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Nurturing Elementary Piano Students: A Descriptive Study on an Integrated Pedagogical Approach

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Abstract

Since the past decades, most of the Hong Kong piano students have been focusing on graded examinations of performance. They are strong in score reading and performance with preparation in detail in advance. However, they usually find difficulties on practical musicianship, including improvisation, harmonization, ensemble and play by ear etc. An integrated pedagogical approach, is developed to strengthen the above abilities. The approach is aimed at beginners with some previous experience of the piano, it focuses on listening and creativity, rather than reading music. The approach includes 42 lessons (60 minutes per lesson) which covers performance, aural training, music theory, piano technique, harmonization, music appreciation, composing, arranging and memorization etc. The approach starts with understanding basic musical elements such as melody, harmony rhythm. In each unit, particular focus is given to one element of music, but other elements are also incorporated organically and/or reinforced. During the later stages, students are provided with various 'recipes' on how to combine musical materials and create their own music. By the end, students will become a well-rounded musician, will learn better through self-evaluation and in a group situation through evaluation of others. Plus, self-motivation and deep understanding of key musical elements and being able to apply them confidently to piano playing.

This study aims to examine the integrated piano pedagogical approach. Six piano beginner students and three trained piano tutors will be participated. Each student will take ten pilot lessons of 60 minutes, totally 60 pilot lessons will be observed, while a questionnaire will be distributed to all the participants for their feedback. Afterwards, selected participants will be invited to join in a series of semi-structured interviews. A student concert will be held towards the end of the ten pilot lessons, in order to assess students' learning achievements.

In sum, this study explores the outcome of the integrated piano pedagogical approach, in terms of teaching and learning interest, satisfaction, musicianship abilities and skills. The approach is implied for improvement in nurturing all-rounded musician, both in performance and in musicianship.