborative online components foster a sense of community. While maximizing personalization, challenges like equitable access to technology and effective communication must be addressed for a well-rounded blended learning experience.

(iii) Technological integration for creativity in music education

Blended learning integrates technology into music education, fostering creativity. Virtual instruments and music software empower students to experiment with composition. Collaborative online platforms facilitate shared creativity, while multimedia resources deepen understanding. Challenges include ensuring equal access and maintaining a balance between traditional and digital methods. Ultimately, technological integration enhances the creative potential of students in a blended learning environment.

Blended learning revolutionizes music education by seamlessly integrating traditional and online instruction, offering unparalleled flexibility and personalized experiences for students. In the realm of music, this approach not only allows learners to engage with content at their own pace but also provides access to a myriad of digital resources, virtual instruments, and collaborative platforms. Despite its advantages in fostering creativity, challenges such as effective virtual communication and managing technology costs must be acknowledged. Overall, blended learning presents a dynamic and personalized paradigm, harmoniously combining traditional teaching methods with technological innovation, enriching the music education landscape.

Conclusion, Implication and Recommendations

Blended learning in higher music education, while presenting challenges like virtual constraints and costs, offers unparalleled flexibility and personalization. Strategic navigation of modern technologies and contemporary management principles is key. Ultimately, it provides an innovative and sustainable path for cultivating high-level musical talent. Details regarding the conclusion, implication, and recommendation.

(i) Conclusion

In conclusion, blended learning in higher music education presents both challenges and prospects. Despite hurdles such as virtual teaching constraints and associated costs, overcoming these obstacles allows blended learning to provide music education with flexible learning opportunities and personalized educational experiences. Effectively applying modern information education technology within the context of higher education, grounded in the latest management principles, is crucial for addressing challenges faced by blended learning. Overall, blended learning offers an innovative and sustainable pathway to cultivate high-level talent in the field of music.

(ii) Implication

Regarding the challenges and prospects of blended learning in higher music education, it is essential for stakeholders to deeply understand its potential impact. Education administrators

must recognize the importance of providing balanced and innovative teaching methods in the integration of virtual and in-person learning. Simultaneously, emphasis should be placed on offering appropriate training and support for educators to better meet the demands of virtual and in-person teaching. Driving the digital transformation of music education systems and strengthening the integration of disciplinary knowledge and technology are crucial keys to ensuring optimal results in blended learning.

(iii) Recommendations

In the realm of blended learning within higher music education, initial recommendations encompass firstly, invest in comprehensive music educator training. Secondly, establish clear music education guidelines and policies. Lastly, enhance music technological infrastructure.

(a) Invest in comprehensive music educator training

Allocate resources for thorough training programs that equip music educators with the skills needed for effective blended learning. This includes proficiency in utilizing digital tools, implementing innovative teaching methods, and navigating the dynamics of virtual and in-person instruction.

(b) Establish clear music education guidelines and policies

Formulate transparent guidelines and policies that provide educators with a framework for achieving balance in blended course design and implementation. These guidelines should foster a harmonious integration of traditional and online elements, ensuring a cohesive and effective music learning experience.

(c) Enhance music technological infrastructure

Strengthen the technological infrastructure within higher music education institutions to support seamless participation in blended learning. This involves upgrading digital platforms, ensuring reliable access to online resources, and providing necessary technical support for both students and educators.

The integration of blended learning in higher music education marks a transformative paradigm shift, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Recognizing the significance of strategic measures, this study advocates for substantial investments in comprehensive training for music educators, the establishment of transparent guidelines for harmonious integration, and the enhancement of technological infrastructure. These recommendations, collectively, aspire to navigate challenges, harness opportunities, and elevate the educational experience within higher music institutions, ensuring a dynamic and effective implementation of blended learning principles.

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