

A Comparative Analysis of Children's Motivation in Piano Learning: The Role of Teaching Climate and Parental Involvement

Tongxin Xue

School of conservatory of music, University of West London, London, UK

Abstract

This research compares how children's motivation to learn the piano is constructed based on the teaching climate established by teachers and how parents support at home. Based on the Self-Determination Theory, the text first reviews how autonomy-supportive teaching contributes to children's intrinsic motivation in the classroom and then the ways in which supportive, controlling, and passive parental behaviours affect the intrapersonal stability of motivation outside the classroom. By comparing these two traditions of research, the paper demonstrates that teaching strategies and parental support influence motivation through different mechanisms but are functionally interconnected, and motivates children to learn the piano persistently with the support of both environments. The study further shows differences in theoretical foundation, research paradigm, and the type of interpersonal or social connection in each context. The results show that to improve children's motivation to learn the piano, teachers and parents have to collaborate, and it also suggests future research on interaction between classroom and family influences in evolving learning environments enriched with adaptive technology.

Keywords

Piano learning; Motivation; Teaching climate; Parental involvement; Self-determination theory; Music education.

1. Introduction

Motivation contributes greatly to children's learning the piano because it not only influences their initial learning, but also long-term success in learning. Numerous children start their piano learning at early ages due to their parents' or their schools' expectations. However, many of them lose motivation, and a period of time passes. This shows that motivation is a challenge for music learning. It has been established from previous studies that motivation is related to students' engagement, practicing behavior, and long-term persistence in instrument learning [1]. Thus, it is crucial to know how motivation is formed to enhance teaching and learning.

In educational research, motivation is seen as a dynamic process, not as a way of a person being thought of as a particular trait. Learning is affected by how students engage with their educational environment. According to self-determination theory, the process develops motivation by fulfilling three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness [2]. Learners develop intrinsic motivation when their needs are supported, leading to deeper learning and longer periods of study.

Theoretical perspective is applied to different educational settings including music education. Multiple perspectives have been applied by a researcher in the context of piano learning. Some of the studies pay attention to the role of teaching practices and focus on how the classroom environment contributes to the students' learning experience. Evans [3] focuses on music education and supports teaching that gains student independence and helps their inner drive and participation using self-determination theory. The research shows that the teachers'

lessons design and methods of delivery contribute to learning experiences that form students' perspectives around their studies.

The family environment is iso-examined by scholars whose research has established its effects on academic progress. Throughout the added years, parents contribute to their children's learning in music through their positive influence and shaping motivation. Creech [4] established that different kinds of parental support contribute to different outcomes in students' motivation and persistence. Those students who are continuously supported by their parents during the studying process have constant motivation, while those who experience controlling or passive behavior from their parents lose their interest.

Also, the research sees the motivation in music learning as being determined through the interaction of different factors rather than a single causative factor. For example, Hallam [5] argued that the development of music is the result of the combined effect of various factors such as individuals, society, and the environment. This implies that the teaching environment and the family one should not be investigated separately because both of them could jointly affect motivation. However, many studies still continue focusing on one of the studied environments either the family or the classroom one. Therefore, the current understanding of how these factors interact to shape children's motivation in learning the piano is still very limited.

In summary, the study about motivation in music education requires a more comprehensive approach than the one it has now. The current study focuses on conducting a comparative analysis of children's motivation in piano learning based on the teaching environment and parental involvement. By combining the two aspects for the analysis, the researchers intend to provide a more deeper understanding of the way motivation is formed and retained in different learning environments.

2. Literature Review

Motivation is one of the significant aspects in children's piano learning since it affects various processes, including engagement (initially), perseverance, and learning consequences (in the long term). In the context of music education, motivation is not a personality trait that remains stable. On the contrary, it is a dynamic way of encouraging learners, which develops through interactive learning environments. The most supported approach to explaining the said process is the Self-Determination Theory, which states that motivational processes are fulfilled through satisfying three essential psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness [2]. The first element (autonomy) is related to the feeling that learners have some authority over their learning; competence is connected to the sense of being capable and efficient, whereas relatedness entails the assurance that learners have bonds with others. If the previous needs are fulfilled, learners may develop intrinsic motivation characterized by joy, deeper engagement, and long-term effort throughout the learning process.

Within the said theoretical approach, research investigates the role of different learning contexts in fostering or resisting the presence of motivation. Evans [3] uses self-determination theory in the framework of music education, supporting the fact that the expectation environment developed by educational entities stands as a crucial determinant in influencing the motivational experiences of students. The teachers in such settings allow the learners to pick the activities they want to pursue and discover their musical genres as well as their personal means of expression. It supports learners in gaining more authority over their learning process and the activities related to education. By engaging in a program, the student acquires intrinsic motivation characteristics, enabling them to pursue the learning process in playing the piano. Controlling teaching techniques imply the use of external incentives and specific instructions combined with pressure to perform in order to achieve specific educational goals. These strategies achieve what is necessary without long-term consequences,

since students' motivation to learn and satisfaction with the educational process decline over time [3]. In the context of educational research, it is shown that autonomy-supportive teaching methods increase students' engagement and resilience while improving their psychological health [6]. The educational style operates as a manner of presenting content, thus shaping the way students encounter learning based on educational research.

At the same time, the motivation of children learning the piano similarly is influenced not only by teachers but by the family context where it occurs. Creech [4] emphasizes the role of parental involvement by comparing various ways of supporting children and their impact on their motivation levels. The study shows that higher and more consistent motivation levels appeared because of the following actions: supportive parental behaviours (meaning encouragement and emotional support) and structuring guidance during practice. The two strategies help children gain confidence, which allows them to acquire good learning behaviours. Parental involvement becomes too controlling when it appears through pressure and many expectations and constant oversight, a dynamic that leads to much anxiety and a decline in intrinsic motivation. Detached parents who do not put in much effort will discourage children from actively engaging with learning in Creech's [4] discussion. According to the research, parental influence plays a crucial role in shaping their children's learning practices, as it is demonstrated that their presence in the initial stage of piano learning has an impact on their educational process.

On the whole, various recent studies which concern the motivation of children to learn the piano support the understanding that motivation is affected by both the teaching style and parental involvement. Teachers mainly affect the educational experience, which occurs in the classroom; parents influence the practice attitude and behaviour of a child outside the educational setting. Both aspects act otherwise but closely relate. For instance, conditional support on the part of a teacher might motivate a child to learn, yet without parental support at home, such enthusiasm does not last. Similarly, appropriate levels of parental support may encourage practice behaviour, yet children might lose interest over time without an efficient approach on the part of the teacher. Despite the close relationship, many studies regarding the influence of teaching factors and family influence do not focus on one view concerning their effect on children's motivation, limiting an understanding of how motivation is built.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more in-depth comprehensive research to explore how the classroom environment and the family environment interact with each other and affect children's enthusiasm for learning the piano. Understanding this interaction is particularly important in today's learning environment, as traditional face-to-face teaching is increasingly combining with new learning forms (such as digital tools and mobile applications). These changes may alter the ways in which motivation is formed and maintained, and require a more comprehensive approach to the study of motivation in music education.

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1. Overview

Table 1 summarises the main points of comparison between the two studies that inform this analysis, before the discussion develops each point in detail below.

3.2. Motivation as a Socially Shaped Process

Motivation is important to kids when it comes to learning an instrument as it impacts how often these children will practice and how long they will continue their studies. Factors of motivation on which music education relies do not exist as fixed and unchanging. The social setting provides the environment in which motivation evolves. According to both Evans [3] and Creech [4], motivation in children is developing as a result of interaction that is not based on an individual's own ability. In the explanation of motivation, Evans [3] refers to self-determination

theory, which specifies autonomy and competence along with relatedness as the key psychological needs identified by Deci and Ryan [2, 3]. Through parental involvement, Creech [4] shows that motivation is also shaped by the home environment, where children's learning is influenced. The studies show that motivation develops through social ties based on educational institutions as well as domestic environments.

Table 1. Comparison of Theoretical Perspectives on Children's Piano-Learning Motivation

Aspect	Evans [3]	Creech [4]
Research focus	Motivation shaped by teaching climate	Motivation shaped by parental involvement
Theoretical basis	Self-determination theory (SDT)	Parental support framework
Key comparison	Autonomy-supportive vs controlling teaching	Supportive vs controlling vs passive parenting
Source of motivation	Classroom environment	Home environment
Type of motivation	Intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation	Stable vs unstable motivation
Key influencing factor	Psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness)	Parental behaviour (support, pressure, involvement)
Research approach	Conceptual / theoretical	Empirical / comparative
Main finding	Teaching style affects quality of motivation	Parenting style affects level and stability of motivation
Learning impact	Influences engagement and interest in learning	Influences persistence and practice behaviour
Educational implication	Teachers should support autonomy and student choice	Parents should provide support and guidance, not pressure

3.3. Sources of Motivation: Teaching vs Family Context

These studies differ significantly in terms of motivation source explanations. According to Evans [3], students' motivation is shaped by the teaching environment. When teachers produce autonomy support for their pupils, they will have increased control, which will result in their internal drive development. In instructors who favor controlling teaching methods, students will depend on outside motivators, which will result in decreased involvement [3]. Creech [4] shows that one of the primary aspects influencing student motivation is parental conduct outside the classroom. While motivation sustainment is performed by supportive parents, controlling or passive ones may endanger it [4]. The comparison shows that students' motivation is developed through their experiences in relatively independent developing trajectories both at home and at class.

3.4. Types of Motivation: Intrinsic vs Stability

Although both studies aim at motivation as their key research concern, they handle different elements of the subject matter. Evans [3] has examined both types of motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic. The work of her research shows that when students are supported with teaching methods aligned with their autonomy, they become intrinsically motivated; therefore, they

enjoy learning and are more persistent. Creech [4], on the other hand, addresses concerns about the continued presence of motivation over time. For students receiving competent parental support, motivation will remain steady; those under the control of parents will achieve short-term results, followed by a die-down in motivation. Evidence shows that motivation consists of two components: its type and its duration of existence.

3.5. Research Approach: Theory vs Empirical Evidence

Another distinguishing factor is the research approach. Evans develops a theoretical framework that forms the basis of his analyses by drawing on various psychological theories. The study seeks to explain the operation of motivation through the basic theoretical basis. Creech carries out his research by gathering actual findings to determine how different parenting styles affect academic performance. Researchers employ two separate strategies that are developed through different modes of information collection. However, the two approaches complement each other. Theoretical explanation guides our comprehension of the process of motivation, as empirical data demonstrate how it operates in practice.

3.6. Role of Relationships in Motivation Development

Both research studies demonstrate the crucial nature of human connections, although their findings differ from each other. Evans emphasizes teacher-student interaction as a way to support psychological needs. Creech expands this idea by including parent-child and parent-teacher relationships. The two studies show that people become more motivated when they have relationships that provide them with good communication and active listening. The process of learning piano requires two types of motivation because it depends on personal efforts and social interactions with others.

3.7. Educational Implications

The overall conclusion points to the fact that the motivation of children can be improved by the right combination of teaching strategies and parental support. Teachers, according to Evans [3], should build autonomy-supportive environments, where students enjoy exploring and expressing themselves. At home, parents need to supply organized support as well as educational guidance, per Creech [4]. Motivation is lost when one of the two domains is missing. The approach to piano learning for children is a system that integrates what happens in the classroom with what happens at home.

4. Conclusion

This study focused on the effect of parental involvement and teaching style on children's learning process of playing the piano. The study affirms that motivation formation has to be drawn from many sources because it is influenced by several settings. Evans shows how introduction of teaching practices forms an environment that supports autonomy, which is critical in increasing students' motivation and involvement in classrooms. Additionally, Creech indicates that involvement of parents is central in forming children's motivation, particularly in the aspects of practice and persistence. The evidence proves that for children to succeed in learning, they need to be supported both in school and at home.

The comparison suggests that parental and teaching factors direct motivation differently. Parental involvement relates mainly to adolescents' motivation after school, while teaching practices direct their learning experience in the classroom. These two settings are connected strongly, which ensures motivation for a long period when they provide similar support. As a result, motivation in learning piano has to be considered as defined by the relationships between different social contexts as opposed to a personal motivational aspect.

Next, the research demonstrates the need to use a broader perspective when considering the motivation issue in learning music. Some studies separately address teaching or family conditions but fail to consider their interplay. The subsequent analysis is expected to determine their coexistence in actual learning conditions and possible influence from new learning environments such as digital services and online. It is crucial for learning of modern music as it evolves to take place in both informal and formal settings.

Therefore, enhancing children's motivation in learning piano can only be attained through collaboration between parents and teachers. Teachers need to create learning environments where the students can be independent and enthusiastic while parents can provide help without setting high expectations. This amalgamation of efforts would create motivation to continue making progress in piano learning.

References

- [1] McPherson, G. E., & Davidson, J. W. (2006). Playing an instrument. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 331-352). Oxford University Press.
- [2] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- [3] Evans, P. (2015). Self-determination theory: An approach to motivation in music education. *Musicae Scientiae*, 19(1), 65-83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864914568044>
- [4] Creech, A. (2016). The role of parents in children's instrumental learning: Comparing different parental support styles. *Music Education Research*.
- [5] Hallam, S. (2010). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. *International Journal of Music Education*, 28(3), 269-289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761410370658>
- [6] Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 149-172). Springer.