

**Teaching Western classical piano music effectively in
West Malaysia**

by

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ABSTRACT

The existing curriculum for piano lessons in West Malaysia is over-reliant on the syllabi of foreign examination boards resulting in a fragmentary curriculum which denies the student access to a wider range of musical experiences. The aim of the study was to identify and suggest solutions to problems by analysing the teaching approaches of piano teachers and to determine if there are elements which are lacking in the lessons. It also aimed to provide solutions by establishing a theoretical framework for effective piano teaching with optimal lesson plans. This study made use of mixed methods research design.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted and data collection was by self-structured questionnaires. In addition, interviews were conducted for the qualitative component of this study. Twenty-five piano teachers with between one to twenty years of teaching experience were randomly selected to participate in the survey. A further fifteen interviews were conducted with teachers who were selected from the participants of the survey by purposive sampling. Interpretative phenomenology analysis was used to analyse the interviews in an effort to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of the piano teaching in West Malaysia.

The study finds that having piano examinations with regularity, usually on a yearly basis, has largely dominated the curriculum with examination requirements and has resulted in several elements being missing or absent in a typical lesson. Hence the situation is clearly not ideal as lessons are too examination oriented. Furthermore, students are generally not exposed to sufficient opportunities to display their skills and musical achievements. These findings suggest that Western classical piano music can be taught more effectively in West Malaysia if teachers re-think their approach to teaching in terms of planning for an optimal lesson. This would involve having both long-term and short-term goals in which a variety of strategies and important elements are incorporated seamlessly using the “simultaneous learning” approach advocated by Harris, Crozier and Ley.

KEYWORDS

Effective music teaching, Simultaneous learning, Curriculum, Foreign examination boards, Mixed methods research, Interpretative phenomenology analysis, Western classical piano music, Approach to teaching, Piano examinations, Optimal lesson.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and background

1.1 Background to the study

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in teaching Western classical piano music effectively in West Malaysia. There is growing concern that some students are being disadvantaged because of the present manner in which piano lessons are being conducted.

A brief overview of Malaysia will present the research context for the study. Topographically, Malaysia comprises thirteen states. There are eleven states in West Malaysia located on the peninsula between Thailand and Singapore in South East Asia. The remaining two states are in East Malaysia, which is located on the northern portion of Borneo Island.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation exposed to a myriad of musical cultures ranging from those of the indigenous people, Malay, Chinese, and Indian to those of the Portuguese, Dutch and British. The total population was estimated at 28.3 million by the Malaysian Department of Statistics in 2010. The estimated number of Malaysian citizens was 91.8 percent of the total population. Of this, the “Bumiputera”, who comprises the Malays and the indigenous people, constitute 67.4 percent; the Chinese 24.6 percent; Indians 7.3 percent and others 0.7 percent. The Malays form the predominant ethnic group in West Malaysia constituting 63.1 percent. In East Malaysia, the Ibans, an indigenous people group constitute 30.3 percent of the population in Sarawak and the Kadazan/Dusun make up 24.5 percent of the population in Sabah (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2013). The languages spoken in Malaysia are Bahasa Malaysia - the official language, English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainanese, Foo Chow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Thai, Iban and Kadazan. The official religion of Malaysia is Islam. However, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Christianity are also practised (Merchant 2012). However, it should be noted that the anthropological aspects of the Malaysian people are not of primary consideration in this paper.

It is against this back-drop of a multiracial society and the impact of British colonialism from 1770 to 1957 (Kennedy 2007:76, 338), that the researcher considers the current position of teaching Western classical music in Malaysia. According to Malaysian music educator, Shah

(2006:135-136), the teaching of Western classical music does not enjoy a position of prominence in the curricula of either primary or secondary schools. The genres of music taught in primary schools are children's music, patriotic music and music reflecting the culture of Malaysian society. At secondary schools, the genres are expanded to a broad overview of the musical styles of various ethnic groups, Western classical music, popular music and music of other countries. The wide diversity of this approach results in children obtaining a mere superficial knowledge of the prescribed styles.

A large majority of students resort to taking lessons at private music schools or with private music teachers in order to acquire a form of education in Western classical music. Furthermore, as a result of the lack of standardized national guidelines, private instrumental instruction is generally based on the syllabi of foreign music examination boards such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College of Music (TCM) and the London College of Music (LCM).

Graded piano examinations in Western classical music were first introduced into the country during the first half of the twentieth century by examination boards such as the ABRSM. Kok (2011:78) states the following in her article "Music for a postcolonial child":

Middle-class Malaysians, especially the Chinese, welcomed the arrival of the (ABRSM) in 1948. [...] the ABRSM offered to Malaysians by the 1970s and 1980s a system of evaluating skills in Western classical music, organized into eight levels or "grades" that progressed from elementary (grade1) to advanced (grade8). Alongside practical skills, the ABRSM evaluated knowledge of music theory and ear-training at every grade, and music history at advanced grades. The system was supported by a range of materials produced by ABRSM Publishing: "examination books" or editions of music preselected by the Board for each grade, instructional manuals covering principles of theory, books of scales and arpeggios for each grade (complete with suitable fingerings), and previous examinations republished for students as practice material.

The examination board's entry into the country was initially to meet the needs of British families who were resident in the country following the British expansion into the Malay Peninsula in the second half of the nineteenth century (Ross 2002:27). However, this move made available to Malaysians an exposure to Western classical piano music which would otherwise not have been possible. It has also created opportunities for students with a widely accepted international accreditation to further their studies musically in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America. A number of Malaysian

musicians have attained international recognition as performers and pedagogues, albeit the minority group.

However, for most piano students in Malaysia, the availability of the graded piano examinations in the country has resulted in an over-dependence on the syllabi in that they are often used exclusively as the curricula for piano instruction. This has led to a common misconception that after eight years or so of learning the piano and achieving a Grade 8 certification in it, the student has completed his formal music education in Western classical music. Unfortunately, by that stage most students are only able to play the prescribed examination pieces and technical exercises, and respond in varying degrees to the aural tests and sight-reading. They have limited skills in other areas of musicianship, additional repertoire, general knowledge and overall exposure to music.

The researcher is particularly interested in investigating the current state of the teaching of Western classical piano music in West Malaysia. Hence, this study is centred on West Malaysian piano teachers' approaches and how they adapt their teaching styles to relate effectively to their students.

1.2 Personal Motivation

I have had thirty-one years of experience as a music educator and teacher trainer in West Malaysia. My teaching activities have included private piano teaching, regular training of other teachers in many aspects of music such as piano and vocal performance, piano pedagogy, composition, history of Western music, analysis of scores, orchestration and musicianship skills.

Furthermore, I regularly organise lecture-recitals, concerts and seminars featuring musicians of international stature. These events are usually attended by music teachers from the various states of West Malaysia. The purpose of these events is to keep abreast with developments in piano teaching and to remain current in adopting new approaches where applicable and relevant.

It has been my observation that piano teaching in West Malaysia is clearly in need of stimulating ideas as it has remained relatively stagnant. Young pianists are often technically proficient but lack the knowledge and understanding of the musical subtleties of Western music. Owing to the strong reliance on the syllabi of foreign examination boards, there is a

tendency to focus largely on the requirements of the graded examinations, namely, three examination pieces per grade; scales and arpeggios; aural tests and sight-reading. It is also a consequence of what is usually taught during the limited duration of piano lessons and the time-frame usually given to the music teacher for the student to complete a grade. Hence there is a general lack of teaching additional repertoire. This often amounts to a loss of interest for young students and many of them do not continue playing the piano once they have completed what is often regarded as the “final” grade which is usually the eighth grade. It is my desire to see young pianists inspired and passionate for music beyond the graded examinations through inspiring and challenging piano teachers in West Malaysia to be more innovative and effective in their approach.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The teaching of Western classical piano music in West Malaysia is ineffective as the existing curriculum for piano lessons is often bound to examination requirements from various boards. This has resulted in a fragmentary curriculum which determines the elements taught in a lesson and denies the student access to a broader range of musical experiences (Ley 2012:16). However, a major problem with this situation is that piano lessons can be uninspiring for students as teachers work almost solely on the components of the examinations in order to ensure the students are well prepared. It therefore limits the student’s musical experience and may take the joy out of learning music.

1.4 Research question

The main research question may be formulated as follows:

How can Western classical piano music be taught more effectively in West Malaysia?

Several sub-questions arise which are consequential or related to the main question:

- How do teachers approach piano tuition in West Malaysia?
- Which elements are lacking or absent in a typical Malaysian piano lesson?
- How much do the teachers rely on foreign examination syllabi as a basis for lessons?
- What are the recurring characteristics or features in the teaching of piano teachers in West Malaysia?

- How can deficiencies in the current piano teaching approaches of teachers in West Malaysia be addressed effectively?

1.5 Aim of the study

This research endeavours to assess the current condition of piano teaching of Western classical piano music in West Malaysia. It seeks to understand the current situation and identify elements that are lacking or absent in piano lessons. Furthermore, this research aims to seek to identify and suggest solutions to problems by analysing the teaching approaches of piano teachers and to determine if there are elements which are lacking in the lessons. Concurrently, the approaches of prominent piano methodologies and teachers of international standing will be consulted and incorporated into suggestions for improvement.

Finally, this study aims to provide solutions by establishing a theoretical framework for effective piano teaching using optimal lesson plans.

1.6 Methodology

This study has adopted “mixed methods research” as its research design. This is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms (Creswell 2009:4). More specifically, it will employ a “sequential explanatory strategy” which is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase of research followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase. The latter builds on the results of the initial quantitative data. Thus, the two forms of data are separate but connected (Creswell 2009:211).

The philosophical worldview that the researcher has adopted in this study is pragmatism which “arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (Creswell 2009:10). Pragmatism is concerned with “applications - what works - and solutions to the problems” (cited in Creswell 2009:10). The researcher has found that pragmatism works well with the mixed methods approach and has shaped the approach to the research for the following reasons (adapted from Creswell 2009:10-11):

- The researcher was able to draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions

- The researcher was free to choose techniques and procedures that best suited one's needs
- The researcher could adopt many approaches for collecting and analysing data
- The researcher looked to the *what* and *how* to research based on the intended consequences

An eclectic approach was adopted for the research which presents a wide variety of ideas and approaches serving as a springboard to explore the topic of piano teaching in Malaysia. The study is centred on West Malaysian piano teachers' teaching approaches.

A more detailed discussion of the Methodology will be presented in chapter three of the dissertation.

1.6.1 Selection of participants

Twenty-five teachers who had been teaching for about a year to those who had been teaching for at least twenty years were randomly selected to participate in the questionnaires. A further fifteen interviews were conducted with a purposive sampling of participants from the survey who were known to the interviewer for several years as fellow teachers and students, both past and present. A few of the participants had established music schools and are principals of their schools. Others teach privately or at music schools. Participants were selected employing a purposive sampling strategy for the qualitative stage of data collection. In purposive sampling, people or units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular or specific purpose. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:206) amplify that we might choose people as they typify a group or may "represent diverse perspectives on an issue". The rationale behind the selection of these participants is that they are typical examples of a group of piano teachers who have largely been trained locally, are actively teaching the piano privately in their homes or in music centres, have varying years of teaching experience and are conversant with the piano examination boards available in Malaysia. A further common factor is that they largely teach Malaysian children who have been taught according to the local education system and face common expectations from their parents.

1.6.2 Data collection strategies

The first stage of the data collection included questionnaires completed by twenty-five piano teachers. The questionnaires elicited personal data, information on teaching experience, the reliance on the syllabi of piano examinations in lessons, elements taught in a lesson and opportunities for students to perform. The second stage of data collection included in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted via purposive sampling of fifteen individuals. The interviewees were audio-recorded. Thereafter the data was transcribed verbatim. The semi-structured interviews aimed to determine the typical experience of a piano teacher in West Malaysia in greater depth.

1.6.3 Data analysis and interpretation

The quantitative data from the survey questionnaires will be analysed and presented in tables, line graphs and bar charts. The qualitative semi-structured interviews will be transcribed, analysed and coded through the organization of data by *ad verbatim* transcriptions. The coding of the data aims to determine main themes and inter-relating themes.

The method of data analysis and interpretation of the interviews employs an interpretative phenomenological analysis method (IPA). The purpose of IPA is “to understand the experience from the participant’s point of view” with a focus on “a particular phenomenon as it is typically lived and perceived by human beings” (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:144). The method of data analysis is to identify emergent themes or “meaning units” that reflect various aspects of the experience and to integrate these units into a “typical” experience (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:144).

1.6.4 Ethical considerations

The study aimed to adhere to the ethical procedures and guidelines of the University of Pretoria. All participants invited to take part in the study were asked to complete letters of informed consent and assent. These letters (see appendix A) describe the nature and procedure of the study and made it clear that participation is entirely voluntary and that the study would not pose any risks or benefits.

1.7 Literature Overview

The literature review (chapter two) will cover a brief historical background of Malaysia in order to provide a contextual premise for this research. In particular, the focus on race and language aims to amplify the challenges of teaching Western classical piano music, as Malaysia is multi-ethnic country. The impact of British colonialism on Malaya is also a point of focus as it had a direct effect on the teaching of Western classical piano music.

Existing research on Western classical music in Malaysia will be examined to gain an overview of various perspectives of music in West Malaysia. Limited previous research was found on piano teaching in West Malaysia. There is therefore clearly a need for more research in this area in order to give an overview of the current context, thus addressing a gap in previous studies in this field. Information on piano examinations available in Malaysia was readily available from the various web-sites of examination boards.

Criteria for optimal lessons are researched in order to establish a relevant theoretical foundation to underpin this research. In particular, it was discovered that the concept of simultaneous learning was a salient criterion for optimal lessons. Various lesson plans were examined to determine specific elements which are present in these lessons. This will provide supporting evidence from various professional piano teachers for an optimal lesson. The factors important to an optimal lesson are critical listening skills, expanded repertoire, inner ear or aural development, and developing an understanding of the composer's intention.

1.8 Chapter overview

This dissertation comprises six chapters in which the first chapter introduces the study with a brief historical and contemporary context for the research.

Chapter two contains the literature review investigating existing research on Western classical music in Malaysia. It also examines criteria for optimal lessons in order to establish a relevant theoretical foundation for this research.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology involved in accumulating the data for this study.

Chapter four presents the findings of the qualitative and quantitative data and analyses the data resulting from the outcomes of the survey questionnaires and interviews. It assesses the current condition of piano teaching in West Malaysia objectively based on the viewpoints of

the teachers and students. It identifies the elements that are lacking or absent in the regular piano lesson.

Chapter five discusses solutions and/or approaches to the problems according to the elements identified in the preceding chapter and furthermore presents possible solutions to these problems by suggesting lesson plans which are based on the theoretical framework of “simultaneous learning”.

Chapter six includes the summary and conclusion. The study concludes with a list of sources and appendices.

1.9 Delimitations of the study

The scope of this research is confined to the teaching of Western classical piano music. Music teaching refers to teaching in the context of a studio or home, on a private basis.

The geographical location of private piano teaching in this dissertation is specifically in West Malaysia. Private piano teaching in East Malaysia is not taken into consideration owing to its distance from West Malaysia and the researcher’s lack of contact with piano teachers in that region.

1.10 Value of the study

This study hopes to contribute to the current literature on music education in Malaysia in the area of private music teaching. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the growing number of students who have been disadvantaged by the current approach to piano teaching in West Malaysia. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the background and circumstances that influence piano teaching in West Malaysia and how these have affected piano teachers’ approach to teaching. It also seeks to remedy these problems by suggesting effective ways of teaching Western classical piano music based on the approaches of prominent piano methodologies and teachers of international standing.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review begins with an overview of the historical background of Malaysia in order to provide a contextual premise for this research. In particular, the focus on race and languages serves to amplify the challenges of teaching Western classical piano music as Malaysia is multi-ethnic. The impact of British colonialism on Malaya is also a point of focus as it has a direct effect on the teaching of Western classical piano music. The review will also consider literature related to music in West Malaysia and music teaching in Malaysian government schools, as well as articles on the role and positive effects of music in Malaysia. Furthermore, the review will investigate literature related to Western classical music in West Malaysia in terms of Western classical music teaching, piano teaching and piano examinations. It will further expound on the theoretical framework for this study, the basis for lesson plans and review lesson plans by Harris and Crozier (2000) as well as an analysis of a group lesson plan by Ley (2012).

2.2 An overview of the historical background of Malaysia: race, language and politics

The multi-ethnic aspect of Malaysians is an important consideration in this research as it affects one's understanding of the particular challenges in teaching Western classical music in West Malaysia. The existence of four main races, namely, Malays, Chinese, Indians and the indigenous people have resulted in a country where the various cultures of each race have merged together while maintaining their individuality. This has caused different customs, languages and religions (Merchant 2012). It is therefore not uncommon for a Malaysian to be multi-lingual. However, even within a language type, for example, Chinese, there are many different dialects such as Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainanese and Foo Chow. Hence, it is fairly common for Malaysian Chinese to communicate with each other in English, Mandarin and also in "Bahasa Malaysia" which is the national language taught at schools.

British colonialism, which began in 1770 with the English East India Company's settlement at Penang (Kennedy 2007:76) and ended in 1957 (Kennedy 2007:338) with the proclamation

of Independence within the Commonwealth, which had a major impact on Malaysia, the effects of which are felt till today. The British brought along their traditions which were often adopted by the Malaysians of their day. According to Kok (2011:76) education, as taught in missionary schools in the 1950s and colleges in the 1960s and “British-style behaviour”, gestures; dress and tastes were unwittingly copied. Kok (2011:76), a Malaysian of Chinese parentage, recounts her experience of being brought up in a typical Malaysian family where it was not uncommon to have afternoon tea, read Enid Blyton and Beatrix Potter, wear Edwardian type clothing such as are available in Laura Ashley stores and yet have all this fully integrated with the Malaysian practices. These practices included having Chinese *dim sum* in the mornings, hearing “daily broadcasts of Muslim calls to prayer” and seeing “roadside stalls peddling fresh *durian* and starfruit”, among others.

2.3 Literature related to music in West Malaysia

Much of the existing literature on music in Malaysia focuses on the following topics: ethnic music of the various races and indigenous people (Dobbs 1995:555); Malay and Chinese traditional music, namely, folk, classical and syncretic music (Ang, Ramani & Othman 1998; Ang 2002; Matusky & Tan 2004); Malay opera (Yousof 1989), Malay performing arts (Yousof 2000) and pop and rock music. Popular music, in particular, often of American origin is the musical preference of most Malaysian young people, owing to greater accessibility to such music (Shah 2006:132) especially on popular radio stations like “hitz.fm” from Astro Radio and in public places such as shopping malls.

Ang, Ramani and Othman (1998) broadly classify Malaysian traditional music into two main types: Great Tradition (Classical or Art tradition) and Little Tradition (Folk Tradition). Great Tradition music comprises both non-notated music which is considered as classical music and notated music which is further sub-divided into art music and popular music. Little Tradition music is classified as folk music. Both folk music and popular music lead to syncretic music. A definition of syncreticism may be appropriate at this juncture. Mazonde (2007:8) defines syncreticism as “the integration of performance elements of different cultures into a form that aims to retain the cultural integrity of the specific materials used while merging diverse cultures and theatrical elements”.

In addition, Ang (2002) presents a concise introduction to the different types of music found and practiced in Malaysia. Ang gives a cursory account of the social and political background of Malaysia from the 15th to the 20th century. In discussing the trends and development in

music she states her hypothesis “that a truly Malaysian music is one in which various elements of the various local cultures are emerged and blended into a uniquely distinguishable musical style, has only just become attainable with the current peace, inter-racial harmony and prosperity experienced in the country” (Ang 2002:3). Ang stresses that there is a lack of research into music composed by Malaysian composers who have had Western classical training. In discussing contemporary art music in Malaysia, she makes mention of the piano as a popular instrument which is regularly studied, and the examination boards such as ABRSM and Trinity College of Music. She also lists various instrumental ensembles and orchestras available in the country but concludes that the state of Western art music instrumental study in Malaysia is still backward and undeveloped. The final chapters focus on music in the folk tradition and syncretic music.

Further research on Malaysian traditional music is published in Matusky and Tan’s (2004) book on “The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk and Syncretic Traditions”. In a book review, Gerald Groemer (2004) states that the book was published as a guide for both music teachers in the Malaysian school system and Malaysian ethnomusicologists. In addition it serves to elucidate the perhaps wrongly perceived complexities of Malaysian music. Instead the reader can now come to terms with the splendid musical culture of Malaysia. The authors describe major theatrical forms in their first chapter. These include the syncretic theatre of Penang (*boria*), the folk dance theatre in northern Peninsular Malaysia (*menora*), Chinese opera and hand puppet theatre (*po-te-hi*). Groemer adds that the authors discuss each theatrical form in terms of the instrument, performance practices, textures, and forms of the music played with transcriptions of scales, melodies and rhythmic practices. The following chapter deals with dance forms such as the *joget gamelan*¹, *tarinai*², *zapin*³ and the Chinese lion dance. In chapter 3 the authors analyse the music of percussion ensembles such as the *caklempong*⁴ and the *kulingtangan*⁵. Groemer adds that the authors also discuss the “24 Season Drums” that were made popular in Chinese schools and associations since the 1990s. Groemer describes the next chapter as having a focus on vocal and solo instrumental music

¹ *Joget gamelan* is “music and dance that developed in the Malay palace setting as an art or classical tradition” (Matusky & Tan 2004:108).

² *Tarinai* is the tradition of music and dance which “exists in the folk and formerly, in the classical traditions in the northwestern states of Kedah and Perlis in Malaysia” (Matusky & Tan 2004:120).

³ *Zapin* is a dance form introduced to Peninsular Malaysia by Arab communities that settled in the state of Johore before the 14th century C.E.” (Matusky & Tan 2004:127).

⁴ *Caklempong pacik* are traditional instruments “that consists of five knobbed gongs, a katindiek or adok drum and a reed instrument called the pupuik or serunai” (Matusky & Tan 2004:57).

⁵ *Kulingtangan* is a gong-chime usually accompanied by a drum accompaniment. (Polunin & Polunin 1995).

such as the *zikir* (monophonic Islamic songs) and the *nasyid* (sung poetry on Islamic themes). There is a similar focus in Ang's (2002) chapter on music in the folk tradition. Chapter 5 deals with music played for entertainment during celebrations. This includes the *rongeng* (social dance) and *dondang sayang* (love songs). This is a useful source of information on Malaysian traditional music as it clearly classifies and vividly describes the wide variety of theatre, dance and musical forms.

2.4 Music teaching in Malaysian government schools

It appears that traditional Malaysian music has also made an impact on music teaching in Malaysian government schools. Tan (2008) examines how various forms of traditional Malaysian music as well as selected genres of traditional music from Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia have been introduced in Malaysian secondary schools. Tan states that a comparative approach is used in teaching traditional music of South East Asia in music appreciation classes through active music-making and guided listening. Tan emphasises the fact that cross-cultural studies are now implemented in Malaysia and are very much in the experimental stage especially pertaining to appropriate instructional approaches (Tan 2008:249).

This article also deals with issues of multiculturalism, which is a common topic referred to in most articles on Malaysian music teaching. Tan looks at the music curriculum in Malaysian secondary schools where music is considered an elective. However, music as a subject is compulsory and centralized in primary schools. Tan elaborates that up to 1994 the primary school syllabus was very Westernized. In 1994, revisions were made to the syllabus to include some basic rhythms and forms of Malaysian music. In 1996-7, Tan adds that music was introduced as a subject in twenty pilot schools and boarding schools.

The curriculum was divided into four main parts (Tan 2008:251):

- Basic theory and elements of style which covered rhythm, melody, scale, pitch, dynamics and form.
- Music appreciation, concentrating on the traditional music of Malaysia, South East Asia and Asia and the lives and works of a few well-known Western composers.
- Performance skills and expression on selected traditional and Western instruments

- Documentation, involving group projects of selected traditional music in which the students were required to interview performers, collect photographs, attend performances and document the data in a folio, scrapbook and tape recordings.

Tan discusses the current limitations in implementing the curriculum highlighting the lack of teaching hours assigned for music and the limited performance time for playing traditional instruments. Tan notes the lack of qualified teachers as the teachers largely have no background in traditional music and are learning as they teach. The class size is often large with forty students or more and there are usually an insufficient number of instruments for the students to play together.

Tan also explains that the curriculum is rather rigid thus leaving little room for flexibility and creativity. These issues such as a lack of time, shortage of instruments and skilled teachers, among other limitations, have resulted in it being impossible to teach musical skills to a high level in public (government) schools. I concur with this conclusion as it confirms why students and parents resort to private teaching for music outside government schools. The overall dissatisfaction with the system of education and the lack of international recognition of the music curriculum are factors that dissuade parents and students from taking music as an elective at secondary schools.

In this article, Tan includes two lesson plans which employ traditional instruments such as the gongs, cymbals and ‘togunggak’ - a bamboo instrument. In conclusion, Tan states “that developing music materials for the classroom in public schools requires a long process of planning and experimentation” (Tan2008:258). He added that school teachers would require teaching aids and training workshops. The main goal of this approach is to introduce the traditional forms of music making to the students by encouraging listening and active participation. Tan also believes that this approach will help students to learn about the diverse cultures in the region, which would have a positive effect on different cultures enhancing each other. It will also foster better understanding in their interactions with each other. It is not currently possible to discuss the syllabus critically because an updated version has not been made available publically.

This focus on the music curriculum used in Malaysian schools is further investigated by Lah (2003) as he considers the role of the Malaysian government and private sectors in music education in terms of their emergence, curricula and syllabi. The purpose and value of the

study is to illustrate the role played by various Malaysian government organizations “in shaping public school music education” (Lah 2003:1). The study’s aim is to demonstrate how the Malaysian government and the private sectors can work closely “to promote the concepts of music education in a multi-plural and racial society” (Lah 2003:1-2). At the conclusion of his thesis, Lah (2003:92) surmises that “after thirty-nine years of being an independent and sovereign state, Malaysia has included music education at all levels of its educational system from kindergarten through university”. It is difficult to establish if the statement made by Lah is accurate as most kindergartens are run privately and not all government and private universities offer music as a course.

In addition, Lah concludes with a popular statement which he claims is made by most music teachers in Malaysia: “There is no bad music education system, just some bad music teachers” (Lah 2003:92). Here I beg to differ having not heard this statement made by most music teachers in Malaysia. It may be true that there are some bad music teachers but this will be true probably in every country where music is taught. However, Nor (2011) makes a case for a poorly administered music education system with unskilled teachers and an incomplete curriculum in Malaysia. This will be discussed in detail in a later section of this literature review.

Lah stresses the importance of the implementation of both an evaluation system and assessment process to regulate the standard of music teaching in schools. He sees the future of music education in Malaysia being heavily dependent on good cooperation between the Malaysian government and the private sector. Lah is concerned about improving the standard and hence, effectiveness of music teaching in Malaysian schools by some form of regulation involving both the evaluation and assessment of teaching.

In a continuing focus on the music curriculum, Nor (2011) states that the Malaysian music curriculum for primary schools known as the New Curriculum for Primary School was implemented in 1983. This curriculum includes aesthetic perception, musical experience, creative expression and artistic appreciation. The Curriculum for Secondary School which was implemented in 1988 has similar elements including traditional music, playing of instruments and offers a wider experience for the student to develop their musical skills. He concurs with Tan (2008) that in primary schools music is included as a subject but in secondary schools it is considered as an elective, thus students can opt whether or not to take music as a subject.

Nor (2011:221) elucidates the situation by stating that the students face the following problems in taking music as a subject in schools:

- Lack of proper administration, e.g., time allocated for music classes being used for other subjects
- Society's negative perception of music as it is not an examinable subject and hence not important
- Unskilled or inexperienced music teachers with neither commitment nor skills in teaching music
- Incomplete music curriculum which is lopsided and does not include local Malaysian music

Nor counter argues the problems by stating the following benefits of a music education:

- Success in society - inculcates good values, positive characteristics and will benefit the nation
- Success in school - generally a higher rate of success in achieving better grades for students who had experience in music performance
- Success in developing intelligence - Shaw, Rauscher, Levine, Wright & Dennis (cited in Nor 2011:221) reported a link between music and intelligence where music trainers were superior to computer instructors. In particular, music enhanced students' performance in learning mathematics and science
- Success in life - benefits spiritual, physical or psychological development

Following criticism and highlighting the benefits of music, Nor (2011) makes several suggestions to policy makers to:

- Improve the role of the Malaysian Association for Music Education (MAME) in creating awareness by organizing conferences more frequently; including professional musicians as members and creating a bill of rights for music education in Malaysia
- Have a blueprint for music education in developing consistent, periodical monitoring and supervision of music in schools, and coordination between various institutions and divisions involved in music education
- Implement music as an examinable and core subject in schools with a balanced curriculum incorporating both Western and Eastern elements

- Enforce more stringent entry levels for music teachers and appointing an expert music teacher in each state
- Increase resources and facilities in terms of music texts and teaching material
- Introduce a music education slot on the mass media such as television

Nor's suggestions are particularly helpful in teaching music more effectively. He addresses significant issues regarding music teaching at schools as music is often relegated to an insignificant role. In many cases the extent of music education in schools is limited to having a choir which will participate in inter-school or inter-state competitions. This privilege will be limited to a minority rather than the majority of the students. For the other students the music period is often used to give classes in more important examinable subjects. I concur with Nor that music as a subject is not held in high regard at Malaysian schools. It is often treated as a filler and nothing of great significance is taught during the music period.

The following review focuses on music preferences of Malaysian students and its implications for the music curriculum of the integrated secondary school curriculum. Ang and Yeoh (2002) discuss the findings from a sample of teenage students and their preferences for ethnic-based and non-ethnic related Malaysian music. Ten music excerpts of ethnic-based Malaysian music and twenty excerpts of non-ethnic related music were used in the study. The responses of 139 randomly selected teenage students showed a strong preference for non-ethnic-related music, especially popular music. This concurs with Shah's (2006) conclusion that popular music (often of American origin) is the musical preference of most Malaysian young people owing to greater accessibility to such music. Ang and Yeoh (2002) state that the implications of these findings influence the proposal of new strategies administered in teaching approaches. It was also to assist in the preparation of learning materials for the Malaysian Integrated Secondary School curriculum for music. These findings support previous research investigating music preferences (Cook 1998). Hargreaves, Miell and Macdonald (2002) put this succinctly: "Our musical tastes and preferences can form an important statement of our values and attitudes, and composers and performers use their music to express their own distinctive views of the world."

Further literature on preferences or value systems of Malaysian children is seen in Ghazali's (2006) doctoral thesis in which he states that the aim of this research is to examine "the personal and external factors which help to shape Malaysian children's valuing for the formal learning of music both in and out of school". Ghazali employed surveys of 1,060 primary

school children aged 9 to 12 and interviews of a smaller sample of learners as the principal research instruments. The surveys were categorized into five ethnic-religion groups (Malay Muslims, Chinese Buddhists, Chinese Christians, Indian Hindus and Indian Christians), musical experience (learners, non-learners and those no longer learning) and gender. The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Expectancy-Value theory of Eccles and Wigfield which “investigate(s) motivational constructs dealing with attainment, intrinsic interest, and utility values, in addition to the cost factor related to learning music”(Ghazali 2006:v).

Ghazali states that the outcomes “revealed that most children, regardless of ethnicity, were intrinsically motivated to learn music in school” (Ghazali 2006:vi). However, Ghazali adds that most children, regardless of ethnicity, musical experience and gender did not attach a high attainment value to learning music in or out of school. As for differences among the ethnic groups, Chinese and Indian children “perceived the utility value of musical training more than Malay children, who were also more inclined to perceive learning music as difficult and involving more cost” (Ghazali 2006:vi). It was significant for gender differences that girls recognized more intrinsic and utility value of learning music both in and outside school. Ghazali’s thesis focuses on an important aspect of learning, namely, motivation. This in turn will determine the effectiveness of music teaching received by the children.

2.5 Role of music in Malaysian mass media and public education

Chopyak (1987) draws our attention to the role of music in mass media, public education and the formation of a Malaysian national culture. Chopyak argues that Malaysia is trying to form a national culture in its current status as a developing nation. He states: “this article will survey the interrelationships between the development of a national culture and the development of modern Malaysian music” (Chopyak 1987:431). He draws a parallel between the development of the country’s contemporary urban music and its communication and education policy. He believes that the concept of “cultural planning” is important in determining the national culture of a country.

Chopyak describes the specific policies governing the formation of a Malaysian national culture. He explains that the policy guidelines mean that Malay culture and Islam are the basis of Malaysian national culture, but that some allowance must be made for some

influences from the other racial and religious groups. He then describes the public education system in Malaysia as being part of the country's colonial legacy which began in the second half of the 19th century. Chopyak refers to Hodge who said that "Music did not play an important role in the education system at that time, but it is clear that the music which was used and taught in the schools was European music" (Hodge 1932:143-5). Chopyak opines that music in the Malaysian education system is both complicated and controversial as it affects language, race and national unity. He concludes that music and other performing arts are usually the visible manifestations of the national culture. He bemoans the fact that there is a shortage of qualified music teachers in Malaysia and that the music syllabus is often not properly administered. This view is supported by Nor (2011) who also expresses that there are generally unskilled or inexperienced music teachers with neither commitment nor skills in teaching music. Research indicates that the situation has not improved from 1986 to 2011. This is clearly not ideal for music teaching in schools.

Chopyak further discusses the role of music in mass media through recording and film industries. Grenfell (1979:96) reports a greater preference for imported films from America and Europe as well as Indian and Chinese films to the locally produced ones. Broadcasts from Radio Malaysia had a significant following of about 48 percent of the adult population. In 1989, the Minister of Information, Tan Sri Ghazalie Shafie (Grenfell 1979:8) felt that "through dramas, music, dance, etc., TV must enlarge the awareness of the aspiration and development of the nation...". These directives made their way to the heads of the entertainment and news divisions, to drama and music directors, producers, writers, actors and musicians.

2.6 Literature related to Western classical music in West Malaysia

In searching for literature about teaching Western classical music in West Malaysia it became apparent that there seems to be paucity of research in this area. Literature found is limited to the following authors: Thomson (2000); Ross (2002); Kok (2011) and Cheah (2012). The current research therefore extends on studies in this field. This section will consider Western classical music teaching, piano teaching and piano examinations available in West Malaysia.

2.6.1 Western classical music teaching in West Malaysia

Thomson (2000) wrote *The Music Teacher's Companion*, Malaysia supplement,

“Practical Information for Music Teachers in Malaysia” which was included in a book by Harris and Crozier (2000) bearing the same title but qualified by the statement “A Practical Guide”. Thomson gives an account of music in Malaysia’s education system and the role ABRSM has played in the country in educating the young people in Western classical music. Thomson feels that it is essential for an instrumental or vocal teacher in Malaysia to have “a basic working knowledge of the broader structure of national music education”. He emphasizes that teachers should also know their fundamental legal rights and obligations. He further explains that this supplement was written to aid teachers in their working life by providing practical information and advice. The topics he covers include history and local issues; education and training; ABRSM in Malaysia - professional development programme for music teachers, certificate of teaching course and publications; music retailers; Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra - education outreach programme; music societies; competitions and festivals; advisory organizations; purchase and rental of musical instruments; popular music and jazz as well as legal issues, contracts and fee structures. This is a concise guide for music teachers in Malaysia as it seeks to keep teachers informed of the role of ABRSM in Malaysia and also the business aspects of music teaching. It is helpful in alerting music teachers to be aware of their fundamental legal rights and obligations. Novice teachers would find this supplement useful.

After a brief overview of Malaysia, Thomson states that there is no compulsory music curriculum in government schools. Therefore most of the formal music education for young people is through private music schools or a private teacher. Statistically, at the time of writing, he records at least 3,000 music teachers in Malaysia. He adds that most children who learn music privately take the graded practical examinations of international examinations boards such as ABRSM complemented by studying the theory of music. In advancing their music studies after they have “completed Grade 8” (Thomson 2000:3), Thomson states that the natural progression for students is to study at a tertiary institution either in England, Australia, the USA or locally.

He explains ABRSM’s role in Malaysia by first stating that the Ministry of Education in Malaysia is ABRSM’s representative throughout East and Peninsular (West) Malaysia. The ministry’s role is to handle all syllabi and examination enquiries as well as the administration

and regulation of examinations. Thomson adds that ABRSM takes an active interest in the professional development of teachers by organizing yearly seminars on various topics such as new developments in the syllabus; aspects of music education and new publications. Teachers on ABRSM's database also receive free copies of their journal entitled "Libretto". A further focus on professional development is seen in ABRSM's Certificate of Teaching course which Thomson indicates is for teachers to "maximize their potential and that of their pupils" (Thomson 2000:4). However this course is not yet fully available in Malaysia. It is interesting to note that this course has garnered a great deal of interest among Malaysian music teachers who are keen to hone their skills to teach Western classical music more effectively.

Additionally, Thomson discusses the impact of popular music and jazz in Malaysia. He states that Jazz has had a wonderful revival in recent years and there are many opportunities to hear good-quality jazz by local artists and international musicians. Finally, he discusses legal issues such as The Child Protection Act, 1991 which "serves as a safeguard against mistreatment, whether physically or mentally, of minors in the care of adults" (Thomson 2000:7). He mentions that teachers who work in establishments such as music schools should have knowledge of this Act. Thomson was ABRSM's Regional Consultant for South East Asia and was based in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia during his posting.

2.6.2 Piano teaching in Malaysia

In an unpublished thesis, Ross (2002) investigates the social and symbolic significance of acquiring a "music education" through piano lessons and external public music examinations. This thesis has several aims. The first is "to discover why the learning of the piano and the certification of musical attainment through the taking of external piano music examinations are so prevalent and revered among Malaysian music students". The second aim is to determine if the act of playing the piano "conveyed a symbolic meaning that is peculiar to a specific cultural vista". The third aim is "to examine the degree to which this practice represents both a validation and a sense of conformity to social norms in the contribution to the continuity and stability of an expanding middle class society in Malaysia" (Ross 2002:3). Both interdisciplinary methodologies and meta-theoretical principles were used to "extrapolate the social and symbolic meaning of this peculiar approach to music education". A macro-micro approach to data collection, categorization and analysis was taken. Emergent

themes were metatheorised within the prescribed analytical model employing the theories of Mead and Schenker.

Ross (2002:218-219) analyses the social and symbolic reasons for taking external music examinations. This study produced several thematic outcomes regarding the impact of British colonialism on music in Malaysia: the desire for certification and validation, improved social status, personal and social goals, the impact of the media and marketing strategies, bureaucratic constraint and political agendas as well as limitations of the system of music education.

In her seminal article, Kok (2011) discusses piano teaching in Malaysia from an interesting perspective of “a native informant”. She meticulously and vividly describes her childhood memory of her first piano examination. Her then child-like perception of the examiner reveals the disparity between him as the “colonial master” and herself as a “little yellow child”. Kok goes on to explain that she is now a scholar of Western classical music and is active as an academic in North America and Europe. She further discusses intertwining ethnicity where the British cultural practices occurred on a family-by family basis. Kok adds that this was dependent on ethnicity, income, education levels, social aspirations and contact with the colonials. She also suggests that it was the norm for a Malaysian family to adopt British practices alongside Malaysian ones and that these practices were fully integrated into the Malaysian existence.

Kok adds that middle-class Malaysians, in particular the Chinese, welcomed the arrival of ABRSM in 1948 as it marked the beginning of Western instrumental music education in Malaysia. She elaborates that the timing of ABRSM’s entry into Malaysia was ideal as there was a deeply ingrained respect for British systems of education among middle-class Malaysians. Hence taking piano lessons was clearly associated with pride and prestige for its middle-class adherents. It also strengthened the chances of their children going to good universities as an admirable extra-curricular activity and provided an alternate means of future income especially for young ladies.

Kok recalls her piano teacher emphasizing that learning to play the piano was a “British” activity. This led her to conclude that to play piano was to be “British”, and the better she played, the more “British” she became. Therefore, instrumental instruction became a colonizing force as she was “imbibing postcolonial values alongside note values, chord progressions, melodies, and rhythms prescribed by ABRSM as suitable for (her) level of

skill” (Kok 2011:81). She bemoans the fact that over a span of eight years she had only learned ABRSM’s prescribed pieces of music for each grade as they were about the only music available and ABRSM was her only avenue to Western classical music.

Kok (2011:82) considers her limited repertoire at that time to be hardly representative of music which was then available in Great Britain. She poses several questions which highlight ABRSM’s lack of research and sensitivity to the complex cultural situation and music-educational needs of the Malaysian market:

- Had the Board researched Malaysian’ attitudes and needs with regard to Western classical music?
- Did the Board know about the lack of resources Malaysians faced?
- Was the Board concerned that the ears and brains of those who processed the music they prescribed had otherwise had little exposure to and experience with the cultures of which the music was inextricably part?

The final outcome of Kok’s experience of learning Western classical music was seen in the confusion she underwent in trying to form a musical identity. She states that her early musical education “did not foster intellectual curiosity and musical activity” (Kok 2011:83). Instead she vehemently claims that “it is a story of colonial “violence” wrought on young minds and psyches” (2011: 83). Kok lucidly describes her perceived outcome of her early education and emphasizes the great need for examination boards like ABRSM to be culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of a multi-cultural country like Malaysia. The researcher concurs that this is an aspect which should be considered in effective music teaching as the choice of repertoire is an important factor in motivating students. Although it may come to mind that Kok’s teacher could have taken more initiative in providing her student a broader based repertoire which would have been more suitable for a Malaysian student, it was generally the case that teachers were not personally equipped to do so and resources were very limited at that time. Therefore this is a fair criticism of the system adopted by ABRSM during the period Kok was a student as there was a general lack of awareness of the needs of a multi-cultural country like Malaysia. However, in recent years there have been major changes to the choice of repertoire in the ABRSM syllabus with the inclusion of music from various cultures throughout the world.

In a more recent study on piano teaching in Malaysia, Cheah (2012) in an unpublished master’s project investigates the knowledge and skills needed for beginner or novice piano

teachers to teach a music programme in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Cheah states that the aim of this research was to find answers and solutions to guide new beginner teachers start their teaching career, to teach beginner students learn to play the piano appropriately.

The principal research instruments employed were survey questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The purpose of the survey was to discover some areas where teachers and students needed focus and attention. Cheah states that sixty piano teachers with two or more years of experience were asked to complete the survey questionnaires and ten teachers with five or more years of experience were selected for the face-to-face interviews to obtain deeper insight into their piano teaching.

According to Cheah, the main findings from this study are ideas, concepts and viewpoints on various methods and approaches in private studio teaching. In addition, Cheah surmises that private music teachers faced a series of issues and challenges in their daily teaching. However, it should be noted that this study does not have an in-depth analysis of the findings and moves on almost too quickly to solutions to the perceived problems in the form of a guidebook. This may be understandable as the main aim of the research study was the development of a guidebook for novice studio teachers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Cheah expounds on the benefits of the guidebook to assist both practising and prospective private piano teachers as she believes that it covers an array of issues and problems on teaching. Cheah is clearly concerned about effective music teaching in Kuala Lumpur which is located in West Malaysia. Her area of focus is mainly in guiding novice studio teachers to start their teaching on the right path by thinking through their approach and methodology in teaching. Cheah's methodology of using self-administered questionnaires and interviews is perhaps the most effective way of understanding the perspectives of the subjects and their experiences. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be an accurate reflection of the phenomena.

The information garnered from these resources reveals that these studies in Western classical music teaching in Malaysia are still in the initial stages as there are still many aspects of teaching and learning which have yet to be researched. In summary, it is evident that there is a clear need to extend research in this area.

2.6.3 Piano examinations in West Malaysia

There are four piano examination boards in West Malaysia: Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity Guildhall - a joint board between Trinity College London (TCL) and Guildhall School of Music (GSM), London College of Music (LCM) and Australia and New Zealand Cultural Arts Limited (ANZCA).

ABRSM has been providing examinations and assessments since 1889 with the aim of giving students realistic goals and tangible rewards. ABRSM believes that their examinations provide motivation and nurture, and evaluate an individual's performance and progress. A typical piano examination comprises performing selected scales and arpeggios and three pieces. Candidates are also required to play a sight-reading piece and respond to aural tests. There are eight grades of assessment preceded by a preparatory test.

TCL has been providing assessments since 1877. They provide grade and certificate exams designed to nurture musical development at every level. TCL believes that their graded music exams provide a structured learning framework which evaluates a student's progress at every level. Furthermore, they emphasize that their music examinations equip learners with real-life skills to help them become confident musicians and performers. The graded examinations comprise technical work (scales and arpeggios or a technical study); three pieces and two supporting tests chosen from aural, improvisation, sight-reading and musical knowledge. There are eight grades of assessment including an initial exam.

LCM has been providing external examinations since 1887. It was incorporated as a public educational institution in 1939 and became a part of the Thames Valley University in 1991. A unique feature of the graded examinations is that the certification is awarded by a university. LCM believes that their graded examinations are effective as they are motivational and rewarding, besides having international recognition. Graded examinations comprise technical work; three exam pieces; viva voce; sight-reading and aural tests. The eight levels of graded examinations are preceded by an "Early Learning" examination for children aged 3 to 6 years and a pre-Grade 1 exam called "Steps".

ANZCA is a non-profit examining body of the performing arts which was formed in 1983 "in response to a growing need among private music teachers for an examination system catering for a greater diversity of styles" (ANZCA music examinations). It was first started in Malaysia in 2006 and is relatively a newcomer where the piano examination boards are concerned. ANZCA strives to provide a wide range of choices in the classical and modern

syllabi for the piano. They express that all aspects of the syllabi have been arranged sequentially with careful attention to the educational merit underlying each requirement. A typical piano examination in classical pianoforte comprises technical work; three examination pieces, sight-reading, aural tests and general knowledge. There are eight grades of assessment preceded by a preliminary exam.

In summary, the four examination boards mentioned have common aims of motivating, stimulating, exciting and nurturing musical studies. They speak of rewarding the students of music and equipping them with skills that will develop them into musicians and performers through a structured, progressive and sequential learning process. Examinations are also regarded as a form of evaluation. The common components in the graded examinations are technical work, three performance pieces and at least two supporting tests which are popularly aural and sight-reading. All the boards have eight grades of assessment preceded by a preliminary or initial examination.

2.7 Theoretical framework for this study

This section discusses the theoretical framework adopted for this study, namely, “simultaneous learning”. It reviews research on optimal lesson plans and analyses lesson plans by Harris and Crozier who advocate “simultaneous learning”. It also reviews an analysis of a lesson plan by Ley who is also an advocate of “simultaneous learning”.

2.7.1 Simultaneous learning

The term “simultaneous learning” was coined by Harris and Crozier (2000:71). Approximately two years after the term “simultaneous learning” had been introduced, Ley (2012:16) expounds on this concept defining it as “an innovative approach to instrumental work”. He adds that it is a perception of instrumental teaching and learning which aims to “encompass a range of skills in a seamless experience...to support learning and develop musical understanding” (Ley 2012:16). Ley explains that historically, instrumental teaching has been based on the master-apprentice model which has been promoted by conservatories and teachers in private schools and studios. He states that this approach to teaching has been challenged in recent years as teachers gain a greater understanding of the students’ learning process and their role as effective teachers.

Harris and Crozier (2000) further expand on this thought by exploring the problem faced in music teaching challenging music teachers to take an honest look at their typical lessons in terms of the content and the proportion of time spent on each element. It is suggested that the greatest emphasis is probably given to the teaching and learning of pieces. In addition, teachers probably find their teaching to be reactive rather than pro-active to whatever the students may or may not have prepared. The resultant effect is usually a general loss of interest for both teachers and students with poor progress and many fundamental issues of musical development being marginalized. Harris and Cozier state that the teaching of sight-reading, aural skills, and scales can develop technique “in its widest sense” and add that the teaching of musicianship will ultimately lead to self-reliance. The researcher wholly supports the thought that self-reliance should be the ultimate aim in teaching. Harris and Crozier highlight that the problem is further augmented by the fact that the teachers have to relegate the elements of scales and sight-reading as well as aural work to the last ten minutes or so of a lesson in the last few lessons before the exam. This is clearly not an ideal situation for effective teaching.

In discussing the problem faced in music teaching, Ley (2012) states that the technique-driven approach often dominates music lessons. He adds that one of the reasons for this is that for so many teachers the instrumental curriculum is dominated by the exam requirements. Ley concludes that the focus on performance skills, sight-reading, aural skills and a knowledge of theory can result in a fragmentary curriculum. Hence, the real problem is seen in the fact that the exam has influenced rather than reflected the practice of instrumental teaching and learning.

Harris and Crozier present a solution to this problem in the form of “simultaneous learning” which integrates aural work with pieces, scales with sight-reading and aural work with scales, among other permutations. They believe that the “ingredients of musicianship can be taught and learnt much more effectively when they are seen as being part of a whole” (Harris & Crozier 2000:72). To sum up their perception of “simultaneous learning”, the teacher should have a set agenda which will help her be more pro-active rather than reactive. Pupil-teacher interactions should be encouraged throughout the lesson. The aim is to make the lesson a more organic process. Ley concurs on the thought that teaching should not be a one-way process where the teacher merely imparts both technical skills and information to the students. Effective teachers motivate students to have a continuing desire to learn and also ensure that their students have an enriching experience of music learning.

However, Harris and Crozier caution against stereo-typing the lesson plan as each student is an individual. Therefore it is essential to adapt the content and methodology accordingly. Having the correct ingredients and also the freedom to combine and experiment with them according to one's own way could result in an exciting journey of discovery. Ley expands on this thought by stating that some students learn best from doing; others from listening and yet other from visual stimulus. Therefore he advocates an approach which will include listening and internalizing as this will develop aural awareness and acuity; playing and singing both individually and with others; creating through developing and interpreting musical ideas through improvising and composing and performing and communicating which will encourage the students to evaluate their own and others' music.

Furthermore, encouraging students to ask questions, think for themselves and solve problems will ultimately develop students who are self-reliant and confident. A possible limitation in this approach could be that students may find this a frightening or daunting experience and may end up tongue-tied. However, with sufficient encouragement and patience on the part of the teacher the student will gradually blossom. The researcher concurs that this approach would be refreshing and inspiring for both the teacher and student. It could ignite or re-ignite a passion for music and pave the way for an enjoyable adventure in music learning.

Harris and Crozier present two lesson plans which will be discussed in detail later in this section 2.7.3. The first lesson plan combines both simultaneous learning with conventional teaching while the second one develops musicianship skills using an advanced level of simultaneous learning. Ley presents an analysis of a lesson for a group of guitarists where the teacher employs a variety of strategies with interrelated activities where one activity leads to another. This will also be discussed later in this chapter.

Subsequently, Harris and Crozier state that simultaneous learning is about "making connections". Incidentally, this phrase was used as the title of Ley's (2012) article on simultaneous learning. Harris and Crozier suggest making the connection between a sound made by singing to a physical action such as sounding the same note on the piano will eventually lead to seeing the musical notation for that sound. The researcher suggests that this concurs with the familiar concept of teaching a sound before a symbol. Ley takes the idea of making connections further by starting a lesson with warm-ups and scales that relate to the pieces which the students are learning followed by sight-reading of the new piece while integrating listening and aural work in all the activities.

2.7.2 Lesson plans

In researching systematic teaching, Rosenshine et al. (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:299-300) have developed several guiding principles for an effective or optimal lesson. They claim that it is important to start the lesson with a review of previous pre-requisite learning. New material is presented in small steps with opportunities for the student to practise after each step. Initially practice is guided with clear and detailed instructions and explanations. It is important to model procedures with both positive and negative examples of performance. It is also vital to allow for a high level of active practice with systematic feedback and corrections. This is continued until the student is able to practise independently and confidently. Another principle is to check for student understanding by encouraging student participation with questions.

Rosenshine's et al. (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:300) research on systematic teaching supports six functions on direct teaching in music: review, presentation of the lesson's objectives, guided practice, corrections and feedback, independent practice and weekly and monthly reviews. Price (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:300) portrayed "sequential patterns" of music instruction. After the teacher presented a task to be learned, the student responded by interacting with the teacher through performance and verbal communication.

2.7.3 Lesson plans by Harris and Crozier

A considerable amount of literature has been published on lesson plans. Two lesson plans have been selected for review in this study as they pertain to simultaneous learning. For the first lesson plan (see appendix D), Harris and Crozier (2000:73) combine simultaneous learning with more conventional teaching. There are twelve activities in all. No time-frame was given for the lesson. The lesson scenario states that this plan is for a piano pupil who has been practising the scale of C major and the first section of Czerny's *Allegretto* in C major Op. 500 No. 36.

This first activity encourages teacher-student interaction. The teaching is in small steps and the instruction is clear. It checks with the student for understanding and evokes imagination.

The questions are subjective and are open to discussion.

In the following activity, the teacher determines whether or not the student is certain of the pitch names of the scale. It therefore establishes a theoretical understanding of the scale. It also develops the technical side of playing the scale where separate hand playing will assist the student in being more aware of the correct fingering and technique in order to execute the scale comfortably. The questions encourage critical listening on the student's part to her own performance. This would eliminate the need for the teacher to state the errors but would instead help the student to be more acutely aware of her playing. Thus this would encourage the student to think for herself and solve problems and will ultimately develop independence, self-reliance and confidence.

The third activity promotes greater enthusiasm in scale playing and takes away the drudgery of mindless repetitions. It encourages creativity as it allows the student a choice as to how she might like to play the scale. It simultaneously develops the technique of playing scales as different rhythms and groupings would improve the evenness and rhythmic sense of the scale. Different dynamics would improve fingering control and critical listening.

In the fourth activity improvisation is being incorporated. Playing by ear is an important aspect of musicianship. The area of improvisation may be unfamiliar ground but the student is offered two familiar elements - a well-known tune and the all too familiar key of C major. Thinking of a shape before improvising is vital and encourages aural anticipation of the final outcome. The student has to visualize and hear the short piece internally before she embarks on it. This will develop creativity and musicianship skills.

This fifth activity naturally follows the preceding one and is therefore making a connection from improvising to developing aural skills. It also encourages concentration and aural memory as the student has to repeat the phrase as accurately as possible. Furthermore, improvisation skills are also developed as the student has to create an answering phrase.

Repertoire is being taught in the next activity. This flows into developing a better understanding of the harmonic progression and its relationship to the dynamic indications. This activity builds a better understanding of the composer's intention. Simultaneously, memory work is introduced in the left hand.

The seventh activity builds on the memory skills recently acquired from the previous activity and encourages improvisation of a right-hand melody over the memorized left-hand part. So both memory work and improvisation are being taught simultaneously. This approach is

effective and manageable as it deals with an eight-bar phrase thus presenting it in small steps. Memory work and vocal skills are being focused on in the next activity. In addition, the coordination of singing and playing simultaneously is being developed. For many this may prove a challenge especially if they are unaccustomed to singing while playing. Several attempts may be necessary before this can be achieved.

Repertoire and musicianship skills are being developed in the ninth activity. Transposing the opening melody will develop greater certainty and a better memory of it. It will also develop a better key sense as the student will have to introduce the correct accidentals for the different keys. The questions encourage critical listening as they focus on tempo control; musical shaping of the phrases and technical issues. Both the musical and technical aspects of the performance are considered. Asking the student to suggest strategies to solve technical problems encourages student participation and develops independence as well as confidence.

The tenth activity encourages a more acute aural perception of the harmony and a better musical understanding of the composer's intention through harmonic analysis. Thinking through the hand positions will develop better keyboard topography and fingering choices which will be helpful for the student as she learns the second section.

Sight-reading and critical listening skills are being developed in the next activity. As the student reads the music for the first time she is also encouraged to listen to her own performance in order to be aware of any errors. She is to identify the mistakes and to focus on removing the mistakes on her second playing. This may be a difficult task for the student who may just be barely able to sight-read through the music. In most cases the focus would have been on getting the right notes in approximately the right rhythmic sense. Thus, to expect the student to identify her errors may be impracticable. However it is a worthy activity as it demands a higher level of concentration and awareness while sight-reading.

In the final activity, work is assigned for the next lesson. It focuses on improvisation, technical work and repertoire. In summary, this lesson plan has a strong emphasis on developing musicianship skills such as improvisation and transposition in activities 4, 5, 7 and 9. There is also a focus on the technique of scale playing in activities 1-3. Performance of repertoire and critical listening are dealt with in activities 6, 9 and 10. Sight-reading is included in activity 11.

The second lesson plan (see appendix E) by Harris and Crozier (2000:74) can be used for any instrument. Harris and Crozier regard this lesson as being a more 'advanced' 'simultaneous

learning lesson with a focus on developing musicianship skills. There are ten activities in all with no time-frame given for the lesson.

This first activity creates an awareness of key right from the start with the intention of returning to the piece later but this time with a certainty of the key. A connection is made with the first activity where the identified key is now being explored in greater detail in terms of the key- signature, notes and the muscular feel of the scale and arpeggio. Critical listening is encouraged as the student plays the scale and arpeggio and is asked to identify any weakness in her own playing. Self-criticism and sensitive aural perception are developed. Confidence is also built in teacher-student interactions where the student is encouraged to make suggestions of remedial work.

The third activity makes a connection with the previous activity in maintaining the same key. It develops aural perception in testing the aural memory of a melodic phrase with the appropriate inflexions as performed by the teacher. Both the abilities of singing back and playing back are being developed even if the latter is more challenging.

The connection with the previous activity is once again the key. However the focus of this activity is to use a different instrument from the one the student regularly plays, in this case, the voice. This promotes variety and develops vocal skills, hence, maintaining the interest level of students. For certain students however, singing may be a daunting task as they are afraid to sing having not had much experience of singing. It is important for the teacher to encourage the student to make attempts to sing in small steps and not to make any disparaging remarks. Any successful attempt should receive sufficient praise and encouragement.

The fifth activity develops musicianship through improvisation. Once again it maintains the same key as the previous activity and either takes a phrase from the previous aural exercise or introduces a phrase from the sight-reading piece. Anticipating the overall structure of the improvisation and length gives it shape and direction.

In the subsequent activity critical listening, self-assessment and aural skills are being developed simultaneously with improvisatory skills. Being able to state the time signature shows an awareness of the regular pulsation and rhythmic emphasis throughout the improvisation. Analysing the way in which the material was used helps in creating greater awareness of motivic development. It is interesting to note that the use of dynamics is also emphasized as it develops a more musical account of the improvisation.

The seventh activity introduces sight-reading skills and memory work. By this stage, the key of the sight-reading piece should be absolutely familiar as it has been the point of focus and reinforced in the earlier six activities. Other aspects of the piece come into focus such as the tempo, rhythmic sense, pitches, dynamics and performance directions. Asking the student to memorise a phrase at a glance will encourage quick eye movements and brain activity which take a snap-shot of the phrase. Visual and aural memory is being developed. Having the student perform the phrase from memory is a test of how well she is able to transfer the visual and aural memory of the phrase to the muscular execution of it.

In the next activity, musical awareness and memory are being developed. The ability to glean the musical score for shapes and patterns requires quick saccadic eye movements and also sharp analytical skills. It assists in the thinking process and stimulates the brain to take in and analyse as much as possible in a relatively short period of time.

Performance of repertoire and memory work is being developed in the ninth activity. In addition, critical listening and self-assessment skills in terms of accuracy, musicality and understanding the composer's intention are also being honed.

This ensuing activity reinforces the previous one. It gives the student an opportunity to correct any errors or improve on the overall performance in the areas outlined in the previous activity. A further challenge in the final activity is for the student to perform the piece from memory. This should be a natural consequence given the progressive approach taken in learning the piece.

Therefore the aim of the lesson was not merely for the student to be able to perform the sight-reading piece from memory but to provide opportunities to develop musicianship and aural acuity. The key of the piece received an important focus as it was reinforced over six activities. Improvisation was encouraged in activities 5 and 6. An approach to sight-reading also received an important focus as Harris and Crozier emphasized the use of visual and aural memory. Furthermore, aural perception and critical listening were also developed simultaneously using the scale, arpeggio and the sight-reading piece.

2.7.4 Analysis of a group lesson using simultaneous learning

The value of reviewing an analysis of a group lesson employing simultaneous learning is to evaluate the efficacy of the lesson. This lesson (see appendix F) using simultaneous learning was documented and analysed by Ley (2012:17) from a case study on an online clip from a

teaching course launched by ABRSM in 2010. Ley describes the lesson as being well-planned as the teacher employed a number of strategies and used a variety of resources. He found the activities were sequential as one naturally led to the other and were all related to the goal of the lesson. At the close of the lesson, the students had made good progress and most of them managed to perform the piece fluently. Ley concluded that music and the development of musical understanding formed the heart of the lesson.

A more in-depth analysis of the activities within the lesson reveals that the first activity concurs with Rosenshine, Froehlich and Fakhouri's (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:303) principles for an optimal lesson in stating the lesson goals and providing an outline at the beginning of the lesson.

This second activity develops the students' rhythmic sense and subtly introduces them to a rhythmical pattern which they will experience later in the new piece. It also simultaneously develops their technical ability in terms of finger dexterity and also their improvisatory skills through a simple call and response exercise.

In the third activity, the key of the piece is introduced by means of recognition or flash cards. The students are encouraged to practise the scale in varied ways by starting on different degrees and playing in parts. This innovative way of practising scales will remove the boredom of endless repetitions and the loneliness of practising scales on their own. Therefore it is effective in being a more inspiring way of practising scales which is often regarded as a mundane task.

The connection between the fourth activity and the previous one is the familiarity with the key of the new piece in terms of notation and performance of its scale. This activity focuses on the rhythms of the piece and thus develops the aural perception of the piece in advance of playing it. Breaking down the music into small segments is a good practice method and approach to learning a new piece. Some may argue that it is inadvisable for the teacher to play together with the students as this may lead to mindless copying on the part of the student. Furthermore, the teacher may not be able to detect errors on the part of the students as he is unable to hear them over his own performance. However, from another point of view, playing together with the student may foster more confidence and enable the student to keep going till the end of the piece.

The fifth activity reinforces the aural perception of the piece in terms of rhythm and melody. Clapping the rhythm against an accompaniment will challenge the students to maintain their

memory and aural sense of the rhythmic line. If the rhythmic sense is poor, the students will have difficulty in clapping the rhythm. However, Ley shows an awareness of this possibility and asks for the students to clap the rhythm again showing the importance of getting the rhythm absolutely correct before embarking on playing the piece. He takes it a step further by asking the students to sing the melody line. This develops greater accuracy in terms of intonation.

The ensuing activity is in line with Rosenshine et al.'s (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:303) principles for an optimal lesson. It advocates independent practice where students only receive help during initial steps. After this, practice continues until the students are playing independently. The teacher provides active supervision only where it is necessary. In the final activity a performance of the repertoire takes place.

Critical listening is developed as the students discuss and evaluate their performance. Aural acuity is simultaneously developed as they recognize the rhythms they had practiced earlier. Independence and self-criticism are encouraged as they note the features they need to practise at home. This will lead to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility on the part of the student with less reliance on the teacher.

Although this lesson plan was designed for a group of guitarists, it can be applied to a different group of instrumentalists such as a group of pianists.

2.8 Summary

The literature reviewed shows that music in Malaysia has a large focus on ethnic music of the various races and indigenous people. Research in Western music in Malaysia revealed a lesser focus. There seems to be a paucity in literature about piano teaching in West Malaysia. There is therefore clearly a need for more research in this area in order to give an overview of the current context as the literature reviewed does not address specific issues in piano teaching and this study will therefore fill the gap in the research. However, information on piano examinations conducted in Malaysia is readily available from the various web-sites of the examination boards. Criteria for optimal lessons were researched in order to establish relevant theoretical foundations to underpin this research. In particular, it was discovered that the concept of “simultaneous learning” is a salient criterion for optimal lessons. In exploring related research in this field, various lesson plans were examined to determine specific elements which were present in these lessons. This is to provide supporting evidence from

various professional piano teachers for an optimal lesson. The areas which were researched included critical listening, an expanded repertoire, inner ear development and developing an understanding of the composer's intentions. Hence, these areas were delved into to substantiate the need for these elements in an optimal lesson. The researcher believes that simultaneous learning and related techniques discussed in this literature review are particularly suited to piano teaching in West Malaysia as there is a particular need for more holistic, integrated teaching methods, as Malaysian students and teachers have a specific problem with lesson content being dominated by examination requirements.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will define and expand on the research strategy. It will also describe the techniques of data collection in terms of the use of analytical surveys and semi-structured interviews. It will further expand on the strategies behind the structuring of the questionnaire and the interview questions. In addition, it will explore the approach in data analysis and validation procedures. Finally, it will discuss the adoption of an eclectic study for this research.

3.2 Research strategy

This study has adopted a mixed methods research approach. Greene, Tashakkori and Teddlie explain that in this approach quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of the research situation (cited in Maree 2008:261). According to Maree (2008:264), the rationale behind the explanatory mixed method design is “that the quantitative results provide a general picture of the research problem while the qualitative results refine, explain and extend the general picture”. The explanatory mixed method design is shown in figure 1.

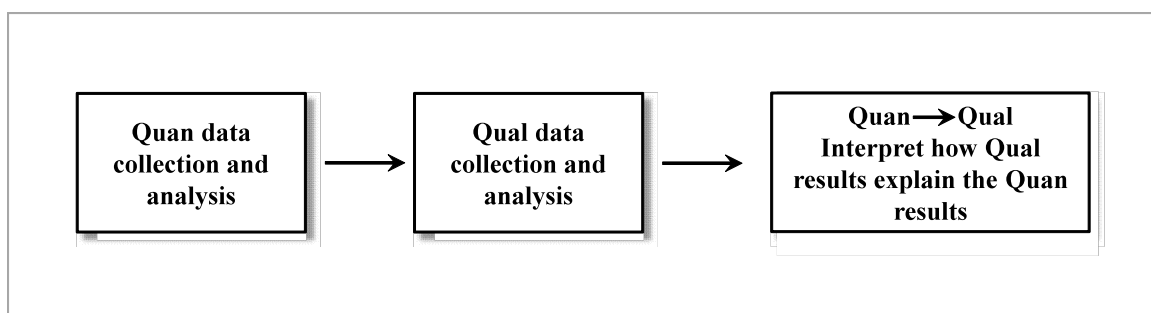


Figure 3.1: Explanatory mixed methods design⁶

⁶ Maree 2008:264

Moreover, Creswell (2009:3) states that qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches are not as discrete as they first appear. According to Newman and Benz, qualitative and quantitative approaches should be viewed as the “different ends on a continuum” (cited in Creswell 2009:3). Creswell (2009:3) adds that “mixed methods research resides in the middle of this continuum because it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches”. Creswell (2009: 206) maintains that there are four important aspects that influence a mixed methods study. They are timing, weighting, mixing and theorizing. In the case of timing, the researcher would need to consider the timing of the qualitative and quantitative data, that is, the order of the data collection whether it is concurrent or sequential and the order, determining which one should be collected first. As for weighting, the researcher has to consider the priority given to both quantitative and qualitative research. Various factors may determine the weighting such as the “interests of the researcher, the audience for the study and what the investigator seeks to emphasize in the study” (Creswell 2009:207).

In considering mixing the data, two questions which arise are: “*When* does the researcher mix in a mixed methods study? And *how* does mixing occur?”(Creswell 2009:207). Mixing the data can occur during data collection, data analysis and interpretation. It can also occur during all three stages. To answer the second question, Creswell suggests that qualitative and quantitative data may be merged on one end of the continuum, kept on separate ends of the continuum; or combined in some way between both ends. The data may also be connected between the different phases of research or integrated by merging both data.

It is also important to consider whether “a larger, theoretical perspective guides the entire design” (Creswell 2009:208). In mixed methods research, the theories are typically found at the initial sections of the research and serves “as an orienting lens that shapes the types of questions asked, who participates in the study, how data are collected, and the implications made from the study” (Creswell 2009:208).

In considering the strategies behind the mixed methods approach, the following are typical strategies which are regularly used (Creswell 2009:211-216):

- Sequential explanatory strategy
- Sequential exploratory strategy
- Sequential transformative strategy
- Concurrent triangulation strategy
- Concurrent embedded strategy
- Concurrent transformative strategy

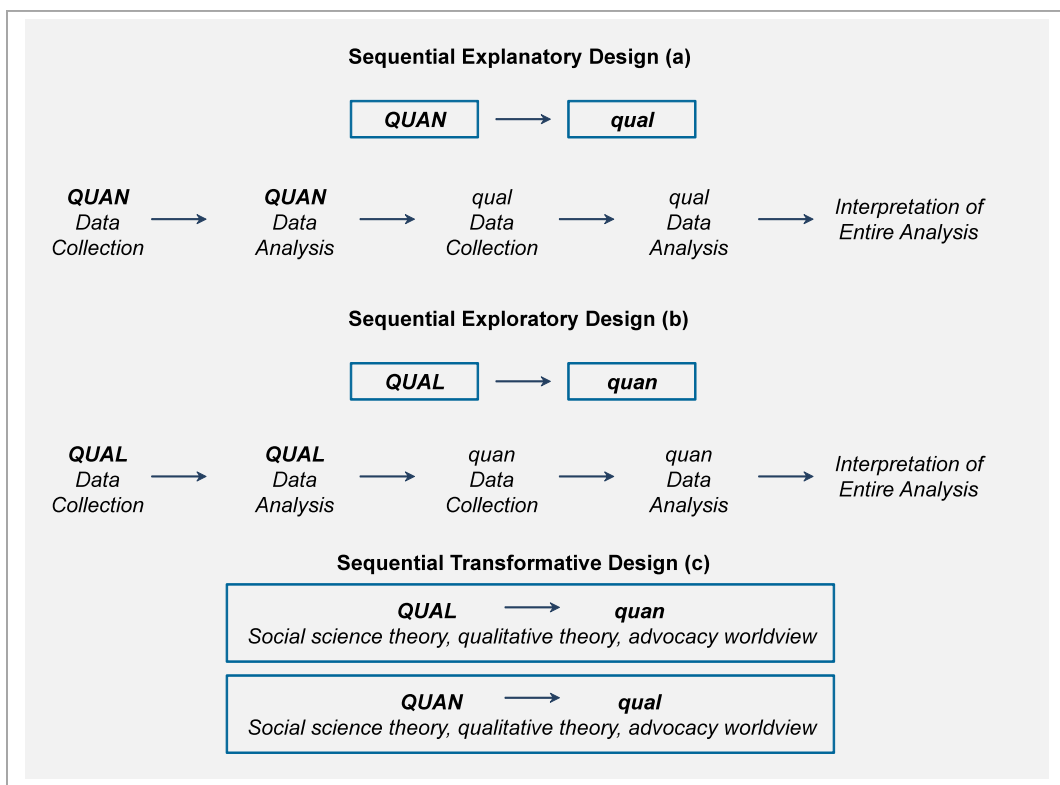


Figure 3.2: Sequential Designs⁷

⁷ Creswell 2009: 209

3.3 Selection of participants

Quantitative data was collected using a pre-determined instrument based on a self-structured questionnaire. The sampling of participants was random, “in which each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected? With randomization, a representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population” (Creswell 2009:148). Questionnaires were disseminated to a cross-section of participants from various states in West Malaysia where private piano teaching is prevalent.

Qualitative data was collected from a purposeful sampling from the larger body of participants who had answered the questionnaires spanning a range of teachers who had been teaching for about a year to those who had been teaching for at least twenty years. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling was based on the premise “that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell 2009:178). Furthermore, it was based on semi-structured questions which drew upon the initial questionnaire and were more open-ended in order to achieve greater lucidity on the issues at hand. It therefore helped to build on the results of the initial quantitative data collected during the first stage. As sequential sampling was employed, the sampling from the first stage informed the sampling from the second stage (Creswell 2009:217). This was evident from the fifteen interviewees being selected by purposive sampling from the initial body of twenty-five randomly selected teachers. Consequently, five interviews were selected from the fifteen interviews on the basis of richness of text and the level of comprehensibility for an in-depth study including exploratory comments and emergent themes.

3.3.1 Ethical issues

As regards ethical procedures in data collection, it was necessary to treat each participant with respect and not to put any of them at risk. It was also vital to respect “vulnerable populations....such as minors (under the age of 19), mentally incompetent participants, victims, persons with neurological impairments, pregnant women or fetuses, prisoners, and individuals with AIDS” (Creswell 2009:89). This research did not involve any individual from the vulnerable populations.

Prior to data collection, the researcher developed an informed consent form (letters of consent and assent) which the teachers who had been selected to participate had to complete before venturing to fill in their respective questionnaires. These letters (see appendix A) described

the nature and procedure of the study and made it clear that participation was entirely voluntary. It expressly stated that all information gathered will be treated with confidentiality and that the teacher's participation in this study would carry no risk of any kind. The researcher also offered to make the results of the study available to the participant.

Ethically, the researcher had also to consider the following issues during the course of the interviews (adapted from Creswell 2009:90):

- How the interview would improve the human situation
- How a sensitive interview may be stressful for the participants
- Whether the participants have a say in how their statements are interpreted
- How critically the interviewees might be questioned
- What the consequences of the interview for the interviewees might be
- How to protect the privacy of the participants in case harmful, intimate information is disclosed during the interview

3.3.2 Quantitative data collection

Creswell affirms that “a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. From sample results, the researcher generalizes or makes claims about the population” (Creswell 2009:145). Surveys are “studies that are usually quantitative in nature and which aim to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population” (Mouton 2008:152).

Creswell maintains that a survey can be cross-sectional where data is collected at one point of time or longitudinal where data is collected over a period of time (Creswell 2009 :146). In the case of this study the survey was cross-sectional. Moreover, Fink (cited in Creswell 2009:146) specifies four types of data collection: self-administered questionnaires; interviews; structured record reviews and structured observations. The first two types of data collection were administered in this study.

The strengths of conducting surveys are that it has the “potential to generalize to large populations if appropriate sampling design has been implemented and (it has a) high measurement reliability if proper questionnaire construction and high construct validity if proper controls have been implemented” (Mouton 2008:153). According to Creswell, the sampling design can either be single stage or multistage (also known as clustering). “A

single-stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to names in the population and can sample the people (or other elements) directly. In multistage or clustering procedure, the researcher first identifies clusters (groups or organizations), obtains names of individuals within those clusters, and then samples within them” (Creswell 2009:148). A single-stage sampling procedure was employed in this study.

As for the techniques of data collection, questionnaires (see appendix B) were disseminated to a cross-section of participants from various states in West Malaysia where private piano teaching is prevalent. A wide selection of teachers who are actively teaching the piano, were approached for the study. As stated in the criteria for purposive sampling, these teachers had many common factors in their background and teaching experience. However, it was also deemed important to select participants from various states in West Malaysia as each state has its own characteristics that shape or mould the experience of a piano teacher. For instance, in Wilayah Persekutuan where the country’s capital Kuala Lumpur is located; and in Selangor where the largest suburban city Petaling Jaya is located, piano teachers have greater exposure to international musicians and also many local musicians who have received international training. Seminars, lecture-recitals, workshops, competitions and concert recitals are abundant and readily available all year round. In contrast, in the northern state of Kedah, eastern state of Kelantan and central state of Pahang, a piano recital would be regarded as a major event and there is a lack of proper facilities such as a concert hall or even a grand piano. Piano teachers from states such as these would need to make a special effort to travel in order to attend events in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya.

The questionnaires and letters of consent were sent out by e-mail, regular mail and included in the folders given to participants who attended events organised by the researcher. The questionnaires were also given to music students attending classes at the researcher’s music studio as well as to music students studying at various private music centres, music colleges and music departments of local universities. Quantitative results were collected through twenty- five survey questionnaires (see appendix B) distributed to piano teachers in West Malaysia in order “to provide a general picture of the research problem” (Maree 2008:264). Initial questions were to determine the demographics of the respondents. The level of teaching involvement of the respondents was directly related to the number of teaching hours per week and the number of students taught at the various levels of proficiency. Subsequently, different elements were presented and respondents were to indicate whether or not these existed in their piano lessons. The extent to which the elements were applied in

piano lessons was queried through the allowance of describing their approach, where applicable.

The first four questions focused on basic biographical information like the piano teacher's gender, age group, race and highest musical qualification. The next five questions queried the teacher's experience in terms of the number of years teaching the piano, number of teaching hours per week, number of students both preparing and not preparing for graded piano examinations and frequency of entering students for graded piano examinations. The next question was to determine the durations of piano lessons taught per week at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. The following eight questions were related to the lesson content in terms of the number of new pieces taught per year, the inclusion of non-examination repertoire, analysis of pieces, music appreciation of recorded and live performances, improvisation or playing by ear and sight-reading. The next two questions looked at the musical activities and performance experiences organised for the students, viz: performance opportunities as a soloist, accompanist, in an ensemble in competitions or concert recitals. The final question was a self-assessment on rating the piano teacher's overall experience of teaching Western Classical piano music.

3.3.3 Qualitative data collection: interviews

Creswell states: "Qualitative research is interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants" (Creswell 2009:177).

Qualitative research in education has also come to be known as "naturalistic inquiry" which is a "non-positivistic approach to research in which the researcher is the instrument, and the focus is on understanding the meaning the people under study give to their experiences" (Tesch 1990:43, 50-51). It is viewed by Guba and Lincoln as a method for "getting at the truth" (cited in Tesch 1990:43). Tesch maintains that "Humans are the major form of data collection device" (Tesch 1990:44). Furthermore, she sees qualitative research as evaluative research which is rooted in educational anthropology. Qualitative research is often referred to as "ethnography" which Goetz and LeCompte define as a "way of...studying life" (cited in Tesch 1990:46). Tesch defines ethnography as a "describing and analyzing practices and beliefs of cultures and communities (as consistent wholes)".

In administering interviews, Creswell suggests that they are useful when participants cannot be directly observed. One is able to obtain historical information of the interviewee's

experience and the researcher has control over the line of questioning. There are limitations to interviews as well. The accuracy of the information given may be questionable as it is “filtered through the views of the interviewees”; information is provided in a designated place as opposed to its natural field setting; the researcher being present may cause a bias in the response and not all the interviewees may have the same level of understanding, perception and ability to articulate a response (Creswell 2009:179).

Qualitative results were collected through fifteen interviews (see appendix C) with piano teachers in West Malaysia in order to “refine, explain and extend the general picture” (Maree 2008:264). The participants were known to the interviewer for several years as fellow teachers and students, both past and present. A few of the participants had established music schools and were principals of their schools. Others were teaching privately or at music schools.

The interviews were conducted “face-to-face - one-on-one, in-person interview” (Creswell 2009:179); by telephone and also by e-mail and Skype via the internet. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews which was audiotaped and later transcribed *ad verbatim*. Participants were encouraged to expand on their experience of teaching whenever possible. Physical reactions such as hesitation, laughter and nervous gestures during the course of the interviews were recorded. Comments were made on their responses and emergent themes were derived.

Twenty questions were asked in order to determine the following:

- the respondents’ background of teaching
- the content or elements taught in their classes
- approaches in teaching different elements
- beliefs - philosophy towards examinations
- Feelings about their level of achievement and satisfaction in their teaching
- Motivation for teaching
- Challenges they may have faced in teaching

In the process of conducting the interviews, the researcher found that arguably the biggest limitation was that of language. Most of the interviewees were not able to grasp the full impact of the questions asked owing to a poor command and understanding of the English language. There were therefore many instances in which questions had to be explained and

the suggestions had to be given in order for the interviewee to have a better understanding of what was being asked.

3.4 Data analysis and validation procedures

Data analysis “occurs both within the quantitative (descriptive and inferential numeric analysis) and the qualitative (description and thematic text or image analysis) approach and often between the two approaches” (Creswell 2009:218). In the mixed methods data analysis the following approach was used in analyzing the quantitative data:

- Statistical analysis was reported from the survey
- Tables, line graphs and bar charts and were employed for a visual representation
- An “effect size” (Creswell 2009 :167) was pre-determined to identify the strength of the conclusions

As for qualitative data, Creswell’s approach was adopted in the following way (Creswell 2009:185):

- Data was organized and prepared for analysis by transcribing interviews
- Data was read through to get a general sense of the information and overall meaning
- Coding the data was done manually to determine themes
- Themes were interrelated
- Meanings of the themes were interpreted

A series of steps were taken to validate the accuracy of both the quantitative and qualitative data. Both internal and external threats to validity were considered. The researcher has noted the threat to internal validity, among those listed by Creswell, which is relevant to this paper, is that of “Selection”:- “Participants can be selected who have certain characteristics which predispose them to have certain outcomes. (To counter this threat), the researcher can select participants randomly so that characteristics have the probability of being equally distributed...” (Creswell 2009: 163-165).

Creswell maintains that “External validity threats arise when experimenters draw incorrect inferences from the sample data to other persons, other settings, and past and future situations” (Creswell 2009:162).

He also lists the following as types of threats to external validity:

- Interaction of selection and treatment
- Interaction of setting and treatment
- Interaction of history and treatment

Of this list, the researcher has found the threat of interaction of selection and treatment relevant to this study. This is “because of the narrow characteristics of participants in the experiment, the researcher cannot generalize to individuals who do not have the characteristics of participants. (To counter this threat), the researcher restricts claims about groups to which the results cannot be generalized” (Creswell 2009: 165).

Furthermore, interpretative phenomenology, a type of phenomenological analysis was used in this study to analyse the emergent themes from the analysis of the five interviews which were selected on the basis of the richness of text and comprehensibility. Willig (2013:54) is of the opinion that the methodological recommendations of transcendental phenomenology has “proved to be of interest to researchers in the social sciences in general and in psychology in particular. This is because phenomenology focuses upon the content of consciousness and the individual’s experience of the world”. He quotes from Kvale (cited in Willig 2013:54):

Phenomenology is interested in elucidating both that which appears and the manner in which it appears. It studies the subjects’ perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects’ consciousness, to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to explicate their meanings.

Willig believes that any human experience can be subjected to phenomenological analysis which is why it appeals to psychological researchers. He also points out that many researchers embrace a hermeneutic or interpretative version of phenomenology. This, together with what the researcher brings to the text, constitutes an integral part of phenomenological analysis. Willig highlights the fact that there are two types of phenomenological analysis. The first is a phenomenological contemplation of an object or event and requires an introspective attention to one’s own experience. The second is a phenomenological analysis of an account of a particular experience as presented by a research participant and involves getting inside someone else’s experience based on their description of it. Thus, Willig concludes that the research participant’s account becomes the phenomenon with which the researcher engages.

The type of phenomenological analysis used in this study is interpretative phenomenology which “aims to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of the phenomena as they present themselves” (Willig, 2013:56). Willig points out that this type of analysis relies on understanding and it cannot take place without taking the liberty of making some preliminary assumptions about the meaning of what we are trying to understand. He quotes Schmidt (cited in Willig 2013:56) in saying that “ (...) parts can only be understood from an understanding of the whole, but the whole can only be understood from an understanding of the parts”. Willig states that this means that understanding requires a circular movement from presupposition to interpretation and back again”. He also points out that interpretative phenomenological analysis “accepts the impossibility of gaining direct access to research participants’ life worlds”. Therefore “the phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an *interpretation* of the participant’s experience”(Willig 2013:57).

Willig (2013:57) explains that interpretative phenomenological analysis works with transcripts of semi-structured interviews with extreme importance being attached to the interview questions being both “open-ended and non-directive”. Furthermore, this approach allows the researcher to enter, as it were, the personal “life world of the research participant”. Willig points out that interpretative phenomenological analysis takes an *idiographic* approach. WordWeb defines *idiographic* as “psychology relating to or involving the study of individuals” (WordWeb 2013). Willig adds that the insights garnered from the intense and detailed engagement with each individual case are integrated during the later stages of the research.

According to Willig, interpretative phenomenology involves four stages in its methodology:

1. The researcher’s initial encounter with the text
2. Identification and labeling of themes
3. Introducing structure by clustering of themes
4. Production of a summary table of the structured themes

Willig (2013:58) further elaborates that in the first stage, the transcripts or texts are read and reread. The researcher is encouraged to make notes that reflect his initial thoughts and observations. This may include associations, questions, summary statements, comments on language use, among others. In the second stage, the researcher has to identify and label themes which characterize each portion or section of the transcript. In the third stage, the researcher should attempt to introduce structure into the analysis by clustering the themes.

Willig maintains that some may form natural clusters of concepts. In the fourth stage, the researcher should produce a summary table of structured themes. Each theme should be illustrated by quotations and should be focused on the quality of the participant's experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Beyond the fourth stage, Willig (2013:61) suggests that the researcher may attempt to integrate the individual summary tables into an inclusive list of master themes that reflects the experiences of the group of participants as a whole. It should be understood that the group of participants is homogeneous as they share a particular experience, event, situation or condition. This will help in developing a more generalized understanding of the phenomenon.

Willig (2013:63) also suggests that it is possible to have "a more explicit interpretation of the themes identified in the research. To achieve this Larkin et al. (cited in Willig 2013:63) suggests the researcher may draw upon existing theoretical constructs and formulations. According to Eatough and Smith (cited in Willig 2013:63), this may be taken a stage further by adopting two levels of interpretation. The first aims to allow the researcher to enter the participant's world on a more descriptive and emphatic level. The second is more interrogative and critical of the participant's account. It aims to gain further insight into the nature, meaning and origin of the account.

Willig (2013:67) states that the limitations of this method are both conceptual and practical. The first limitation is in the role of the language as phenomenological analysis works with texts, transcripts and semi-structured interviews, among others. Therefore language is the means by which the participants communicate their experiences to the researcher. Willig concludes that phenomenological analysis relies on the representational validity of language. However it can be argued that "language can never simply give expression to experience". Hence, Willig maintains that an interview transcript may tell us more about the way an individual talks about a particular experience than about the experience itself.

Another limitation is in the suitability of accounts. As the aim of phenomenological analysis is to have a better understanding of "what it is like to live in a particular moment or situation"(Willig 2013:67), this raises some difficult questions as listed by Willig:

- To what extent do participants' accounts constitute suitable material for phenomenological analysis?
- How successfully are participants able to communicate the rich texture of their experience to the researcher?

- How many people are able to use language in such a way as to capture the subtleties and nuances of their physical and emotional experiences?

3.5 Summary

It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was a sequential explanatory strategy. Quantitative data was acquired by the use of self-structured questionnaires and qualitative data was collected through structured interviews where the questions were designed to build on the results of the initial quantitative data. It was evident that qualitative measures would usefully supplement and extend the quantitative analysis. In conducting the surveys, a single-stage sampling procedure was employed in which the researcher had access to names in the population and could sample the people directly in this study. In the qualitative interviews, the researcher was “typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants” (Creswell 2009:177) in order to get at the truth of the matter. However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of interviews. The accuracy of the information given may be questionable as it is “filtered through the views of the interviewees”; information is provided in a designated place as opposed to its natural field setting; the researcher being present may cause a bias in the response and not all the interviewees may have the same level of understanding, perception and ability to articulate a response (Creswell 2009:179).

A data analysis was made in this study in which the elements which are not regularly included in a typical piano lesson taught in West Malaysia were determined. The researcher subsequently explored criteria for optimal lessons in order to establish relevant theoretical foundations. Suggestions toward criteria for optimal lessons were based on established research (Harris & Crozier 2000; Colwell & Richardson 2002:299; Ley 2012). It was also deemed essential to establish the premise on which these lessons were based, namely, the one-to-one encounter, formulated on what Harris and Crozier (2000) described as the master-apprentice model (cited in Ley, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

Data results and discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter both the quantitative and qualitative data will be presented and discussed. Quantitative data was collected by means of twenty-five survey questionnaires targeted at piano teachers from different states of West Malaysia. Qualitative data included fifteen interview sessions which were conducted with selected piano teachers who had answered the survey questionnaires and were available and willing to elaborate further on their experience of piano teaching.

The qualitative component of this study investigates the teaching practices and perceptions of five Malaysian piano music teachers of varying years of experience through a methodology of interpretative phenomenology. This method of analysis garners emergent themes resulting from first identifying the themes and then clustering them. The findings will be listed and discussed. Suggestions will also be made for further research in this area.

4.2 Quantitative data

The survey questionnaire was structured so as to include the basic demographic information of the piano teachers, teaching experience, lesson duration, lesson content, musical activity and performance experience and self-assessment on the teacher's overall experience.

4.2.1 Detailed description of the sample

Thirty questionnaires were given out in person and also sent out by internet. Of these, 25 were completed and returned. Twenty-four of the respondents are female and one male. There is clearly a gender imbalance in this study and it may be indicative of the fact that that piano teaching is a female dominated profession in West Malaysia; however, the sample size may be too small to verify this.

In terms of age of music teachers, more than half of the teachers (16) were above the age of 30. The other nine teachers were between 20 -30 years of age (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Age of piano teachers

Age group	No. of respondents	Percentage
20 - 25 years	3	12%
26 - 30 years	6	24%
31 - 35 years	6	24%
> 35 years	10	40%

West Malaysia consists of Malay, Chinese, Indian and the indigenous people groups. Twenty four of the respondents of the study are Chinese (Table 4.2). Perhaps this is indicative of the fact that the Chinese in West Malaysia value music lessons more than other races resulting in more Chinese piano teachers. This however, will need to be verified with a larger more representative sample of piano teachers.

Table 4.2: Race of piano teachers for this study

Race	No. of respondents	Percentage
Chinese	24	96%
Malay	-	-
Indian	1	4%
Other	-	-

Piano teachers' qualifications ranged from certificate to university degree. Most respondents in this study achieved diploma level qualification (Table 4.3). Five had graded certificate qualification and one completed a degree. The fact that most respondents completed diploma level qualifications could possibly be the result of the accessibility of the qualification because it can be completed in a relatively short period and on a part-time basis in West Malaysia, unlike music degrees which, although available in West Malaysia, would require full time attendance at the university for at least 3 years. Only four respondents specified that they had teaching diplomas.

Table 4.3: Teacher’s music qualification

Qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
Graded certificate	5	20%
Diploma	19	76%
Degree	1	4%

More than half the teachers had between 1-15 years of teaching experience (Table 4.4). Ten teachers had more than 16 years of experience. This sample represents a selection of fairly experienced piano teachers.

Table 4.4: Number of years teaching experience

No. of years	No. of respondents	Percentage
1-5	3	12%
6-10	6	24%
11-15	6	24%
16-20	4	16%
>20	6	24%

Most of the teachers taught more than 20 hours a week reinforcing the fact that they were possibly the more experienced teachers (Table 4.5). It should be noted that one teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 4.5: Number of teaching hours per week

Teaching hours	No. of respondents	Percentage
<10	4	16%
10-15	3	12.5%
16-20	2	9%
>20	15	62.5%

Approximately 400 students were recorded as part of the study. Students’ ability ranged from elementary to advance level which seems to be a fairly even distribution of students preparing for graded examinations (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Level of students preparing for graded piano examinations

Elementary level		Intermediate level		Advanced level	
No. of students	No. of respondents	No. of students	No. of respondents	No. of students	No. of respondents
1-9	17	1-9	18	1-9	15
10-15	2	10-15	2	10-15	-
16-20	1	16-20	-	1-9	1
>20	1	>20	-	>20	-

For the majority, 12 teachers, had between 1-5 students not preparing for graded piano examinations followed by eight teachers who had more than 10 students not preparing for graded piano examinations (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Students not preparing graded piano examinations

No. of students	No. of respondents	Percentage
None	3	12%
1-5	12	48%
6-10	2	8%
>10	8	32%

Most of the teachers entered students annually for graded piano examinations, whereas approximately half entered their students bi-annually (Table 4.8). Only three teachers entered their students for graded examinations occasionally. It can be surmised that students generally entered for these examinations on a yearly basis.

Table 4.8: Frequency of entering students for graded piano examinations

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Occasionally	3	12%
Yearly	15	60%
Bi-annually	7	28%
Others	-	-

At the elementary level the preferred lesson duration is 30 minutes. A few teachers extended the lesson time to 45 minutes, and one taught for one hour. At the intermediate level the preferred lesson duration is 45 minutes. Quite a few teachers extended the lesson time to an

hour, and a few more to over an hour. At advance level, the preferred lesson time exceeds an hour although many teachers keep the lesson time to an hour.

4.2.2 Lesson content

This section relates to the lesson content in terms of the number of new pieces taught per year, regularity of the inclusion of non-examination repertoire, topics taught in a piano lesson; analysis of pieces, music appreciation of recorded and live performances, improvisation or playing by ear and sight-reading.

Twenty-three teachers taught more than ten new pieces each year at the elementary level and the remaining two teachers taught between seven to ten new pieces yearly (Table 4.9). At the intermediate level, 14 of the teachers taught more than ten new pieces annually while the remaining eight taught between seven to ten new pieces yearly. Three teachers abstained from answering as they did not teach students of intermediate level. At the advanced level, only 20 participants responded to this question as the remaining five did not teach students of advanced levels. Of these seven teachers taught between four to six new pieces yearly, six teachers taught between seven to ten new pieces and the remaining six taught more than ten new pieces. Only one teacher stated that she taught between one to three new pieces annually.

Table 4.9: Number of new pieces taught per year

Elementary level		Intermediate level		Advanced level	
No. of pieces	No. of respondents	No. of pieces	No. of respondents	No. of pieces	No. of respondents
1-3	-	1-3	-	1-3	1
4-6	-	4-6	-	4-6	7
7-10	2	7-10	8	7-10	6
>10	23	>10	14	>10	6

As for the frequency of teaching non-examination piano repertoire, more than half the teachers taught this regularly and less than half the teachers only occasionally.

Table 4.10: Regularity of inclusion of non-examination repertoire

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	-	-
Occasionally	11	44%
Regularly	14	56%

Topics regularly taught in a piano lesson were repertoire in the form of examination and non-examination pieces, sight-reading, technical exercises and analysis of pieces (Figure 4.1). Both examination and non-examination pieces received equal emphasis. Sight-reading and technical exercises were also very similar in emphasis. Although analysis was frequently taught, about a third of the teachers did not teach it at all. Ear training and music appreciation were also taught but it was significantly less in frequency.

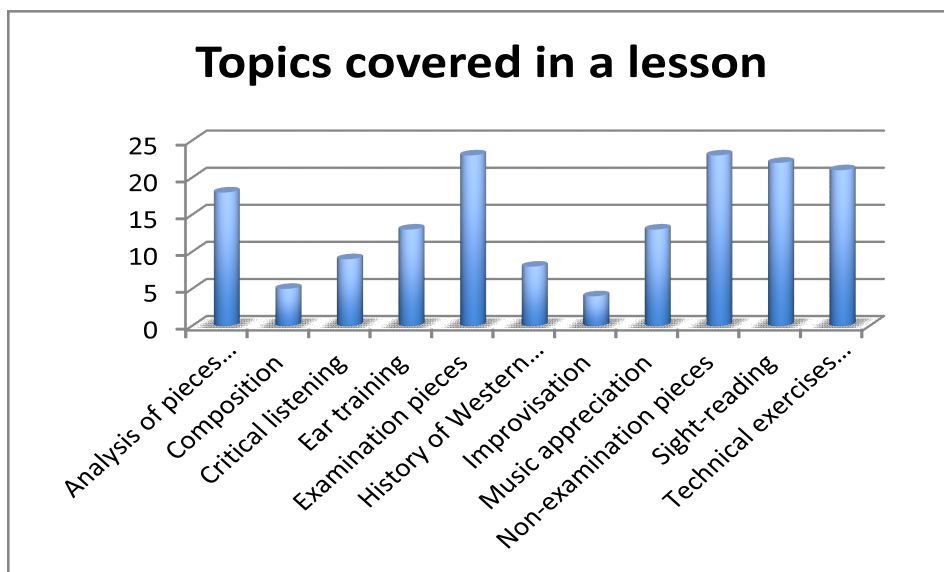


Figure 4.1: Topics covered in a lesson

It is evident from the results in figure 4.2 that topics which are not or rarely covered in piano lessons are improvisation, composition, history of Western music and critical listening. Only four teachers responded positively to teaching improvisation. Similarly, only five teachers taught composition. Both history of Western music and critical listening received similar emphasis of being taught.

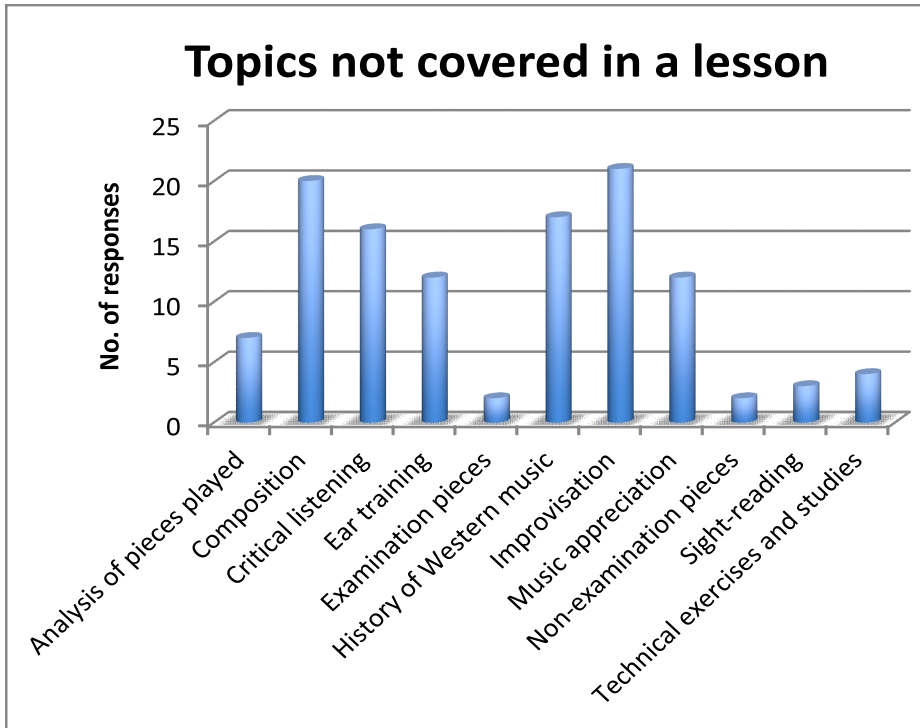


Figure 4.2: Topics not covered in a lesson

Analysis of the pieces played is an area in which the teachers showed awareness but it was taught occasionally by most of them. Only a third of the teachers taught analysis regularly and one teacher did not teach it at all (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11: Frequency of analysing pieces

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	1	4%
Occasionally	15	60%
Regularly	9	36%

Active listening sessions to enhance appreciation of Western Classical music and extend repertoire was conducted only occasionally by about half the teachers (Table 4.12). Only five teachers conducted listening sessions regularly into their teaching routine while the rest of the teachers had never conducted listening sessions.

Table 4.12: Frequency of listening to recorded classical music

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	6	24%
Occasionally	14	56%
Regularly	5	20%

Concert outings for students were organised occasionally by majority of the teachers (Table 4.13). Only five teachers organised these regularly whilst the remaining two teachers had never organised a concert outing for their students.

Table 4.13: Frequency of organising concert outings for students

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	2	8%
Occasionally	18	72%
Regularly	5	20%

Improvisation is taught regularly by only two of the respondents (Table 4.14). More than half of the teachers teach it occasionally and a large number of teachers never teach improvisation.

Table 4.14: Frequency of teaching improvisation or playing by ear

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	10	40%
Occasionally	13	52%
Regularly	2	8%

Sight-reading is included regularly in lessons by over half the teachers whilst the rest of the teachers include the development of this skill on an occasional basis (Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: Frequency of teaching sight-reading

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Never	-	-
Occasionally	11	44%
Regularly	14	56%

4.2.3 Musical activity and performance experience

The most common performance experience for the students was performing in a concert as a soloist (Figure 4.3). About half of those surveyed (11) indicated that they had arranged for students to have opportunities to perform as accompanists or to participate in an ensemble. Only one teacher reported that she arranged for her students to participate in piano competitions.

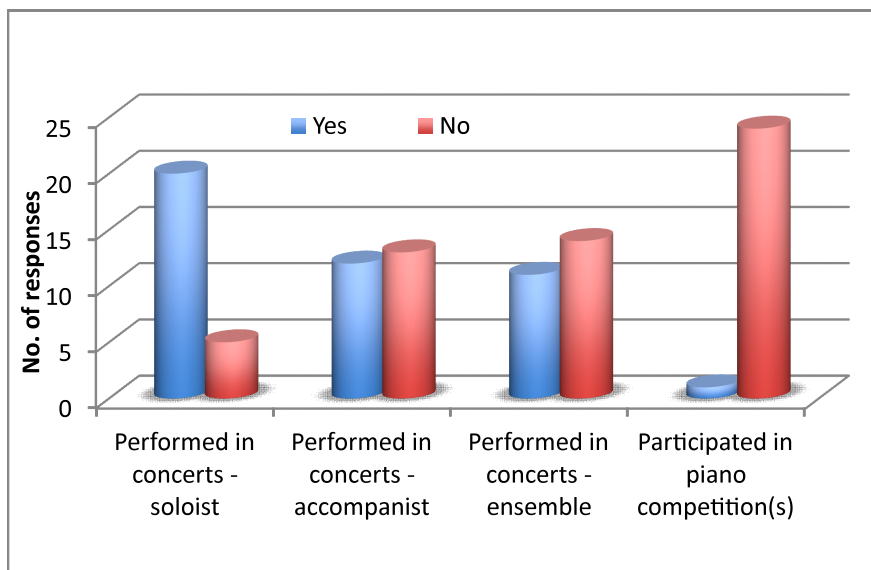


Figure 4.3: Musical activities and performance experiences

Most of the teachers (18) organised concerts for their students to perform in front of their family and friends while the remaining six did not (Table 4.16). One teacher abstained from answering this question entirely implying that she did not organize concerts for her students or did not wish to disclose such information.

Table 4.16: Organisation of concerts for students' performance

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	18	75%
No	6	25%
Abstain	1	-

4.2.4 Self-assessment of teachers

To conclude the questionnaire, the teachers were asked how they rated their overall experience of teaching Western Classical piano music. The responses from the teachers ranged from being satisfactory to good (Table 4.17). Only two teachers found their experience to be very good and the remaining two found their experience to be unsatisfactory.

Table 4.17: Overall experience of teaching Western classical piano music

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very good	2	8%
Good	6	24%
Satisfactory	15	60%
Unsatisfactory	2	8%

4.3 Qualitative data

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching practices and perceptions of five Malaysian piano music teachers in order to give greater clarity on (a) understanding how teachers approach piano tuition in West Malaysia, (b) identifying the elements which are lacking or absent in a typical lesson, (c) understanding how much teachers rely on foreign examination syllabi as a basis for lessons and, (d) studying the recurring characteristics or features in the teaching of piano teachers in West Malaysia. Participants were of varying years of experience ranging from one and a half years to over twenty years. They have been teaching students ranging from elementary to advanced levels. In this study, interpretative phenomenology analysis was selected as an appropriate method

“to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of the phenomena as they present themselves” (Willig 2013:56).

Initially a broad range of twenty-five research participants were asked to complete a questionnaire each which explored factual information regarding their personal musical background, teaching practice and experience. Subsequently fifteen research participants selected by purposive sampling were asked if they would like to be interviewed. Clear objectives had to be established for the interviews bearing in mind that the data is based on self-report perceptions of piano music teachers’ views about their teaching practice. The willing research participants were then interviewed individually using semi-structured questions which allowed for elaboration on certain areas of interest or concern. Of the fifteen interviews, five were selected on the basis of the richness of the text and the level of comprehensibility as the command of the English language was somewhat limited in several other cases. Interviews were transcribed *ad verbatim* and formatted to include exploratory comments and emergent themes.

For the qualitative component of the study I conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 participants which were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim according to one of the approaches recommended by Creswell (2009:182). The interview questions (see Appendix C) probed the teachers’ experiences of piano teaching, their aims and specific objectives in piano teaching, philosophy regarding examinations, lesson content, approaches to teaching specific elements in a piano lesson, performance objectives and self-assessment of the teachers’ achievement level in terms of their students’ progress. These questions correspond to the aim of this study to investigate the effectiveness of teaching practices and perceptions of five Malaysian piano music teachers in the following ways:

- a) Teachers’ experiences in piano teaching, their aims and specific objectives in piano teaching and approaches to teaching specific elements provide a broader understanding on how teachers approach piano tuition in West Malaysia.
- (b) The lesson content and approaches to teaching specific elements help in identifying the elements which are lacking or absent in a typical lesson.
- (c) Answers to specific questions on philosophy regarding examinations, choice of repertoire, aural training and sight-reading provide an insight into understanding how much teachers rely on foreign examination syllabi as a basis for lessons.

(d) Answers to specific questions as listed above in (c) including a question related to the importance placed on teaching repertoire assist in ascertaining the recurring characteristics or features in the teaching of piano teachers in West Malaysia.

Fifteen interviews were conducted in person, by telephone, via Skype and on-line by written responses. The length of time taken for the spoken interviews ranged between eight to sixteen minutes. The responses from the fifteen interviews will be taken into account in the following section of this chapter. The main questions will be presented in italics followed by the detailed discussion of the answers.

4.3.1 Experience of piano teaching

In response to the question *‘Could you please describe your experience of piano teaching?’* it was evident that most teachers found teaching to be enjoyable, stating that it was interesting, satisfying, challenging and fun. A teacher commented that she not only found it interesting but she learned a lot when she taught and increased her own understanding of classical music.

It is apparent that many teachers have students who have a bad technique and are very tense in performance. Respondent 10 finds that her students do not listen to themselves and are not aware of the kind of tone they produce while playing. The resultant effect is either a weak or harsh tone. She attributes the cause to undue tension caused by arm pumping from the forearm and stressed their need to be more relaxed in performance.

A further question to probe more detail on the first question *‘Could you please elaborate on your students in terms of their musical and technical abilities?’* elicited the following responses:

Respondent 10:

Mostly students when they come, they have bad technique. They are just so concerned in producing the sound so I find they have weak tone basically. Either that or it is too harsh. They use a lot of arm pumping... Or they are very tense in their forearm. You see after that I am very particular in relaxation.

It is plain that many teachers feel that their students with an inborn or inherent musical ability were naturally fast learners. Respondent 9 explains that such students are also impatient to learn “songs” or pieces fast. However, she adds that they will not be able to manage playing the pieces without the teacher’s help on technical issues.

Respondent 9:

And umm...if they the students have a musical ability in their inborn then, that could be a fast learner, usually is a fast learner. [...] and things that they want to learn are like uh... (pause) they know how to play the song fast

But ah...technically, they need a teacher's guide to play well.

Have you experienced any challenges in teaching your students?

It is evident that many of the teachers experienced frustration with students who do not prepare adequately for examinations. Respondent 10 mentions that pupils often don't have enough time to practice which results in lesson time wasted on practicing.

Respondent 10:

Yes, definitely. Most of them are that they don't practise. The biggest challenge is that they don't have enough time to practise. So we spend most of the time in the lesson practising rather than to build on what they should have done at home. [...] So it takes a lot of their (answer inaudible) time...some theory. It is quite a problem.

KA: Hmm, ok. So you find yourself practising with them in your lessons sometimes...

Ya (exasperated sigh)

It is clear that many teachers shared respondent 10's opinion that their students lacked practice. Respondent 12 offers an explanation that the students have no time as they have too many activities and are probably overwhelmed by so many tasks that they have no interest. It appears that the only reason they have lessons is to fulfill the will of their parents, not because they have any interest in piano lessons.

Respondent 12:

Ah... most of them ...the main problem is lack of practice.

Uh, I think they have too many activities, no time. Another thing is lack of interest. Their parents send them because their parents want them to learn but they are not interested.

In addition to respondent 12's frustration over students having neither time nor interest to pursue their musical studies, it is evident that teachers also felt burdened by students who are over-reliant on them and are not able to work independently. Respondent 5 mentions that students do not know how to work hard but are expecting hand-outs from the teacher. She attributes this to the system of Malaysian education which she feels does not encourage students "to think or act for themselves". Teachers will do everything for the students thus preventing them from having to think or act for themselves. More so, the students are also expecting the teacher to do all the work for them.

Respondent 5:

I realised the education also...the way of Malaysia education already like affected them. Um...they don't know hard work ah. You need hard work to do something. They hope some teacher can help.

KA: Do you feel that our education system spoon feeds them too much?

Yea

KA: Mmm, so they are expecting the teacher to do all the work for them.

(Vague yes by nodding somewhat)

4.3.2 General aims and specific objectives in piano teaching

What are your general aims and specific objectives in piano teaching?

It is evident that teachers shared a common aim of encouraging their students to expand their repertoire and sight-reading skills. Respondent 6 adds that once her students have acquired these skills sufficiently she would allow them to go for an exam. She qualifies that the exam is to assess their ability and not for the result or certificate.

Respondent 6:

I want them to play more repertoire. [...]To get ...improve their sight-reading

KA: Sight-reading, ok...so musicianship skills

When they are ready for all these skills, then only will let them to go for exam. But it's just for ...the test for their abilities but not for...for the result...have the certificate.

It is apparent that examinations are foremost on the minds of the teachers. Although respondent 8 concurs with respondent 6 on teaching more repertoire, she is focussed on “finishing the grade”. She confirms that to mean the student has completed the Grade 8 certificate piano examination. She adds that this is because of parental pressure where the students are “forced to learn music”.

Respondent 8:

They can play more pieces.

KA: To enjoy the pieces?

They play more pieces...can enjoy the music and can finish the grade.

KA: Finish...meaning go up to grade 8?

(sniggers) Ya! (emphatically, both laugh)

Because most of them they are forced by the parents to learn the music.

It is an unmistakable fact that for many teachers their main aim is to enrol their students for external exams. Similar to respondent 8's focus on examinations, respondent 12 confirms that students learn music mainly for the exam as their parents want the certificate. As a result the teachers feel pressured to prepare and enter the students for exams. She adds that for adult students who do not have parental pressure, her aim is to "make them love music" by allowing them more room to choose pieces that they like to play.

Respondent 12:

Ok. The main aim is ...ah... (laughs) for most students, it is for the exam.

KA: Mainly for the exam, all right...

Mainly for the exam because um...the parents want the certificate.

KA: Ok...

That is the pressure. But of course for those... like they come... they are more adult, then they have their own aim. For those my aim is to make them love music. Let them play more songs that they like.

Could you please elaborate on your specific objectives?

It is evident that many teachers focussed on teaching a variety of repertoire. Respondent 12 encouraged student interaction where her students would be free to express their preferences. However, her reasoning for this was to introduce the student to the category of pieces that they did not mention.

Respondent 12:

Um...ok I will introduce them to... They have their own, how to say, certain songs that they like.

KA: Ok (questioningly)

I would encourage them to let me know. Then maybe I will teach them how to play. [...]

But at the same time I will also introduce them to music other sections. If they like popular music I will introduce them to classical music. If they like classical music I will also introduce them to popular music so they have one or either range.

KA: Ok. So one of the things is that you will widen their range of repertoire.

Ya.

It is obvious that many teachers concurred with the idea of teaching a balanced repertoire which would include both Western classical piano music and popular music, including Chinese popular tunes. Respondent 4 felt that enabling students to play interesting repertoire as well would be motivating and would keep them interested.

Respondent 4:

Actually I will prefer to let them to play some repertoire pieces [...] besides of playing the classical music and some of them, they more interesting in their like pop music right now for the... because I am teaching more the Chinese students. So they will like to play like the singers like Hong Kong or Taiwan one. They will download from the YouTube.

So they just print out. That will teach them more. They more interesting in all these.

KA: Um... (Surprised)

Once they interesting, they will the can play well.

4.3.3 Philosophy regarding piano examinations

Could you please describe your philosophy regarding piano examinations?

It is apparent that teachers viewed examinations as an assessment of the student's standard. Respondent 12 mentions that the examination will give students an incentive to work. She also expresses her opinion that the number of years of learning tends to correspond with the level of the grade.

Respondent 12:

Uh... I feel that ...um... exams are merely an assessment...

KA: Is it helpful? Does it give the children a standard or does it give you a guideline as to how they are doing?

It is helpful for certain students. For example, if they don't practice, the exam...

KA: Will give them an incentive?

Yeah, yeah, so that they must be hard working.[...]Then another thing is also for a guideline so we know where they are.[...]For example they learn three years, we don't where they are... but exam helps to...uh set a standard. Ah she is in grade 3 or grade 4 now.

Respondent 10 concurs with respondent 12 on the philosophy that examinations are an assessment. In response to a query on parental expectations, she elaborates that the parents with whom she deals are more understanding as they realise that their children have a lot to cope with. Their children are therefore learning to enjoy music without the pressure of examinations.

Respondent 10:

Yeah, I do have pressure from parents but not all of them. Most parents nowadays really understand that their children have a lot to cope with. So they just allow their children to enjoy the music... not really that they must finish grade 5 if possible. But for this kind of students I will try to maintain their interest. I will not push if they are not ready. It's not so much for the certificate for me. I will always explain that the exam is an assessment.

4.3.4 Lesson content

In response to the question *'Which areas do you generally cover in a piano lesson?'* it is obvious that teachers took great care to address all the syllabus requirements like scales, exam pieces, sight-reading and aural tests. This meant that these were areas which were taught during a piano lesson. Respondent 4 clearly states this to be the case in her teaching. She adds that she would teach more repertoire to good students.

Respondent 4:

Um... Theory and Practical. So, for the Practical, normally uh... beside of doing uh... doing the when during exam time, doing all the uh... cover up all the syllabus like scales, exam pieces, sight-reading, aural tests. And also, for those that can play good, so I will teach them further repertoire pieces also.

KA: That's additional repertoire?

Uh... Additional.

KA: So you do the main areas which are necessary for the exam

Uh...

It is evident that respondent 10 concurs with respondent 4 in teaching repertoire, sight-reading and aural in a piano lesson. However, respondent 10 had very distinct ideas on simultaneous learning and positive experiences in adopting it in her teaching. Another major difference was her independence from being bound to the examination syllabus. Her focus was on the effectiveness of her teaching.

Respondent 10:

Of course we have the first one covering pieces, right? But I know how important it is to have sight-reading and aural. But I feel there isn't much time for sight-reading. Sometimes it is just two bars per hand but it is just something fresh every week for the student and for aural I will teach it like in a new piece. For example, I will not let them see the piece first and then I will explore some elements of aural in that piece, for example like intervals. I would ask them to identify it. So more like... (thinking hard)

What importance do you place on teaching repertoire in your piano lessons?

It is plain that teaching repertoire is very important to teachers when the student is entered for an examination. Respondent 10 is very specific in stating that she would teach more repertoire to an exam student and less to a non- exam student implying that it is very important to teach the exam repertoire as there is obviously a large emphasis on it in the exam.

Respondent 10:

That's depends on whether they are sitting for exam, you know. If they are sitting for exam then of course it would be 60%.

KA: All right, but if they are not?

Then maybe 45%.

KA: Ok, you are very specific. (both laugh)

Respondent 1 concurs with respondent 10 on the importance of teaching exam repertoire. She mentions that she would teach at least one piece from the exam repertoire at every lesson. Additional repertoire would largely depend on whether the student is a slow or fast learner. Obviously, the slower learners would learn less repertoire than the faster ones.

Respondent 1:

Mostly, student take for the exam ...graded one. Then every lesson must play the at least one repertoire. Unless the student is very slow learner. They totally cannot memorize the scale and the exam pieces. That's one quite hard to teach other extra repertoire.

It is evident that most teachers placed a very high importance on teaching repertoire spending at least half the lesson on it. Respondent 11 concurs with respondents 10 and 1 and stresses the importance of exposing students to different repertoire so they would experience playing a variety of pieces.

Respondent 11:

For repertoire?

KA: Uh... huh...

Uh... mostly half, about half of the, half of the lesson spending on the repertoire. So for me, I um... certainly believe that uh... it is good to expose students to the different repertoire, and to let them to know different variety of repertoire.

Which types of piano repertoire do you regularly teach?

It is obvious that many teachers attempt to teach a variety of repertoire including Western classical piano music as well as jazz. Respondent 1 states her preference for repertoire from the Romantic period as she feels that it is important for students to 'feel the Romantic style'.

Respondent 1:

Mostly Western ... Western classical piano one. Then if the children can see the rhythm then maybe we can add a little bit jazz if the student didn't like to play jazz

then back to the classical part. But occasional must add some Romantic if not they cannot feel the Romantic style.

KA: Romantic you mean Romantic period pieces?

Uh

It is also evident that exam pieces formed an important part of the repertoire taught by most teachers. In answering this question, respondent 4 implies that it was understood that exam pieces would form part of the piano repertoire she would teach. She adds that she would teach Chinese and English pop songs transcribed for piano. This concurs with respondent 1's response of teaching a variety of pieces.

Respondent 4:

Beside of the exam pieces are?

KA: Besides Classical repertoire, do you teach other types like you mentioned just now, the Mandarin songs.

Uh...

KA: Ya. Do you also teach the other pop songs? Do you teach Jazz? Or do you teach popular tunes from musicals? Do you teach any on these or do you focus mainly on piano Classical repertoire?

Uh... Not mainly for Classical repertoire but like uh... like the Chinese pop song and some of the English pop song and some of them just only the music, without words one.

Do your students regularly listen to Western classical piano music? If so, kindly elaborate.

It is clear from most teachers' experience that their students would not listen to Western classical music on their own accord. Respondent 2 mentions that very few of her students would take the initiative to listen on their own.

Respondent 2:

Not really. Uh... but uh... maybe 10% of them only. They can they they those uh... who approach to classical music. Unless like for those uh... who which is having in my theory class...

KA: Uh huh

Then I will show them quite often.

KA: Okay. So that means, say, on their own, uh... you know only about 10% listen unless they hear it in your lesson or your class.

Yes.

Respondent 9:

Ah...(hesitation), not every week.

KA: Um...

Its once a month.

KA: Once a month? You will organise that in your lesson?

Ya.

KA: But, on their own?

What do you mean “on their own”?

KA: Do they have interest or do they go online listen to Western classic piano music? Do they have CDs?

Ah, ya...for this right ah, to make sure that they will really Google for it or go and find it, I will give some homework and then, ask them to find it from the internet, YouTube, for a particular work that I have been [?] before

KA: Em...so, you encourage them to do that on their own as well?

Yes.

In contrast to the responses from respondents 2 and 9, it is evident that some teachers find a few of their students showing more interest in listening to Western classical music than others. Respondent 10 recounts her experience of a few of her students who have shown such enthusiasm. Unfortunately this is not the case with the rest of her students. So she concurs with respondents 2 and 10 on the lack of initiative and interest in listening to Western classical music shown by most of their students.

Respondent 10:

Umm...some of them even listen on the IPod. They ask me to help them find the piece. I have a few that play in an orchestra or ensemble. They are more familiar with this kind of music. But for the rest it is more rare that they will listen. I will help to bring my laptop. I will discuss certain pieces with them...just to expose them to it. They won't go to hear it themselves.

KA: Ah... they won't do it themselves. So you have said that you bring your laptop and let them listen.

4.3.5 Approaches to teaching specific elements

Do you analyse the pieces you teach to your students? If so, kindly describe your approach.

It is apparent that teachers do analyse the pieces which they teach. Respondent 8 mentions that she would analyse the key, form or structure and the phrase structure of the pieces. Upon further probing, she adds that she would also analyse ‘special chords’, implying chromatic harmonies.

Respondent 8:

Huh? (appears surprised)... I will analyse the key and the form and the structure...the phrase structure.

KA: Ok. Do you analyse chords?

Ya

KA: So you will analyse all the pieces.

Yes, the special chords.

Respondent 9 concurs with respondent 8 in analysing pieces but adopts a different approach for junior and senior students. She states that she would focus on the meaning behind the title to the piece and mention keys and cadences for the more junior students. However, for her more senior or advanced students she would explain interesting chords like augmented ones.

Respondent 9:

Um. Okay, for the early age... for the beginner and intermediate, I will do... I will explain to them the...the title of the piece and then later, the key and then, where is the cadences.

KA: Um.

but, whereas for the advance age, I will explain to them ah for the title and then, they have to analyse the piece for like the - key, [...] chords, [...] and then, some like ...augmented chords or extra chords that they cover in their ah...er, theory.

In contrast to majority of the responses including the ones from respondents 8 and 9, it was evident that respondent 3 did not analyse the pieces she taught at all. Instead she just asked her students to play the pieces focussing on the sound and dynamics only.

Respondent 3:

Um... um... Ya. For like beginner, I just straight play

KA: Just play the piece?

Ya. Just let them like hear the dynamic level. The sound...

KA: But you don't... show them how many sections - this is the first half, this is the second half?

No. *What activities do you have that develop critical listening during your piano lessons?*

It is evident that many teachers have not given the topic of critical listening much thought as this question solicited very few responses and needed substantial probing before a response was given. Respondent 9 focuses on qualitative texture and compositional devices in critical listening.

Respondent 9:

Okay, for example, let's say...ah on that particular day, I open for a Baroque piece. And, I will, before I start switch on the music, I will ask them to listen carefully for the (bass) music that the composer play whether what style or what is the contrapuntal? I will explain first before they start...ah listening. Along the way, I will also explain to them this called contrapuntal or this is called the imitation or sequence.

KA: Okay. So, you will guide them.

Yup.

Respondent 10 concurs with respondent 9 on focussing on compositional devices but in this case she encourages her student to detect the devices in order to determine the style of the composition.

Respondent 10:

KA: When they listen do you give them ideas on what to listen for?

Yes

KA: Rather than just listen...

No, no, no. I'll give them a bit of background. I'll let them know the style of this period and the style in the composition. And then ask them to try to detect it. I'll give them a few things to listen for. Later on we will have a discussion on it. It is very interesting actually.

How do you include ear training in your piano lessons?

It is evident that most teachers find it difficult to have ear training sessions during the lesson. Respondent 5 has a separate session for ear training clearly implying that it is treated as a separate entity.

Respondent 5:

Err, not during lesson most err. Can we say? erm should we say slot in ler...but do it separately. More, more time to..

KA: Mmm, is this part of your lesson or do you hold it at a separate session?

Oh, I I ask them to come for extra, then they do on their own, or whatever, in another room

KA: Mmm so...

Respondent 1 concurs with respondent 5 in teaching ear training as a separate entity. She adds that she would basically use an ear training book in her teaching. Overall, the answers to this question anticipated the following question: 'Do you regard ear training as a separate entity or do you teach it through simultaneous learning? Kindly describe your approach?'

Respondent 1:

Separate...

KA: And then do you just test them or do you actually have a programme?

Mostly, teach them how to listen to the rhythm pattern. Then later on I will test them.

KA: So you teach them how to listen ...means you give them some exercises.

Got ear training book.

Do you encourage your students to improvise during their piano lessons? If so, could you please describe some activities which you employ?

It is apparent that most teachers did not encourage any form of improvisation at all during their piano lessons as this question generally received a negative answer except for the following respondents. Respondent 2 is one of two teachers who mentions teaching improvisation to students with good aural ability. She explains that her methodology involves familiarizing the students with chords and subsequently transposition.

Respondent 2:

Yes. Very little, too. Uh... I mean uh... actually uh... based on certain students.

KA: Aha...

Those like uh... who... who is already having a good ears.

KA: Um

ASB: Okay. So uh... they are and then that uh... which I think they are able to do that. So I will give them some... guide, guide them to do in the basic like broken chords. Okay, a piece which is full of broken chords. That's I will uh... after they can handle, then maybe I can, uh... I will uh... ask them uh... maybe can play it in different keys. That's sort. [...] That's for the uh... general improvisation.

KA: Okay.

Not into very details.

What is your approach to sight-reading in your piano lessons?

It is evident that teachers encourage their students to sight-read at every lesson. Respondent 2 uses sight-reading books and studies for this purpose. She ensures that the student sight-reads at least a phrase or two.

Respondent 2:

(Laughs) I make the regular, regular approach to the sight- reading. Uh... actually, uh... most of my students will have sight-reading books or uh... or those studies,

simple studies. Okay. So, I make sure every lesson they would play a short phrase or two, I mean, to ...

KA: So, you do it at every lesson?

Ya. Every lesson.

Respondent 5:

Or just give them every time new pieces; I thought is a sight reading

KA: Ahh, when you give them a new piece, do you make them sight read it through first?

Play through first

KA: Without any guidance from yourself? And then only you teach it.

Mm

KA: Ok and you do this at every lesson or ...

Yea, I give them new piece every lesson

How important is the background to the composer and piece in teaching a new piece?

It is clear that a few teachers felt that the background to the composer and piece was very important in teaching a new piece. Respondent 8 highlights that the background to the instrument used for a particular period was also important as it would determine the type of technique used. In terms of style, knowing the period of composition would assist in interpretation.

Respondent 8:

It's very important because...uh if the student is understand to the composer's background and instruments, they will be more ...understand the technique that they need to play. Like Baroque period you cannot play very expressive... (mumbles).

Respondent 2 concurs with respondent 8 on the importance of the background to the composer and piece, especially in terms of style. She adds that without an understanding of the style it is likely that the student will play "very mechanically and without musical understanding."

Respondent 2:

Um... Yes. In fact uh... that's uh... involves a quite a lot of uh... in style. Okay. If you don't know the composer's uh... background and uh... you don't explain it uh... between like a classical or a jazz piece, right? So, the student will play uh... very mechanically and without any musical [...] understanding.

Have you planned a curriculum on music appreciation for your students? If so, kindly elaborate.

It was plain from the responses of most of the teachers that they did not plan a curriculum on music appreciation for their students aside from one teacher who teaches the biographical details of a new composer every first week of a month.

4.3.6 Performance objectives

In response to the question ‘*What are your objectives in providing opportunities for your students to perform, if applicable?*’, it is clear that most of the teachers did not have any objectives other than to organize concerts at least once a year. Respondent 4’s objectives in providing performance opportunities for her students are both as an incentive to work and not to “lose face” or be embarrassed in front of their friends. She adds that it also takes the boredom out of “just learning about for the exam pieces for the whole year” as her students will play other repertoire for the concerts.

Respondent 4:

Um... For my mini concert, actually it’s, want to give them like uh... a pressure, especially for those like the type that is lazy. So to make them to pressure, they will practise hard and they can perform well because they will like ‘malu’ in front if when play no good to their friends. And some of them, they are more uh... they are very uh... musical in uh... others, like others repertoires. I will ask them to play. Besides playing the exam pieces, they are volunteer to play the other the other repertoire.

So to make the ... just to tell them that learning piano is not so boring, just learning about for the exam pieces for the whole year. At least you have you can enjoy the music for the other pieces.

In addition, respondent 6 feels that this provides an opportunity for her students to perform on stage and to overcome their fear in playing in front of people.

Respondent 6:

For them to have the experience to perform on stage because they... my private students do not have the experience. [...]And to play... to let them to be more brave to play in front of people.

Respondent 11 concurs with respondent 6 in stating that her objective is that her students play in front of other people. But she states that she would encourage them to play in front of their friends and peers.

Respondent 11:

Ya. Um... Ya. We have um... most of my students. I conduct class in group lesson in group lesson. [...]So, most of the time, my students, they perform to each other.

KA: Okay.

So, during a group lesson, if whenever my student is ready to perform a piece, so uh... they perform to their their peers, their their friends.

4.3.7 Self-assessment of teachers

A final question requiring reflection and self-assessment of the teachers: *To what extent are your aims and objectives achieved in the progress of your students?*, elicited varied responses.

It is apparent that teachers experience their weak students not making any progress. However, more is achieved by the average to good students who are able to perform satisfactorily in the concerts. Therefore respondent 6 is only partially satisfied with the level to which her aims and objectives have been achieved in her students.

Respondent 6:

Of course the very weak students ... they are really not achieve anything... but some average to good students...they achieve something, especially when I organize a concert for the, I am really more than happy.

Additionally, it is evident that some teachers experience frustration in not seeing their aims and objectives achieved. Respondent 4 attributes this to the students' lack of initiative in practising and being prepared for class. She adds that the parents' attitude gives her more stress as they expect her to supervise their children's practice by extending the lesson. She emphatically states that this does not help in making the situation any better.

Respondent 4:

Um... More of them not meet the expectation. You know why? Because I'm try my best and spend my time in uh... doing all the things for them, for especially now since exam coming soon. [...]But the parents is uh... sometimes not co-operate. When you told her uh... told the parents that about uh... your daughter or your son do like that like that, mostly the parents will: "Um... uh... um... uh... " Why not just let her to come here and practise more? So every time for those uh... I will give them their lesson is one hour. Sometimes, I will give them more.

Ultimately, it is plain that some teachers are not satisfied with what they are doing for their students. Respondent 11 frankly identifies her areas of weakness as music

appreciation and improvisation. She strongly states that she hopes to improve in these areas as soon as possible.

Respondent 11:

At this moment, no, no. I, I, I, I believe I can do more for my students, uh... especially in the area of music appreciation and improvisation. So, um... ya... ya... I hope it can be achieved in uh... shorter period.

4.4 Discussion

In assimilating the quantitative and qualitative data, the broad areas covered were:

- Basic demographic information of teachers
- Teaching experience
- Frequency of and philosophy regarding examinations
- Lesson duration and content
- Musical activities
- Performance experience
- Self-assessment of teachers

Similar to the findings of Harris and Crozier (2000), most of the teachers took a master-apprentice approach to their teaching without any formal training in pedagogy. The majority of the teachers had diplomas in performance but only four of the respondents (16 percent) had diplomas in teaching. Cheah (2012) also discovered through her findings that novice teachers in Kuala Lumpur needed guidance in their teaching as they were also following the master-apprentice model of teaching.

In exploring the general aims and objectives of teaching, it was clearly construed that the teachers wanted to encourage their students to expand their repertoire with a variety of Western classical piano music and popular music. They also expressed the desire for their students to have better sight-reading skills. Cheah (2012) had similar findings in that the third most important goal for teaching beginner and elementary students was for them to sight-read well. However, the most important goal from her findings was to instill a love for playing the piano and to enrich listening skills. These goals barely resonate with the goals from the findings of this study.

Another observation from this study's findings in the area of general aims and objectives of teaching was that for students the aim was to finish or complete their graded examinations to the final level, namely, grade 8 of most examination boards. Kok (2011) concurs with this

concept as she also alludes to the fact that most of her Malaysian friends had been content to stop their music training at grade 8 which was and is still perceived as the final grade.

It was established that most of the teachers entered their students for piano examinations annually hence reinforcing the fact that these examinations have a significant influence on piano teaching. For most teachers, their philosophy of examinations is to regard examinations as an assessment of the student's standard as well as an incentive to work. They also use the examinations as a gauge of the student's progress and generally target to complete a grade per year. Cheah's (2012) research concurs on this use or abuse of examinations as the frequency of entering students for examinations has limited the amount of time to learn pieces other than examination pieces. Hence, this results in a fragmentary curriculum, since the exam has influenced rather than reflected the practice of instrumental teaching and learning (Ley 2012:16).

In terms of lesson content, it was discovered that most of the lesson was spent on teaching and learning of pieces. This concurs with Harris and Crozier's (2000) findings that the greatest emphasis was probably given to the teaching and learning of pieces in the course of a typical lesson. Cheah (2012) also discovered from her findings that the teachers felt that the area which needed most improvement in their teaching was to encourage students to learn a wider repertoire. Hence, this confirms the heavy emphasis on the teaching and learning of repertoire in the lessons administered by piano teachers in Malaysia.

Apart from the teaching of repertoire, in particular examination pieces, sight-reading, technical exercises and analysis of music are regular components in a typical lesson. Similar findings from Cheah's (2012) research apart from the theory of music, reveal that repertoire, to some extent reflecting the examination syllabi, technique - also listed as a component of examination syllabi and sight-reading are considered essential in the teaching programme for beginners and elementary students. Ley (2012) explains that one of the reasons for this is that for so many teachers the instrumental curriculum is dominated by the exam requirements. Ley states that the technique-driven approach often dominates music lessons. He concludes that the focus on performance skills, sight-reading, aural skills and knowledge of theory can result in a fragmentary curriculum. He therefore agrees on similar elements being regular components in a typical lesson. It was also established in this study that elements which are not regularly included in a lesson are aural skills, improvisation, composition, history of Western music and critical listening.

In exploring the musical activities the teachers organize for the students, performing on the piano as a soloist in concerts in front of family, friends and fellow students was the most regular activity. These performances were regarded as a platform to perform; an incentive to work and a distraction to take the boredom out of learning examination pieces all year round. Performing as an accompanist or in an ensemble was a rare activity.

In the self-assessment of teachers, most of the teachers reported their teaching as being satisfactory to good. However, there were teachers who were only partially satisfied with their teaching, frustrated at not seeing their aims and objectives achieved, stressed by the expectations from parents, and realistic in being aware of their shortcomings in areas such as music appreciation and improvisation. With regard to the teachers' self-assessment, Cheah's study (2012:63) also makes a similar enquiry through her questionnaire but under the topic of "important characteristics for teachers" which would help determine the level of satisfaction in their teaching. Cheah's findings list 'possessing sufficient knowledge' and having a commitment to further improvement as an important characteristic for a teacher. Furthermore, from Cheah's research regarding the essential qualities of a successful teacher, teachers rank patience and tolerance as being of highest importance. This is followed closely by a belief that the teacher should love teaching; have the power to inspire all students, have a sincere respect for students and have a sense of fairness. This may spur further research into the criteria used by the respondents to assess themselves.

The teachers in this study display some understanding of what it entails to teach music effectively but there is a discrepancy between what the teachers know and do, and what they say about teaching. There may therefore be a disconnection between their understanding of the concept of effective teaching and the perception of how to approach teaching effectively. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of what music education provides for students and students should have a clear perception of what they are expected to learn. The students should also be able to track their progress and whether or not they are meeting their goals. Currently there is a predilection to use examination requirements to dominate the instrumental curriculum. This is clearly not in tandem with teaching music effectively and has resulted in a fragmentary curriculum (Ley 2012:16).

4.5 Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed individually, employing the principles of interpretative phenomenology. The transcripts were read and reread in order to identify themes. Similar themes were clustered in order to establish their inter relationships across the transcripts. Hence the themes were organized in a tentative manner for further exploration in terms of their relationship with each other. The themes were finally integrated across transcripts to identify shared themes that dealt with the area of missing or absent elements in piano lessons. (Willig 2013:64). Data was categorized into the more salient emergent or cluster themes and subthemes or constituent themes as listed in the section on findings.

Ten cluster themes emerged from the analysis: ‘types of students’, ‘challenges’, ‘aims of teaching’, ‘specific objectives’, ‘teachers’ attitude towards piano examinations’, ‘parents’ attitude towards piano examinations’, ‘lesson content’, ‘repertoire’, ‘performance opportunities’ and ‘reflective practice’.

4.5.1 *Types of students*

The results of this study indicate that the respondents had students with poor technique and tone. Respondent 12 found that the students who came to her after having attended a Junior Music course at Yamaha were generally very musical but weak technically.

Respondent 12:

If they went through that when they come they are very musical but they are lack in technical.

So I'll focus on technical.

Respondent 10 concurred on this as she found that her students also had poor technique and a weak or harsh tone. She attributed this to the fact that they do not listen to themselves and are not aware of the kind of tone they produce while playing. She suggested that the undue tension could be caused by arm pumping from the forearm and stressed the need for her students to be more relaxed in performance.

Respondent 10:

Mostly students when they come, they have bad technique. They are just so concerned in producing the sound so I find they have weak tone basically. Either that or it is too harsh. They use a lot of arm pumping...Or they are very tense in their forearm. You see after that I am very particular in relaxation.

Another type of student was a musically weak one. Respondent 5 clearly stated that her students needed help in every area but she emphasized that they were musically weak.

Respondent 5:

Heh...they need help for every parts. I think musicality more.

Respondent 8 affirmed that her students needed to improve musically as they were also musically weak.

Respondent 8:

No then after I every end of the year will prepare a concert for them so they can listen (to) each other. So to improve them musically...

A further type of student was those with poor musical exposure. Respondent 5 informed that her students were unable to distinguish between pieces of different periods because of their overall lack of exposure in listening to Western classical music.

Respondent 5:

So even you show them the different period in exam, they can tell you. If ah a 20th century music, is it sounds awfully, they don't think... they think it is classical from...20th century music they can tell you it's baroque

Finally, a teacher had students with poor musical ability which were not up to expectation. Respondent 2 attributed this situation to her students having limited time to practise owing to busy school curriculums.

Respondent 2:

Um... for their musical abilities is like uh ... not very up to what I expect uh ... because uh... due to their uh... uh... school curriculum and all that ... the time limited for them to practise and all that.

Although the respondents' responses vary, their eventual comments focused on having students with both musical and technical weaknesses. Another interesting finding was that their students also lacked musical exposure.

4.5.2 Challenges

On the question of challenges, this study found that all the five respondents concurred on having students who were too busy to practise. Respondents expressed frustration over the

fact that students have limited time to practise with so many other school and extra-curricular activities.

Respondent 2:

... the time limited for them to practise and all that.

Respondent 5:

Most of them don't practise, I think nowadays, they have no time, I think

Respondent 8:

Too busy to practise

Respondent 12:

Ah... most of them ...the main problem is lack of practice.

Respondent 10 bemoaned the lack of progress and efficacy of the lesson as the lesson was spent practising work that had been assigned the previous week rather than building on what had been achieved over the week. It can be concluded that all the respondents felt that practice is essential for an optimal lesson.

Respondent 10:

Yes, definitely. Most of them is that they don't practise. The biggest challenge is that they don't have enough time to practise. So we spend most of the time in the lesson practising rather than to build on what they should have done at home.

A further challenge was having students with poor concentration. Respondent 5 felt that concentration levels were low because students found classical music too difficult.

Respondent 5:

Yea, yea they rather...because it is too difficult to concentrate... I find classical music is too difficult for them nowadays

Respondent 2 also asserted that she was challenged with the same problem and that she had to put in more effort to overcome this.

Respondent 2:

... maybe they are not too concentrating ... those kind. So you need to put more efforts to... on that specific aspect.

Respondent 12 was challenged by students who lacked interest. She suggested that a lack of interest could lead to a lack of practice. She also attributed this condition to students being forced by parents to learn the piano.

Respondent 12:

Uh, I think they have too much activity, no time. Another thing is lack of interest. Their parents send them because their parents want them to learn but they are not interested.

A further challenge was having students who were overly dependent. Respondent 5 asserted that the local education system did not encourage students to be independent but to be reliant on their teachers.

Respondent 5:

I realised the education also. The way of Malaysia education er already like affected them. Um...they don't know er hard work ah. You need hard work to do something.

They hope some teacher can help.

KA: Do you feel that our education system spoon feeds them too much?

Yea

KA: Mm, so they are expecting the teacher to do all the work for them.

(Vague yes by nodding somewhat)

Another finding was that teachers faced the challenge of having students who were slow and uncoordinated. Respondent 2 expressed that this required more effort from the teacher.

Respondent 2:

Um... Yes. (Laughs) Depends on the uh... the students that come to you. Okay and uh... and those like for those who really slow and they have problem on the coordination of uh... hands uh (...) those kind. So you need to put more efforts to... on that specific aspect.

The respondents share a common opinion of being challenged by students who are too busy to practise. Although their responses vary, one theme among the challenges faced is having unmotivated students who lack interest, who are overly dependent on the teacher, who have poor concentration and are physically slow and uncoordinated.

4.5.3 Aims of teaching

On the question of teaching aims, this study found that a common aim was for the students to go for examinations in order to “finish” their graded examinations.

Respondent 8 strongly believed that the reason for this aim was because most of the students were forced by their parents to learn music.

Respondent 12:

Ok. The main aim is ...ah... (laughs) for most students, it is for the exam.

Respondent 8:

They play more pieces...can enjoy the music and can finish the grade.

KA: Finish...meaning go up to grade 8?

(sniggers) Ya! (emphatically, both laugh)

Because most of them they are forced by the parents to learn the music.

In contrast, it is somewhat surprising that respondent 2 is “not really into exams”. She offered this thought after explaining the importance of her students enjoying their lessons with her. By implication she suggested that preparing for examinations was not an enjoyable task.

Respondent 2:

Not really into the exams. (Laughs)

Respondent 2 added that her aim was to ensure that their piano lessons were enjoyable.

Respondent 2:

Um... My aim is actually to teach them uh... (...) ... enjoying to what they are having in the piano class.

A further aim was to improve musicality. Respondent 2 defined her aim as making her students more musical.

Respondent 2:

Um... My aim is actually to teach them uh...more on like uh... to let them know uh... musically the musicality ...

Another interesting finding was to expose the students to more repertoire. Respondent 10 stressed the importance of students having a wide repertoire. She amplified the fact that the repertoire should also be very appealing and wide ranging covering different periods of music.

Respondent 10:

General aims... I really want to expose the students to as much repertoire as they can (play). I can see that for Baroque period, not all the pieces are very appealing so I will

choose the very nice ones. (Laughs) Like for example all my students like the (inaudible) by Bach. There are also famous opera tunes like for example, from “The Barber of Seville”. They also like that very much. So I just pick certain nice ones and explain the periods to them.

In this study, respondent 5’s aim was to improve musical exposure both in terms of listening and performance.

Respondent 5:

Err...I did a concert for them

Let them expose more “la” (colloquial expression) I think

KA: Expose... in terms of listening, in terms of performance?

Both

The results of this study show the common aim of going for examinations to “finish the grades” for a couple of respondents. For the remaining respondents their aims were generally to improve the students’ musicality, musical exposure, range of repertoire and above all to enjoy their piano lessons.

4.5.4 Specific objectives of teaching

The current study found that four of the respondents shared a similar specific objective of having their students read more repertoire confidently. However, respondent 2 emphasized the importance of ensuring that the pieces were within the technical ability of the students.

Respondent 2:

Um... uh... Yes. So, it’s more uh... like uh... make them uh... to read the uh... pieces confidently and also uh... technically

Respondent 8 added that she would teach a wide range of repertoire from different periods.

Respondent 8:

I will give other pieces sometimes. So every week I will give them some other repertoire - different periods of repertoire.

Respondent 10 stated that she would encourage her students to make their own choices of pieces they would like to play from a list of pieces she would have prepared beforehand.

Respondent 10:

I have a list in mind. So I will see which one the student likes and I will just give the list to them. Normally, we would take a few pieces in a month. So I have a list prepared so I will know that at least what I had covered. I have not... (Inaudible).

Respondent 12 concurred with respondent 10 on giving her students a choice of pieces and suggested that they even choose their own pieces.

Respondent 12:

Um...ok I will introduce them to... They have their own, how to say, certain songs that they like. I would encourage them to let me know. Then maybe I will teach them how to play.

It is evident that another finding was to develop aural skills. Respondent 2 mentioned that the aural skills must be up to the performance level thus emphasizing its importance.

Respondent 2:

Uh... and also uh... aurally as well. It's up to that certain grade. Okay. So they must have that certain uh... level on that.

It is also obvious that respondent 2 felt that it was important to develop sight-reading skills.

Respondent 2:

KA: And so... so if I can summarize, it is basically in the area of aural ...
Sight-reading

The current study found that the specific objective of reading more repertoire confidently was shared by most of the respondents. Only one respondent mentioned the development of aural and sight-reading skills. This may imply that the remaining respondents were overly focused on the area of repertoire to the exclusion of other elements of musicianship such as aural and sight-reading skills.

4.5.5 Teachers' attitude toward piano examinations

In this study, it is clear that teachers follow the parents' wishes in determining whether or not a student goes for examinations. Respondent 5 affirmed that half of her students' parents would insist on an examination.

Respondent 5:

KA: Hmm...right but would you have pressure from the parents to, to insist, to make them go for an exam?

Um...I think it's 50%

Respondent 8 diplomatically stated that only 5 percent of her parents' students would not pressurize their children or the teacher to take examinations. By implication she suggested that the majority of her students' parents insisted on their children taking examinations. Both respondents 5 and 8 were therefore obliged to meet the parents' wishes.

Respondent 8:

They have some which are the parents don't want pressure. So don't want to take exam...just enjoy playing.

KA: Ok...how many percent of your students are like that?

5%

Another important finding was that for the remaining respondents, piano examinations were regarded purely as an assessment. Respondent 10 emphasized the importance of keeping up the interest of the student and not stressing the student out especially if he is not ready for the exam. She also added that for her the aim of taking examinations was not merely to acquire the certificate.

Respondent 10:

I will try to maintain their interest. I will not push if they are not ready. It's not so much for the certificate for me. I will always explain that the exam is an assessment.

Respondent 5 concurred with respondent 10 that deciding on whether or not to take an examination was dependent on a student's progress.

Respondent 5:

It depends on the student as well actually.

Respondent 12 added that apart from being merely an assessment, examinations could have a positive effect on students as an incentive to practise.

Respondent 12:

Uh... I feel that ...umm... exams are merely an assessment...

It is helpful for certain students. For example, if they don't practise the exam...

KA: Will give them an incentive?

Yeah, yeah, so that they must be hard working.

Respondent 2 elaborated that examinations will give the student confidence in knowing their standard. It would also be an opportunity for them to perform.

Respondent 2:

Uh... Actually it's like um... just giving the student a confident on that uh... what they what level they are. So uh... through the exam, they could learn the piece in more details. And then uh... when they go into the exam, so uh... the to just like performance stage for them to show uh... another level they're going through.

KA: Okay. So more of an assessment ...

Yes

4.5.6 Parents' attitude toward piano examinations

On the question of parents' attitude toward piano examinations, this study found that some parents insisted on examinations as they wanted their children to have some form of certification. Respondent 12 was particularly vocal on this topic. She surmised that being forced to put a student in for an examination by their parents resulted in an unhappy situation where the student does not enjoy the lessons because of the pressure. This unfortunate situation was often augmented by the fact that the students have not reached a standard anywhere near the required level of the examination leading to a loss of interest on the student's part and a further loss in the joy of teaching on the part of the teacher. Clearly this pressurized situation is not ideal for optimal learning as both student and teacher can only see the examination looming before them. Parents are also equally anxious as they continue to pressurize both the teacher and their child.

Respondent 12:

Mainly for the exam because umm...the parents want the certificate

I think mainly because they are not interested and their mothers are pushing. Pushing them or pushing me? I think pushing me more.

KA: So it is not easy being a piano teacher in Malaysia.

It's like after 2-3 years of teaching if they still didn't hear of any exam then they will start pressing already. So long already...how?

KA: So this is bound to happen?

Yes this has been happening and sometimes we feel that the student is not prepared yet the parents still want.

We have to give in so when we send there are a lot of problems.

KA: Yes

When we press the students then the students don't like as it's not their standard yet. Everyone is not happy. A lot of problems.

KA: So everyone is under pressure to perform. Sometimes you feel that the student is really not ready but because of pressure from parents you have no choice but to put them in for an exam.

Ya.

In contrast, another important finding was that there are parents and students who trust the teacher's judgment. Respondent 2 used the term "trust" to describe the attitude of parents who were willing to allow the teacher to guide and develop the student's musical ability.

Respondent 2:

KA: Cause if parents are more open-minded and willing to allow the teacher to do what they want, ah to guide their children and develop them

Trust, you mean

KA: Ah yes, trust is very important.

Respondent 8 added that some parents just wanted their children to enjoy playing without the pressure of examinations.

Respondent 8:

They have some which are the parents don't want pressure. So don't want to take exam...just enjoy playing.

Respondent 10 added that parents were more understanding and were willing to allow their children to enjoy music rather than to pressurize them to take a piano examination.

Respondent 10:

Most parents nowadays really understand that their children have a lot to cope with. So they just allow their children to enjoy the music... not really that they must finish grade 5 if possible.

4.5.7 Lesson content

On the question of lesson content, this study found that the teaching of technique was a significant element in piano lessons. Respondents 2 and 8 stated that they would begin their lessons with technique.

Respondent 2:

Ya. Basically, I will start with uh... technique - scales...
... and some studies.

Respondent 8:

I will start with the technical.

Both respondents 2 and 12 elaborated that teaching technique constituted the learning of scales and studies.

Respondent 12:

Umm, studies... scales...

It is also apparent that the teaching of repertoire was included in the lessons conducted by all the five respondents.

Respondent 2:

And then will go to the repertoire...

Respondent 5:

Repertoire

Respondent 8:

I will start with the technical. Then...uh pieces.

Respondent 12:

Repertoire

In most cases it was the topic taught after technique except for respondent 10 who stated that she covered the teaching of repertoire as the first topic in her lessons.

Respondent 10:

Of course we have the first one covering pieces, right?

Another important finding was that the training of aural skills are an essential element for the five respondents. On the question of the approach to training aural skills, respondent 2 explained that she taught ear training through repertoire. Hence, ear training is taught through simultaneous learning of repertoire. She also encouraged her students to listen to music in order to evoke a happy or sad response to the music and also to appreciate basic triads.

Respondent 2:

Um... uh... Most of the time, I really into the repertoires. Let them listen to like the very beginners of what and just like uh... them listen to those happy sound or sad sound they enjoy, like that kind of basic triads.

KA: Okay. So, you teach awareness of ear training through the pieces...is that all?

Yes. Mostly.

Respondent 5 stated that she taught aural training as a separate entity and even encouraged her students to work at it independently.

Respondent 5:

Err, not during lesson most err. Can we say? erm should we say slot in ler...but do it separately. More, more time to...

KA: Mm, is this part of your lesson or do you hold it at a separate session?

Oh, I I ask them to come for extra, then they do on their own, or whatever, in another room

Respondent 8 stated that she would sometimes treat ear training as a separate entity and also teach it by simultaneous learning. This was clearly an inconsistent approach to ear training.

Respondent 8:

Than sometimes I will alternate week in between the aural and sight-reading.

Sometimes I will teach it separately. Sometimes I want the student to listen to the cadence... to notice the cadence so I will play up to it and ask "What is the cadence formed?"

Respondent 10 stated that she was aware of the importance of teaching aural skills.

Respondent 10:

But I know how important it is to have sight-reading and aural.

Respondent 12 informed that she teaches aural occasionally in her lessons.

Respondent 12:

Aural and sight-reading, occasionally.

In response to a further probe on how she taught aural skills, respondent 12 explained that she taught it as a separate entity using the Associated Board's (AB) aural tests as a guide.

Respondent 12:

Aural tests...

KA: Aural tests ...ok.

So you just do aural tests on their own...

With guideline of AB.

From this study, it can be concluded that ear training was generally taught as a separate entity sometimes during piano lessons and at other times as a class on its own. It was less frequently taught simultaneously during lessons.

Another important finding was that developing sight-reading skills was considered an important inclusion in lessons by three of the respondents. Respondent 2 stated that she teaches sight-reading at every lesson, even if it is a short phrase or two.

Respondent 2:

(Laughs) I make the regular, regular approach to the sight- reading. Uh... actually, uh... most of my students will have sight-reading books or uh... or those studies, simple studies. Okay. So, I make sure every lesson they would play a short phrase or two, I mean, to ...

KA: So, you do it at every lesson?

Ya. Every lesson.

Respondent 5 stated that she treated a new piece as sight-reading initially and concurred with respondent 2 on teaching sight-reading at every lesson.

Respondent 5:

Or just give them every time new pieces, I thought is a sight reading

KA: Ahh, it's like when you give them a new piece, do you make them sight read it through first?

Play through first. Yea, I give them new piece every lesson

Respondent 8 informed that she taught sight-reading as a separate entity on an alternate week basis.

Respondent 8:

Then sometimes I will alternate week in between the aural and sight-reading.

Respondent 10 stated that she was aware of the importance of sight-reading and would try to include it in a lesson in spite of the shortage of time.

Respondent 10:

But I know how important it is to have sight-reading and aural. But I feel there isn't much time for sight-reading. Sometimes it is just two bars per hand but it is just something fresh every week for the student.

Respondent 12 affirmed that she did not give her students sight-reading exercises at every lesson owing to time constraint. It was also dependent on whether they came well prepared for the lesson.

Respondent 12:

Uh, not every lesson. If they practise their repertoire then I will have more time then I will teach sight-reading.

KA: Will you use a separate sight-reading book or will you choose other pieces?

Separate sight-reading books.

The results of this study show that improvisation was often ignored in lessons owing to a lack of knowledge and time. Respondent 2 confirms this by stating that she did not teach improvisation except to students who are more naturally gifted with good ears.

Respondent 2:

Yes. Very little, too. Uh... I mean uh... actually uh... based on certain students. ... Those like uh... who... who is already having a good ears.

Okay. So uh... they are and then that uh... which I think they are able to do that. So I will give them some... guide, guide them to do in the basic like broken chords. Okay, a piece which is full of broken chords. That's I will uh... after they can handle, then maybe I can, uh... I will uh... ask them uh... maybe can play it in different keys. That's sort.

That's for the uh... general improvisation. Not into very details.

Respondent 5 affirmed that she attempted to teach improvisation occasionally. She further elaborated that she would teach improvisation by encouraging students to play familiar tunes by ear.

Respondent 5:

I play through the chords. Oh maybe play some simple like happy birthday then let them play the left hand or maybe do some variation

Respondent 10 indicated that this was an area which was rarely touched upon and that more thought had to be given to this area of her teaching.

Respondent 10:

(bursts out laughing) Actually I tried it but they are kind of... I don't think I did it the right way. I asked them to start on black keys first and to improvise rhythm. But I feel they are so used to doing things that are already written. They are probably vague about their own ideas. And with the limited time, this is really neglected. I feel very bad actually as I know this is very important.

Improvisation... but I did try for some but it is so difficult to put this in this whole thing...in the teaching.

Respondent 12:

KA: Do you encourage your students to improvise during their piano lessons?

Uh....no.

In this study, three respondents affirmed that they did not teach improvisation at all in their lessons. Only one respondent made an attempt to teach improvisation while the other respondent stated she would do so only in special cases.

It is interesting to note that in four cases of this study, music appreciation was not taught at all in the respondents' lessons. An exception was respondent 10, who regularly includes music appreciation once a month. She elaborated that she discussed a different composer at each session.

Respondent 10:

I do it every 1st week of the month. So I will cover composers. I don't really write out. I have a plan that every 1st week of a month we have to do music appreciation.

KA: Ok, good. But does this plan go by period or composer, alphabetical order or do you start with Baroque, go on to Classical... what is your style of doing it?

I do by composers. I start with Beethoven, Mozart, and then Johann Strauss.

The current study found that developing the ability to listen to Western classical music was not given much emphasis. Respondent 8 stated that her students would rarely listen to Western classical music. If the students listened at all, the source of the music would be on the internet.

Respondent 8:

KA: Do your students regularly listen to Western classical piano music?

Less

KA: Less meaning hardly or...?

Less...sometimes they can get from internet

Respondent 10 stated that her students would rarely listen. So she would need to initiate the listening process.

Respondent 10:

Umm...some of them even listen on the IPod. They ask me to help them find the piece. I have a few that play in an orchestra or ensemble. They are more familiar with this kind of music. But for the rest it is more rare that they will listen. I will help to

bring my laptop. I will discuss certain pieces with them...just to expose them to it. They won't go to hear it themselves.

Respondent 12 stated that most of her students do not listen to classical music.

Respondent 12:

Err, I don't do it (laughs). I think they... I think most of them don't listen to classical music.

The findings of this study show that only two respondents had students who occasionally listen to Western classical music. The remaining respondents did not have students who listen to Western classical music.

In this study, it is clear that the honing of critical listening skills was still in an initial stage. Respondent 2 explained that critical listening helps to give music a focus such as listening to the timbres of instruments, forms and phrases.

Respondent 2:

Uh... Most of the time, I'll ask the them uh... prepared some questions before uh... they listen. Uh... Let's say for those orchestra not really into the like you say, uh... piano is u ...solo instrument. Mostly is in the orchestra, listening to the forms, the structure, the phrase ...

Respondent 5 concurred with respondent 2 in stating that in critical listening she focused on the timbre of instruments. In addition respondent 8 explained that she would attempt to include some listening experiences in the class. She also elaborated that she would encourage critical responses by comparing different performances of the same work.

Respondent 8:

I will...I will try to put two or more of the performances on CDs to let them to specific...in between two...

KA: Hear the differences, you mean.

Ya

Respondent 10 had stated earlier that she would discuss certain pieces with her students but she did not elaborate further. Respondent 12 did not respond in this area as she had clearly stated that her students did not listen to Western classical music either by themselves or with her.

The results of this study show that discussing the background to the pieces and the composer was fairly important to the respondents. Respondent 2 explained that it is important to know

the difference between classical and jazz pieces. She also affirmed that the background is important to prevent the student from playing very mechanically and without musical understanding.

Respondent 2:

If you don't know the composer's uh... background and uh... you don't explain it uh... between like a classical or a jazz piece, right? So, the student will play uh... very mechanically and without any musical... understanding.

Respondent 5 stressed the importance of discussing the background to the composer and the piece when teaching a new piece.

Respondent 5:

KA: How important is the background to the composer and the piece in teaching a new piece? Do you actually take time to talk about the composer..?

Yes, yes

KA: Do you do it on a regular basis or ad hoc?

....regular basis ... new piece

Respondent 8 affirmed that the background to the composer and piece were very important for the student to understand how to play the piece. It would have a direct impact on the interpretation and performance of the piece.

Respondent 8:

It's very important because...uh if the student is understand to the composer's background and instruments, they will be more ...understand the technique that they need to play. Like Baroque period you cannot play very expressive... (mumbles).

Respondent 12 stated that she did not give the background to the pieces to her students on a regular basis but affirmed that she would do so for exam pieces. She elaborated that she would give more background to the composer and piece to her older students.

Respondent 12:

Not always.

KA: Uh, would you do it for exam pieces?

(hesitates) For exam pieces, yes.

KA: For non-exam...

(continuing) For older students, more. For younger students, less.

In this study, it is an unmistakable fact that analysing pieces of music with the student was an important element in the lessons of the respondents. Respondent 2 stated that she analysed the pieces she taught her students but fairly cursorily with less detail for the lower grades and more emphasis on chordal progressions for the higher grades.

Respondent 2:

(Laughs) Uh yes uh... Very quick run actually. Uh... uh... not uh... into the details uh... for like lower grades. Maybe for higher grades. Yes. I will do uh... more detail to them and then uh... maybe instead of melodically then maybe play in the bar chords for... to show them the harmony progression and all that.

Respondent 5 stated earlier that she would analyze examination pieces. She added that she would teach analysis by simultaneous learning if she could show some connection to the theoretical side of music.

Respondent 5:

But maybe some you do it when you find there are some cadences or you can connect to the theory then. When you teach them, you just tell them of the keys...at least the keys I thought you should analyse for them.

Respondent 8 affirmed that she would analyse the pieces she taught to her students. She also showed a clear understanding of analysis in terms of keys, form and special (chromatic) chords.

Respondent 8:

Huh? (appears surprised)... I will analyse the key and the form and the structure...the phrase structure.

KA: Ok. Do you analyse chords?

Ya.

KA: So you will analyse all the pieces.

Yes, the special chords.

However, two respondents were fairly confused in their understanding of analysis. Respondent 10 stressed the importance of analysing every piece and elaborated that she teaches her students to analyse by themselves. However there was an unexpected response when probed to explain her understanding of analysis. She showed some confusion between analysis and transposition.

Respondent 10:

Yes, definitely, for every single piece.

I teach them to analyse it. I don't really do it for them.

KA: Can you detail your approach? Do you just do the structure/ form, phrasing, keys, modulations? Do you do anything beyond that?

Umm... structure includes sequence, phrasing and all that, right?

KA: Yes.

Sometimes I analyse by asking them to memorise a bar. Then after that ask them to transpose it, for example from C major to G major. Then if that piece has been transposed they will learn much faster.

Similarly, respondent 12 affirmed that she analysed the pieces which she taught by discussing the structure of the piece highlighting any repetitions. However, she steered off the tangent by discussing dynamics, character and choice of tempo.

Respondent 12:

I show them the structure.

I show them umm...where is the repetition so that it is easier for them to practise.

I also talk to them about the dynamics. Um...The general idea of the whole piece. Like this piece is about a dance. How fast should it be...like that?

4.5.8 Repertoire

As repertoire had emerged as a significant cluster theme, a further probe was necessary into the types of repertoire the respondents regularly taught and their preferences; how they teach different types of repertoire and how much emphasis they gave to the teaching of repertoire in a lesson. An important finding was that the types of repertoire regularly taught were mainly Western classical piano music from different periods. Each respondent had her own preference of period. It was noted that popular piano music and jazz were regularly included. Respondent 2 had a preference for Classical and Baroque piano music. She mentioned an occasional use of jazz piano music and a more infrequent use of popular piano music.

Respondent 2:

Um... It's uh... also depends on the student that comes to you. But basically, I'll more focus on uh... those uh... classical and uh... baroque. Um... Occasionally, we will do some jazz but less to pop keyboard. Um... that not so much.

Respondent 8 stated her preference for Western classical music from various periods. She also affirmed that she also included popular and jazz pieces.

Respondent 8:

KA: Which types of piano repertoire do you regularly teach? I mean ...do you teach more classical? Do you also teach popular or jazz styles?

No I will alternate... in between the different periods to let the student explore...

KA: So you will teach more classical repertoire? Not classical period...it can be Baroque, Classical...

But even though the pop I also will add in.

KA: You also will include pop. How about Jazz?

Ya.

Respondent 10 stated her preference for Romantic and twentieth century Western classical music as well as jazz and popular music.

Respondent 10:

Ya, it's more from Romantic to twentieth century. When it comes to the twentieth century there are more jazz and pop music.

KA: So you also teach these regularly aside from Western classical.

Yes.

Respondent 12 stated that she generally covered classical pieces as well as popular and jazz pieces.

Respondent 12:

But at the same time I will also introduce them to music (of) other sections. If they like popular music I will introduce them to classical music. If they like classical music I will also introduce them to popular music so they have one or either range.

KA: Pop music?

Sometimes

KA: How about jazz?

Jazz... less often than... less often than the popular.

KA: Ok, but you do occasionally teach jazz?

Ya.

A probe into how the respondents taught different types of repertoire revealed varying responses.

Respondent 2 suggested that she would teach popular songs during less busy periods, for example, after the examinations and also during the holidays.

Respondent 2:

Yes. Uh... unless uh... they uh... I mean uh... after the exam or during the holidays uh... they may give some extra but...

Respondent 8 stated that she would make a conscious effort to alternate pieces from different periods. This clearly has a positive effect of creating variety and even comparisons of different styles.

Respondent 8:

No I will alternate... in between the different periods to let the student explore...

A further probe into how much emphasis the respondents gave to the teaching of repertoire in a lesson showed a heavy emphasis on teaching repertoire ranging from 50 percent to 70 percent of the lesson. Respondent 2 and 5 concurred that 70 % of the lesson is spent on repertoire.

Respondent 2:

Um... can be say like 70% on the time is spent on the repertoires.

Respondents 8 and 10 concurred on spending 60 percent of the lesson on repertoire.

Respondent 8:

Hmm.... (long pause) I think 60%.

Respondent 10 added that an examination student would have a higher proportion of repertoire in the lesson than a non-examination student.

Respondent 10:

That's depends on whether they are sitting for exam, you know. If they are sitting for exam then of course it would be 60%.

KA: All right, but if they are not?

Then maybe 45%.

Respondent 12 was the only one who spent only half the lesson on repertoire.

Respondent 12:

Ok, let me think...

(mutters to herself). 20% on theory, repertoire I think 50 %.

4.5.9 Performance opportunities for students

On the question of performance opportunities for students, this study found that four of the respondents provided such opportunities by organizing concerts and play-throughs. Respondent 2 stated that concerts are held with some regularity at the school. They are

usually held twice a year.

Respondent 2:

For the school, yes, we did uh... half... oh no, half a year...

KA: Half yearly concerts? In one year, you have two concerts?

Two concerts.

Respondent 8 concurred with respondent 2 on having concerts regularly. She elaborated that apart from the annual concert there would also be more concerts over the course of the year.

Respondent 8:

A concert...end of the year.

KA: Once a year?

Yes but sometimes will be more. The main one will be at the end of the year.

Respondent 10 affirmed that she organized concerts for her students. She further confirmed that the major concert was conducted annually while other concerts were often conducted impromptu.

Respondent 10:

Yes, school concerts and I ask them to play for each other, maybe not for a big audience. Sometimes their sister comes along. I'll just ask her to sit really quietly and ask them (my students) to perform.

KA: So how often are these concerts? Are they once a year?

Once a year. But for this kind when I just ask them to sit down and listen to another person playing. This can happen anytime. If I feel that they like a piece very much which they are learning...they have already memorized. Then I'll say, "Everyone let's listen to..." This will give her a little bit of pressure to perform it in front of others.

Respondent 12 affirmed that she organized a major concert bi-annually. She also added that she organized play-throughs before the students sat for their exams.

Respondent 12:

I do concerts, currently two years one time.

I will do small group playing for those going for exam.

One or two times before they sit in for exam.

It is interesting to note that only respondent 2 regarded the piano examinations as an opportunity for performance.

Respondent 2:

And then uh... when they go into the exam, so uh... the to just like performance stage for them to show uh... another level they're going through

4.5.10 *Reflective practice*

The results of this study indicate that four respondents were mostly satisfied with their students' progress and felt that their aims and objectives were largely achieved. Respondent 8 merely affirmed that she was happy with her students' progress. Respondent 2 stressed the importance of her students enjoying the music they play. She further added that her students needed to have a basic foundation to support their playing. She surmised that she was happy as long as the two criteria had been met in her students.

Respondent 2:

Um... As long as my students enjoy what they play...

...and uh... they have uh... some uh... how to say uh... uh...how to say uh... basic foundations that uh... support whatever they can play.

I'm happy enough. (Laughs)

Respondent 10 stated that she was pleased with her students' progress especially in the area of sight-reading as it has improved their overall rate of learning new pieces.

Respondent 10:

I'm very happy with the part where the effort I put into helping them with sight-reading. They really improved so much. Now when I ask them to read they are faster. So when they learn I can see they are much faster.

Respondent 12 expressed a mixed reaction of being happy with the progress of 70 percent of her students as well as being unhappy with the rest, especially the ten percent who were struggling with the examinations.

Respondent 12:

Not all.

KA: Not all... how many? More than half? Less than half?

About 70%.

KA: You're not happy or happy.

Happy.

KA: Ok. So for 30% you're not very happy with their progress

10 % are struggling with exams.

Surprisingly, only respondent 5 was found to be dissatisfied with her students' progress as she felt that her aims and objectives had not been achieved. She stated that only a very small percentage of her students were able to achieve an understanding of classical music.

Respondent 5:

(pause) Most of them can't achieve what you think that you want them to understand from classical music

Is only 10% can ...will understand what you are trying to teach ... Appreciate what you are doing

4.6 Discussion on emergent themes

The ten cluster themes which emerged from the analysis are reiterated : 'types of students', 'challenges', 'aims of teaching', 'specific objectives', 'teachers' attitude towards piano examinations', parents' attitude towards piano examinations', 'lesson content', 'repertoire', 'performance opportunities' and 'reflective practice'. This study produced results which corroborate the findings of previous work in this field. Such corroborations will be discussed here.

The emergent theme of challenges faced by teachers has similar findings to those of Cheah (2012:75) who also found that a common problem in teaching beginner students was a lack of commitment to practise. This resonates with the common challenge teachers faced in this study where their students were too busy to practise thus affecting their progress in their classes.

The next emergent theme on the aims of teaching show that the common aim of going for examinations was to "finish the grades". This corroborates the findings of previous research in this field. Thomson (2000:3) refers to most children who learn music privately taking the graded practical examinations of international examinations boards such as ABRSM having "completed Grade 8" before advancing their music studies. Kok (2011:81) makes mention of a similar span of eight years in which she had only learned ABRSM's prescribed pieces of music for each grade as they were about the only music available and ABRSM was her only avenue to Western classical music.

Two main constituent themes emerged regarding teachers' attitude towards piano examinations. One theme was that teachers would abide by the parents' wishes with regard to piano examinations... There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the teachers in this study and those described by Cheah (2012:84). According to Cheah's findings, one of the

teachers described a disadvantage of examinations as parents or students being obsessed with them. This could therefore cause the parents or students to lose sight of the real value of learning music. Similarly, two respondents from this study felt obliged to follow the parent's wishes to enter their children for examinations because of a similar obsession or ambition on the part of the parents.

The other constituent theme on teachers' attitude toward piano examinations was that teachers regarded piano examinations merely as an assessment. This is consistent with Cheah's findings with similar areas of emphasis including entering students for examinations only if they were ready for them and regarding examinations as an opportunity for performance as well as to boost confidence.

Contrary to expectations, two opposing constituent themes emerged from this study on parents' attitude towards piano examinations. One theme suggested that parents insisted on their children taking piano examinations in order to acquire the relevant certificate. This concurs with Ross' findings (2002:218-219) in her analysis of the social and symbolic reasons for taking external music examinations. Among the thematic outcomes of this study are the desire for certification and validation, improved social status, and personal and social goals. There are also similarities between the attitudes expressed by respondents in this study and those described by Cheah (2012:84-85). A teacher from Cheah's findings was of the opinion that "Exams have their usefulness to a certain extent...but they and the collecting of certificates cannot be taken as the final achievement." Another teacher expressed her strong opinion that in our (Malaysian) society we are paper chasers. Furthermore, another teacher observed that not all the students could cope with the stress of examinations and that this took away the enjoyment of playing. Similarly in this study, respondent 12 surmised that being forced to put a student in for an examination by their parents resulted in an unhappy situation where the student does not enjoy the lessons because of the pressure. This unfortunate situation was often augmented by the fact that the students have not reached a standard anywhere near the level of the examination leading to a loss of interest on the student's part and a further loss in the joy of teaching on the part of the teacher. Clearly this pressurized situation is not ideal for optimal learning as both student and teacher can only see the examination looming before them. Parents are also equally anxious as they continue to pressurize both the teacher and their child.

The opposing constituent theme on parents' attitude towards piano examinations indicated that parents trusted the teacher's judgment to guide and develop their children's musical

skills. Therefore, these parents do not insist on their children taking piano examinations and leave that decision to the teacher's good judgment. They would rather have their children enjoy music.

This current study showed several emergent themes in the area of lesson content. They were broadly based on elements that were regularly taught, irregularly taught and mostly ignored. It was established that technique, repertoire, sight-reading, discussing the background of pieces and analysis were regularly taught. Aural and critical listening were irregularly taught whereas improvisation, music appreciation, listening to Western classical music were mostly ignored in piano lessons. The findings of the current study in the area of repertoire are consistent with those of Harris and Crozier (2000:71) and Ley (2012:16) who also established that repertoire was most regularly taught and that it took up a major part of the lesson. Ley adds that the focus of the lesson is often exclusively on pieces or repertoire. These results are also consistent with the present findings of this study in that teaching repertoire takes up a significant portion in a piano lesson.

However, the current results differ somewhat from the findings of Harris and Crozier in the teaching of sight-reading, aural skills and technique. According to Harris and Crozier these elements are often relegated to the last five or ten minutes of the lesson and are sometimes completely omitted owing to a lack of time. Ley concurs with Harris and Crozier that sight-reading and aural are often neglected. However, the results of the present study establish that sight-reading and technique are regularly taught.

The results of this study are similar in the area of aural as it was established that aural is not included in the lesson regularly. Ley adds that listening skills are also neglected. The findings of this study support the idea that listening to Western classical music was mostly ignored.

In the area of improvisation, Cheah's (2012:76) findings indicated that most of the teachers she interviewed included improvisation in their teaching programme for beginner students. In contrast to these findings, the results of this study show that improvisation was often ignored in lessons, possibly owing to a lack of knowledge and time. A possible explanation for this might be that Cheah's targeted group of students was at beginner level and so the teaching of improvisation may have been necessary to maintain the interest and appeal of lessons. In comparison the teachers from this study taught a wide range of students from beginner to advanced levels and had therefore to cover many other elements in the course of the lessons. Hence they were left with little time to include improvisation in a lesson.

4.7 Suggestions for future research

Further research should be done to investigate the development and implementation of other methods of teaching which aim to be all-encompassing such as simultaneous learning. This will be discussed in chapter six of this study. In future investigations it may be possible to conduct case studies of students undergoing such programmes in order to determine the efficacy of the lesson plans and to identify any problems or difficulties in its implementation.

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations for optimal piano lessons

5.1 Introduction

In assessing the current situation of the teaching of Western classical piano music in West Malaysia, it was established that there are elements lacking or absent in piano teaching and piano lessons. From the data analysis in this study, the elements which are not regularly included in a lesson are aural skills, improvisation, composition, history of Western music and critical listening. I propose to forward suggestions of criteria for good lesson plans based on established research (Harris & Crozier, 2000; Colwell & Richardson, 2002:299; Ley, 2012). This chapter aims to address these deficiencies and offer suggestions on how to improve piano lessons through a process of simultaneous learning. Sample lessons will be presented in lesson plans for elementary, intermediate and advanced levels.

5.2 Optimal lessons based on solid theoretical foundation

In order to suggest optimal lessons I explored criteria for optimal lessons in order to establish relevant theoretical foundations. It was also deemed essential to establish the premise on which these lessons were based, namely, the one-to-one encounter, formulated on what Harris and Crozier (2000) described as the master-apprentice model (cited in Ley 2012). This is generally the way in which studio music teaching is conducted. Kennel (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:244) describes the master-apprentice model as an expert-novice apprenticeship or an expert-novice dyad. He opines that all music instruction can be reduced to the classic dyad of teacher and student. Kennel further states that Jones conceives of this dyad as a continuation of the parent-child relationship:

The one-to-one relationship of the teacher and music student is only duplicated in one's life by the kinship of parent and child. A student often experiences a relationship with his teacher as personal as any in his life and is profoundly influenced musically and otherwise.

Kennel (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:244) makes a further reference to Campbell's view of the expert-novice dyad "placing this professional practice in a world context":

The making of a performing musician in the West is the result of events that

transpire between student and teacher in the privacy of the studio lesson. For a period of thirty minutes or an hour each week, the student has the undivided attention of the teacher. As transmitters of their own musical heritage, teachers shape the musicianship of their students, demonstrating through their own performance the standards for tone quality and technique. They listen to students and respond to their individual needs regarding sound production, phrasing and articulation. They offer ways to improve students' literacy skills including sight-reading ability, and define new symbols as they occur in the notated repertoire. They recommend methods of practice, advise means of memorizing a work, and suggest opportunities for the creative expression and interpretation of a piece. Teachers are the musical agents, the models, and the motivating forces for their students (Campbell, 1991:276).

Kennel (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:244) concludes that a conception of studio instruction must include the elements of teacher knowledge and the rise of expertise, student characteristics and development, and the interactive strategies that ensure faithful reproduction of these desired capabilities from one generation of musicians to the next.

In this study, I explored several criteria for an optimal lesson. The criteria pertain to the teacher's personal ability, preparation, goals and objectives, consistency, ability to engage the student, body language and ability to appreciate differences in students. Other criteria are to have essential activities in an optimal lesson, to select repertoire that will not be too easy or hard for the specific student and to have ensuing "deliberate practice" (McPherson 2005:7) on the part of the student.

The first criterion for an optimal lesson is for teachers to be effective and efficient in teaching well-defined concepts and skills (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:299). Kennel states that this would be rooted in the teacher's expertise "both in performance on a specific instrument and instructional expertise" (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002: 250). Kennel further expounds that the teacher has the following responsibility "to expand or increase the capabilities of the novice (in this case, the student), a process that involves acquisition of important information about the specific student and comparison of that information with previous teaching experience" (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:250).

L'Hommidieu (1992) suggests that teacher experience, the quality of instruction, and the effectiveness of the teacher's work are related to the effectiveness with educational process variables as seen in this excerpt from a case study:

He provided clear instructional cues in a manner and style that was appropriate for both student and the instructional goal. He also provided reinforcement to individual students at appropriate intervals and in a way that provided

informational feedback and the necessary boost to student motivation. Finally, he was extraordinarily effective and doggedly persistent in diagnosing problems and formulating instructional correctives for remediation of the problem (L’Hommidieu, 1992:301).

Kennel (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:251) surmises a few salient features which characterize effective teachers: consistency in approach, personal interactions with students, instructional interactions, standards of preparation and performance and the level of musical and technical detail. Sink (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:316) adds that effective music teaching have contributed to establishing common tenets, namely,

- knowledge of the subject matter is a pre-requisite of effective teaching;
- modeling is necessary to develop effective teaching skills; and
- the mastery of verbal and non-verbal rehearsal/presentation skills and analytical skills are essential to presenting the subject matter in an understandable and logical manner.

A second criterion is for the teacher to have high standards of preparation in lesson planning. A well-planned lesson will lead to a seamless learning experience. This involves strategizing a series of interrelated activities which will lead to sequenced and orderly musical progress (Ley 2012:16; McPherson 2005:30). Ley elaborates that for teaching to be effective it should include a range of interrelated activities in an integrated approach: “Warm-ups and scales relate to the pieces; sight-reading forms a part of every new experience of a notated piece; and listening and aural work permeates all musical activities” (Ley 2012:16). This forms the basis for simultaneous learning. Therefore a considerable amount of planning is required to develop effective lesson plans and to be proactive in anticipating and fulfilling the goals and specific objectives of each lesson.

A third criterion is for the teacher to have clear goals and specific objectives to enable learning to take place. Kennel explains that “it is the responsibility of the teacher to project a trajectory of satisfactory progress for the student by setting goals from one lesson to the next” (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002: 250). Rosenshine et al. (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:304) emphasize that the goals and objectives should be shared with the student by simply stating them at the start of the lesson. This will provide the student with a “short behavioral objective (which will) help to focus the student and reduce the complexity of what is being presented. In addition, such objectives will help the teacher to stick to the subject

matter and avoid confusing digressions”.

A fourth criterion is for the teacher to have consistency in his approach. L’Hommidieu (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:251) in his study of master teachers stated that a student of a master teacher once said: “It was characteristic of this teacher that his personal interactions, his standards of preparation and performance, and the level of musical and technical detail remained virtually invariant from lesson to lesson”. Hence, the master teacher showed clear consistency in his approach to lessons.

A fifth criterion is for the teacher to engage and lead the students through “strategy instruction... that would encourage children to monitor, control, and reflect on their own progress, as ways of improving strategy development” (McPherson 2005:31). This would naturally motivate students to continue to learn. McPherson adds that students could be encouraged to think by asking them to explain how they are doing a task, what they are feeling, and whether they feel competent enough to do it on their own. A couple of questions to this effect are:

- Can you explain to me what you are doing?
- Can you teach me how to do this?

He also suggests providing information about the student’s performance which would encourage them to reflect whether they are approaching it in the best way with these questions:

- Is what you are doing working?
- Why not?

He further encourages teachers to provide content-specific information on how to do a task, rather than telling a student what to do in this way:

- ‘In order to do this, you will need to...’ (McPherson 2005:31).

A sixth criterion according to Sink is “to be able to hold the student’s attention through both high and low teaching intensity” (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:318). Sink states that studies have been done by Yarbrough (1975) and Hendel (1995) in which they both studied the body language of conductors and elementary music teachers respectively. Yoder-White (1993:37) cites Yarbrough’s (1975) operational definition of high and low levels of teaching intensity in each area:

Table 5.1: Operational definitions of high and low teaching intensity (adapted)

Body language	High intensity	Low intensity
Eye contact	Maintaining eye contact throughout	Occasional eye contact
Proximity	Frequently walks around	Remains in one position; keeps distance from student
Voice loudness	Firm, strong voice; reflects vitality	Audible, quiet voice
Voice inflection	Wide range of pitch fluctuations	Little variation in pitch of speaking voice
Gestures	Uses arms and hands frequently	Rarely uses arms and hands; maintains strict body posture
Facial expression	Animated expression incorporating a variety of facial expressions	Neutral facial expression with little variety
Pace	Maintains a fast, exciting pace characterized by concise instruction, minimal talking, with immediate and constant feedback	Slow, methodical pace characterized by meticulous detail in instruction, much lag time between activities, feedback given only when students are not involved in activity

Hendel's (1995) focus was largely similar in the areas of body movements, voice loudness, pitch, pace, type of activity, eye contact, gestures and facial expressions. Therefore finding the correct balance between moments of high and low teaching intensity is essential and a vital criterion for an optimal lesson.

A seventh criterion is for the teacher to appreciate differences in students. Some students are more visual while others learn through listening or kinesthetically. Understanding the characteristics associated with various stages of development may be the starting point to being effective in teaching. Runfola and Swanwick (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:391) maintain that "an understanding of musical development might inform music education (concerning) individual development". At the earliest stages the teachers should aim at developing sensory exploration and manipulative control. For students between the ages of 6-9, Runfola and Swanwick (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:391) encourage educators or teachers to "assist in the process of refining perception of feeling qualities and in facilitating students' expressive production. This may involve movement, dance, drama, and visual images, all of which promote, stimulate and intensify awareness of expressiveness". By the age of 10, teachers would be "looking to further the production and recognition of

musical speculation, an awareness of the uniquely contextual nature of contrasts and repetitions essential to musical form”.

An eighth criterion is to have these essential activities in an optimal lesson:

- Listen and internalize
- Play and sing
- Create
- Perform and communicate

Ley (2012:16) believes this to be a broad approach where listening and internalizing will develop aural awareness and acuity, playing and singing can be an individual activity or with others, creating will assist in developing and interpreting musical ideas through improvising and composing while performing and communicating will include evaluating the student's own and other students' music.

McPherson (2005:9) adheres to the thought that students should be exposed to a range of activities that will stimulate their visual, aural, creative and performance skills. He states that the findings from his studies has resulted in defining the five aspects of music performance relevant to understanding children's abilities to perform music:

- Perform rehearsed music
- Sight-read
- Play from memory
- Play by ear
- Improvise

McPherson and Schleuter (cited in McPherson 2005:10) believe “for children to become competent musicians, they need to be able to develop their capacity to “think in sound” by being able to aurally represent in their minds what they see, hear or wish to create on their instrument”. They also need to have good coordination of eyes, ears and hands to perform on their instrument.

A ninth criterion according to Kennel is “to facilitate optimum student progress by selecting repertoire that will not be too easy or hard for the specific student” (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:250). Furthermore, encouraging students to have some choice in selecting their own repertoire could be “an important dimension of helping to instill a feeling of control

of their own learning. This, in turn, makes the learner an active participant in the instructional process” (McPherson 1989). In their discussions on motivational theory and educational practice, Maehr, Pintrich and Linnenbrink (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:365-366) maintain that the “general principle is that students should be given some choice and control in the classroom setting, the same principle that intrinsic motivation theorists (Deci & Ryan, 1985) propose as important for intrinsic motivation”. They add that students should be allowed to choose their repertoire from a variety of pieces.

A tenth criterion is to have ensuing “deliberate practice” on the part of the student in order to come well prepared for each lesson. This can be achieved by the teacher giving the student clear instructions about practice and the student implementing them in her practice. McPherson (2005:7) believes that the quality of practice is determined by motivation, resources and attention. He adds that “deliberate practice” is goal-oriented, structured and requires effortful facets of practice.

He encourages the use of a practice diary where strategic practice can be recorded and the student preferably works on the weaker areas before playing the pieces they enjoy. The student should practise to improve and work on self-correction (McPherson, 2005:17). In the case of younger students, parental supervision is deemed necessary for effective practice.

5.3 Suggestions for optimal piano lessons based on this study

The following suggestions for optimal piano lessons are based on deficiencies identified from the analyses of the questionnaires and interviews as discussed in chapters four. It is established that the deficiencies are in the areas of developing critical listening, expanding the repertoire, developing the inner ear and developing greater understanding of the composer’s intention. These deficiencies will be discussed by firstly establishing relevant theoretical foundation in these areas followed by suggested lesson plans and a discussion at the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels.

5.3.1 Developing critical listening skills

Last (1960:1) emphatically states that “Far too many pianists do not listen critically to their own playing, it is most important to acquire the habit of self-criticism.” Hence the ability to listen and appraise will help one to evaluate one’s own playing as well as that of others.

Instead, there is a tendency to listen and copy a recording on a wholesale basis, that is, as closely as possible. This approach generally leads to unconvincing interpretations of music. This is often the case in the playing of students in West Malaysia owing to a lack of proper guidance on how to listen critically and also the lack of availability of a variety of recordings in the country.

Williams (2004) states that he employs activities “to develop critical listening skills through structured listening to recorded performances in which students describe in very specific terms the differences between two performances of the same work”. He correlates this activity to teaching where he emphasises that the “most essential competency for effective teaching - the ability to listen critically and to effectively describe what the performer is doing”. Therefore giving a student clear guidelines of what to listen to is essential in critical listening.

Trinity Guildhall’s examination assessments focus on three areas, namely,

- i. notational accuracy and fluency - ‘Me and the Music’,
- ii. technical facility - ‘Me and the Instrument’ and
- iii. communication - ‘Me and the Audience’ (Trinity Guildhall 2008:5).

The importance of notational accuracy is vital to critical listening. Sarah Chang, the renowned violinist, was quoted as having said, “We, as classical musicians, are here to portray the composer’s message: we’re serving the composer.” (Ganesan 2008) All too often a performer may become too familiar with a musical score and makes changes, usually unknowingly, to the rhythms, articulations, dynamic indications, tempi changes and sometimes even the pitches themselves while learning the piece. These errors are often memorized resulting in an inaccurate performance of the work. If one were to listen to a performance of a piece without the score or without being aware of the errors in the performance, it could be detrimental to one’s own performance, particularly if the performer was playing by ear.

Technique refers to “instrumental control and the ability to draw the most from the instrument; tone colour, articulation, pedaling, etc.” (Trinity Guildhall 2008:5). A performance may be marred by a lack of sufficient technical skill to execute it correctly. The end result would be fairly disastrous as one listens to a series of technical imperfections which will result in an inaccurate account of the piece. This can be a traumatic experience both for the listener and the performer. On the other hand, if sufficient thought and care have

gone into developing the technical skills required for the piece, the experience can be uplifting and satisfying for both.

Communication relates to “how well the candidate interprets the music, engages the audience and conveys a sense of the meaning of the music they are playing” (Trinity Guildhall 2008:5).

We may hear a piece which seems to be flawless technically but may be far removed from the actual intention of the composer musically. Issues of performance practice, background to the piece, instrument and the composer need to be taken into account in order to interpret a work correctly. On top of that, the personal interpretation of the piece by the performer will add a personal stamp on the characterization of the piece.

An effective method of listening to one’s own playing is through the use of recording technology such as audio or video recordings. These recordings can be used as a means of self-evaluation in order to assess positive and negative points in one’s playing. Zdechlik (2006) maintains that the following questions will assist a student to make an honest evaluation of his/her own playing:

General questions might include:

- Where do I need to make improvements in the performance of Minuet in G?
- What is my greatest frustration in playing? Is it a coordination problem? Rhythmic problem? Do I have a strategy to overcome this problem?
- How do I want to be playing this piece by next week? What two practice strategies would help me achieve this goal?

Specific questions might include:

- Rhythm: Is my tempo appropriate for the piece? What is my target tempo? Am I playing each rhythmic pattern correctly? Are there places where I have continuity issues? Does my playing communicate a strong metric sense?
- Dynamics: Am I playing with the indicated dynamic indications? What is my general range of dynamics? Did I begin the crescendo in m. 5 too loudly?

Zdechlik strongly advocates the use of recordings as “an excellent way to prepare for testing...using the same rubrics that will be used in the examination.” She also sees the recordings “as a documentation of student’s work” as they serve as a portfolio of their performances and a journal of their development. This will encourage students to be more independent as they learn “to take ownership for their progress”. In summary she maintains

that the key outcome is that students “learn to listen to their own playing and what effect particular adjustments in technique have on tone production”.

It is also helpful to mark the areas which need attention on the score in order to practise them in the following practice sessions. This will be a further record of the student’s progress and he/she would be able to see if the problem areas have been addressed or overcome. In some cases if a recurring problem has not been resolved either musically or technically, it would be useful to seek the advice of the student’s teacher for a solution. This would be a proactive move on the student’s part and would encourage active involvement in the lesson.

A video recording of one’s own playing would also be useful in noticing any unusual grimaces made while in performance. Points of tension can usually be noted by the following:

1. Jerking or nodding of the head owing to undue tension in the neck
2. Biting of lips or a gaping mouth
3. Lack of facial expression or inappropriate facial expression
4. Random swinging of the upper torso
5. Raised shoulders - usually one or the other
6. Awkwardness in the arms held too close to the body or stretched out too far
7. Overly raised wrists or collapsed wrists
8. Double-jointedness in fingers, overly raised fingers or lack of independence in fingers
9. Sitting too far back on the stool
10. Crossed legs or feet placed too closely together or too far apart

While listening to the playing of other performers, one can sharpen one’s listening prowess by using a score and noting both positive and negative aspects in the playing. One should first note the accuracy of note-reading in terms of pitch and rhythm, attention to dynamics, articulation, phrasing, rhythmic context, ornamentation and effective use of the playing apparatus. In terms of the interpretation, factors such as performance practice, stylistic use of pedaling, *rubato* and technique as well as the instrument for which the piece was written should be taken into account.

Zdechlik (2006) suggests a comparison of various performances of the same piece where the

student should be encouraged to:

- identify how the overall impression of each performance is different
- synthesize the various details into an artistic whole
- make judgements about aspects of a performance that they consider stylistically appropriate or inappropriate

She concludes that “the great learning outcome from exercises in critical listening is that students gain awareness of their own tendencies in listening”.

The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music also stresses that at advanced levels it is important “to be able to assess artistic integrity, adhere to performance practice with an understanding of style, be aware of the historical position, idiom, form and style of the works as these are essential to critical listening”. Therefore, in critical listening it is vital to help the student acquire the habit of self-criticism by giving her clear guidelines of what to listen to in the music: notational accuracy, technical facility and communication.

5.3.2 Expanding the student’s listening repertoire

Currently in West Malaysia there is limited access to classical recordings in the form of CDs, DVDs and sheet music. A few bookstores like Borders, Kinokuniya and Tower Records stock recordings of classical works but these are usually limited in availability. Hence there is a glaring need for the classical piano teacher to expand his or her collection of classical recordings. Some teachers resort to buying recordings from other countries such as Singapore, China, Taiwan, the United States of America and the United Kingdom either while they are travelling or directly from the music bookstores in these countries.

In expanding the listening repertoire of the student, music teachers can encourage a greater awareness of the availability of classical music recording resources from websites such as Amazon.com, SheetmusicPlus, YouTube and others for better access to a wide variety of recordings. Teachers are well advised to familiarize themselves with such resources in order to be in a better position to guide their students in their listening of classical piano music available on these websites. However, teachers should encourage their students to access legal music sites only. It should be emphasized that the purpose of listening is to widen one’s listening repertoire in order to assess the positive and negative aspects of the performance and not for the purpose of wholesale copying as stated earlier.

Other possibilities of expanding the student's listening repertoire would be in arranging for the student to attend concerts at premises such as the "Dewan Filharmonik Petronas" in Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia where performers of international standing perform.

In Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya, piano recitals are also regularly performed by local and visiting artistes at various concert halls such as Chinwoo Stadium, Civic Centre, Istana Budaya, Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPAAC), PJ LiveArts Centre, The Recital Hall at Wisma Bentley Music and various music schools or centres with in-house facilities for concerts. Nation-wide newspapers such as The Star regularly carry advertisements and sometimes articles on such events.

5.3.3 Developing the inner ear

In her article "Inner hearing is central to what we do!" Davidman (2006) states that "well developed inner hearing is the defining feature of a good musician". The development of this mental function is central to the Kodály approach to music education. The more the teacher understands the complexity of inner hearing, the better he or she will be to structure activities and plan lessons". Davidman (2006) likens the usage of inner hearing to that of a musical compass. She adds that "The challenge for the music teacher is therefore to build small steps of hearing into every musical activity at every level of skill...". A further challenge is to create "steps within steps" (Trinka 2004) which will lead to strengthening and expanding inner hearing. Employing the Kodály method, Trinka (2004) describes a five-phase instrumental sequence - Prepare, Make Conscious, Reinforce, Practice, and Create:

- Prepare phase: Students experience the new element or concept mainly through listening, moving, singing by ear, inner hearing, and part work. The teacher then uses group aural analysis to guide students to identify the presence of a new element and articulate its critical attributes.
- Make Conscious phase: Students name the element, revisit its aural context, and show its visual representation.
- Reinforcement phase: Students write and read the specific pattern used to name the new element, and then explore -- through listening, singing, moving, inner hearing, writing and reading, etc., - the new element as it exists in very familiar patterns extracted from song repertoire presented in the Prepare phase.
- Practice phase: Students explore the new element or concept in familiar and

unfamiliar patterns in unfamiliar materials such as songs, exercises, reading pieces, and listening examples. All skill domains are then plumbed, relative to the new element, in myriad musical settings. Additionally, the new element is applied in familiar settings to instruments such as the recorder, barred instruments, rhythm sticks, etc.

- Create phase: Students apply their knowledge by engaging in higher level improvisation, composition, and performance on instruments, thereby demonstrating mastery of the musical element or concept.

Notably, inner hearing and listening are emphasized at the critical phases of preparation and reinforcement whenever a new element is introduced.

Welsh (2010) discusses the importance of inner hearing for a musician and describes the ways in which Kodály's approach to musicianship develops this:

Inner hearing is basically the concept of being able to hear notes or music inside our heads without the need to play or sing. If a musician is looking at a piece of music they should be able to accurately hear how it sounds inside the head (if their inner hearing skills are good), with no need to play or sing it. Included in this, is the ability to pitch intervals inside the head, thus making sight singing much easier. This skill is developed predominantly through singing and the use of the voice, which is strongly emphasised in the Kodály method of teaching.

As for the practical implementation of the Kodály method in an individual lesson, one can garner some excellent suggestions from Pearce (2010:11) who personally visited Hungary and observed the implementation of the Kodály method at nursery, primary and secondary schools as well as the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest. Having been an advocate of the system in schools and privately for the last thirty years, he suggests the following for the student:

- Singing songs to words and to tonic sol-fa syllables
- Making hand signs for the degrees of the scale and for songs and phrases being sung
- Keeping a steady pulse/beat
- Performing an accompanying ostinato pattern
- Reading simple rhythm patterns from flash cards
- Reading simple melodic patterns from tonic sol-fa syllables on flashcards
- Internalising and then singing short phrases from hand signs

- Developing inner hearing
- Singing melodic phrases from the stave
- Singing a melody to tonic sol-fa syllables and making the appropriate hand signs before being asked to perform it on an instrument
- Improvising/composing
- Improving intonation through various exercises
- Developing musical memory

Pearce (2010) also recommends the use of the following materials published by Boosey and Hawkes to teach the Kodály method:

- *The Kodály Way to Music* - C Vajda
- *333 Exercises*
- *Let Us Sing Correctly*
- *77 Two Part Exercises*
- *Binica Hungarica*
- *15 Two Part Exercises*

Therefore, it can be surmised that the Kodály method reinforces the student's ability to hear what one sees. This will also strengthen the student's mental accuracy of the preconceived sound especially while sight-singing, thus making him more aware of his intonation. Inevitably this will also be a great asset in sight-reading a piece at the piano.

Conversely, music dictation is also an effective way to be able to see what one hears. Bernstein (1981:125-126) suggests that the student be trained in *solfège* or sol-fa and dictation. He should focus on notating a single voice at a time in a passage of music. To take the boredom out of musical dictation he suggests working with a fellow student of music and taking turns to give musical dictation.

A further application of inner listening as amplified by Bernstein (1981:110-118) is in the way the student listens to his practice. He strongly advocates that in practising, all activities relate to each other and that the total concept of a composition is ultimately influenced by the way one listens to one's practising. Moreover, he stresses that for practice to be effective, one must be aware of every sound one produces. That would require that one trains oneself inwardly to sounds that originate in the mind's ear. Hence the concept of "tuning in" when

practising requires the greatest amount of concentration and focus. To reinforce this thought Bernstein also states the necessity to “listen before one plays” in practice. This will also help interpretatively in deciding on the agogic accent within a phrase and working musically towards it. In addition, this will enable the performer to articulate his musical concept of the passage with some degree of predictability or conviction thus creating a synthesis between the performer’s comprehension, conceptualization and execution of a composition.

Davidman (2006) also suggests that Curwen hand signs can be also be used to enhance inner hearing as it engages parts of the brain which are not associated with sound. The New Curwen Method (John Curwen Society 2006) reinforces the thought that “music is for listening and the quality of that activity is determined by what the listener is able to bring to the process”. John Curwen “drew the threads of earlier practices into a cohesive whole, based, in the pitch identification on the inner hearing and musical memory. His employment of associative aids included Word (Tonic Sol-fa syllables), Gestures (Hand Signs) and Mental Effects (the recognizable character of each note of the scale).”

The John Curwen Society (2006) further expounds that:

Music is a mental activity, the ear being involved only to the extent that it channels the soundless vibrations of the atmosphere into the seat of the brain where they are transformed into ‘sounds’. But in the true act of listening two distinctive experiences are involved. First, the external message is received; then, the mind compares it with what is already present — whether this is a single note, part of a phrase, or some wider context. As a musical experience, listening becomes rewarding when what is heard acquires meaning through this deliberate process of comparison.

Listening to a musical score internally without actually playing on the instrument will also develop disciplined inner hearing. Consciously listening internally without any form of external interruption will cause the student/performer to hear the sound perceived from the score. Once the performer has internalized the sound, the actual performance will be far more satisfying and accurate as he has already anticipated the score aurally before experiencing the physical sensation of the actual performance. For instance, listening to a passage of music with a *decrescendo* followed by a *crescendo* mentally will help the student to make the physical adjustments more readily upon the actual performance of the passage. Visualisation of the printed score should be encouraged from the earliest stages. It is also an effective tool in memorisation as it enhances visual memory.

Furthermore, being aware and sensitive to keys, modulations, chords, cadences and harmonic

progressions while hearing a piece mentally will also help in developing the inner ear. Asking the following questions in the midst of the performance will also help direct the performer's thoughts towards his inner hearing:

- What is the key in this passage?
 - How does this key relate to the home key?
 - If there is a modulation, how does it feel in contrast to the previous key?
 - Is there something different or special about this chord? (especially chromatic chords)
 - Does this phrase feel finished or unfinished? Why?
6. Have I heard this harmonic progression before?
(e.g. standard progressions like I c V I)

5.3.4 Developing greater understanding of the composer's intention



All too often one hears a performance fraught with errors because of a lack of awareness of performance directions such as dynamics, articulations, *tempo*, *tempo* changes, changes of character and /or moods within a piece. The resultant effect is a performance which may be fairly accurate in terms of note-reading and rhythms but is lacking in many other aspects.

When learning a new piece either for repertoire or sight-reading, the student should be directed to take a step back in order to hear the music internally with the appropriate indications. He should establish an acceptable *tempo* and be aware of any changes to the *tempo* such as *ritardando*, *accelerando*, *stringendo*, etc. Changes in time-signature should also be noted and the student should take some time to consider how to switch from the original time-signature to the new one. It is essential to be able to change the stresses within a bar without any sense of delay or awkwardness. For this to be effective there would need to be sufficient mental preparation to anticipate the moment.

In order to develop a greater awareness of various performance directions, Warburton (1976:257-260) has devised several tests of general musical literacy. The researcher has referred to these particular tests as they are included in Warburton's "Graded Aural Tests" to provide material for many public music examinations available at that time. Hence, these tests are not often included in other aural books. This chapter is a teacher's guide with the answers marked in red. It also has a section for the student without the answers. Therefore it facilitates the correction of the test for the teacher.

In the first set of tests the student is given a number of tempo indications to choose from and

also dynamic markings, as in figure 1, which is to be indicated on the score whilst listening to a recording or live performance of the excerpt. The following are the instructions which precede the test:

“Add *presto*, *allegretto* or *adagio* at the beginning of the following song to indicate its speed. Also add *p*, , *rit.*, , and *a tempo*, in this order, at suitable places” (Warburton 1976: 258).

Example 5.1 Warburton, 1976, Schubert’s *Heidenröslein*



The musical literacy tests have proven useful to teachers in increasing the level of awareness of students in their inner hearing, practice, performance and assessment of recorded and live performances.

5.4 Suggested lesson plans and discussion

In a well-planned lesson, Ley (2012:17) relates that the teacher would have a variety of strategies, namely, warm-ups, games, listening exercises, practising and performing. These strategies would be well supported by the use of flash cards, visual aids and notated music, amongst others. It is important that the activities are sequential and connected where one activity would lead to another as a natural consequence. These activities would also need to be related to the aim of the lesson. This is the essence of “simultaneous learning” (Ley 2012:17) which forms the theoretical framework of this study. The suggested lesson plans which follow are largely based on the concept of “simultaneous learning” (Harris & Crozier 2000: 72-77; Ley 2012: 17).

5.4.1 Elementary level

Lesson scenario:

Two students at an elementary level have been receiving piano tuition. They have been learning for about two years.

General aim of lesson:

The general aim of the lesson is to gain familiarity in playing C major scale and broken chord and to relate it specifically to the first movement of Sonatina No.2 in C by Thomas Attwood, a pupil of Mozart.

Activity 1

The teacher shares the aim of the lesson with the students. She plays the piece and asks them to identify the key she is playing in.

Activity 2

Once the key has been identified, ask the students to take turns to play the scale and broken chord of C major. Now ask them to comment on each other's performance in terms of evenness or unevenness of rhythm, awkward fingering choices, weak technique of playing such as bumping the thumb or difficulty in turning the thumb under the hand. Encourage the students to suggest corrections. Critical listening is being developed simultaneously with technical ability.

Activity 3

Play the opening motif from the beginning to the first crotchet of bar 3.

Example 5.2: First movement, Sonatina No. 2 in C by Thomas Attwood, bars 1-3



Ask the students to imitate the motif by playing on the piano with the appropriate dynamic level, shaping of the phrase and articulations. The inner ear is being developed simultaneously with musical memory.

Activity 4

Encourage the students to improvise an eight-bar phrase using the opening motif. They can make it sound unfinished at the fourth bar with an imperfect cadence and finished at the eighth bar with a perfect cadence. A demonstration may be helpful in advance of the students attempting to improvise. Ask each student to evaluate each other's improvisation in terms of the time-signature, structure and dynamic levels. Improvisation skills are being developed simultaneously with critical listening.

Activity 5

Ask the students to play C major scale beginning on the tonic and also on the dominant both ascending and descending. Now ask them to sight read the right-hand of the prescribed piece from bar 9 to the first crotchet of bar 15.

Example 5.3: First movement, Sonatina No. 2 in C by Thomas Attwood, bars 9-15



The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Piano and Pno. (Piano). The score is in 4/4 time and covers bars 9 to 15. The Piano part starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Pno. part starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The right-hand part of both staves features a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the left-hand part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

The technique of scale playing and musical memory of the scale is being developed simultaneously with sight-reading.

Activity 6

Ask the students to read the piece individually for the first time. Encourage the students to evaluate each other's performance in terms of phrasing, rhythmic continuity and dynamics.

Give clear guidance on specific areas for practice at home in preparing for the next lesson. Expanding the repertoire and critical listening are being developed simultaneously with sight-reading.

5.4.2 Intermediate level

Lesson scenario:

Three students at an intermediate level have been receiving piano tuition. They have been learning for about six years.

General aim of lesson:

The general aim of the lesson is to introduce a method of learning contrapuntal music and to relate it specifically to J S Bach's first two-part invention in C major.

Activity 1

The teacher shares the aim of the lesson with the students - an explanation of the term "contrapuntal" is necessary. This could be supported aurally by the teacher performing a portion of J S Bach's first two-part invention in C major to illustrate the interplay between parts. This will encourage critical listening to each voice; the interplay of the two voices and an appreciation of the contrapuntal texture.

Activity 2

Begin by asking the students to sing a familiar tune "Are you sleeping Brother John?" together at first and then as a round. Using a familiar tune will put the students in their comfort zone. This will make singing the tune more manageable and they will be able to focus on the timing of the entries. This encourages accurate pitching and a rhythmical response as the timing of each entry is critical to the successful singing of the round. A few attempts may be necessary. Concurrently the teacher encourages the students to listen to each other's part while singing their own. Critical listening is being developed simultaneously with pitching and rhythmical skills which are elements of inner ear development.

Activity 3

Ask the students to play the tune by ear on the piano in the key of C major. This will encourage improvisation. They can be sitting at different registers of the keyboard and can take turns to start the round. Flash cards numbered one to three can be used for them to select the order of players. This will help to sustain interest and create a random ordering which will keep up the intensity of the activity. Improvisation skills are being developed simultaneously with ensemble playing.

Activity 4

Introduce the new piece - J S Bach's first two-part invention in C major by clapping the recurring rhythmic motif:

Example 5.4: J. S Bach, Two-part invention in C major, rhythmic motif from bar 1



Reinforce this by the use of a flash card. Inform the students that they will be hearing this motif many times throughout the piece. Play the opening motif and ask the students to notate it. This will develop their inner ear through musical dictation.

Example 5.5: J. S Bach, Two-part invention in C major, bars 1-2



Activity 5

Ask the students to attempt inverting the theme. This will encourage improvisation and a better aural appreciation of the intervals and also the direction in which the melody is travelling. Play the piece and ask the students to identify the number of times they hear the inverted theme. Critical listening and aural acuity are being developed simultaneously with improvisation.

Activity 6

Ask any two of the students to play the upper and lower voices of the piece at a higher or lower register as long as both students are able to play comfortably. This will develop sight-reading skills and tempo control as both the students have to keep going to the end of the piece. In the meantime, ask the student who is not playing to listen for sequences, modulations and the structure of the piece. Various permutations can be made in attempting this activity so that each student has a chance at each role:

Students A and B play while student C listens.

Students A and C play while student B listens.

Students B and C play while student A listens.

Sight-reading skills are developed simultaneously with critical listening and analytical skills.

Activity 7

Ask each student to give a first performance of the piece individually. The remaining students are encouraged to discuss and evaluate the performance in terms of accuracy, fingering choices, technical ability and communication of the interplay between voices.

Give clear guidance on specific areas for practice at home in preparing for the next lesson.

Performance skills are being developed simultaneously with critical listening and good practice habits.

5.4.3 Advanced level

Lesson scenario:

Three students at an advanced level have been receiving piano tuition. They have been learning for about eight years.

General aim of lesson:

The general aim of the lesson is to focus on various types of syncopations and to relate them specifically to Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cake Walk* from *Children Corner's* Suite.

Activity 1

The teacher shares the aim of the lesson with the students explaining the different ways in which syncopation can occur. This could be supported aurally by the teacher performing a portion of Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cake Walk* to illustrate syncopation. Ask the students to note the number of times they hear syncopations and to describe how the syncopations are formed. Critical listening skills are being developed simultaneously with inner ear development.

Activity 2

Begin by asking the students to clap these rhythmic patterns taken from bar 6 of *Golliwogg's*

Cake Walk at  =80

Example 5.6: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, bar 6



Student A claps quavers on the main beats in duple time.

Student B claps quavers on the off-beats in duple time.

Student C claps a quaver on the first off-beat and two semiquavers on the second off-beat.

Rests are indicated by hand signs where the hands open outwards rhythmically.

Table 5.2: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, 1st rhythmic pattern, bar 6

A	
B	
C	



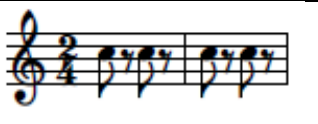
Give the students a different rhythmic pattern to clap.

Student A claps quavers on the off- beats in duple time.

Student B claps two semiquavers on the first off-beat and a quaver on the second off-beat

Student C claps quavers on the main beats in duple time.


Table 5.3: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, 2nd rhythmic pattern, bar 8

A	
B	
C	

Movement skills though clapping and hand signs are being developed simultaneously with inner ear development and ensemble work.

Activity 3

Ask one student to clap on the main beats and to indicate rests by hand signs at

 = 80 while the other two students improvise other types of rhythms to create syncopation over two bars. A possible combination:

Student A claps two semiquavers on the off- beats in bar 1 and on the last quaver of bar 2.

Student B claps three semiquavers after a semiquaver rest followed by a quaver rest and a quaver in bar 1 and a semiquaver, quaver, semiquaver on the first beat of bar 2 followed by a quaver on the second off-beat.

Student C claps quavers on the main beats in duple time.

Table 5.4: Improvisation of different rhythms to create syncopations

A	
B	
C	

To reinforce the visual impression of the improvisations, ask two of the students to notate the rhythms while one claps them. Each improvisation should be notated. Improvisation skills are being developed simultaneously with inner ear development through musical dictation.

Activity 4

Introduce the new piece from bars 6-9. The students play according to this arrangement:

Student A plays the chords in the bass.

Student B plays the cluster chords in the inner voices.

Student C plays the chords in the upper voices.

Example 5.7: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, arrangement of bars 6-9



Ask the students to take note of the dynamics in performance.

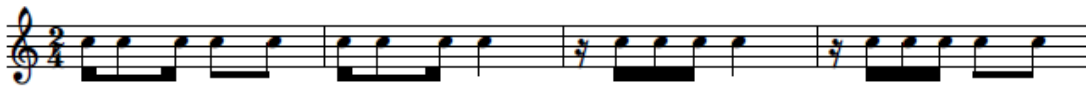
Sight-reading skills are being developed simultaneously with interpretation skills seen in the observation of dynamics.

Activity 5

Introduce new rhythmic patterns from bars 1-4 of the prescribed piece. As this passage has several tricky rhythms, ask one student to clap in semiquavers while the other claps the given rhythm. Different permutations of students should be arranged.

Student A (rhythmic patterns from bars 1-4)

Example 5.8: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, rhythmic patterns, bars 1-4



Student B (continuous semiquavers)

Example 5.9: Rhythmic pattern of continuous semiquavers



OR

Student B (rhythmic patterns from bars 1-4)

Student C (continuous semiquavers)

OR

Student C (rhythmic patterns from bars 1-4)

Student A (continuous semiquavers)

Ask two students to play the passage together on the piano at least two octaves apart while the other student acts as a time-keeper by clapping continuous semiquavers.

Inner ear development through rhythmic clapping and tempo control are being developed simultaneously with sight-reading skills.

Activity 6

Ask the students to play bars 10-17 in this arrangement:

Student A plays the melody.

Student B plays the chords in the inner voices with both hands.

Student C plays the chords in the bass.

Example 5.10: Debussy, *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*, bars 10-17



The musical score for Example 5.10 shows two systems of music. The first system (bars 10-17) is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The right hand has a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, starting with a dynamic of *mf*. The left hand has a bass line with chords and single notes, starting with a dynamic of *p*. The tempo is marked "tres net et tres sec". The second system (bars 18-25) continues the piece, with the right hand playing a melody that becomes more rhythmic and the left hand playing a bass line with chords. Dynamics include *f* and *molto*. The tempo remains "tres net et tres sec".

In this passage all the rhythms practised thus far are being put together.

Continue this arrangement in bars 18-25. Once again different permutations of students should be encouraged. Sight-reading skills are being developed simultaneously with ensemble playing.

Activity 7

Ask the students to perform bars 1-25 of the piece individually. Encourage discussion and evaluation of the piece in terms of conveying the composer's intention accurately in the areas of precision of reading both rhythm and pitch, articulations, dynamics and choice of pedaling. Also consider the performances in terms of the use of the proper apparatus or technique. Finally, discuss the performances in terms of communication and projection of the appropriate character.

Give clear guidance on specific areas for practice at home in preparing for the next lesson.

Expanding the listening repertoire and critical listening skills are being developed simultaneously with garnering a greater understanding of the composer's intention.

5.4.4 Discussion

The efficacy of these lesson plans would be dependent on the students who would need to be fairly compatible in musical ability, intelligence, age and understanding of the language of instruction. At the elementary level the students will develop critical listening, technical ability, aural skills, musical memory, improvisation skills, sight-reading ability and expand their repertoire. At the intermediate level the students will develop critical listening, aural ability, improvisation skills, ensemble playing, sight-reading ability, analytical skills, performance skills and good practice habits. At the advanced level the students will develop critical listening, aural skills, ensemble playing, improvisation skills, sight-reading ability, interpretative skills, performance skills in tempo control, expand their repertoire and garner a greater understanding of the composer's intention.

5.5 Summary

This study set out to determine criteria for optimal lessons in order to establish relevant theoretical foundations. Ten criteria were established which are by no means exhaustive. The first criterion for an optimal lesson is for the teacher to be effective and efficient in teaching well-defined concepts and skills. The second criterion is for the teacher to have high standards of preparation in lesson planning. The third criterion is for the teacher to have clear goals and specific objectives to enable learning to take place. The fourth criterion is for the teacher to have consistency in his approach. The fifth criterion is for the teacher to engage and lead the students through “strategy instruction... that would encourage children to monitor, control, and reflect on their own progress, as ways of improving strategy development” (McPherson 2005:31). The sixth criterion according to Sink is “to be able to hold the student's attention through both high and low teaching intensity” (cited in Colwell & Richardson 2002:318). The seventh criterion is for the teacher to appreciate differences in students. An eighth criterion is to have these essential activities in an optimal lesson: listen and internalize, play and sing, create, perform and communicate. The ninth criterion is for the teacher to facilitate optimum student progress by selecting repertoire that will not be too easy or hard for the specific student. The tenth criterion is to have ensuing “deliberate practice” on the part of the student in order to come well prepared for each lesson.

Suggestions were also made for optimal lessons in developing critical listening skills as it is vital to help the student acquire the habit of self-criticism by giving her clear guidelines of

what to listen to in the music: notational accuracy, technical facility and communication. Further suggestions were made to expand the student's listening repertoire by purchasing CDs and DVDs, accessing legal music sites on the Internet, and attending concerts at recommended venues. In developing the inner ear, it was recommended to employ the Kodály method, Curwen hand signs and to listen to a musical score internally. In order to develop greater understanding of the composer's intentions, it was suggested that the student should be directed to take a step back in order to hear a new piece of music internally with performance directions such as dynamics, articulations, *tempo*, *tempo* changes, changes of character and /or moods within a piece.

Finally, lesson plans which incorporated the theoretical framework for this study, namely, simultaneous learning, were proposed at the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. The efficacy of these lesson plans were discussed at 5.4.4.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation has investigated how teachers approach piano tuition in West Malaysia and identified elements which are lacking or absent in a typical lesson. It has also determined to what extent music teachers rely on foreign examination syllabi as a basis for lessons and identified recurring characteristics in the teaching done by piano teachers.

6.2 Restatement of aims of research

In this investigation, the aim was to assess the current condition of piano teaching of Western classical music in West Malaysia. This study also set out to determine the elements that were lacking or absent in piano lessons. Concurrently, it also studied the approaches of prominent piano teachers of international standing in the areas where the identified elements were lacking or absent. This study was undertaken to encourage music teachers in West Malaysia to explore new avenues of piano teaching thus making their teaching of Western classical piano music more effective.

6.3 Summarising the findings

The results of this investigation show that most of the teachers use a master-apprentice approach to their teaching without any formal training in pedagogy. A common challenge teachers faced in this study was having students who were too busy to practise. Although their responses vary, the most notable themes among the challenges faced were having unmotivated students who lacked interest, were overly dependent on the teacher, had poor concentration and were physically slow and uncoordinated.

In exploring the general aims and objectives of teaching, it was clearly construed that the teachers wanted to encourage their students to expand their repertoire with a variety of Western classical piano music and popular music. They also expressed the desire for their students to have better sight-reading skills. One of the more significant findings to emerge

from this study was that a salient aim for teachers was for their students to finish or complete their graded examinations to the final level, namely, grade 8 of most examination boards.

The results of this study revealed two main constituent themes which emerged regarding teachers' attitude towards piano examinations. One theme was that teachers would abide by the parents' wishes with regard to piano examinations. The other theme was that teachers regarded piano examinations merely as an assessment. It was established that most of the teachers entered their students for piano examinations annually hence reinforcing the fact that examinations have a significant influence on piano teaching. For most teachers, their philosophy of examinations was to regard examinations as an assessment of the student's standard as well as an incentive to work. They also used the examinations as a gauge of the student's progress and generally set a target to complete a grade per year.

Contrary to expectations, two opposing constituent themes emerged from this study on parents' attitude towards piano examinations. One theme suggested that parents insisted on their children taking piano examinations in order to acquire the relevant certificate. The other emergent theme indicated that parents trusted the teacher's judgment to guide and develop their children's musical skills. Therefore, these parents do not insist on their children taking piano examinations and leave that decision to the teacher's good judgment. They would rather have their children enjoy music.

This study showed several emergent themes in the area of lesson content. They were broadly based on elements that were regularly taught, irregularly taught and mostly ignored. It was established that technique, repertoire, sight-reading, discussing the background of pieces and analysis were regularly taught. Aural and critical listening was irregularly taught whereas improvisation, music appreciation, listening to Western classical music was mostly ignored in piano lessons.

In exploring the musical activities the teachers organize for the students, performing on the piano as a soloist in concerts in front of family, friends and fellow students was the most regular activity. These performances were regarded as a platform to perform; an incentive to work and a distraction to take the boredom out of learning examination pieces all year round. Performing as an accompanist or in an ensemble was a rare activity.

In the self-assessment of teachers, most of the teachers reported their teaching as being satisfactory to good. However, there were teachers who were only partially satisfied with their teaching; frustrated at not seeing their aims and objectives achieved, stressed out by the

expectations from parents and realistic in being aware of their shortcomings in areas such as music appreciation and improvisation.

The teachers in this study displayed some understanding of what it is to teach music effectively but there is a discrepancy between what the teachers know and do, and what they say about teaching. There may therefore be a disconnection between their understanding of the concept of effective teaching and the perception of how to approach teaching effectively. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of what music education provides for students and students should have a clear perception of what they are expected to learn. The students should also be able to track their progress and whether or not they are meeting their goals. Currently there is a predilection to use examination requirements to dominate the instrumental curriculum.

6.3.1 Answering the research questions

How can Western classical piano music be taught more effectively in West Malaysia?

Western classical piano music can be taught more effectively in West Malaysia if teachers could re-think their approach to teaching in terms of planning for an optimal lesson. This would involve having both long-term and short-term goals in which a variety of strategies and important elements are incorporated seamlessly using the “simultaneous learning” approach advocated by Harris and Crozier (2000) and Ley (2012). The strategies may include warm-ups, games, listening exercises, practising and performing. These strategies would be well supported by the use of flash cards, visual aids and notated music, amongst others. The important elements should include the teaching of aural, critical listening, improvisation, music appreciation and listening to Western classical music in addition to the present inclusion of technique, repertoire and sight-reading in typical lessons.

In addition, adopting the ten criteria for an optimal lesson as explained in chapter five could result in more effective piano teaching in West Malaysia:

1. Teachers need to have well-defined concepts and skills both in performance and instructional expertise.
2. Teachers need to have high standards of preparation in lesson planning.
3. Teachers need to have clear goals and specific objectives to enable learning to take place.

4. Teachers need to have consistency in their approach.
5. Teachers need to engage and lead the students through strategic, motivational instruction.
6. Teachers need to be able to hold the student's attention through high and low teaching intensity.
7. Teachers need to appreciate differences in students' learning abilities.
8. Teachers need to include essential activities in an optimal lesson - listen and internalize, play and sing, create, perform and communicate.
9. Teachers need to facilitate optimum student progress by selecting repertoire that will not be too easy or hard for the specific student.
10. Teachers need to ensure ensuing "deliberate practice" on the part of the student in order to come well prepared for each lesson.

A further area which needs to be addressed is the attitudes of both teachers and parents towards piano examinations. If there is the continued desire for the student to go for an examination yearly there will be little opportunity to develop the other aspects of music learning. Ideally, examinations should be taken more infrequently and the parents should rely on the teacher to develop a comprehensive curriculum which would cover the various elements listed earlier in a more substantial manner. This would relieve students, teachers and even parents of the pressure associated with taking the examinations. Instead, it would revive or restore the joy of learning music.

Several sub-questions arise which are consequential or related to the main question are now answered:

- How do teachers approach piano tuition in West Malaysia?

Most of the teachers take a master-apprentice approach to their teaching without any formal training in pedagogy. They therefore largely adopt the approach to teaching which was administered to them by their own teachers. Fairly few teachers would develop themselves professionally by taking a diploma in music teaching. There is a greater preference for performance diplomas and hence there is a greater emphasis on the teaching of repertoire.

- Which elements are lacking or absent in a typical Malaysian piano lesson?

Aural training and critical listening are lacking whereas improvisation, music appreciation, listening to Western classical music are mostly absent in piano lessons.

- How much do the teachers rely on foreign examination syllabi as a basis for lessons?

Currently there is a predilection to use examination requirements to dominate the instrumental curriculum. It was established that the main components of the examinations such as technique, repertoire, and sight-reading were regularly taught. There is a significant emphasis on repertoire as students would be required to play three examination pieces and this would take up a large portion of the lesson time. Aural training is more irregularly taught although it is a main component of the examinations owing to the time constraint in piano lessons. For this component, the prescribed aural tests of the examination board would be used to test the students.

- What are the recurring characteristics or features in the teaching of piano teachers in West Malaysia?

One of the recurring characteristics is for students to finish or complete their graded examinations to the final level, namely, grade 8 of most examination boards. Therefore the curriculum is largely determined by the examination syllabi. Teachers are generally pressured by the time constraint of having to cover as many examination topics as possible during the lesson. Another recurring characteristic is to focus on repertoire as the main element taught in a typical lesson. A significant portion of the lesson is devoted to teaching repertoire which mainly comprises examination pieces, non-examination Western classical pieces, popular pieces and jazz pieces. The teaching of technique is also fairly significant as it is a component of the examination and usually comprises scales and arpeggios. It is also common for teachers to teach sight-reading regularly or on an alternate week basis. If aural is taught at all it is usually on an alternate week basis or conducted in a separate class. Aural tests from the examinations are commonly used to test the student's aural ability. There is no mention of having a programme to train aural skills.

- How can deficiencies in the current piano teaching approaches of teachers in West Malaysia be addressed effectively?

In order to address the deficiencies in the current piano teaching system in West Malaysia, more effective ways should be employed to incorporate into a piano lesson these elements of music learning such as aural, critical listening, improvisation, music appreciation and

listening to Western classical music. For example, Harris and Crozier's (2000) approach of simultaneous learning is an innovative approach to instrumental work as it aims to encompass a range of skills in a seamless experience...to support learning and develop musical understanding. This approach, as described in chapter 5(5.4.1- 5.4.3), requires planning and sequential thought, as one activity has to lead to another in order to teach different elements more imperceptibly. This will be a significant change from the present tendency to sectionalize the topics in piano lessons in West Malaysia. For instance, a typical lesson might begin with technique in terms of scales and arpeggios followed by repertoire and either sight-reading or aural at the end of the lesson.

6.3.2 Integrating the elements in developmental phases

Based on the lesson plans as suggested in chapter 6, at the elementary level the students will develop critical listening, technical ability, aural skills, musical memory, improvisation skills, sight-reading ability and expand their repertoire. At the intermediate level the students will further develop critical listening, aural skills, improvisation skills and sight-reading ability. However, ensemble playing, analytical skills, performance skills and good practice habits will be included at this level. At the advanced level the students will continue to develop critical listening, aural skills, expand their repertoire, ensemble playing, improvisation skills and sight-reading ability. In addition they will also develop interpretative skills, performance skills in tempo control and garner a greater understanding of the composer's intention.

6.4 Significance of the findings

The current findings add substantially to our understanding of how Western classical piano music is being taught in West Malaysia. It contributes to the current literature on music education in Malaysia which mostly focuses on education in government schools. There are several studies on private music teaching in Malaysia but these are generally fewer in number. Hence, the present study makes a noteworthy contribution to understanding the background and circumstances that influence piano teaching in West Malaysia and how these have affected piano teachers' approach to teaching. The study finds that having piano examinations with regularity, usually on a yearly basis, has largely dominated the curriculum with examination requirements. As such, several elements are missing or absent in a typical lesson. Hence the situation is clearly not ideal as lessons are too examination oriented. Furthermore, opportunities for music making in terms of performance are also limited to occasional play-throughs as soloists in the teacher's studio, music schools or at a venue for an

annual concert. Therefore students are generally not exposed to sufficient opportunities for performances and rarely have a platform to display their skills and musical achievements.

6.5 Limitations of the current study

The findings of this study are subject to at least three limitations. First, there was a relatively small sample of teachers who were interviewed. Second, the limitation of the understanding and command of the English language did not add to the richness of the text owing to the diversity of Chinese dialects spoken by the respondents. Third, students and parents were not interviewed and hence their perspectives on the current situation were not investigated.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas:

- Understanding the aims of students in learning the piano
- Understanding the aims of parents in having their children learn the piano
- Developing a curriculum incorporating simultaneous learning
- Investigating the effect of the new curriculum on students
- Assessing the effects of examinations on the musical growth of a student

It would be interesting to compare experiences of individuals within the same area of investigation. Understanding the aims of students in learning the piano and that of parents in having their children learn the piano may throw further light on the current situation of music learning in West Malaysia.

Further research could be done to investigate the development and implementation of a curriculum incorporating simultaneous learning. In future investigations it may be possible to conduct case studies of students undergoing the new curriculum in order to determine the efficacy of the lesson plans and to identify any problems or difficulties in its implementation.

It would also be interesting to assess the effects of examinations on the musical growth of a student. A comparative study may be conducted of students “fed a diet of examination material to the exclusion of anything else” (Harris & Crozier, 2000:112) with students taught using a curriculum incorporating simultaneous learning.

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APPENDIX A

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT of MUSIC

TEL (012) 420-3747 (*Secretary*)
TEL: +27 12 420 3747
FAX (012) 420-2248
musdep@up.ac.za
www.up.ac.za/academic/music/music.html

Music education specialist questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently planning a Masters degree in music at the University of Pretoria, under the joint supervision of Dr Clorinda Panebianco-Warrens and Professor Wessel van Wyk. The title of my research is *Teaching Western classical piano music effectively in West Malaysia*. The broad aim of the study is to explore the development of a more comprehensive approach to the study of Western classical piano music.

I would like to request permission to include your experience and expertise in this study.

All information gathered will be treated with confidentiality and is purely for academic purposes. The information will be analysed and transcribed, then stored for approximately 15 years.

Your participation in the study will carry no risk of any kind. As an added benefit I will gladly make the results of my study available to you.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

.....
Researcher

I have read and understood the contents of this letter and give permission to fill in the Education Specialist questionnaire.

Signed:

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Teaching Western classical piano music effectively in West Malaysia.

For each of the following items, please put a cross (x) where applicable.

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age group (in years):

20-25

26-30

31-35

More than 35

3. Race:

Chinese

Malay

Indian

Other

4. Highest musical qualification:

Graded examination

Diploma

Degree

Post-graduate degree

Other

Kindly specify the level and area of specialization, if applicable.

5. Number of years teaching the piano:

- 1-5
 6-10
 11-15
 16-20
 More than 20

6. Number of teaching hours per week:

- Less than 10
 10 - 15
 16-20
 More than 20

7. Number of students preparing for graded piano examinations:

Level	Number of students			
	1-9	10-15	16-20	More than 20
Elementary				
Intermediate				
Advanced				

8. Number of students who are not preparing for piano examinations:

- None
 1-5
 6-10
 More than 10

9. How often do you enter your students for graded piano examinations?

- Occasionally
 Yearly
 Once every two years
 Other

10. What are the durations of the piano lessons you teach per week?

Level	30 minutes	45 minutes	60 minutes	More than 1 hour
Elementary				
Intermediate				
Advanced				

11. How many new pieces do you teach your students to play in a year?

Level	Number of pieces			
	1-3	4-6	7-10	More than 10
Elementary				
Intermediate				
Advanced				

12. How often do you teach piano repertoire that is not included in the piano examination syllabus?

- Never
 Occasionally
 Regularly

13. Below is a list of topics which could be included in your piano lesson. Put a tick (✓) in front of each one which you teach in your lessons. You may select more than one of the following.

- Analysis of pieces played
 Composition
 Critical listening
 Ear training
 Examination pieces
 History of Western music

- Improvisation
- Music appreciation
- Non-examination pieces
- Sight-reading
- Technical Exercises and studies

14. How often do you analyse the pieces your students are playing with them?

- Never
- Occasionally
- All the time

15. How often do you have listening sessions for your students to appreciate Western classical piano music?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Regularly

16. How often do you arrange for your students to attend concerts?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Regularly

17. How often you encourage your students to play music by ear or to improvise pieces?

- Never
- Occasionally
- All the time

18. How often do you include sight-reading in your lessons?

- Never
- Occasionally
- All the time

19. Below is a list of musical activities. Put a tick (✓) in front of each one which your students have experienced.

- Performed in a concert
- Accompanied a soloist
- Played in an ensemble
- Participated in a piano competition

20. Do you organise concerts for your students in order for their family and friends to hear them perform?

- Yes
- No

If you answered “no”, please give your reasons why.

21. How would you rate your overall experience of teaching Western Classical piano music?

- Unsatisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Good
- Very Good

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MALAYSIAN PIANO TEACHERS

Teaching Western classical piano music effectively in West Malaysia.

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

- 1) Could you please describe your experience of piano teaching?
- 2) Could you please elaborate on your students in terms of their musical and technical abilities?
- 3) Have you experienced any challenges in teaching your students? If so, kindly elaborate.
- 4) What are your general aims and specific objectives in piano teaching?
- 5) Could you please elaborate on your specific objectives?
- 6) Could you please describe your philosophy regarding piano examinations?
- 7) Which areas do you generally cover in a piano lesson?
- 8) What importance do you place on teaching repertoire in your piano lessons?
- 9) Which types of piano repertoire do you regularly teach?
- 10) Do you analyse the pieces you teach to your students? If so, kindly describe your approach.
- 11) Do your students regularly listen to Western classical piano music? If so, kindly elaborate.
- 12) What activities do you have that develop critical listening during your piano lessons?
- 13) How do you include ear training in your piano lessons?
- 14) Do you regard ear training as a separate entity or do you teach it through simultaneous learning? Kindly describe your approach.
- 15) Do you encourage your students to improvise during their piano lessons? If so, could you please describe some activities which you employ?

- 16) What is your approach to sight-reading in your piano lessons?
- 17) How important is the background to the composer and piece in teaching a new piece?
- 18) Have you planned a curriculum on music appreciation for your students? If so, kindly elaborate.
- 19) What are your objectives in providing opportunities for your students to perform, if applicable?
- 20) To what extent are your aims and objectives achieved in the progress of your students?

APPENDIX D

First lesson plan by Harris & Crozier (2002:72)

Lesson scenario:

The first lesson plan by Harris and Crozier is with an individual student who has been practising the C major scale and also Allegretto by Czerny Op. 599 No. 36 which is also in the same key. The focus of the lesson is four-fold:

- further develop a sense of C major
- improve the playing of the C major scale
- use the music learnt as a starting point for aural, improvisation and other musicianship work
- improve the first section of the piece

The objectives show a simultaneous development of key-sense, muscular memory, technique of scale playing, musicianship and repertoire.

- Activity 1

Begin by asking your pupil to play a scale of C major. Ask them about C major:

- Does it have a colour?
- Does it have any distinguishing features?

- Activity 2

Ask your pupil to say the notes of the scale, up and down. Then the scale should be played in each hand separately. Ask questions:

- Was the sound even?
- Was the fingering well-controlled?
- Was the rhythm even?

- Activity 3

The scale should be played again a number of times, each time with a different focus (chosen by either pupil or teacher), such as varied dynamics, different rhythms or groupings, and various combinations of dynamics and rhythms.

- Activity 4

Choose a well-known tune and ask for it to be played by ear in C major. Now improvise a short piece in C, either for the right or left hand - decide on a shape beforehand (e.g. ABA). Discuss it, and play it again.

- Activity 5

Remembering a phrase from the improvisation, use it to initiate a series of aural 'games'. First you play a series of two-bar phrases and your pupil repeats them. Then, instead of repeating the phrase, your pupil responds with an answering phrase.

- Activity 6

Turning now to the piece, begin by looking at the left-hand part. Play the first eight bars and then discuss the harmonic shape. Try the left-hand part from memory. Discuss the dynamic shape and its relation to the changing harmony.

- Activity 7

Try to improvise a simple right-hand part over the actual left-hand notes. Try this from memory.

- Activity 8

Learn to sing the right-hand melody. Try singing the melody whilst playing the left-hand part.

- Activity 9

Ask the student to play just the right-hand first bar. Ask them to try playing this melody beginning on other notes. Ask them to perform the first section. Discuss the qualities of the performance:

- Was it in time?
- Did the phrases have shape?
- Did the dynamic shape enhance the melodic line?
- Were there any technical difficulties? If so, what strategies could be used to help?

- Activity 10

Now look at the left-hand part of the second section. Discuss the harmony; think through the hand positions.

- Activity 11

Ask the pupil to sight-read the music. Were there any errors? Ask them to play the music again, focusing on removing any mistakes.

- Activity 12

Finally, set work for the next lesson:

- Improvise or compose a short Allegretto in C;
- Do more work on the C major scale;
- Begin work on the C major arpeggio;
- Learn the second half of the Allegretto.

APPENDIX E

Second lesson plan by Harris & Crozier (2002:74)

Lesson scenario:

The lesson will require a little pre-lesson preparation in selecting a sight-reading piece in a key (and scale and arpeggio) familiar to the student. It may be in a key that the student is already studying for a piece, song or study. It should be well within the technical capabilities of the student.

The focus of the lesson is to develop musicianship skills.

- Activity 1

Begin by asking your pupils to identify the key of your chosen piece, then put the piece to one side.

- Activity 2

Ask them to play or sing the scale and arpeggio of that key, after having first made sure they understand the key signature and that they know the notes. This might be followed by some technical work on, for example, weakness of tone, unevenness of rhythm or some tricky fingerings; encourage your students to listen intently to their performance so that, with your guidance, they can suggest any necessary remedial work. The importance of getting your pupils to ‘take ownership’ of their playing is essential; do this by encouraging continual self-criticism.

- Activity 3

Now try some imitation exercises. Using the same key, sing or play a short, simple melodic phrase that you then ask your pupil to sing back or play back on their instrument. As well as reproducing pitch and rhythm (the mainstays of most exam aural tests), ask them to imitate, to the best of their ability, your tone, dynamic levels, intonation (where appropriate) and any other musical ‘shaping’ or phrasing. Keep your phrases very straightforward to begin with - playing back is more difficult than singing back, but you should find, as time goes by, that this exercise really will improve your pupil’s aural perception.

- Activity 4

If you’re teaching an instrument rather than the voice, ask them, sometimes, to sing the phrases back (similar to the ABRSM aural test in the early grades); you might sing the

phrases yourself - there are many permutations. You can use more 'grade-based' aural exercises at this point if you wish, but always try to make them practical and related to the key-of-the day.

- Activity 5

At this point you might slip in some improvisation. Still in the same key, use as the opening idea one of your imitation phrases, or a phrase from the sight-reading piece. Decide with the pupil beforehand on the musical parameter - aimless doodling (whilst certainly having its place) is perhaps not appropriate here. Decide how the pupil might 'use' or even develop the material, some kind of overall structure (AB or ABA for example) and how long the improvisation is to be.

- Activity 6

After the pupil has played their (her) improvisation, discuss the success (or otherwise) of the performance:

- What was the time-signature?
- How was the material used?
- Which dynamic levels were employed?
- Was the structure clear?

and so on.

Perhaps if there is time, repeat the improvisation, but now with adjustments and improvements.

Activity 7

Finally, we come to the sight-reading piece. There are many ways to bring this into the integrated learning process; you might begin by asking your pupil to glance at the opening two bars - or at least the opening phrase, for a few seconds. Remove the music from sight and ask the pupil:

- What was the time signature?
- Can they clap the rhythm?
- Can they sing the melodic line?
- What was the tempo mark and dynamic level?

- Were there any other expression markings?
- Can they play any of it?
- Activity 8

Now allow a further glance through, with the purpose of spotting repeated shapes and scale and arpeggio patterns. Again, cover the music and ask the appropriate questions. If time permits you can continue this process, looking at modulations, technical or rhythmical difficulties, structure, musical shape and climax and so on. In this way, and in a relatively short time, we are stimulating and developing that all-important musical awareness.

- Activity 9

Now ask for a performance and then, again removing the copy, discuss it:

- Was it accurate?
- Were there errors?
- Was it a musical performance?
- Were all the expression markings observed?
- Activity 10

Ask the pupil to play the piece again. If you have time you might ask them to try playing it again from memory.

APPENDIX F

Group lesson employing simultaneous learning analysed by Ley (2012:17)

- Lesson scenario - a group guitar lesson:

Five 10 and 11-year old students receive acoustic guitar tuition. They have been learning for just under a year. The aim for the lesson is to reinforce understanding of pulse and rhythm and to relate this to a (new) piece that students have (to learn).

- Activity 1

The teacher shares the aims of the lesson with the students - a focus on the pulse and a particular rhythm (tango).

- Activity 2

The students warm-up by tuning their guitars and playing a rhythmical pattern that they will find in the new piece, later. The warm-up, which is played on open strings, also encourages finger dexterity. A call and response exercise then allows some simple improvisation.

- Activity 3

The teacher uses note recognition cards to introduce a scale pattern (the same scale that the students will discover in the tango piece). The students are encouraged to listen as they play the scale. They vary performance by starting at different points in the scale, in two and three parts. Listening skills and aural acuity are developed simultaneously with scale and chord playing.

- Activity 4

The new piece is introduced. The teacher uses flash cards to reinforce understanding of the rhythms in the piece, and the notated music is broken down into small segments, which students and teacher play together.

- Activity 5

The students clap the rhythm of the piece whilst the teacher plays an accompaniment. The students clap the rhythm again and then sing the melody line.

- Activity 6

Individual and paired guitar practice now takes place. The students work on particular sections and the teacher provides support in improving technique.

- Activity 7

A first performance of the whole piece; the teacher accompanies. The students discuss and evaluate their performance recognising that the rhythms they practised earlier are found in the piece. They note particular features that they need to practise at home.