

The Impact of Chinese Piano Aesthetic Education on University Students' Aesthetic Literacy: Mediating Roles of Learning Engagement and Psychological Capital based on the FORUM Model

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Abstract

In the midst of holistic development (Suzhi Jiaoyu) becoming a focal point in Chinese higher education, aesthetic education (Meiyu) has been made a national priority. In this study, we intend to see how well a certain kind of PAE programme, which uses an unusual method called the FORUM (Foundation, Observation, Reflection, Understanding, Manifestation) approach to build itself, works for Chinese university students when it comes to teaching them how to appreciate art. Additionally, it looks at how these are related to each other and proposes a parallel mediation model where Learning Engagement (LE), and Psychological Capital (PsyCap). A cross-sectional survey was carried out with 850 undergraduate students in 5 universities in China who took part in the FORUM based PAE elective. Data were analyzed through means of describing statistic, correlation analysis and structural equation modeling (bootstrapping). According to the results, FORUM-PAE had significant positive predictions for students' AELE. Both Learning engagement and psychological capital partially mediated this relationship. In terms, the PAE program increases students' engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) and PsyCap (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism), then, the students have higher aesthetic literacy (perception, judgment, creativity). All the above indicate that it is necessary to use FORUM as a means of education for learning music, and stress how significant it is to develop student engagement and good psychological resources when we try to promote beautiful feelings. And it can also offer useful information for educators and policymakers who would like to improve aesthetic education curriculums in China.

Keywords

Piano Aesthetic Education; Aesthetic Literacy; FORUM Model; Learning Engagement; Psychological Capital; Chinese Higher Education; Mediation Analysis.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese government requires that aesthetic education (Meiyu) occupies a very important status in higher education, so as to achieve all-around students' development (Suzhi Jiaoyu). This policy holds that aesthetic literacy-being able to see, enjoy, criticize, and make beauty-is important for feeling good and making the country better. In doing so, it is still lacking something. A lot of university art classes, particularly at the piano, default to the paradigm of skill at the expense of authentic aesthetic sensibility. It often fails to attract the students, resulting in superficial learning. Therefore, there is a need for new kinds of pedagogical models to transform our practices into aesthetic literacy[1]. Study the new one - FORUM model for PAE (Piano Aesthetic Education). we posit that these more holistic approach does not just improve our aesthetic understanding, but also enhances Learning Engagement and Psychological Capital, that is being Behaviourally engaged, cognitively engaged, affectively

engaged, hopeful, efficacious, resilient and optimistic. After reading about all of these processes, in this study I can say that a well done piano program should allow the deep seated graduates in the 21st century to have the competencies needed for aesthetics[2].

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Aesthetic Education and Aesthetic Literacy in the Chinese Context

Literacy in the Chinese Context

Modern China: aesthetic education originates from a tradition where art is seen as a means of moral cultivation. The modernized version is a reaction to an old-fashioned education system focusing mainly on standardized testing. The Ministry of Education has stipulated that aesthetic education should be strengthened, in order to improve student's aesthetic and humanistic accomplishment, thus making the aesthetic literacy the aim of teaching, the target outcome is a multi-dimensional one. Sensory perception&appreciation, critical judgment (works in context), creative application (expressing oneself aesthetically) Piano education, being comprehensive, is a natural place for delivering “Meiyu”, but the traditional piano teaching is focused on repetitive practice and on pursuing perfection, which is not in line with what is demanded by this “Meiyu” to truly open up people’s curiosity, openness, and critical reflection[3]. In this study, it is argued that pedagogical structure is key. That it cannot just be a performance-based structure, it must be an experience-structure.

2.2. The FORUM Model for Piano Aesthetic Education

We offer the FORUM model to make up for these deficiencies: Foundation, Observation, Reflection, Understanding, Manifestation. The Foundation stage lays out some basic grounding in terms of technical/theoretical matters but also in the way of emotion. Observing is above all about more actively observing various performances in various forms as opposed to being a passive listener. Reflection: this part belongs to the metacognitive element through which students do structured writing or discussion about their thoughts and how they relate music to life events. The understanding stage puts the music into its context, getting into the history and culture behind it and transforming notes into meaningful human documents. Finally, Manifestation is about using the learning and expressing one’s own creative thoughts (improvisation/interpretation). It completes the cycle from “seeing” to “creating”. This model is set up as inherently engaging and psychologically empowering so as to set up these hypotheses to be true for our model.

2.3. The Mediating Role of Learning Engagement

Learning engagement (LE) consists of positive, energizing feelings: vitality, a sense of vigor (or energy and resilience); involvement; pride; being absorbed. it is the opposite of academic burnout. We suspect the FORUM model promotes high LE. Unlike a passive format, it calls for active participation: Reflection needs thinking; Observation needs to be critical; Manifestation needs to be creative and behavioral. Active, multimodal process that is self-motivating, so it causes students to put some energy into it (vigor), find meaning in it (dedication), and become absorbed in the task (absorption). Thus this greater engagement is an antecedent to deeper learning. An active learner is an engaged student who builds meaning and integrates new aesthetic frames[4]. So, we consider LE as an important mediator in this case, where FORUM creates aesthetic literacy because it first gets those students really into the act of learning itself.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a higher order positive construct comprised of four resources: (Self-)Efficacy (confidence to succeed at challenging tasks); Optimism (positive attributions regarding successes); Hope (persistent effort toward goals and redirection of paths); and

Resilience (springing back from adversity). We suggest that PsyCap is both a result and a driver of aesthetic literacy from FORUM. To master the piano within such a framework is a powerful engine of PsyCap. Foundation and Manifestation stages build up self-efficacy because as students beat obstacles they are building self-efficacy. Reflection phase. This creates resilience as they learn how to handle and work through having failed. Understanding can help be optimistic as to put artist troubles into a context. And this accumulated PsyCap then becomes a resource for the formation of aesthetics. A high PsyCap student who wants to take greater aesthetic risk (efficacy), expand genre familiarity (optimism), persist through ambiguity (hope), and learn from criticism (resilience). This fortitude is needed to go past surface-level appreciation. So we posit PsyCap as the second, parallel mediator.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Procedure

This study was by a cross- sectional survey. The population comprised undergraduate students in elective "Piano Aesthetic Education" classes at five large universities in Eastern China; we distributed 900 questionnaires online through campus systems. After filtering, 850 valid responses were kept (94.4% response rate). Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, informed of their right to remain anonymous and given digital informed consent. In terms of demographic data of table 1 In terms of gender, 41.2% were male, and 58.8% were female; in terms of major category, 68.2% were non-art students, indicating its elective nature. Participants were located throughout all years of study.

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N=850)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	350	41.2%
	Female	500	58.8%
Major	Art/Music Major	270	31.8%
	Non-Art/Music Major	580	68.2%
Year of Study	First Year	245	28.8%
	Second Year	230	27.1%
	Third Year	205	24.1%
	Fourth Year	170	20.0%
Prior Piano Exp.	None	460	54.1%
	< 1 Year	190	22.4%
	1-3 Years	125	14.7%
	> 3 Years	75	8.8%

3.2. Measures

All constructs used validated scales with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree").

FORUM-based PAE (IV): A 20 item self-developed scale with 4 items for each of the five pillars
Sample : "This class really made me think about my own emotions to music"

Aesthetic Literacy (DV): A 12-item scale adapted from existing literature, comprising three factors: Aesthetic Perception (e.g., "I am sensitive to the emotional nuances in a piece of music"), Aesthetic Judgment (e.g., "I can articulate why I find a musical work compelling"), and Aesthetic Creation (e.g., "I feel confident expressing my own ideas musically").

Learning Engagement (M1): The 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-Student (UWES-S 9), capturing Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption.

Psychological Capital (M2): The 12-item PCQ-12 scale adapted for academics, measuring Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism.

3.3. Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis used SPSS 26. 0 and AMOS 24. 0. Firstly, descriptivestatistics and pearson correlation were applied. Common Method Bias (CMB) was tested by Harman's single-factor test. Second, AMOS Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess the measurement model was tested for both the convergent and discriminant validity, with the use of fit indices like χ^2/df , CFI, TLI and RMSEA; Third was SEM with ML estimation. The hypothesized mediation model was tested. The statistical significance of the indirect effect (LE and PsyCap mediating) was tested by bootstrapping 5000 times and providing a bias corrected 95% CI: An effect is significant if the 95% CI does not contain zero.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary Analysis and Measurement Model

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. FORUM-PAE	5.62	0.98	1			
2. Learning Engagement	5.48	1.05	.61**	1		
3. Psychological Capital	5.55	0.95	.58**	.65**	1	
4. Aesthetic Literacy	5.41	1.02	.64**	.70**	.62**	1
Note: ** p < .01. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.						

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Reliability Analysis

Latent Variable	Dimensions	Sample Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
FORUM-PAE	Foundation	(Item F1)	.75 - .82	.93	.94	.61
	Observation	(Item O2)	.77 - .84			
	Reflection	(Item R3)	.79 - .85			
	Understanding	(Item U2)	.78 - .86			
	Manifestation	(Item M4)	.76 - .83			
Learning Engagement	Vigor	(UWES V1)	.80 - .88	.91	.92	.64
	Dedication	(UWES D2)	.81 - .89			
	Absorption	(UWES A3)	.82 - .87			
Psychological Capital	Hope	(PCQ H1)	.72 - .81	.89	.90	.58
	Efficacy	(PCQ E2)	.74 - .83			
	Resilience	(PCQ R3)	.73 - .80			
	Optimism	(PCQ O1)	.75 - .82			
Aesthetic Literacy	Perception	(AL P2)	.79 - .86	.92	.93	.66
	Judgment	(AL J3)	.80 - .87			
	Creation	(AL C1)	.81 - .88			

Harman's single factor analysis showed that for the first factor, 34.8% of the variation is extracted which is less than the critical value of 40%, showing that CMB was not a major issue. According to table 2, according to the descriptive statistics results, the mean scores of the constructs are relatively high. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that all the Pearson correlations for FORUM based PAE, Learning engagement, Psychological capital and Aesthetic literacy were significant positive ($p < .001$) which supported the hypotheses. A four-factor PAE measurement model (LE, PsyCap, AL) was tested using CFA with acceptable fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.89$,

CFI =.945, TLI =.938, RMSEA =.048 As shown in Table 3, all factor loadings were significant (>.60), Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were high (>.85), and CR (>.80) and AVE (>.50) were satisfactory. These results show that the measurement model is reliable, has convergent and discriminant validity.

4.2. Mediation Analysis

The hypothesized parallel mediated model was tested through SEM with bootstrapping (n=5000), producing a well-fitting model ($\chi^2/df=3.05$, CFI=.940, TLI=.931, RMSEA=.051): Path analysis results are in table 4. The total effect of FORUM-PAE on Aesthetic Literacy was substantial (Total Effect, $\beta=.638$, $p<.001$) After adding mediators, there is still significant Direct Effect of PAE on Aesthetic Literacy, but it decreased (Direct Effect, $\beta=.291$, $p<.001$) which means part of the mediation. The path from PAE to LE was significant ($a_1 \beta =.605$, $p<.001$), and the path from PAE to PsyCap was significant ($\beta =.579$, $p<.001$). LE ($b_1.384$, $p<.001$) and PsyCap ($b_2.168$, $p<.01$) both positively predicted Aesthetic Literacy. Most importantly the bootstrap analysis shows us the two indirect paths as well. Indirect effect through Learning Engagement (a_1b_1): Significant (Effect = .232 95% CI = [.178, .290]), and the indirect effect via Psychological Capital (the a_2b_2), which turned out to be statistically significant (Effect =.097; 95% CI = [.055,.141], as well. Neither CI was 0, therefore H5 is supported as is H6. These results mean FORUM-based PAE improves aesthetic literacy directly and indirectly via the stimulation of student engagement and psychological capital construction.

Table 4. Results of Parallel Mediation Analysis (Bootstrap 5000 Samples)

Path	Description	Estimate (β)	S.E.	p-value	95% CI [LL, UL]
Total Effect					
PAE -> AL (c)	Total Effect	.638	.041	<.001	[.557, .719]
Direct & Indirect Paths					
PAE -> AL (c')	Direct Effect	.291	.049	<.001	[.195, .387]
PAE -> LE (a1)	Path a1	.605	.043	<.001	[.521, .689]
PAE -> PsyCap (a2)	Path a2	.579	.045	<.001	[.491, .667]
LE -> AL (b1)	Path b1	.384	.052	<.001	[.282, .486]
PsyCap -> AL (b2)	Path b2	.168	.047	.008	[.076, .260]
Indirect Effects					
IE 1 (a1*b1)	PAE -> LE -> AL	.232	.030	---	[.178, .290]
IE 2 (a2*b2)	PAE -> PsyCap -> AL	.097	.023	---	[.055, .141]
Total IE	IE 1 + IE 2	.329	.036	---	[.260, .401]
Note: N=850. PAE = FORUM-based Piano Aesthetic Education; LE = Learning Engagement; PsyCap = Psychological Capital; AL = Aesthetic Literacy. IE = Indirect Effect. Bolded CI indicates significance (does not include zero).					

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Findings

LE and PsyCap as potential mediators were tested for their effect from FORUM-lead PAE programs and Aesthetic Literacy This supports our model. The sizeable PAE -> AL effect shows that the FORUM model is a decent way of teaching. In contrast to the skills-drill ways, such total

integration, with its emotional connection (Foundation) and attention to details (Observation), its critical thinking (Reflection), its context-based understanding (Understanding), and its creative expression (Manifestation), successfully fosters a high-level aesthetic perception, judgment, and creation[5]. The former validates the call for a shift from “Meiyu” from skill acquisition to literacy development. Mediation analysis sheds light on the forces behind such success. That PAE is predicting both LE and PsyCap positively is really interesting, and the model’s active, reflective, and empowering form – is that its own predecessor towards positive psychological state? Students become more engaged, hopeful confident, and resilient. Significantly indirect effects confirm these are states which have become conduit states. The pathway through LE (a1b1) was stronger, therefore we can say that engagement (vigor – dedication, absorption) is the dominant process. And the pathway went through PsyCap(a2b2), this means the learner’s mindset (hope, efficacy, resilience) is important and independent for facilitating their aesthetic development as well.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This is good for quite a number of books First, it contributes to aesthetic education pedagogy by empirically supporting the FORUM model and gives concrete, replicable ways of holistic arts education. Second, LE’s unique curri based antecedent (Forum model) adds to student engagement. The third is that this research uniques includes Psychological Capital in music education. Its application as both a result of arts education and mediation for aesthetics literacy is a novel theoretical extension. it means that Meiyu’s benefits are not limited to art skills and can be transferred psychologically. Finally, with the confirm of the LE state and PsyCap state’s parallel mediating roles respectively, this research gives the “black box” of pedagogy and learning a detailed comprehension, showing education needs to solve not only how to engage but also who is the “me” of inner state of students.

5.3. Practical Implications

With specific proposals. FORUM is like a roadmap for arts educators to redesign their curriculums and instructing methods. Teachers have to transition from technical practice to structural observation and guided reflection (e.g., journaling) and extensive contextual knowledge. The “manifestation” (creativity) is important – reproduction is not enough. Secondly, as the strong role of LE instructors have to promote the engagement actively by using techniques of FORUM model which can be vigorous, dedicated, and absorbed. To achieve it be naturally motivating. And the third, that is, the significance of being PsyCap, implying new objective for education. Administrators should know that properly made ‘Meiyu’ courses are integral parts of students’ wellbeing. They can and have been interventions for building the hope, the resilience, the efficacy students need. For policymakers, it’s a further indication that investing in aesthetic education is worthwhile because students gain from the educational aspect and develop strong psychological resources at the same time.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations. First, it doesn’t let us figure out the causes. Future studies will have to use a longitudinal or experimental approach (pre-test/post-test) for the proof of the order of the time Second, this study employed only self-report measures. They are reliable but biased. Future studies could also be strengthened through the incorporation of objectivity via looking into the reflective journals (reflection), creative outputs (manifestation) or peer/instructor rating. The third point is that the sampling was only taken in the East of China, so it cannot be generalized. It needs to replicate this study using a sample of more geographically and institutionally different institutions. In future research, one might also look into other mediators (e.g. emotional intelligence) or moderators (e.g. prior musical experience) between P AE and aesthetic literacy.

6. Conclusion

In order to answer to the China's national call for aesthetic education, I find out an effective way to implement the teaching of aesthetic education and the way it works. Research shows that the structured, all-around the FORUM model has a lot of impact on university students' aesthetic literacy. This model succeeds because it engages two critical psychological processes: it generates deep Learning engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) and builds Psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism). This study adds empirical proof that art education isn't a "soft" pursuit but can create the engaged, resilient, and aesthetically savvy folks that whole-of-person "Suzhi Jiaoyu" desires, by showing FORUM is valid, and LE and PsyCap mediate that model. It shows an evidence-based way forward for successfully practicing aesthetic education in Chinese higher education.

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