

Teaching Reform and Practice of Piano Improvisation Accompaniment Course in Music Education Major of Normal Universities

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Abstract: In the current piano improvisation accompaniment course teaching of music education majors in normal universities, there are common problems such as the disconnection between teaching content and actual needs and insufficient practical ability of students, which makes it difficult for students to quickly adapt to the needs of primary and secondary school music teaching after graduation. To solve this problem, this study aims to improve students' improvisation accompaniment ability through teaching reform. The research methods include: First, we sort out the existing course content and redesigned the teaching content in combination with the primary and secondary school music textbooks. Second, we introduce a tiered teaching model, divide the students into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced according to their basic level, and formulate teaching objectives and practice repertoires, respectively. Third, we increase practical links, organize students to participate in primary and secondary school music class observation and internship, and hold regular improvisation accompaniment competitions. Finally, we comprehensively evaluate the teaching effect through three indicators: skill testing, classroom performance scoring and student work evaluation. The research results show that after one year of reform practice, students' improvisational accompaniment ability has been significantly improved, the average score of skill tests has increased from 65 points before the reform to 85 points, the classroom performance score has increased from 70 points to 88 points, and the rate of excellent students' works has increased from 20% to 60%. By optimizing teaching content, stratified teaching and strengthening practice, the teaching effect of piano improvisation accompaniment course has been significantly improved.

1. Introduction

The requirements for improvisational accompaniment in primary and secondary school music

classes are relatively high. Teachers need to flexibly apply accompaniment skills according to different teaching scenarios, but the existing courses fail to effectively cultivate students' ability. In addition, the basic levels of students are uneven, and a unified teaching model is difficult to meet the learning needs of students at different levels. These problems not only affect students' career development but also restrict the improvement of the quality of talent training in music education in normal universities. Therefore, exploring a teaching model that can effectively improve students' improvisational accompaniment ability has become an urgent problem to be solved.

The research methods of this paper include optimizing teaching content, introducing a differentiated teaching model and strengthening practical links. These measures can not only make up for the shortcomings of traditional teaching but also provide students with a systematic and practical learning path. By redesigning the course content in combination with primary and secondary school music textbooks, students can more directly master the accompaniment skills required for actual teaching. The stratified teaching model sets differentiated teaching goals according to the students' basic level to ensure that students at each level can be improved in a targeted manner. And the strengthening of practical links, such as primary and secondary school classroom observation, internships and improvisational accompaniment competitions, further enhances students' practical ability and professional adaptability. The comprehensive application of these methods provides new ideas and practical references for the reform of music education courses in normal universities.

The innovation of this study is to construct a systematic reform plan for piano improvisation accompaniment courses. First, by optimizing the teaching content, the study closely combines theoretical knowledge with primary and secondary school music textbooks, making the course content more practical and targeted. Second, the introduction of a stratified teaching model effectively solves the problem of uneven basic levels of students and provides personalized learning paths for students at different levels. These innovations provide new directions and references for the reform and practice of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in music education majors in normal universities.

2. Related Work

The research on piano improvisation accompaniment course teaching has attracted much attention, and scholars have proposed innovative teaching models and methods from different perspectives. Xu [1] innovatively constructed the teaching model of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in colleges and universities from the perspective of personalized education concept. Pan and Luo [2] focused on art courses in colleges and universities and devoted themselves to in-depth discussion of the application of "flipped classroom" teaching model in piano improvisation accompaniment teaching. Its core purpose was to break the shackles of traditional teaching models and comprehensively improve teaching effectiveness and students' learning efficiency. Cao [3] proposed a new idea of music teaching with interdisciplinary integration, which was to integrate the courses in the two fields of literature and music, take the musical ancient poetry as the starting point, combine the ancient poetry art songs with piano accompaniment, and explore the artistic characteristics of the piano accompaniment of ancient poetry art songs from the implementation of improvisational accompaniment. Qu and Shi [4] believed that improving the effectiveness of teaching is a new exploration of the current education and teaching reform of higher vocational music performance professional talent training courses. Based on the positioning of piano improvisation accompaniment courses, Wang et al. [5] explored the current development status of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in college music education and proposed corresponding countermeasures to the problems. Deja et al. [6] conducted a systematic review of

augmented piano prototypes focused on instrument learning. Faber and McIntosh [7] proposed a conceptual model of music improvisation with known neural correlates. Reardon-Smith [8] believed that the concept and meaning of "freedom" in free improvisation is largely determined by the male subject status. Palhares et al. [9] believed that mind wandering during music improvisation tasks is associated with a higher level of musical creativity. Espeland and Stige [10] described the characteristics of music repertoires in music teaching and discuss the relationship between these repertoires and teaching improvisation. These studies provide rich theoretical support and practical references for the teaching reform and practice of piano improvisation accompaniment courses.

3. Methods

3.1 Optimization of Teaching Content

In terms of teaching content optimization, this study first comprehensively sort out the existing content of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in normal college music education majors, and finds that it is biased towards theory, lacked practice. To solve these problems, the study secondary school music textbooks and actual teaching needs to redesign the course content. Specifically, the course content is divided into three modules: basic theory, skill training and practical application. The basic theory module includes systematic explanations of core knowledge such as chord arrangement, harmonic progression, and key conversion. The skill training module focuses on improving students' improvisational accompaniment skills, covering accompaniment pattern training in different styles (classical, popular, and folk), and conducting targeted exercises based on the repertoire in primary and secondary school music textbooks. The practical application module emphasizes integration with actual teaching scenarios and designs a variety of situational training such as simulated classroom accompaniment, choral accompaniment and solo accompaniment to help students master the ability of improvisational accompaniment in different teaching environments[11]. In addition, the course introduces modern music technologies such as digital audio workstations (DAWs) and virtual instruments to enhance students' music production and creativity.

3.2 Layered Teaching model

In terms of the tiered teaching model, this study divides students into three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced, based on their basic level of piano improvisation accompaniment. Targeted teaching objectives and practice repertoires are formulated for each level to achieve teaching in accordance with students' aptitude. The elementary level students are mainly those with weak piano foundation and insufficient experience in improvisation accompaniment. The teaching goal is to master basic chord arrangement, simple harmonic progression, and common key conversion. The practice repertoire is mainly simple songs in primary and secondary school music textbooks, such as *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *Ode to Joy*, aiming to help students establish a basic accompaniment framework and confidence [12]. Students at the intermediate level have a certain piano foundation and improvisation accompaniment ability. The teaching goal focuses on improving the flexibility of harmony and the diversity of accompaniment styles. The practice repertoire covers a variety of styles such as pop music and folk music, such as *Jasmine Flower* and *Childhood*. At the same time, more complex harmonic progressions and rhythmic training are introduced to enhance students' musical expression. Students at the advanced level have a solid piano foundation and strong improvisational accompaniment skills. The teaching objectives focus on difficult accompaniment techniques and creative expression. The practice repertoire includes complex classical music pieces, improvisation tasks, and difficult pieces in primary and secondary

school music textbooks, such as excerpts from the *Yellow River Cantata*. At the same time, students are required to be able to complete the accompaniment arrangement independently and use it flexibly in actual teaching. Through the tiered teaching model, students at each level can receive targeted improvement in teaching objectives and practice repertoires that are suitable for their own level, thereby comprehensively improving their piano improvisation accompaniment ability [13].

3.3 Strengthening the Practical Aspects

In terms of strengthening the practical link, this study significantly improves students' piano improvisation accompaniment practical ability by increasing diversified practical activities. First, students are organized to observe and practice in primary and secondary school music classes, so that they could experience the accompaniment needs in actual teaching scenarios. During the observation phase, students learn about the specific application of accompaniment in music teaching by observing the accompaniment methods and classroom organization skills of primary and secondary school music teachers. During the internship phase, students directly participate in classroom teaching and provide impromptu accompaniment for chorus, solo or instrumental performances, thereby transforming the theoretical knowledge learned in class into practical teaching ability [14]. Secondly, we hold improvisational accompaniment competitions regularly to provide students with a platform to showcase and exercise their skills. The preliminary round is conducted by class, while the final round invites professional teachers and primary and secondary school music education experts to serve as judges. The competition content includes various forms such as accompaniment of designated repertoires, improvisational accompaniment, and on-site topic accompaniment, which comprehensively examines students' improvisational accompaniment ability and on-the-spot adaptability. In addition, the competition also set up interactive sessions and invited primary and secondary school students to participate in the performances to further enhance the authenticity and practicality of the competition. Through these practical activities, students can not only combine theoretical knowledge with practical teaching but also accumulate rich accompaniment experience in practice, significantly improving their comprehensive ability and professional adaptability in improvisational accompaniment.

3.4 Evaluation Metrics

In terms of evaluation indicators, this study comprehensively evaluates the teaching effect through three dimensions: skill test, classroom performance scoring and student work evaluation, to ensure the comprehensiveness and scientificity of the evaluation system. The skill test mainly examines students' ability to improvise accompaniment. The test content includes chord arrangement, harmony progression, key conversion and improvisation accompaniment of different styles of music. The test form is live performance, and professional teachers will score according to accuracy, fluency and musical expression. The classroom performance score focuses on students' participation and performance in daily classes. The score includes the completion of classroom exercises, the frequency of interaction with teachers, and the degree of mastery of teaching content. It aims to comprehensively reflect students' learning attitudes and ability improvement[15]. The evaluation of student works focuses on the accompaniment works completed by students in the practical stage. The evaluation criteria include the creativity, technical difficulty and practical application value of the works. Through the comprehensive evaluation of the originality of the accompaniment arrangement, the rationality of the use of harmony and the musical expression, the students' creative thinking and practical ability are measured. These three indicators complement each other and comprehensively evaluate the students' improvisational accompaniment ability from different angles, providing a scientific basis for the objective analysis of teaching effects.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Experimental Design

In terms of experimental design, this study systematically implements the teaching reform of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in a one-school-year cycle and tracks the changes in students' performance throughout the process. The experimental subjects are two parallel classes of music education majors in normal universities. One class is used as the experimental group to implement the reformed teaching content, stratified teaching model and enhanced practice links, and the other class is used as the control group to continue using traditional teaching methods to ensure the comparative and scientific nature of the experimental results. During the experiment, students in the experimental group are divided into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced according to the stratified teaching model. They receive targeted teaching objectives and practice repertoire training, respectively. At the same time, they comprehensively improve their practical ability through practical activities such as observing primary and secondary school music classes, internships, and improvisation accompaniment competitions. The students in the control group studied according to the traditional curriculum, focusing mainly on the teaching of theoretical knowledge and the training of basic skills. During the experiment, data is collected regularly through three indicators: skill testing, classroom performance scoring, and student work evaluation. Three assessments are conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester to dynamically track the changes in students' abilities.

4.2 Data Collection

In terms of data collection, this study records students' performance through three indicator systems: skill test, classroom performance scoring and student work evaluation. The skill test is conducted in the form of live performance, examining students' chord arrangement, harmony progression and improvisation accompaniment ability, and is scored by professional teachers based on accuracy, fluency and musical expression. The classroom performance score is assessed by the teacher based on the students' class participation, exercise completion and interaction frequency. The evaluation of student works is evaluated by the review panel based on the creativity, technical difficulty and practical application value of the work. Data are collected three times at the beginning, middle and end of the semester to ensure that the changes in students' abilities are fully reflected. Table 1 shows the average scores of the experimental group students in the three assessments:

Table 1: Average data

Evaluation Metric	Beginning of Semester	Mid-Semester	End of Semester	Improvement Range
Skill Test (Full Score: 100)	65	75	85	+20
Classroom Performance (Full Score: 100)	70	80	88	+18
Excellence Rate of Student Works (Percentage)	20%	40%	60%	+40%
Accuracy of Harmony Application (Full Score: 10)	6.0	7.5	8.8	+2.8
Rhythm Stability (Full Score: 10)	5.5	7.0	8.5	+3.0

4.3 Specific Results Analysis

The scores of the two parallel classes are counted and plotted. The experimental group is divided into three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Therefore, this paper will collect the scores of the four groups of data at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Figure 1 shows the skill test scores:

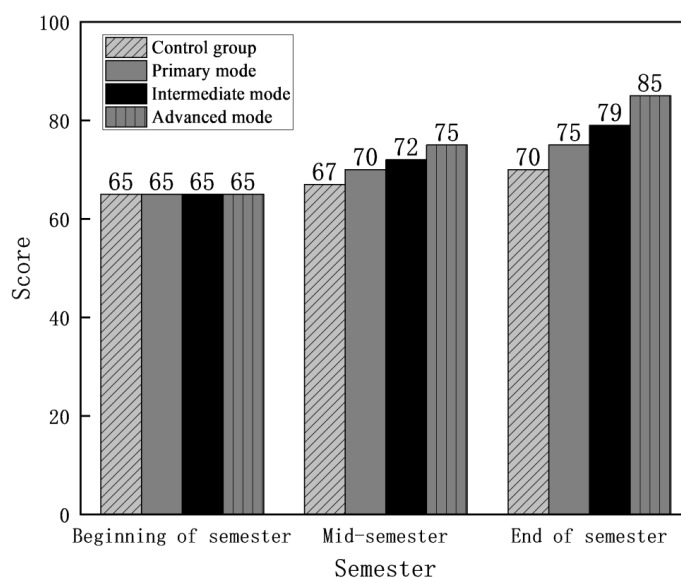


Figure 1: Skills test

The experimental and control groups had the same initial level at the beginning of the semester, both with a score of 65, indicating that all students have the same starting point in terms of improvisational accompaniment ability. However, with the implementation of the teaching reform, the performance of students in different modes in the experimental group is significantly better than that of the control group during and at the end of the semester. Specifically, the students in the elementary, intermediate and advanced modes in the experimental group achieve 75 points, 79 points and 85 points, respectively at the end of the semester, while the control group only scores 70 points, indicating that the stratified teaching model of the experimental group has a more significant effect on improving students' abilities. The students in the intermediate and advanced modes of the experimental group perform particularly well, reaching 85 points at the end of the semester, far exceeding the 70 points of the control group, showing that differentiated teaching has a significant effect on the targeted training of high-level students. At the same time, the students in the elementary and intermediate modes of the experimental group also achieve an increase of 10 points and 14 points, respectively, indicating that differentiated teaching can effectively meet the learning needs of students at different levels and promote the balanced development of overall abilities. In contrast, the control group only improves by 5 points, with limited improvement, which further proves the superiority of teaching reform in improving students' improvisational accompaniment ability. Figure 2 shows the results of classroom performance:

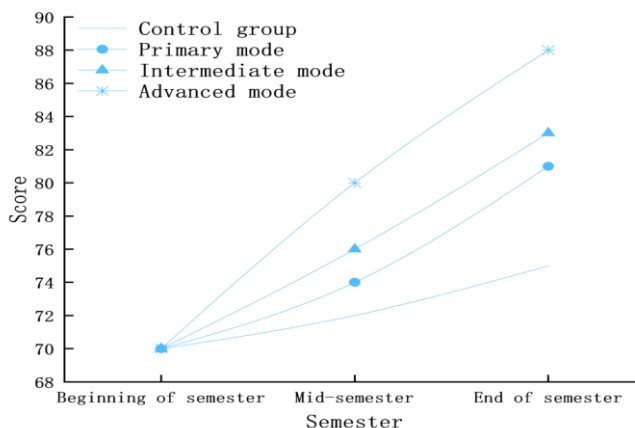


Figure 2: Classroom performance scores

The performance of students in the elementary, intermediate and advanced modes in the experimental group is significantly better than that of the control group at the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, all students score 70 points, with the same starting point. During the semester, the elementary, intermediate and advanced modes in the experimental group reaches 74 points, 76 points and 80 points, respectively, while the control group only scores 72 points. At the end of the semester, the experimental group further improves to 81, 83 and 88 points, while the control group only scores 75 points. The experimental group's improvement is 11 points (beginner mode), 13 points (intermediate mode) and 18 points (advanced mode), while the control group's improvement is only 5 points. This trend shows that the experimental group significantly improved students' classroom participation and expressiveness through the stratified teaching model and strengthened practical links, especially the students in the advanced mode. In contrast, the control group has limited progress due to lack of targeted and practical support.

Finally, the excellence rate of the works is analyzed, and Figure 3 shows the results:

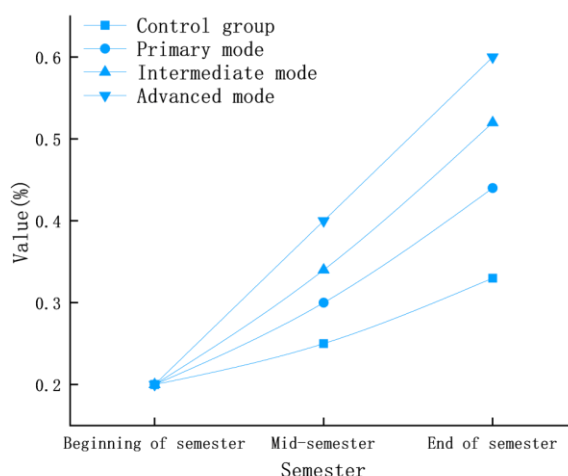


Figure 3: Excellent rate of works

At the beginning of the semester, the excellent rate of all groups is 20%, indicating that the

students' initial creative level is similar. However, as the teaching reform progressed, the excellent rate of students' works in the elementary mode, intermediate mode and advanced mode in the experimental group increases to 30%, 34% and 40%, respectively, during the semester, while the control group only reaches 25%. At the end of the semester, the excellent rate of the experimental group further climbs to 44%, 52% and 60%, while the control group is only 33%. This result shows that the experimental group has significantly improved students' creative ability and work quality through the stratified teaching model and strengthened practical links. In particular, the excellent rate of students in the advanced mode increases by 40 percentage points, far exceeding the 13 percentage points of the control group, showing that differentiated teaching has a significant promoting effect on high-level students. In addition, students in the elementary and intermediate modes in the experimental group also achieve an increase of 24 and 32 percentage points, respectively, indicating that the teaching reform can effectively meet the needs of students of different levels and comprehensively improve their creative ability. In contrast, the control group's progress is smaller, indicating that the traditional teaching model has limitations in stimulating students' creative potential. Overall, the excellent rate of the experimental group has increased significantly, proving the significant effectiveness of teaching reform in cultivating students' creative thinking and practical ability.

5. Conclusion

This study verifies the effectiveness of optimizing teaching content, implementing a differentiated teaching model, and strengthening practical links through the teaching reform and practice of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in normal music education majors. The teaching reform not only significantly improves students' improvisation accompaniment ability but also enhances their classroom participation and creative expression, fully proving the adaptability of differentiated teaching and enhanced practice to meet the needs of students of different levels. In addition, through practical activities such as classroom observation, internships, and improvisation accompaniment competitions in primary and secondary schools, students closely combine theoretical knowledge with practical teaching, further improving their professional adaptability. This study provides a scientific basis and practical reference for the reform of piano improvisation accompaniment courses in music education majors in normal universities. In the future, the feasibility of long-term effect evaluation and promotion and application can be further explored to promote the overall improvement of the quality of music education talent training.

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