

**STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MUSICIANSHIP CULTIVATION
IN GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PIANO LESSONS FOR YOUNG
BEGINNERS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

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**FACULTY OF CREATIVE ART
UNIVERSITI MALAYA
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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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**STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND MUSICIANSHIP CULTIVATION IN
GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PIANO LESSONS FOR YOUNG BEGINNERS:
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES**

ABSTRACT

Piano education in Malaysia can be conducted in two settings which are the individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. Majority of students in Malaysia are attending individual piano lessons while group piano lessons are slowly gaining popularity nowadays. Teachers who spent many years teaching both individual piano lessons and group piano lessons understand the scenarios better than any other party. This study aims to gather opinion from teachers focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of both class settings. Moreover, this study also explores the interaction between lesson structure and piano teaching in both class setting, affecting the musicianship cultivation of young beginners. This study employed a qualitative research methodology to gather insight of musicianship cultivation in both class settings by conducting interview with five experienced piano teachers. Semi-structured interviews contributed most of the finding in this study. The main finding in this study includes the strengths and weaknesses in both individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. The second main finding discusses how the lessons' structure and piano teaching in group and individual piano lessons impact the musicianship cultivation. From this study, teachers and music schools can understand the strengths and weaknesses of both class settings and develop musicianship effectively among young beginners. Parents may consider the pros and cons of both class setting to meet their children's needs. Departing from previous research, this study is the first study to investigate the teachers' perspectives on the relationship between musicianship cultivation, individual piano lesson and group piano lessons in Malaysia.

Keywords: individual piano lesson, group piano lesson, musicianship cultivation,
young beginners

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**KEKUATAN, KELEMAHAN DAN PEMBANGUNAN MUZIKALITI DALAM
KELAS PIANO KUMPULAN DAN INDIVIDU UNTUK PELAJAR MUDA:
PERSPEKTIF GURU**

ABSTRAK

Pelajaran piano di Malaysia boleh dilaksanakan dalam dua jenis, iaitu kelas piano individu dan kelas piano kumpulan. Majoriti kanak di Malaysia menghadiri kelas piano individu, manakala kelas kumpulan kini semakin mendapat populariti. Guru piano yang mengajar kelas piano individu dan kumpulan bertahun-tahun lebih memahami situasi dalam Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengumpul perspektif daripada guru, memahami kelebihan dan cabaran kedua-dua jenis kelas. Selain itu, kajian ini juga meneroka interaksi antara struktur kelas dan pengajaran piano dalam kedua-dua jenis kelas piano, yang mempengaruhi perkembangan kemahiran muzik kanak-kanak. Kajian ini menggunakan metodologi penyelidikan kualitatif untuk mendapatkan perspektif guru tentang perkembangan kemahiran muzik dalam kedua-dua jenis kelas piano dengan menjalankan temu bual bersama lima orang guru muzik yang berpengalaman. Temu bual naratif menyumbangkan sebahagian besar penemuan penyelidikan dalam kajian ini. Penemuan penyelidikan utama dalam kajian ini merangkumi kebaikan dan kelemahan dalam kelas piano individu dan kelas piano kumpulan. Penemuan utama yang kedua membincangkan bagaimana struktur kelas dan pengajaran piano dalam kelas piano individu dan kelas piano kumpulan mempengaruhi perkembangan kemahiran muzik. Kajian ini memberi inspirasi kepada para guru piano untuk memikirkan idea pengajaran yang baru semasa mengajar kelas piano. Guru dan sekolah muzik memahami kebaikan dan kelemahan kedua-dua jenis kelas piano serta membantukan kemahiran muzik yang lebih berkesan. Ibu bapa juga boleh mempertimbangkan kebaikan dan kelemahan kelas piano individu dan kelas piano kumpulan untuk

memenuhi keperluan anak-anak mereka. Berbeza dengan kajian sebelumnya, kajian ini merupakan kajian pertama yang menyelidiki perspektif guru tentang hubungan antara perkembangan kemahiran muzik, pelajaran piano individu, dan pelajaran piano kumpulan di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: kelas piano individu, kelas piano kumpulan, kemahiran muzik, kanak-kanak

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Piano masters such as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn tutored students individually to pass down their knowledge to the younger generation (Chiu, 2017). While the idea of group piano lesson only first came up from Dublin, Ireland in 1815, German musician Johann Bernhard Logier began to conduct piano classes in groups and passed on the knowledge to many teachers coming from other European countries (Fischer, 2010). Group piano lesson gained popularity in the 19th century. It can be seen from Clara Schumann conducting group class in small setting (Lara, 1945) and also Franz Liszt who preferred to teach masterclasses to a group of students (Machnek, 1965). Since then, the culture of group piano lessons arose in European countries and teaching piano in group setting still going on until today.

In Malaysia, piano education can be conducted in two music class settings: group piano lessons and individual piano lesson as options for students. However, majority of students are taking the traditional piano class setting: individual piano classes. On the other hand, integration of group piano setting in piano education is starting to gain popularity in the education scene today in Malaysia. The group piano courses available in Malaysia are in music schools such as Kinderbeats, Yamaha Junior Music Program, MusikGarten and many more. These group piano courses provide many interesting activities to keep young beginner engage to music in many different ways. The beginning stage of learning piano is important because this process shape the perception and foundation of children (Abdumutalibovich, 2020). According to Thomas-Lee (2003), the musical experiences of a child give significant influences to their later development. Most of the group piano program are designed for pre-school children before attending individual piano lesson when they are older. Therefore, compared to individual piano class, the market of group piano class is much smaller.

However, every music educators has different opinion of the timing or the method of giving musicianship training (Borgo, 2018). This study aims to understand teachers' perspectives on giving musicianship training to young piano beginners. There are always a debate whether group piano lessons or individual piano lessons is better for the young piano beginners (Chiu, 2017; Denac, 2008; Dagg, 1965; Fisher C. , 2010; Gipson, 2005; Hutcherson, 1955).

1.2 Problem Statement

Many students today lack of the readiness to begin playing on an instrument. It is necessary for teachers to teach students the musicianship and apply on their instrument playing (Grunow, Gordan, & Azzara, 2001). In an instrument class, teachers guide skills such as setting up an instruments, handling the instrument properly, good posture and good fingering. It is undeniable that those skills are important to become a good musicians however the musicianship part such as audiate tonally and rhythmically should not be neglected (Conway, 2003). It leads to a result of students learn to read the music notation without any understanding.

The majority of students in Malaysia learning instruments by attending lessons from private music schools or private music teachers (Ang, 2013). There is no standardised system for music lessons in Malaysia therefore most music lessons follow the foreign exam board such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and Trinity College of Music (TCM). Over the years, music students are over-dependent on the completion of music examination and neglect the ultimate goals of learning instruments. According to Ang (2013), most students achieved a Grade 8 certificate however not having a good musicianship or musical knowledge. Musicianship is undeniably an important element that makes a musician great.

However, every music educators has different opinion of the timing or the method of giving musicianship training (Borgo, 2018).

In general, musicianship training focus to develop individual musical abilities include ear training, sight reading and melodic, harmonic and rhythmic dictation. Most musicianship skills that mentioned above, requiring inner hearing (Borgo, 2018).

Sawyer (2003) opined that musicianship is like a performance where it requires all the qualities of interaction, blend, groove, and group creativity. Many piano educators nowadays tends to neglect the musicianship development especially the rhythm training in the process of piano teaching (Ling & Tian, 2007). Rhythmic accuracy in piano playing are among the few basic goals in piano instruction (Chai, 2018). The weakness in rhythmic ability is closely related to the other musicianship skill which is self-listening. According to Frewen (2010), when students listen to how one another play, they learned and achieved greater note and rhythmic accuracy in their performance and were able to recognise their mistake.

In fact, three existing studies comparing the outcome of group piano lesson and individual piano lesson on students' musical achievements: (a) Pai-Yu Chiu's study in 2017; (b) Pamela D. Pike's study in 2013; (c) Mario Ajero's study in 2007. In summary, all three studies suggested that group piano instructions helped participants achieved a higher level of musical achievements such as musical knowledge, music reading, aural skills, rhythmic ability, kinaesthetic response and performance skill. Two out of three studies targeted on young piano beginners who do not have any musical background while one of the studies targeted on college piano students. In Chiu (2017) and Pike (2013), participants who were 5-7 years old and without any musical background were recruited.

There is a need to further study with more varied samples and focuses on the population in Malaysia. As the previous researches were conducted in the United States,

therefore it is difficult to gauge the current situation in Malaysia. On the other hand, most of the existing research implements experiment method with 40-50 participants. The methodological gap exist where quantitative data is unable to inform a more nuanced phenomenon or in-depth understanding on the topic. Therefore, interviews with a few chosen experts within the industry were conducted to have in-depth idea on the chosen topic. The study explores interviews with 5 experts in teaching both group piano lessons and individual piano lessons. The interview aims to understand the perspectives of experts' in the current music education industry. This study sought to explore the musicianship cultivation among young piano beginners attending different class settings.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and summarize the perspectives of piano teachers regarding the benefits of individual piano lessons versus group piano lessons for young beginners in developing musicianship. The study aims to gather comprehensive insights from teachers on various aspects, including their opinions on which format better supports the early stages of musical development in young learners. Additionally, it seeks to delve into the differences in teaching strategies employed in both types of lessons, examining how these strategies impact the effectiveness of instruction. The research also investigates the lesson plans, focusing on the content and structure of the lessons, as well as the pacing, to understand how these elements vary between individual and group settings. By doing so, the study hopes to provide a nuanced understanding of the unique advantages and challenges associated with each teaching format, ultimately contributing to more informed decisions in music education for young piano beginners.

1.4 Research Objectives

Research Objective 1: To investigate teachers' perspectives for investigating the advantages and challenges associated with group and individual piano lessons in fostering musical growth in young beginners aged 6-8 years old.

Research Objective 2 : To understand how the musicianship is cultivated among young beginners in group and individual piano lesson settings.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons in fostering musical growth for young beginners aged 6-8 years old?
2. How is musicianship cultivated among young beginners in group and individual piano lessons from piano teachers' perspectives?

1.6 Significance of the study

The first lesson that a piano beginner attended should be a happy experience. Bishop (1964) mentioned that one of the ways to keep a children's enthusiasm in learning is to get them look forward to fun musical activities. Every child loves to sing, dances and plays games. Bishop urged music teachers to incorporate music activities in the beginners' lesson. Some of the common musical activities such as singing, dancing and playing games can help to developing listening skills, sense of rhythm and

harmony. These musical activities are more common to be seen in group piano lessons because group activities are the key point in the group lessons.

Research showed attending group piano lesson is able to enhance students' musical performance in various aspects (Baker, 2011; Chiu, 2016; Fischer, 2010). Group piano lessons improved the quality of music performance that includes broader aspect such as music reading, confidence level, aural skill and performance skill. These findings shown that group piano lessons offer pedagogical benefits that cultivate musicianship in young beginners.

Despite these global insights, there is a lack of study in Malaysia investigating the development of musicianship in young beginners attending group and individual piano lessons. This research aims to obtain teachers' perspectives on the musicianship training among group piano lesson and individual piano lesson to understand piano education in Malaysia. At the same time, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical data from a Southeast Asian perspectives. The existing literature are dominated by Western models, where it may differ from the piano education practices in Southeast Asian countries. This study aims to enrich the understanding of musicianship development in different lesson structure, gaining the cultural and contextual depth in music pedagogy.

1.7 Delimitation of study

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the piano education industry in Klang Valley, Malaysia, focusing specifically on the perspectives of piano teachers working in this region. The research intends to explore various aspects of piano teaching practices, challenges, and successes from the viewpoint of those who have substantial experience in the field. To ensure a comprehensive and inclusive set of insights, the study includes participants from diverse backgrounds, without limitations on race, age, ethnicity, or

gender. This inclusive approach is designed to capture a wide range of experiences and opinions. However, a key criterion for participation is that all selected participants must have at least two years of teaching experience in piano education. This requirement ensures that the findings are informed by the knowledge and insights of seasoned educators, providing a robust and well-rounded understanding of the current state of music education in the Klang Valley.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Individual Piano Lessons

Individual piano lessons refer to a traditional class setting where a teacher instructs one student at a time. This approach, as defined by Pace (1978), has been a prevalent method of piano instruction globally for many years. The one-on-one nature of these lessons allows for personalized attention, enabling the teacher to tailor the curriculum and teaching methods to the specific needs and learning pace of the student. This individualized focus can lead to more rapid progress in technical skills, musical interpretation, and overall musicianship. The private lesson environment also facilitates a closer teacher-student relationship, fostering a deeper understanding of the student's strengths, weaknesses, and musical interests. This setting has been particularly valued in classical piano training, where the nuances of performance and interpretation require detailed and specialized instruction. Various studies have highlighted the benefits of individual lessons, including the ability to address specific technical challenges and provide immediate, personalized feedback (Lehmann & Davidson, 2002; Jørgensen, 2000). This method remains a cornerstone of piano pedagogy, widely recognized for its effectiveness in cultivating high-level musicianship.

1.8.2 Group Piano Lessons

Group piano lessons refer to an instructional setting where two or more students are taught together under the guidance of a teacher. According to Pace (1978), this approach involves a more collaborative and interactive learning environment, where students engage not only in individual practice but also in ensemble activities. In this setting, students are frequently involved in performance, aural and visual analysis, and the constructive critique of both their own and their peers' playing. Group lessons provide a unique opportunity for social interaction and collaborative learning, allowing students to develop skills such as ensemble playing, listening, and musical communication. They also offer the advantage of a more varied musical experience, as students are exposed to a wider range of repertoire and interpretations. Research has suggested that group piano lessons can enhance motivation and enjoyment, as the social aspect of learning in a group can reduce the pressure of individual performance and encourage a supportive learning atmosphere (Burkett, 2015; McPherson & Welch, 2018). Additionally, group lessons can be more cost-effective, making piano education accessible to a broader demographic. While some critics argue that group lessons may lack the individualized attention of private lessons, proponents highlight their value in fostering a well-rounded musical education and promoting a sense of community among students.

1.8.3 Young Piano Beginners

The term "young piano beginners" typically refers to children who are just starting their journey in piano education, generally between the ages of 5 to 7. These students usually have less than one year of formal music learning experience (Wong, 2023). At this introductory stage, young beginners are introduced to basic elements of music, including fundamental piano techniques, simple musical notation and rhythm. The primary goal is to foster a love for music and laying a foundation for future learning

journey. Research indicates that early exposure to music can significantly influence a child's cognitive development, including improvements in memory, spatial-temporal skills, and emotional expression (Hallam, 2010; Rauscher & Zupan, 2000).

1.8.4 Musicianship Cultivation

Musicianship cultivation encompasses the development of a wide range of musical abilities, including ear training, sight-singing, harmonic and rhythmic dictation, and overall musical interpretation. Borgo (2018) emphasizes that these skills are fundamental in training a well-rounded musician. The quality of a music performance, often referred to as "musicianship," is characterized by elements such as rhythm, intonation, tone quality, expressiveness, and technical stability (Ling & Tian, 2007). McPherson (1993) categorizes musicianship into three primary skill areas: visual (reading and interpreting musical notation), aural (listening and understanding music), and creative performing skills (improvisation and composition). Laitz (2003) describes musicianship as a comprehensive ability that includes hearing music internally, singing it accurately, and translating it into performance on an instrument.

The concept of musicianship is multifaceted and can vary significantly depending on cultural, educational, and individual perspectives. Music educators often tailor musicianship training to suit the specific needs and goals of their students. For instance, in Western classical music education, there is a strong emphasis on sight-reading and aural skills, while in other traditions, improvisation and oral transmission of music may be more prominent (Green, 2008). Philosophers of music education also debate the nature of musicianship, with some viewing it as a holistic integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, while others emphasize the technical and theoretical aspects (Elliott, 1995; Reimer, 2003).

In the context of this study, musicianship cultivation includes a comprehensive approach that covers playing and singing, listening skills, sight-reading, and rhythmic ability. This broad definition aligns with contemporary views that musicianship is not just about technical proficiency but also includes expressive and interpretive abilities, cultural understanding, and personal engagement with music (Jorgensen, 2003). The study aims to explore how different teaching methods and settings—such as individual versus group piano lessons—contribute to the development of these diverse aspects of musicianship in young students.

1.8.5 Singing

Students should know some simple and catchy songs to sing first and then play (Wagner, 1965). After students are able to sing the song, teacher may allow them to play it on the piano in different keys. The skill of playing and singing is referring to students playing the piano involves audiation skill and executive skill (Grunow, Gordan, & Azzara, 2001).

1.8.6 Coordination

In piano education, coordination encompasses the development of motor skills, spatial awareness and the capacity to execute simultaneous movements required for piano playing (Fischer, 2010). Mastery of coordination is integral to enabling students to demonstrate both technical proficiency and a comprehensive sense of musicianship (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997).

1.8.7 Note recognition

Note recognition is a process of reading and playing the music (Kupana & Otacioglu, 2012). Among pianists especially, note recognition is first identifying the position of note written on the staves, followed by a motor action where the fingers land on the correct position on the keys of a piano (Goodale & Milner, 1992).

1.8.8 Rhythmic Ability

According to Dalcroze (2013), rhythm is made up of two important elements which are time and energy. Lin & Danpradit (2021) mentioned that rhythm is associated with every actions in part of our daily life. Rhythmic ability allows us to coordinate movement in an exact order and timing (Zachopoulou, 2001)

1.9 Conclusion

In Christopher Fischer's seminal work, *Teaching Piano in Groups*, he asserts that group piano instruction offers numerous benefits that are often not fully realized in individual lessons. Fischer highlights how group settings foster an encouraging learning environment, enhance students' critical listening skills, develop a robust sense of rhythm, and promote functional musicianship skills that are crucial yet frequently overlooked in one-on-one instruction. These advantages of group piano lessons have been supported by various studies conducted outside Malaysia, demonstrating that such settings can be particularly effective in advancing musicianship training for young piano beginners. For example, research has shown that group lessons can facilitate peer interaction and collaborative learning, which significantly enriches the educational experience.

Despite these findings, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing the musicianship cultivation of group versus individual piano lessons within the Malaysian context. Current literature lacks comprehensive studies that compare the impact of these two teaching methods on the musicianship cultivation of young piano beginners in Malaysia. Given the growing interest in optimizing music education practices and the unique educational landscape of Malaysia, it is essential to investigate how these teaching approaches perform locally. Therefore, this study aims to fill this

research gap by exploring and comparing the effectiveness of group and individual piano lessons in fostering musicianship skills among young beginners in Malaysia. Such an investigation will not only contribute valuable insights to the field of music education but also offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance piano teaching methods in the region.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section covers a summary of background of piano instruction and group piano lesson, followed by introducing the educational ideas and piano books for beginning piano education. To understand current situation better, this section covers the piano learning issue globally and in Malaysia. In addition, this section will include the role of group piano lesson on the musicianship and the challenges in group piano lesson.

2.1 The origin and the development of individual piano lesson

Music education often describe the teaching of musical behaviour based on past experiences in the music journey (Uçan, 1994). The piano produces sound instantly upon being played, and its design requires a well-developed hand structure to play on the piano. Therefore piano is referred as one of the most suitable instruments for young children to begin with (Egilmez, 2012). The traditional master-apprentice model was the most common format in piano education, which one student receives guidance from a teacher at a time. The development of piano instruction from the start until nowadays is closely related to the development of the society. Before 19th century, music education was exclusive to aristocratic families in the form of private instruction (Friedman & Reeves, 2020). However, there were also exceptional cases where music education were provided for those who intended to become professional musicians. During that time, a professionally trained keyboardist was able to play on different keyboard instruments and improvisations. A professional keyboardist accompanied other instruments, choir and orchestra with figured bass.

In the early 19th century, piano manufacturers published learning materials such as method books to attract amateur pianists and boost the sales of piano. As a result, the market of pianos extended to the middle class. The piano education at that time was not

only among the higher class but it has been expanded to more people. Piano lessons became popular among young women in rich families. It is because the piano playing skill is considered as a female accomplishment for a better marriage situation (Loesser, 1954). By the end of 19th century, piano instructions focused on exercises for finger technique in order to achieve speed and strength, music expression and musicianship skill (Boyd, 1986).

From the 20th century, piano instruction changed the focus from performance skill training to more towards musicianship and musical knowledge. The piano learning during that time reduced their focus on finger technique. At the same time, piano instruction introduced new activities such as singing, note reading, aural training, harmonization and rhythm training (Strum et al., 2000). In the second half of 20th century, the society emphasized largely on early childhood music education and science research. According to research, preschoolers are more sensitive to aural component among all music components. Therefore, piano instructions and piano method books were designed with music enrichment activities to stimulate awareness among children. Therefore, children are able to explore and experience music through music activities at this early age (Uszler et al., 1991). Teaching individual piano lesson is always a long-standing tradition in piano education, and it continues to become the majority piano education method until nowadays.

2.2 The origin and the development of group piano class

In the 19th century, piano instruction was expanded largely and opened to middle class. The increasing demand for piano instruction led to the introduction of group piano instruction. The first person who had the idea of forming a new format of piano lesson was Johann Bernhard Logier (1777-1846) due to the high demand for piano instruction. It was in 1815, he had created a class format that was able to accommodate

30 students (Fischer, 2010). Within just three years, Logier's innovation widely spread to 28 academies in many countries such as Britain, Ireland, United States and India (Loesser, 1954).

At the end of 19th century, U.S. has become one of the major piano manufactories (Oki, 2017). Thousands of American got a piano at their home. Due to this reason many elementary schools implemented group piano lesson in their school program (Fisher C. , 2010). In 1889, U. S. Office of Education has officially promoted group class piano instruction as one of the main piano lesson settings. Calvin Brainerd Cady (1851-1928) was one of the American music educator who insisted on group piano instruction (Shiraishi, 1999). He found that learning instrument in a group class setting is the best to develop musical thoughts in students. In the Dewey School, Cady opened up music appreciation course in group setting for children to sing and play for their peers. While the group piano classes flourish, numerous method book was designed and published aiming to teaching piano in group setting. Early group piano materials such as *Young Student's Piano Course* (1918) by Earhart and Boyd, *Public School Class Method for Piano* (1919) by Giddings and Gilman, and *Steps for the Young Pianist* (1919) by Hazel Kinsella (Fisher C. , 2010).

The popularity of group piano class can be proved when many of the great musicians back in 19th century applied group piano setting as well. Clara Schumann (1819-1896) was one of them, who liked to teach in a small group that consists no more than 3 students, for 2 times per week (Lara, 1945). Franz Liszt liked to teach masterclasses rather than individual lessons, and he allowed his students to decide what repertoires to play and also when to play for the masterclasses (Machnek, 1965).

One of the world-renowned method book author, Dr. Robert Pace once said there are two goals in music education. Firstly, teachers should teach music fundamentals from the beginning and at the same time encourage their creativity so that

students are able to achieve musical independence. Being musically independent means students generate their own ideas based the existing knowledge given by the teacher, instead of blindly follow what teacher said in class. Secondly, teachers should cultivate social interaction in group class. It is important because when student encourage each other and be grateful for other students' success, a positive learning experience can be created (Hirokawa, 1997). In Christopher Fischer's book *Teaching Piano in Groups*, he claimed that group piano instruction provides benefits such as creating an encouraging learning environment, establish students' critical listening skill, developing a strong rhythmic sense and more functional musicianship skills that are seldom taught in individual class.

2.3 Group Piano Lesson and Individual Piano Lesson

Group piano lesson is one of the class setting for piano education, where students learn how to play on piano in groups. Individual piano lesson is more towards traditional master-apprentice settings, where only involve one student and one teacher. There are always a debate whether group piano lessons or individual piano lessons is better for the young piano beginners (Chiu, 2017; Denac, 2008; Dagg, 1965; Fisher C. , 2010; Gipson, 2005; Hutcherson, 1955). Children always think that being in a group is fun. Rather than being in a class alone with the teacher, children would prefer to play with a group of children in the park (Dagg, 1965). Therefore, it could be inferred that children would definitely go for the group piano lessons that has group activities which he share the participation.

After the comparison of experimental and control groups of a study by Kutnick, Ota, & Berdondini (2008), children who engaged themselves in more group tasks were able to think better, learn more and try harder than the rest of the children. Group piano setting encourages comparative dynamics between students and it becomes one of the mediators that helps students shape their musical identity. In another words, students

have better social relations and interaction with peers when they have a healthy learning environment (Juuti & Littleton, 2010). According to Dagg (1965), children may fail to meet a teacher's expectations by neglecting to practice at home, whereas they rarely let down their peers. A student might come unprepared to class on occasion however it is unlikely to happen repeatedly as they strive to maintain the respect of their classmates.

Most individual piano lessons do not require lesson plans in advance, little time is available due to the lessons being scheduled one after the other (Coats, 2006). On the other hand, teachers always prepare lesson plans before every group lesson because the need of full utilisation of time for more than one student. According to Gipson (2005), the grading system in group piano lessons and individual piano lessons are totally different. In individual piano lessons, teachers tend to focus more on the technical aspects on each student. Examples of technical aspects in piano playing are hand posture, accuracy of notes, customised practice method and sight reading skills. On the other side, the main goal of group piano lesson is stressing on quality of the musical performance of a student. Therefore, students will be focusing on their performance and work on quality of sound. The quality of music performance also known as musicianship (Ling & Tian, 2007), is a combination of rhythm, note, tone, expression, and stability. To achieve the quality of music performance, group piano lessons include group activities that will cultivate rhythmic sense in students in various ways. Group activities such as making body movements to the music, stomping on strong beat, rhythm clapping, piano duet and singing along to a piece cultivate the rhythmic sense in students bit by bit (Anderson & Campbell, 2011). While the action of keeping a steady beat, whether clapping, playing an instrument or singing, engage the brain and stimulate feedback (Fujii & Schlaug, 2013).

Jenks (1984) encouraged private piano lesson teachers to consider group teaching in the economic aspect. Jenks opined that group teaching can be beneficial to

one's time and pocket although it requires training and experiences. A child can be involved in a few extra-curricular activities, the financial advantage of group lesson has stand a better chance for children to continue their musical learning even when the economic is bad. From teachers' perspective, a class consists of four students provide higher pay compared to two private students.

2.4 The teaching methods

There were a few educational ideals for the music instructors to refer to. They were Emile Jaques-Dalcroze(1865-1950), Carl Orff (1895-1982), Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967), Shinichi Suzuki (b.1898) and Yamaha Music Education System.

Emile Jacques-Dalcroze was a professor of harmony in Geneva Conservatory of Music. One of his principles is that every sound created can be translated into motion and at the same the motion created can be translated into sound too (Abramson, 1980). He emphasized his teaching heavily on ear training and improvisation. He opined that a natural rhythmic call-back should be involving the muscular and nervous system of our whole body (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1921). He introduced Dalcroze Eurhythmics method that involves the stimulation of hearing, making sound and having body movement (Farber & Parker, 1987). His system emphasized on teaching rhythm through movement (Keena, 1982). While working with children, Dalcroze encouraged them to respond with physical actions in unrestricted ways. His goal was not to ask the students to imitate the teacher, but to use creativity and imagination during their music learning process (Abramson, 1980). There are plenty of study regarding the effectiveness of Dalcroze eurhythmics in music education. In a study done by Rose (1995), Dalcroze eurhythmics instruction was given to kindergarten, first-grade and second-grade student. Students had better beat competency after receiving the training. In another study, Berger (1999) aimed to explore the incorporation of Dalcroze eurhythmics in music lesson to see if it will affect the pitch discrimination, meter discrimination and auditory

or visual rhythm discrimination. Berger found that students who received Dalcroze eurhythmic instructions had a better sense of meter however not in rhythm and pitch. Wang (2008) conducted an experiment with 1000 6th grade students investigating whether sense of rhythm can be inspired through Dalcroze's approach. Half of the students did body movement activities at school while the other half did not. Wang observed two groups of students for six months, then compared and analysed the result. As a result, students who received Dalcroze music training method had a better understanding on beats and rhythms while students who did not receive training had shown not much progress between their pretest and posttest.

Another educational model, Carl Orff believed in the primacy of rhythm too, influenced by Jaques-Dalcroze (Uszler, Gordan, & Mach, 1991). Orff developed a program combining body movements, gymnastics, music and dance. He believed that a complete music training should contain natural rhythmic activities, instrument playing, aural training and singing (Zinar, 1984). His method the *Orff Schulwerk* is similar to Dalcroze method where students expressed rhythm and melody with their whole body. However, Orff avoided using piano as a guiding instruments. He invented his own percussion instruments such as drum and metallophones for children to express in the most direct way. Instruments were played in group lesson, and children improvise on Orff instruments to express themselves (Apaydin, 2023). According to Jiang (2020), preschool children between three to six years old have shorter fingers that are not yet matured. Therefore during this period of time, it is necessary to cultivate the love towards music rather than developing technical skills. Many studies opined that Orff's teaching is most suitable for preschool piano education (Jiang, 2020; Sun, 2017).

Hungarian composer, Zoltan Kodaly wrote a set of music education system for the children of his native. He introduced Hungarian folk songs and art songs in his

music educational system by using simple forms, pentatonic scales and simple lyrics (Choksy, 1999). Therefore, it was an useful pedagogical approach for children because they could understand the materials easily. Children learned their perception towards melody and rhythm by familiarising themselves with the melodic and rhythmic pattern of the songs. *Iskolai Enekgujtímeny* (Zoltan & Gyorgy, 1943) was the first published book for children, introducing Kodaly approach such as solfege teaching. Other than solfege, Kodaly expressed rhythm by vocalising rhythm-duration syllabus such as *ta* and *titi* (Hudgens, 1987).

Jordan (2023) had recently done a study to find out the application of Kodaly method and its effectiveness by interviewing elementary music teachers. Most participants opined that Kodaly is accessible because it only require the natural sound which is human voices. In addition Kodaly introduced many musical games to help students learn while having fun. For example one of the game is rhythm poison game, where students were asked to avoid clapping to the “poisonous rhythm” that was given at the beginning of the game.

Suzuki method emphasized on rote teaching while teaching a single child at the same time. The music educational system, Suzuki program has a goal which is to create opportunity for children to perform. The first English version *Suzuki Piano School* was published in 1972, children learned new musical skills and concepts from teacher through imitation (Peak, 2012). Their approach was similar with mother tongue approach where children learn through repetition first, then learn how to read and write afterward (MasterClass, 2021). Suzuki opined that ear training was the most important foundation, therefore the majority material were in the form of recording while the printed material was only the supplement (Maris, 1984). According to Henke (2021), the goal of Suzuki method is to help students with the physical coordination issue when

they start to play an instrument. Many studies had shown that Suzuki method is suitable for young beginners in group lesson setting (Bigler & Llyod-Watts, 2016; Lange, 2015; Rosenbalm, 2010). In an experiment done by Hallberg (2014), kindergarten students were split into two groups. One group receive Suzuki method teaching while the other receive no formal music instruction. After a total of 15-hours-teaching, both treatment group and control group were evaluated for posttest assessment. The study shown that the kindergarten students who received teaching with Suzuki method has higher level of attention span than those students who did not receive treatment.

Under Yamaha Music Education System, there were a group of Japanese music teachers worked together to invent their own teaching method for as young as pre-schooler until adult. Every music teachers who is interested to teach with Yamaha syllabus, have to attend their training for quality control (Miranda, 2000). The Yamaha Primary Course are designed for children ages four to six for two year duration. Yamaha Music Education System emphasized heavily on *by-ear* accomplishment, which is gradually trained by imitation (Lancaster, 1984). The first few beginning classes allow students to express rhythm and melody through whole-body and also singing. According to Looney (1984),

The Primary Course is “a process which combines ear Training with sense of touch and memory of intervallic distances, [and this process is] considered by Yamaha a basic to the functional harmony training ahead in [the Yamaha] Extension Course”. (p.32)

Englehardt (2005) designed an experimental study to investigate the effect of Yamaha Music In Education (MIE) approach on middle school students’ musical and nonmusical outcome. The study showed that MIE gave a positive effect on students’ musical learning.

2.5 The development of piano method books

We often assume that the teacher plays an important role on a beginning students, not the method books. In fact, a good method book includes the technical guidance that gives the student a good start (Uszler, Gordan, & Smith, 1999). Piano method books often showcase the ways to shape the tone of each pitch and rhythm. A good method book encourages students to actively listen, experiment and perform on the piano.

Keyboard treaties before 19th century was a guidelines to techniques of playing figured bass. Figured bass is written in Arabic numbers, indication how the bass part should sound to accompany the melody (Randel, 1986). In the early 19th century, piano manufacturers published learning materials such as method books to attract amateur pianists in order to boost their business. By the end of 19th century, piano methods mostly focused on exercises for finger technical (Uszler, Gordan, & Mach, 1991). One of the examples of method books *Le Pianiste virtuose* by Charles-Louis Hanon, consists 60 exercises for pianists to train the speed, precision and strength on the fingers (Hanon, 1873). The other popular piano technique book was *Scales and Exercises for the Piano* by Henri Herz, including exercises such as trill, broken chords and double thirds to train the independence of fingers (Herz, 1923).

At the beginning of 20th century, the content of piano method books diverted their focus from fingering technique to new piano-oriented musical activities. Other than focusing on finger training, method books introduced note reading, rhythm training, aural training, harmonization and even singing (Strum, James, Jackson, & Burns, 2000). Later in the second half of the 20th century, the society started to focus on early childhood education which led to the release of piano method books focusing on

training young piano beginners. The piano method books are learning materials that help piano lessons run more effectively and efficiently (Suwarni, 2015). These piano methods are written based on child's cognitive ability, psychomotor development and attention span (Uszler, Gordan, & Mach, 1991). According to Yang (2015), the selection of learning materials are the most important part of students' learning process.

James Bastien introduced "play first" philosophy, where beginners play from pre-notated melodies (Chon, 2012). Pre-notated melodies are usually on the sets of two and three black keys, finger numbers or letter names. All the pre-notated melodies do not involve staff reading. His method book, *Piano Primer Level* (Bastien, 1985) is most suitable for pre-schooler to play on the black keys while reading finger number. By using this method, children are able to recognise the repetitive patterns slowly. Another benefit is cultivating the correct habit of looking at the book and not looking down at the hand while they play the piano (Bastien, 1973).

The Fabers' focus in teaching piano includes music reading, playing pianistic repertoire and the technique and artistry approach (Monroe, 2018). *The Piano Adventures* series were introduced in 1993. Among the series, there were different books for different age groups and different levels. *My First Piano Adventures* (Faber & Faber, 2007) was designed for preschool children. Faber philosophy is to bring joy to every lesson. In *My First Piano Adventures*, students and teacher are able to do fun activities to strengthen their bonding. Faber also believes that student should not race their levels of learning because it takes time to build foundation in piano study. It is especially important for preschool children because they are at the stage of learning through exploration.

One of the popular method book in Malaysia, *Poco Piano for Young children Level 1* introduced the finger numbers first along with the rhythm (Ng & Farrell, 2016). Beginners count and clap before going into piano playing. The finger number is

introduced one by one. The first finger number is 3, and is introduced on the left hand and the right hand. The only difference is that the finger number is written on the proper music notation instead of pre-notated score.

Another popular method book in Malaysia, *Piano Lesson Made Easy Level 1* introduced the proper music notation and rhythm at the same time (Ng, 2009). In that book, it does not include any introduction for correct posture. Beginners are expected to count while playing out the music notation. One pitch is introduced at the same time with a few rhythm patterns made from semibreve, minim and crotchet. Middle C is introduced first and played with a rhythm pattern consisting of semibreve, minim and crotchet.

2.6 Students' Engagement in Individual and Group Piano Lessons

Young children started learning piano because they just want to give it a try or their parents wanted them to learn (Duke et al., 1997). However, without sustained motivation or meaningful engagement, many students stopped taking piano lesson before they achieve musical independence where they are able to play the music on their own. Student engagement plays a crucial role in determining whether young beginners remain passionate to their piano learning.

To foster sustained engagement, it is important for educator to teach in a way that best helps each student to learn and achieve their goals. The approach will be totally different where some of them want to become a concert pianist while some of them wish to participate in music for leisure. In order to decide which approach is best for the student, educators need to understand the working definitions of each type of instruction (Koner & Eros, 2019).

Piano educators bring their own musical preferences and interpretations to their teaching, shaped by personality and sociocultural experiences (North & Hargreaves,

2008). These factors inevitably affect how they guide students in both individual and group settings. According to Montparker (1998)

Even an instrumental work with the smallest dimension includes the same musical elements and artistic ideas found in great works. Thus, introducing students to the concepts and expression of the art of music will be the key that enriches their musical experiences and transforms difficult skills, like typing the music notes read to them, into an enjoyable artistic activity. (p.7)

It is true that music teachers are getting more creative and introducing some materials and applications on electronic devices. However it cannot solve the problem where teachers are still needed to guide students with the appropriate materials and to select the piece of music that meets the criteria (Lehman, 2008).

Traditionally, most piano instruction, especially at the professional level has occurred in private settings. According to research, 90-95% of current piano lessons are individual however the same percentage of students who eventually drop out also come from this setting (McPherson & Welch, 2018). In contrast, group piano instruction has been gaining attention in recent years as an alternative that might be able to maintain motivation and engagement for young beginners. There has always been some debates going on between the group approach and the individual approach within piano education (Pace, 1978). At the elementary school level, students often perform in a group. Same goes to the secondary schools where students performed as a group during a contest or festival. General comments on musical aspects such as techniques and intonations will be given to the performing ensembles. However, the assessment of individual learning in music lessons and rehearsals is not as common in group performance (Hoffer, 2008). Obviously there is a need for more research to find out the differences between both approaches (Pace, 1978).

2.7 Piano Learning Issues in Malaysia

Western music teaching in Malaysia came from the influence of British colonialism back in 1770-1957 (Kennedy 2007). Nowadays, there are quite a number of students choose to pursue private music lessons outside of the government school even though music is a compulsory subject in primary schools and an elective subject in secondary school (Ang, 2013). According to Tan (2008), the primary school syllabus before 1994 was more westernized. The syllabus was revised to include some basic rhythm and forms of Malaysian music after 1994. Tan (2008) mentioned that the music lessons in secondary schools are more like a music appreciation class. Traditional Malaysian music, as well as traditional music from other Southeast Asia countries. Due to the large size of the class which consists of 40 students and also limited teaching hours in the government schools, quite a number of students pursue private lessons outside of government school.

Nowadays, the majority of students in Malaysia pursue their western music learning by attending lessons from private music schools or private music teachers (Ang, 2013). Unlike other countries, western music teaching is not included as a subject in primary schools and secondary schools in Malaysia (Shah, 2006). There is no standardized system among the private music lessons too, therefore the teaching is largely following the foreign music examination board such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and Trinity College of Music (TCM). According to Ang (2002) there is not much research on the topic of Malaysian-composed music that leads to western music training--According to Kok (2011), middle class in Malaysia especially the Chinese gave a lot of attention to the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music starting from 1948. It was a marking system for Western classical music, consisting of eight grades. The test evaluates students from the perspectives of playing, music theory, ear-training and music history. In order to prepare for the exam, students

are required to get the supporting materials such as song books and instructional manuals that are published by the exam board.

Over the years, the majority of the piano students in Malaysia are over-dependence on the completion of the music examination and neglect the ultimate goals of learning piano. Most of them achieved a Grade 8 certificate after several years of learning, however not having a clear idea of musicianship skill and musical knowledge (Ang, 2013). According to Kok (2011), she remembered her early music learning experience did not encourage her creativity growth with fun musical activities. Instead, her early music education emphasized heavily on the criteria to meet the requirement of examination boards. In a recent research in Malaysia, the researchers mentioned that the most common practice in music classrooms is referred to as 'chalk and talk', a teacher-centered approach that relies heavily on direct instruction while often neglecting students interaction (Ismail, Loo, & Anuar, 2021). Instead, teachers teach coordination by pressuring students that makes students lose interest in learning music.

2.8 Musicianship Training

Bishop (1964) stated that it is important to keep the enthusiasm of a child by allowing him to experience musical activities that he was looking forward to. In addition, children love singing, dancing and playing games. Through these activities, children develop an understanding of musical concepts on tonal, rhythmic, melodic and harmonic. These concepts serve as a strong foundation for their piano learning in the future.

Moog (1976) found that 50% of children aged between three to five and a half years were able to make movement correspond to the music. While children between four to six years old matched their movements to the music even better. Therefore,

Moog suggested that the first rhythmic tasks for children should be keeping the beat by clapping, tapping and marching. According to Watermann (1983), the training of finger technique should be carried out at the same time with the musicianship and note reading. It is undeniable that the letter name of note, the note value and piano key are necessary in teaching beginners. However, it is also important for beginners to learn musicianship to express and produce a quality sound (Egilmez, 2012). According to Dobrota & Blašković (2014),

All people are able to create sound, to create practical and theoretical rules according to which sound is organized, the use of sounds in a very specific way within a defined cultural framework. (p.302)

Many students today lack of the readiness to begin the instrument playing because they have not mastered the application of musicianship to the instrument. Playing an instrument can be approached in two ways, which are the audiation instrument and executive skill (Grunow, Gordan, & Azzara, 2001). Audiation is what students listen in their head, like a language in music. It is through audiation that students learn the musicianship such as tonality and rhythm.

Musicianship indeed is one of the way to make a musician great. Priest (1989) mentioned that aural awareness is important when one does sight reading. Azzara (2002) opined that singing, play by ear and improvising are the key of musicianship. While McPherson (1993) realised that the issue occurred because the terminologies of musicianship is closely related, sometimes even overlapping the nature of aural skills. He categorised musicianship into visual, aural and creative performing skills. An embodied musicianship is not only focusing in music performance, however also in music perception. The body is the most fundamental instrument in every student, while skilled action done by the body parts involving deep understanding of music perception

(Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1982). Laitz (2003) refers musicianship to a student's ability of hearing the music, singing it out and playing it out on an instrument.

2.8.1 Singing

Expecting young piano beginners to achieve both rhythmic and note accuracy simultaneously might seem overly idealistic. However, teachers can focus on implementing understanding from the first day of music lessons to lay a strong foundation. According to Conway (2003), the concept of singing and moving to the steady beat could be a proof that they are musically ready to play on the instrument. The point agreed by Bolton (1997), stating that students cannot start reading before they respond to, sung to and audiate to the music.

Teacher should have some simple and catchy songs for students to sing first and then play (Wagner, 1965). Easy songs gave children immediate sense of achievement. After children are able to sing the song, teacher may allow them to play it on the piano in different keys. The skill of playing and singing is important because playing the piano involves audiation skill and executive skill (Grunow, Gordan, & Azzara, 2001). Audiation skill is an inner-hearing process that goes on students' heads while the executive skill is when students play it on the piano. In order to play a song on the piano, students are required to use both listening skills and playing skills. The singing skill does play an important role in the inner-hearing.

2.8.2 Coordination

Coordination is one of the fundamental aspect of piano playing, mastering the skill allow students to perform with precision and musicality. Fischer (2010) mentioned that having coordination skill is helpful in managing techniques in piano playing, such as

playing different rhythmic pattern on each hand or playing loud and soft. Early piano teaching should focus on training finger independence and timing in order to prepare students better for increasingly challenging piano songs.

According to Ortmann (1929), piano technique should be treated as a scientific subject because it involves arm and hand movements that are central to achieve coordination in playing the piano. His study emphasised the influence of body structure on the force and movement while playing the piano. Ortmann's approach considered one of the earliest attempt to combine music and biomechanics in piano education. Ortmann explored the flat-finger and curved-finger techniques on their biomechanical implication for speed and force in piano playing, both of which require precise coordination.

Existing research has identified some specific trainings training that aim to improve motor coordination, to enhance technical proficiency and reduce the risk of injury during piano practice (Furuya, Altenmuller, Katayose, & Kinoshita, 2012). The study also investigated the precise coordination required on the inter-joint when performing advanced piano repertoire. The result showed that expert pianists exhibit highly efficient inter-joint coordination across multiple joints with precise timing and minimised unnecessary motion, allowing pianists to achieve greater precision in their performance.

2.8.3 Note recognition

Note recognition is one of the elemental musicianship aspects of all musicians (Wristen, 2005). According to McPherson (1994), note recognition can be divided into two stages that are preparation and performance. In the preparation step, instrumentalist employ customised strategies that are most suitable to the individual. For example, notes can be quickly identified by mapping the form, the key, time signature or fingering number. In order to be able to perform a music score at sight, it is important to

do large-scale planning based on the structure and the form of the music to anticipate correct fingering. (Lehmann & Ericsson, 1996).

Eye-hand span has been an important indicator for note recognition (Lim, et al., 2019) (Arthur, Khuu, & Blom, 2016). It refers to the span between a performer's gaze at music score and the action of playing out. Also, it can also be translated to the music being looked by eyes and the music being played by the hand (Beutter, 1991).

Schumann (1969) described the difficulties of read music at sight is like a situation where ones' several fingers are removed. Having a good note recognition skill is able to gain confidence (Newman W. S., 1984) and encourage musician to indulge in more music literature (Spillman, 1990).

Other than playing the music score for the first time, note recognition is also important when a musicians is asked to play as an accompaniment for other instrumentalist (Arthur, Khuu, & Blom, 2016). According to Wristen (2005), among all instrumentalists, having a good note recognition skill is especially important for pianists due to the need of collaborative music making. Coaches and accompanists have a good market in the music scene and in order to become one, it is required to have a good note recognition skill as a prerequisite (Adler, 1965).

2.8.4 Rhythmic Ability

Rhythm is associated with every actions in part of our daily life such as walking, clapping and tapping (Lin & Danpradit, 2021). Rhythmic ability allows us to coordinate movement in an exact order and timing (Zachopoulou, 2001). In his book, Dalcroze (2013) mentioned that the rhythmic ability is part of musicianship,

To be completely musical, a child should possess an ensemble of physical and spiritual resources and capacities, comprising, on the one hand, ear, voice, and consciousness of sound, and, on the other, the whole body (bone, muscle, and nervous systems), and the consciousness of bodily rhythm. (p. 79)

Rhythm refers to a musical movement that was marked by the regulated succession of strong or weak beats (London, 2001). The strong beat and weak beat is indicated by the metre. Metre can be divided into categories based on the hierarchical structure, and can reflect the organization of three temporal levels which are subdivisions, beats and bars (London, 2001).

While in music, beat is referring to the pulse or tactus, indicate the regularly recurring articulations in music (Martens, 2005). When we listen to music and identify the underlying beat, we are going thru the process of beat perception, beat extraction, beat induction and timekeeping (Stambaugh & Nichols, 2021). These process are built on the rhythm sense, which is natural in every child and it is educators' job to develop rhythm capabilities in them (Sehon & O'Brien, 1951). Most music teachers approach the rhythm topic in a numeric way, at the same time require students to make perfect alignment of notes as written in the music scores (Fisher, 2010). Fischer opined that rhythm should not be taught by the numeric concept, instead it should be related to underlying beat and unchanging pulse.

Choksy, Abramson, Gillespie and Woods (1986) introduced two approaches to rhythmic movement which are moving in place and moving in space. The importance of rhythmic ability is to allow students to incorporate the elements of time, energy and space in music aspect (Juntunen, 2004). In order to develop rhythmic ability in beginning piano students, it starts with understanding the foundation of rhythm, which is the beat. According to Miller (2012), the concept of a beat must be introduced to students in the early years of music learning. It is because rhythm abilities can be developed through maturation, acculturation and active learning (Reifinger, 2006). Among the three aspects, acculturation is musical understanding through exposure and repetition (Phillips, 2013). Students learn by repeating the same movement until they are comfortable with that particular motion (Findlay, 1995). While active learning

approach involves auditory, kinaesthetic and visual models (Dunn, 2008). Dalcroze (2013) suggested that rhythmic ability can be achieved when the ear perceives the sound and the muscular system present what the ears received. This process requires both the muscular memory and sound memory.

Another musical term that is related to rhythm ability, that is the tempo. Tempo can also be addressed as the 'time' of a musical composition, more generally used in define musical speed or pacing (London, 2001). A musical tool to keep tempo is called the metronome, was invented and manufactured by Johann Nepomuk Malzel in 1815. Since then, composers added metronome marking as an indication for tempo. Until nowadays, musicians use the metronome during their practice session to keep their tempo consistent (Thayer & Harvey, 2001). One of the challenges in most musicians facing with tempo is keeping beat and not rushing the tempo. When the performer is nervous, they tends to rush the tempo as their heartbeat goes faster (Inesta, Terrados, Garcia, & Perez, 2008). In one of the research done by Farley (2014), an investigation was carried to find out how beat keeping related to more complicated rhythm sight reading among university instrumentalists. The result showed that the participants either slowed down or sped up during the test rather than having inconsistent beat.

2.9 The role of group piano lesson on musicianship

Most group piano lesson are meant for beginners to learn basic piano skills, only small proportion of group piano lesson is made for advanced piano students (Daniel, 2014). Piano pedagogue Calvin Bernard Cady was a music professor at the University of Michigan and started group piano lesson in early 20th century. Cady had influenced the group piano instruction to emphasize heavily on the development of musicianship, and believed that group piano lessons are sufficient to improve musicianship (Tsai, 2007).

According to Goss (2012), all students who had joined the group piano class appeared to be enjoying themselves. They stayed engaging in all activities and paying attention their peers' performance during their music making. The advantages of group piano lesson includes developing listening skill, cultivating rhythm sense through group eurhythmic activities and providing students a motivating learning environment (Fischer, 2010). In collaborative activities such as one of the student being leader to come up with a rhythmic pattern for other students to repeat after, students can interact with each other while achieving better musicianship (Chiu, 2017). Sisterhen (2007) stressed the musicianship skill should be focused in order to help the music-making process despite the insufficient time for students brush up their repertoire during the group piano lesson.

Piano pedagogue James Lyke suggested group piano lessons should be twice a week, one lesson for children to learn songs and finger technique and the other lesson for musicianship training (Fischer, 2010). On the other hand, well-known piano pedagogue Frances Clark prefer a combination of group piano lesson and individual piano lesson (Pike, 2013). According to Daniel (2014), when students consistently perform for their peers in group piano class, they gained confidence slowly lessons by lessons. While performing for other classmates, they also enjoy their classmates' performance. In another similar research done by Haddon (2017), one of the pianists realised he believe more in himself and have more self-confidence than before by participating the group piano class.

2.10 Challenges in Individual Piano Lessons

Individual piano lessons have been the most common mode of piano education, providing highly tailored instruction to all students. However, individual piano lessons pose several challenges that have gained increasing attention. One of the significant

issues is the social isolation that occur when young beginners lacked of musical opportunity to interact with peers (Kim & Yoo, 2023). The lacked of peers' involvement in music lesson also reduce the healthy competition environment and shared learning experience. According to Martinez (2023), healthy competition environment allow students to achieve self-efficacy in music study. It is one of the way to foster persistence in a child while learning piano.

Students eventually lost motivation and enjoyment of learning piano. According to Li and Wang (2022), individual piano lessons allow teachers to help in individual improvement however they can also limit students' opportunities to collaborate with other music students. Next, maintaining students' attention in individual piano lessons required a high degree of creativity and flexibility from teachers. According to Smith and Johnson (2021), teacher must constantly adapt their teaching methods and materials to keep students engaged. The pressure is added to the teachers to balance proper musical instructions with the exciting musical activities in an individual piano lesson.

2.11 Challenges in Group Piano Lessons

A good group piano teacher must keep students engaged and clearly inform parents about the learning objectives and practice expectations for group piano class (Pike, 2013).

Pike (2017) in her book about group piano teaching, noted that:

Teaching a group piano class requires personal traits such as leadership skills, maturity, confidence, and organization. The necessary teaching skills include setting clear expectations, maintaining appropriate student behavior, maximizing time on task, motivating students, fostering a positive atmosphere, and involving

students in the learning process, ideally through discovery and self-exploration.
(p. 173)

Burkett (1982) shared challenges in conducting group piano in his journal, noted that:

Group piano teaching requires more advanced preparation compared to individual lessons. Teachers need to establish long-term goals for the academic year, set more specific monthly objectives, and finally, format weekly lesson plans. While crafting these lesson plans, teachers must anticipate potential problems and be flexible in addressing them. Consequently, the success of a group piano lesson largely hinges on the teacher, who acts as the leader. The teacher's role involves creating an atmosphere of enthusiasm, mutual interest, and understanding within the group. For instance, teachers may ask questions to encourage student responses and initiate communication. Additionally, assigning tasks that allow students to discover new knowledge together can be effective in fostering a collaborative learning environment. (p. 32)

Creating a healthy learning environment for young beginners presents another challenge in group piano lessons. It is beneficial to have every student perform for the group, ensuring they arrive at lessons well-prepared (Sisterhen, 2007). A positive learning environment allows each student to be supported, encouraged, and challenged by their peers (Fisher, 2006). Conversely, a teacher who fails to establish a healthy environment may cause young beginners to lose interest in piano lessons. Factors such as creating a sense of belonging, offering constructive feedback, and encouraging mutual respect among students are crucial for maintaining a supportive atmosphere (Duke & Simmons, 2006).

Another significant challenge is accommodating the varying learning paces of students, as each student progresses differently based on their hand coordination abilities and practice methods (Wristen, 2006). In a private piano lesson, the teacher can tailor the instruction to meet the specific needs of one student, focusing exclusively on their development. However, in a group setting, the teacher must divide their attention among all students, making it challenging to address individual needs adequately (Sisterhen, 2007). There are instances where students may not have sufficient practice time, or the lesson pace may not suit all students (Wristen, 2006). When teachers focus primarily on the weaker students in their group, they may provide less positive feedback and simplify tasks, potentially limiting the overall learning experience. Conversely, teachers often report being more systematic in their instruction when teaching a single student, as it allows for more personalized feedback and targeted teaching strategies (Duke & Benson, 2014). Therefore, a critical challenge in group piano lessons is to ensure each student receive adequate attention and support.

2.12 Critical reviews of related research

Three previous research studies that explored musicianship development and teaching strategies of young beginners attending the individual piano lessons and group piano lessons, authored by Chiu (2017) and Pike (2013).

Chiu (2017) adopted posttest-only quasi experimental design for the research study. Researcher recruited students of 5-7 years old with no previous formal music learning experience. The recruitment was held through researcher's personal and professional networks. An entry interview was held with each of the candidate to make sure participants met the criteria such as kinesthetic response, listening ability, reading ability, and speaking English fluently. Most importantly, the researcher wanted to make sure the participants did not have any prior music background. During the experiment,

48 participants were recruited and divided into 2 groups. The experimental group consisted of 24 participants who went on for group piano instruction while the control group consisted of 24 participants who went on for individual piano instruction. Two teachers executed the piano instructions, each of them handled 12 individual class students and 12 group piano students. The whole treatment process lasted 24 weekly piano lessons. After attending 24 lessons, all students were required to take posttest examination. There were 2 sessions of posttest. In the first session, participants were required to play 2 songs out of 4 songs given a week before the actual test and also complete the test of music knowledge, music reading and aural discrimination. In the second session, the participants were required to play the other two songs and complete kinesthetic response test. The researcher and another piano teacher were the two judges graded the posttest.

There were 4 factors of independence variables: (a) instruction, (b) teacher, (c) age, and (d) gender. This research studies aimed to investigate the relationship of instruction to see if students' musical achievements remain constant across different age and gender groups. The dependant variables are (a) music knowledge, (b) music reading, (c) aural discrimination, (d) kinesthetics response, and (e) performance skill. As a result, the study found out that there was no significant difference in musical achievements between group piano lesson and individual piano lesson.

Pike (2013) adopted a mix-method case study to understand the teaching strategies of a novice and an expert instructor of two beginning children's group-piano class. Both instructors worked at the same music teaching organisation and possess a Bachelor's degree in music. The novice instructor had 5 years of adult group instruction but not children group piano class. He possessed private teaching experience, had students winning awards in local competitions and was a nationally certified teacher of music (NCTM). The expert teacher had 20 years of group teaching experience,

including 12 years of children's group teaching and also taught private piano lessons. He was an award-winning teacher, and held NCTM certification. The recruitment was held among student aged seven to nine, with no prior experience of piano. Each instructor was to make their own lesson plan, for example set the length of the teaching term, the duration of each class period, established age criteria for the class, designed their own curriculum, and chose the methods and materials.

This study applied both qualitative and quantitative research method. The researcher observed both classes and jotted down the overview and logistics of class, including the materials and durations of the class. The researcher also focused on the impressions of instructional sessions which cover the behaviour of students in class, teaching method and in class activities. The quantitative data was presented in a pie chart with percentage as the measurement value. The qualitative data was taken during the final in-class mini recital where students perform as a soloist or ensemble. The researcher came up with 10 component competencies as the standard. The researcher observed the performance and judged whether the students had met with the expected outcome. As a result, students who were guided by the expert group piano teacher appeared to achieve a higher level of performance proficiency compared to the novice group piano teacher.

2.13 Studies related to Piano Education in Malaysia

In an unpublished master's project, Cheah (2012) investigated the teaching strategies needed for novice piano teacher to teach a music programme in Kuala Lumpur. The main findings from the study are the concepts and challenges on various methods and approaches in private music lessons. Cheah chose questionnaires and interviews to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences. However the study did not give an in-depth analysis and solutions to the current problem.

Ang (2013) aimed to investigate the current situation of piano teaching of Western classical piano music in West Malaysia. The study also identifies the current problems and suggests solutions by studying the teaching approaches of piano teachers in Malaysia. Ang approached the study with mixed methods. The quantitative data was collected in the form of questionnaires where 25 sampling participants were randomly chosen. Qualitative data was collected by having interviews with fifteen selected interviewees. The interviews were held in person, by telephone, via Skype and on-line by written response. The length of interviews were about eight to sixteen minutes. The study found a few challenges such as students not having enough practice time, poor concentration, over dependence on teachers and slow learners. The study also found a common aim where students learn piano to complete their Grade 8 examination. At the end of the study, Ang advised that teachers should help develop students' critical listening skills, encourage students to listen to a wider range of repertoire, develop better understanding towards music and develop inner hearing.

The next study aimed to explore the application of Dalcroze's Eurhythmics into music lessons (Ismail, Loo, & Anuar, 2021). The study was to experiment whether the application of rhythmic movement helps to improve students' music performance skills. The chosen methodology was to carry out a ten-week experimental design involving 35 primary school students in Putrajaya. The first part of data collection was the weekly observation during the 30-minute learning session. The data was collected by observation towards the change of behaviours and musical abilities. The second part of the data collection is through in-depth interviews with two music educators who have more than 10-years of experience in teaching. The interview was held virtually with asking open-ended questions, in order to encourage respondents to elaborate their feedback. The study concluded that it is important to make the music learning process

fun and active. Students enjoy rhythmic movement activities and it will smoothen their learning process.

Universiti Malaya

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research is a procedure that is carried out to understand a specific issue in a coordinated and un-biased way (Payton, 1979). In every study, researcher collects the data and then analyse and interpret it to find out more about a phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). According to Bresler (2021), qualitative research is usually used to collect highly descriptive data of human or incident, interpretation of emic issues or etic issues, and obtain triangulation to validate a certain information. Bresler added that the aim of qualitative research is not to find out the fact but it is to sketch a clearer experiential memory and refine universal understanding. The purposes of this study were (a) to assess teachers' perspectives for selecting the most suitable lesson format (group or individual) based on the unique needs and learning styles of young piano beginners aged 6-8 in developing musicianship, and (b) to gather insights from teachers regarding any differences in teaching strategies, curriculum design and lesson pacing between group and individual piano lessons tailored for young beginners. The researcher chose to pursue a qualitative method that obtain the data for analysis through interviews. This chapter aims to elaborate the research methodology to answer the research questions. The outline of this chapter will be constructed as follows: (1) Research Design, (2) Research Process, (3) Participant Recruitment, (4) Participants, (5) Interview, (6) Interview Question, (7) Data Collection, (8) Data Analysis Process and (9) Confirmability.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to obtain insight into the musicianship cultivation of young piano beginners in two class setting: individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. Qualitative study is a method used by researcher

to understand and find out the perspective of an individual or a group of people towards a specific problem (Creswell, 2014). It consists of humanistic questions that are usually starts with why and how (Marshall, 1996). Some examples of humanistic issue are opinion and relationship are suitable to be conducted through a qualitative research because the descriptive outcome explains an individual's experience towards the chosen topic (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

The most common qualitative method used are participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interview. Focus group refer to an interview held with a group of people. However, researcher concerned that participants might not be able to express themselves entirely and having the possibility of being influenced by other participants (Ghelber, 2020). Interviews are conducted to capture different aspect of perceptions that researcher is unable to obtain directly (Bresler, 2021). According to Burgess (1984), qualitative interview can be referred as a purposeful conversation.

In the current study, the researcher aimed to obtain in-depth information and viewpoint of experienced piano teachers on the chosen topic. Therefore, conducting an interview with the chosen participants would be most suitable for this research. Through asking semi structured open-ended question, researcher had a series of conversations with the participants to understand their opinion and perspectives. In the current research, the semi-structured interviews were guided by questions which are predetermined by the researcher. The importance of flexibility was to allow extension to the interviewee's perspectives and discovered the chosen topic on the deeper level.

3.2 Research Process

The research process in this study will refer to the ideas shown by the table below.

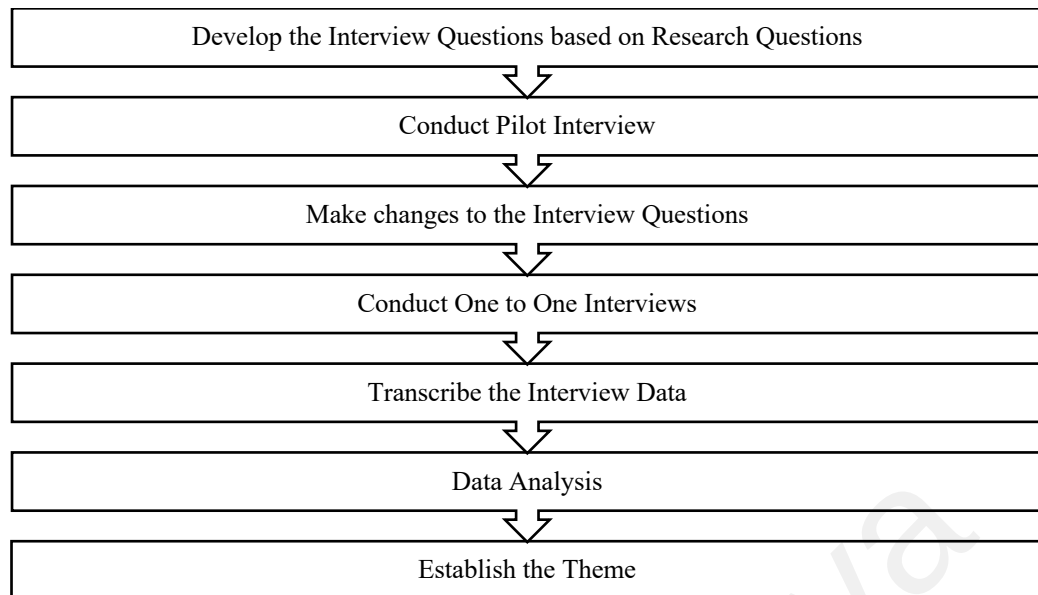


Figure 3.1: The research process

3.3 Participants and Sampling

The participants recruitment in this study utilised purposeful sampling procedures. Creswell (2007) referred *purposeful sampling* as a method to select participants with the purpose of they are able to provide perspectives to the current study topic. The participants met the following criteria:

- Piano teachers taught individual piano lesson and group piano lesson.
- Piano teachers had at least 2 years of teaching experience.
- Piano teachers experienced in teaching beginners aged 6-8.
- Piano teachers who taught in Klang Valley, Malaysia.
- Piano teachers who have minimal qualification of Diploma in Music.
- Piano teacher selection was finalised based on agreement to participate.

The researcher conducted a thorough search to identify suitable candidates for the study by reaching out to several music schools and music teachers within the field. The recruitment process involved disseminating a recruitment message across the community, aiming to engage individuals who fit the study's criteria. In addition to direct outreach, referrals played a significant role in the selection process; several

potential participants were recommended by school principals and fellow teachers who were familiar with the candidates' expertise and experience.

This study collected data via conducting in-depth interviews with five piano teachers, in line with qualitative research best practice which emphasize depth of knowledge over quantity. Small samples ranging from 3 to 10 participants are common in interview approaches (Creswell, 2007). These individuals were chosen based on their relevant experience and expertise in teaching piano to young beginners. Once the participants were selected, the researcher provided them with a detailed explanation of the study's procedure, emphasizing the flexible nature of the interview process. Participants were given the option to choose between virtual or face-to-face interviews, ensuring convenience and comfort for all involved.

The interviews were designed to be semi-structured, comprising open-ended questions that allowed participants the freedom to express their opinions and perspectives in a detailed and nuanced manner. This approach was intended to elicit rich, qualitative data that could provide deep insights into the participants' views and experiences. Each participant was encouraged to share their unique perspectives on the topics under discussion, contributing valuable data to the study.

The following sections provide brief narratives for each participant, offering an overview of their backgrounds and the specific insights they contributed during the interviews. These narratives serve as a foundation for the subsequent analysis and discussion, highlighting the diverse viewpoints and experiences that emerged from the study.

Participant N

Participant N is a seasoned piano teacher with 15 years of experience in the music education field in Kuala Lumpur. She has taught individual piano lessons in a

private music school and conducted group lessons in various international schools. Her teaching repertoire includes preparing students for recitals, concerts, competitions, and other performance opportunities. Participant N specializes in various music syllabi, including IGCSE Music, International Baccalaureate (IB) Music, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), and Trinity College London.

Academically, Participant N holds a Bachelor of Classical Music (Hons) from the Institute of Music, UCSI University. She furthered her education with a Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT), and she is certified with an ATCL Piano Diploma and ABRSM Music Theory Grade 8. Her extensive qualifications and diverse teaching experiences make her a valuable educator, adept at guiding students through a comprehensive and enriching musical journey.

Participant S

Participant S has been a dedicated piano teacher since 2003, beginning her career in Boston, USA, where she taught for two years. After earning her Bachelor of Music from Berklee College of Music, she returned to Malaysia and continued her teaching journey. In Kuala Lumpur, Participant S taught at an international school, where she developed the school's music education syllabus and trained the choir, ensemble, and band. She also worked at the Yamaha Music Foundation, teaching young children aged three and up in group settings. Later, she founded her own music school, creating a specialized keyboard learning syllabus for young beginners. She ran this music program from 2018 until 2023, contributing significantly to the local music education community.

Participant H

Participant H is a dedicated piano teacher with eight years of experience in teaching individual piano lessons at a private music school in Kuala Lumpur. In addition to her piano instruction, she has also conducted band lessons and organized

yearly concerts for her students, showcasing their progress and talents. Since 2022, Participant H has expanded her teaching portfolio by offering keyboard lessons in a group setting at a government elementary school in Kuala Lumpur. Her qualifications include a Diploma in Music and a Music Degree in Arranging and Composing from Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA). These credentials reflect her strong foundation in both performance and music theory, enabling her to provide comprehensive musical education. Her diverse teaching experiences and formal training have made her a respected figure in the local music education community.

Participant L

Participant L is a seasoned piano teacher with 30 years of experience in teaching individual piano lessons and five years in group piano lessons. Throughout her extensive teaching career, she has been dedicated to preparing her students for various recitals, competitions, exams, and other performance opportunities. Her commitment to education is evident in her continuous professional development; she has attended numerous music courses and training programs, including the Orff Method Training and Kodály Method Training. These methodologies have enriched her teaching approach, allowing her to offer a diverse and well-rounded musical education. Participant L's qualifications include a Diploma in Trinity Piano Performance Certificate (PC), ABRSM Piano Grade 8 Certificate, and Trinity Theory Grade 8. Her vast experience and specialized training have made her a respected educator, well-equipped to nurture the musical talents of her students.

Participant W

Participant W holds a Bachelor of Classical Music (Hons) degree from the Institute of Music, UCSI University. She began her musical journey at the age of four and has been teaching since 2017. Participant W is highly qualified, with a diploma from the Associate of Trinity College London (with distinction), ABRSM Grade 8 in

Piano and Theory, Yamaha Piano and Fundamentals Grade 5, Rockschool Vocals Grade 5, and Trinity Cello Grade 4.

In addition to teaching group piano lessons and individual piano lessons, she regularly performs and teach music lessons at an international school. Participant W is also active in collaborative piano, frequently accompanying musicians for university-level exams and ABRSM and Trinity exams. Her choral experience includes performing as a choir member in international competitions and she also performed with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) in various choral concerts.

3.4 Interview

According to Fontana and Frey (2000), interview is one of the most powerful ways when comes to understanding other individual better. The ultimate goal is to design well focused interview questions to lead the study and select appropriate data to discover deeper in the chosen topic. The interview consists of open-ended questions to find out deeper understanding from participants' perspectives or experiences. During the interview, the participants may add on any further elaborations and clarifications. According to Kvale (1996), semi-structured interviews develop a sense of openness while participants are answering interview questions.

In this research, the researcher took the role as an interpreter and a gatherer of interpretations. The research data were collected through interviewing music teachers who have at least 2 years' experience in both group piano lesson and individual piano lesson. The interviews were conducted by the researcher with each of the participants individually. The interview consists of open-ended questions to find out teachers' perspectives on the group or individual piano lessons towards young beginner's musicianship. The interview questions were predetermined by the researcher however the participants were given the freedom to share their opinions through the

conversation. The interview method was most suitable to examine the chosen topic because the expected result was highly elaborative.

3.5 Data Collection

A qualitative research requires different perceptions from people who had various experience in the studied field. According to Stake (1995), the interview process can be seen as a journey to discover different views of the studied topic. The interview questions surround the teachers' perspectives on the musicianship cultivation in group piano lesson and individual piano lessons. A brief explanation on the study were sent to all participants via email in order to maintain transparency with the participants. All participants were asked to sign the letter of consent and were given the option to pull out from the research at the any point. All participants agreed to attend the one-to-one interview hosted by the researcher.

During the semi-structured interview, the researcher started off with the research questions that was designed based on the research questions. Stake (1995) opined interview questions should not be designed to obtain only yes and no answer, on the opposite they should be a tool for the interviewees to open up themselves for further discussion. Each participants was asked the same questions. Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives and further elaborate to provide more insights to the study. Researcher did most of the listener's duty and allow the participants to express their thoughts to the fullest. Each interview had different time duration, between 45-minutes to 1 hour. In order to keep the data reliable and valid, data recording protocol was used in the form of digital materials and audio visual as references. After the interview session with participants, the audio recording were transcribed into text format by the researcher. The narrative interview took the bigger part of the data used in this study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted a series of action or steps to investigate a certain aspect of qualitative data. The whole process involves dissecting the data and then selectively put together beneficial data to make a whole picture and text (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research performed the thematic analysis derived from Braun & Clarke (2013).

There are six phases, (1) Familiarise with the data, (2) Generate initial codes, (3) Search for a theme, (4) Review potential theme, (5) Define the theme with names and (6) Produce the report.

First of all, the interview data is the primary source in this qualitative research. During the interview, the researcher who was also the interviewer will be taking written notes as a reference. Interview data were transcript into text form and checked closely with the voice recording. This step was where the researcher became familiarise with the data and kept track of the research objectives. The transcripts were emailed to each participants for member checking. After obtained confirmation with the participants, the researcher did line-by-line coding to the text using Excel spreadsheet. The researcher allocated code and labelled each code with different colour. This stage, the researcher identified the reoccurring patterns and ensured relevant to the research questions. After that, the researcher search potential themes for the research based on the code (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Different perspectives were collected during the interview with different teachers who came from different musical background and different educational field (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it was crucial to review the potential theme and make sure those themes aligned with your research objectives. Once the potential themes were identified, the researcher looked for the codes that fitted to the potential themes. The researcher organised the themes, subthemes and codes by creating a thematic analysis summary table and attached the example quotes in the table too. Lastly, the researcher

addressed conclusions to the study topic and wrote them into the final report. The themes were presented in Chapter 4, backed up with examples of dialogue from participants.

3.7 Confirmability

This research employed the methods of respondent validation (Creswell, 2002) where the researcher summarized the interview session by words and emailed to the interviewees. This step was to confirm their perspectives with interviewees again and avoid misunderstanding or misinterpret. The next step was using the method of member checking (Janesick, 2000). The researcher emailed the summarized text to guarantee the accuracy and asked for their permission to quote their interview response directly. All participants had responded that the summary of the finding is correspond to their perspectives while all the direct quotes that were included in this research has the participants' permission.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to ethical standards to assure the rights of all participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained the approval letter from University Malaya Research Ethics Committee, with reference number UM.TNC2/UMREC_2644. All participants were informed with detailed information about the research objectives, procedure and their rights. All participants were given the right to withdraw at any stage of the research without any consequences. All participants had signed and returned the consent form. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in this study. The collected data were stored and only accessible to the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

This chapter delves into the comprehensive data analysis of semi-structured interviews, subsequently engaging in an in-depth discussion of the research findings. The study employs a qualitative methodology for data analysis, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences. The analysis is aligned with the research questions, which serve as a guiding framework throughout the study.

The research seeks to address two primary questions:

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons for young beginners aged 6-8 years old?
2. How is musicianship cultivated in group and individual piano lessons from teachers' perspectives?

By closely examining the data through the lens of these research questions, this chapter not only presents the findings but also contextualizes them within the broader discourse on piano education in Malaysia. It seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the effectiveness of developing musicianship in young beginners, offering valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers and students.

The collected interview data are organised into a few themes under research question 1:

- (1) Benefit of conducting group piano lesson,
- (2) Challenges of conducting group piano lesson,
- (3) Benefit of conducting individual piano lesson,
- and (4) Challenges of conducting individual piano lesson

The collected interview data are organised into a few themes under research question 2:

(5) Cultivating musicianship in group piano lesson and individual piano lesson, and (6)

Musicianship Skills in Piano teaching.

The following table represents the thematic analysis summary to compare themes and codes.

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Example Quote
Benefit of conducting group piano lesson	Peer Influence	Social Interaction	“There is social interaction between students... gain friendships along their piano learning journey.” (W)
		Social Skill Development	“Group piano lessons... build social skills and teamwork.” (H)
		Peer Motivation	“Interacting with peers can motivate students to practice and improve.” (N)
		Student Perspective and Empathy	“Some other students... might be able to deliver better than the teacher.” (L)
	Collaboration and Performance Opportunity	Collaborative Learning	“Students learn from each other’s strength and contributions.” (N)
		Sense of Community	“Foster a sense of community and teamwork... collaborative skills are essential.” (N)
		Ensemble Playing	“Enhance [students’] musicianship through ensemble playing.” (H)
	Creativity and Expression	Creative Exploration	“Students can explore musical ideas collaboratively and develop their musical identities.” (N)
		Musical Activities	“It fosters musical independence, encourage experimentation and nurtures the ability to innovate.” (N)
		Creative teaching methods	“If the teacher makes the lesson so boring... the students might feel bored and don’t like music.” (S)

Challenges of Conducting Group Piano Lessons	Personalised Attention	Lack of individualised attention	“Group piano lessons can be beneficial for certain subjects, but may lack individualised attention compared to private lessons.” (H)
		Difficult in giving personal guidance	“Providing individualized attention to each student in a group setting.” (N)
		Assign different tasks	“When some students need more attention, I assign theory tasks to others so I can focus on those who need help.” (W)
	Classroom Management	Teachers’ nature in teaching	“Group teaching is not for everyone. I have tried to train a few teachers... but they can’t do it well.” (S)
		Inexperience at the beginning	“It was fun, but challenging... lacked of experience in teaching group piano lessons.” (L)
		Use of clear rules	“They are not allowed to turn on the keyboard until teacher allow them, make sure the volume is not too loud.” (S)
	Diverse Individuality	No fixed plan fits all	“There were no pre-fixed lesson plan that are able to accommodate every students.” (L)
		Uneven progress within group	“Students have different progress even though they are in the same group piano lessons.” (L)
		Different levels and prior experience	“Students with diverse levels and different prior experience might come together in a group lesson.” (N)
Benefits of Conducting Individual Piano Lessons	Personalised Attention	Focused and tailored instruction	“Tailor lessons according to the student’s specific learning needs, pace and musical interests.” (N)
		Targeted correction and feedback	“More targeted and effective in catering to students' personal needs, such as fixing posture, and explaining concepts... give immediate feedback and solve issues immediately.” (W)

		Suitable for students with special needs	“Slow learner or students having some disability... individual piano lesson would be more suitable.” (S)
	Effective in Learning Progress	Intensive skill development	“Facilitate focused work on technical skills such as finger dexterity, hand position, and control over dynamics and articulation.” (N)
		Better sight reading and note recognition	“Students might have a better sight reading and note recognition... teacher was able to provide immediate response.” (W)
	Teacher-Student Relationship	Close teacher-student relationship	“Foster a close teacher-student relationship... know students on a personal level, understanding their motivations, challenges, and aspirations in music.” (N)
		Trust and encouragement	“A positive and supportive teacher-student relationship... built on trust, respect and encouragement.” (N)
		Adaptive teaching	“Flexibility to adapt their teaching approach and strategies based on the individual student's learning style and personality.” (N)
Challenges of Conducting Individual Piano Lessons	Feeling of Isolation	Loss of motivation	“They might feel lonely... losing motivation to continue their piano journey.” (W)
		Lack of social interaction	“There are many ideas can be brought up to group piano lessons because more students in a class... social interactions happening in group piano lessons allowed students to grow.” (L)
		Hard to keep students engaged	“Motivating students and maintaining progress over time... requires creativity and understanding of their individual motivations.” (N)
	Lacked Ensemble and Performance Experience	Limited opportunities for collaboration	“Individual piano lessons limit the opportunities for students to collaborate.” (W)

		Broader exposure to musical aspects	“During this age, they should be exposed to more musical aspects (in different dimensions).” (L)
		Importance of creating and performing together	“Collaborating with others to perform or create music together is also essential in musicianship development.” (W)
Cultivating Musicianship in Group and Individual Piano Lessons	Expectation	Rhythmic skill and singing	“Beat keeping, note recognition and being able to sing.” (W)
		Good coordination	“Beat keeping, be able to sing and have a good coordination.” (S)
		Notation and sight-reading	“A beginner student is supposed to have a basic understanding of notation, rhythm and coordination... sight-reading skills enable musicians to quickly grasp new pieces of music and perform them accurately with minimal preparation.” (N)
	Lesson Structure in Individual Piano Lesson	No formal lesson plan needed	“I normally don’t do lesson plans for individual piano lessons... manageable without a lesson plan.” (W)
		Structured personalised plan	“A well-designed curriculum provides a structured progression... outline specific goals and outcomes for each lesson.” (N)
		Goal-setting with student/parent	“First, I will assess and set a goal with each individual... Then we can set the lesson planning.” (H)
		Typical duration and time split	“20 mins pieces and 10 mins theory.” (W); “15 mins pieces and 15 mins theory.” (L)
	Lesson Structure in Group Piano Lesson	Lesson plan needed for group	“Lesson plans break down complex musical concepts into manageable steps... build upon their knowledge and abilities progressively.” (N)

		Various activities within time	“50 minutes each lesson: singing, keyboard playing, ensemble playing and rhythm exercises.” (S); “45 minutes: 15 mins musical activities, 15 mins keyboard, 15 mins theory.” (L)
		Use of auditory/visual cues	“Eyes on me... using auditory cues and visual aids to maintain students’ focus and understanding.” (W, N)
		Typical group lesson duration	“45 minutes group piano lessons: 10 mins revision/warm-up, 25 mins keyboard, 10 mins theory.” (W)
Musicianship Skills in Piano Teaching	Rhythmic Sense	Individual Piano Lessons	- Sensory approach: tapping shoulder (L) - Use of percussion instruments, lyrics creation (S, W) - Kodály method: “ta, titi” vocalization (W)
		Group Piano Lessons	- Kinaesthetic activities: clapping, tapping, stomp beats (L, N, S, W) - Group clapping/tapping promotes unity and timing (N) - Percussion ensemble creates fun and peer learning (S, W)
	Note Recognition	Individual Piano Lessons	- Flashcards, drawing notes on iPad/whiteboard (N, W) - Sight-reading exercises (H) - Immediate correction of errors
		Group Piano Lessons	- Flashcards and games (N) - Group activities foster friendly competition and collaboration (N) - Faster coverage of basics (N)
	Singing	Individual Piano Lessons	- Singing lyrics and solfège to aid aural skills (S, W) - Students more shy; need encouragement (S)
		Group Piano Lessons	- Singing is often the warm-up or group activity (S, W) - Encourages participation when peers sing together (S, W) - Builds aural awareness in an engaging way

	Coordination	Individual Piano Lessons	- Warm-up exercises: scales, arpeggios (N) - Body movement before playing (L) - Teacher adjusts pace and exercises to student's level (N)
		Group Piano Lessons	- Observation of peers' techniques (L) - Playing duets or ensembles supports synchronisation (N) - More engaging through group dynamics (L, N) - Harder to catch individual bad habits (N)

4.2 Findings of Research Question 1

4.2.1 Benefits of conducting group piano lesson

Peer Influence. Group piano lessons offer numerous benefits, making them an increasingly popular choice in music education. One significant advantage is the development of social skills among students. Participant W felt the group piano lessons are more lively because there are “social interaction between students”, also students can “gain friendships along their piano learning journey”. Participant H commented more on social interactions, she opined that “group piano lessons” can be beneficial for “social interaction and motivation”. She also believed that the group lessons are to help “build social skills and teamwork”.

Participant N added her point of view, justifying having peers in the piano lessons are able to motivate the students. She opined that through “interacting with peers” can motivate students to “practice and improve”. She shared examples such as “peer observation and feedback sessions can provide valuable insights and encourage constructive criticism among students”. Participant N also agreed that group lessons provide “a social environment where students can share their musical experiences, learn

from each other's mistakes, and support each other's progress". She thought that this can "enhance their overall enjoyment of learning music".

Participant L shared her personal experience when she wants to deliver a certain topic, "some other students in the same classroom might be able to deliver better than the teacher". She further explained that "teachers can have various ideas to carry out her points", but "it could not reach the student because they are having different ways of thinking." She felt that "when a group of students who are similar age, they share the same interests and thinking."

Peer influence also fosters a supportive environment where students share feedback and encouragement, leading to a positive and collaborative learning atmosphere. The presence of peers can reduce feelings of isolation, making the learning process more enjoyable and less stressful. Ultimately, the peer interactions in group music lessons contribute to a richer, more dynamic educational experience that supports both individual and collective growth.

Collaboration and Performance Opportunity. Majority of the participants opined that collaboration and performance opportunity is one of the benefit of conducting group piano lessons. Firstly, Participant N mentioned about the opportunity for students to collaborate in group piano lessons. She enjoys the collaboration aspect of group piano class, where "students learn from each other's strength and contributions".

Collaborating in piano lessons not only affecting the individual, Participant N mentioned that "it can foster a sense of community and teamwork among students."

Within a community, communication is one of the key to achieve collaboration.

Participant N mentioned that "collaborative skills are essential for ensemble playing and

group performance, it can be achieved through another skills which is music communication.

Participant N added, music communication involves “teamwork, listening skills and ensemble playing abilities. Students learn to coordinate their playing with others, which is essential for ensemble performance.”

Another participant, Participant H also shared how she incorporate collaboration in group piano lessons with lots of musical activities. She would “enhance [students’] musicianship through ensemble playing” to foster a “well-rounded musical development through collaborative setting”.

Participant W agreed with stating, “collaborating and performing” are the two important elements in young beginners’ musicianship development. She mentioned the key word collaboration three times during the interview session.

Participant W who emphasized on “sing before play instruments”, mentioned that her current young beginners are “comfortable to collaborate with others”, “they are willing to sing and play ensemble with others.” As a result, she noted that students who attended group piano lessons are usually “stronger in certain aspects such as collaboration skills.” She also commented about singing in group. “I found that in group piano lessons they sing more in tune because they are able to hear how other sing and they will try to refine their pitching.”

Creativity and expression. Based on the interview data, it shows that creativity and expression can be discovered through social interaction, especially in group setting. According to one of the participant, Participant N opined that she enjoy “fostering creativity and expression” within a group context, where “students can explore musical ideas collaboratively and develop their musical identities”.

During the interview, Participant N gave a few musical activities examples that fosters creativity such as “improvisation” and “composition”. The participant added, “It [musical activities] fosters musical independence, encourage experimentation and nurtures the ability to innovate within musical traditions.”

Participant S’s point of view resonated with Participant N’s. She advised teachers to be “up to date and be more creative in their teaching”. She also advised teacher to know what are the songs the students like. She also gave an scenario, “if the teacher makes the lesson so boring to attend, the students might felt bored and don’t like music.”

4.2.2 Challenges of conducting group piano lesson

Personalised attention. One of the participant, Participant H mentioned that she felt group piano lessons can be beneficial for certain subjects, but may “lack individualised attention compared to private lessons”.

Another participant, Participant N also felt the same way. She admitted that she faced challenge “providing individualized attention to each student in a group setting”.

To overcome the issue, Participant W shared her method of handling a group of students who require personal guidance or attention. When some students in the group need more individual attention, she would assign tasks for students in class for example theory assignment. While most of the students are completing their own tasks, she can “focus on those who need help” by guiding them individually. This method provides personal guidance to those who need more help, at the same time does not slow down the overall progress of the group lessons.

Classroom management. Effective classroom management is crucial to ensure every students’ benefits. Participant S, a former music school owner who had done training to

teachers in teaching group piano lessons, opined that “group teaching is not for everyone”.

She added, “I have tried to train a few teachers to teach group piano lessons but they can’t do it well. But of course after a few years of teaching, it will get better.”

Participant L recalled when she first started teaching, it was “fun, but challenging”. It was challenging because “lacked of experience in teaching group piano lessons”.

On the bright side, she did mentioned that years of teaching group piano teaching definitely helps the classroom management. She is able to “manage the class better” and “know how to deal with each situation better” after many years of teaching.

According to Participant S, one of her strategies is to set classroom rule from the beginning of the class such as, “they [students] are not allowed to turn on the keyboard until teacher allow them, make sure the volume is not too loud.”

Diverse individuality. As a teacher who taught over 30 years, Participant L still thought that there were always rooms to improve because every students react differently and “there were no pre-fixed lesson plan that are able to accommodate every students”.

Also, she mentioned that a teacher can have various idea to carry out the lessons but “it could not reach the student because students have different thinking”. Participant L mentioned that another challenging part that she faced is where “students have different progress even though they are in the same group piano lessons”.

Participant N shared about her perspectives on this particular challenges, students with “diverse levels and different prior experience” might come together in a group lessons.

It is crucial for teacher to brainstorm to ensure “students get equal learning experiences in every lesson”. It is also to “make sure every group activities are able to benefit each student”.

4.2.3 Benefits of conducting individual piano lesson

Personalised attention. Four out of five participants mentioned that individual piano lessons is beneficial because students receive personalised attention. Participant N shared her point of view that teachers appreciate the fact that individual piano lessons provide a focused and personalised instruction to students. The class setting where only one teacher and one student in a class allows teacher to “tailor lessons according to the student’s specific learning needs, pace and musical interests”. She added, “I make personalised lesson planning for my students. Tailor lesson plans to the individual student's needs, strengths, weaknesses, and interests.”

The participant, Participant W conveyed that she felt more ease teaching group piano lessons, because there is only one student in the class. She noticed that individual piano lessons are much “more targeted and effective in catering to students' personal needs, such as fixing posture, and explaining concepts”. She also appreciate the fact that she can “give immediate feedback and solve issues immediately”.

When asked about perspectives on teaching individual piano lessons, Participant H answered that she felt there is “a unique opportunity to provide personalised attention and tailored instruction” to each student. She appreciate this approach allows teacher to “focus closely on the student's specific goals, learning style, and pace of progress”.

Participant S also suggested that personalised attention is especially beneficial for students who need specialised care in their learning journey. She suggests that “slow learner or students having some disability”, she recommended that “individual piano lesson would be more suitable”.

Effective in learning progress. Participant W opined that individual piano lessons are able to focus on making progress especially “on the technical aspects of piano playing such as pieces and scales”.

According to Participant N, she can focus intensively on “developing technical skills, musical expression, and interpretation”. She further explained, individual piano lessons “facilitate focused work on technical skills such as finger dexterity, hand position, and control over dynamics and articulation. This lays a strong foundation for advanced piano playing.”

Participant W indicated that students who attended individual piano lessons might have a “better sight reading and note recognition”, it is because teacher was able to provide “immediate response” to students.

Teacher-student relationship. The participant, Participant N believed that individual piano lessons “foster a close teacher-student relationship” and she enjoyed to “know students on a personal level, understanding their motivations, challenges, and aspirations in music”.

She also mentioned that a positive and supportive teacher-student relationship can only be developed on trust, respect and encouragement. She always provide constructive criticism and recognise students’ achievements to help students grow into musicians.

Participant N shared that she enjoyed the “flexibility to adapt their teaching approach and strategies based on the individual student's learning style and personality”. This approach can lead to more effective and enjoyable lessons to the students.

4.2.4 Challenges of conducting individual piano lessons

Feeling of Isolation. Participant W shared about her thought of students attending individual piano lessons, they “learn faster in individual piano lessons” however it could not fulfil the emotional state of a student where “they might feel lonely”. It leads to students “losing motivation to continue their piano journey”. Participant L, also shared her perspectives on the feeling of isolation will lead to students feel the piano class is boring. She mentioned that “there are many ideas can be brought up to group piano lessons because more students in a class”, each of them contribute a small idea will result to many ideas. She added, “there are social interactions happening in the group piano lessons allowed students to grow”. She also said that “often, individual piano lessons are more boring”.

Participant N shared her experience, where she encounter the challenge of keep student motivated in individual piano lessons which is “motivating students and maintaining progress over time”. She felt that it is hard to “keep students engaged and inspired”, in order to achieve that it “requires creativity and understanding of their individual motivations”.

Lacked Ensemble and Performance experience. Participant W mentioned about group activities that are essential to build musicianship in students, which is more suitable to be carried out in group setting. Students would rather do the activities with their peers than with the teacher.

“There are many group activities that can be carried out in the group piano setting,

where students can also do with teachers in the individual piano class. However students might feel less comfortable doing activities with teachers instead of their peers.”

She added, individual piano lessons limit the opportunities for students to collaborate. She mentioned that individual piano lesson plans “often focus on the technical aspects of piano playing”. On the opposite, group piano lessons open up more opportunities to “collaborate” and they are “more willing to sing before playing piano, to build aural skills”. She also gave the conclusion, “collaborating with others to perform or create music together is also essential in musicianship development.”

Participant L shared her perspectives on teaching young piano beginners. Children at this age should exposed themselves to any sort of musical aspect and never limit themselves.

“I think that music learning is very broad in a way students are encouraged to explore as such as possible, especially at a young age. We never know how the lesson will impact a student. During this age, they should be exposed to more musical aspects (in different dimensions).”

Participant S stated that, “Even those 4 years old students in my group class are able to play in ensemble.”

4.3 Findings of Research Question 2

4.3.1 Cultivating musicianship in group piano lessons and individual piano lessons

Expectation. The researcher asked the participants about their expectations on their current young beginners' musicianship cultivation and every teachers had different point of view on this topic. Some keywords that were mentioned by more than two participants, which are rhythmic sense, note recognition, hand coordination and singing.

Participant H shared about her expectations on young beginners. She mentioned that there are three components teacher should develop in young students from the beginner level. She opined that "musicianship often starts with developing foundational skills like rhythm, basic notation, and hand coordination."

Participant W had some similar thought with Participant H, adding one more musicianship skill that she would expect from the young beginners. Her expectation for young piano beginner would be "beat keeping, note recognition and being able to sing."

From Participant S's perspectives, she would like to see that young beginner students to achieve "beat keeping, be able to sing and have a good coordination".

Participant N shared her point of view, "a beginner student is supposed to have a basic understanding of notation, rhythm and coordination." She provides the keywords with brief explanations during the interview. She mentioned that she expects her young beginners to develop rhythmic sense, in order to "interpretate the music in a more expressive way and to be able to play in an ensemble". She added, "musicians must develop a strong sense of pulse, rhythmic accuracy, and the ability to vary tempo and rhythmic patterns as required by the music." Participant N also expected young beginners to be able to "recognise the note". She opined that "the ability to read and interpret music notation fluently is crucial". It is because "sight-reading skills enable musicians to quickly grasp new pieces of music and perform them accurately with minimal preparation".

Participant L mentioned that it is hard for young beginners to achieve a high level of musicianship because they are “unable to sit firm and concentrate for a long period of time.” She opined that fundamental musicianship that a beginners should achieve includes “rhythmic sense and coordination”.

Lesson Structure in Individual Piano Lesson. During the interview, three participants - Participant W, Participant S and Participant L opined that individual piano lessons are manageable without a written lesson plan. Participant W shared her opinion, “I normally don’t do lesson plans for individual piano lessons, I have an idea of what I am going to carry out for today’s lesson and I will just teach. I felt individual piano lessons are manageable without a lesson plan.”

Participant S did not create detailed lesson plan for individual piano lessons, however there was a standard procedure while having individual piano lessons.

“I will usually start with warm up exercises, maybe a scale in unison. Then I will go through their pieces which was assigned for them to practice. Then, I end the lesson with rhythm tapping or rhythm flashcard. I alternatively give another exercises such as note recognition by doing flashcard.”

Participant L shared that she did not prepare lesson plan for individual piano lesson too especially for beginner, unless there are special arrangement that is outside of her expectation.

“To be frank, I did not prepare any lesson plans for individual piano lessons. Except when I have students that was transferred to me from other teachers where I need to make special arrangements. Usually I make lesson plans for intermediate and advanced students, not really for beginners.”

On the other hand, Participant N opined that personalised lesson plan is crucial to make effective individual piano lesson.

“A well-designed curriculum provides a structured progression of learning objectives and skills. Lesson plans within this framework outline specific goals and outcomes for each lesson, ensuring that students develop a solid foundation over time.”

Participant H also prepared lesson plan for individual piano lesson. Firstly, she evaluated students' current skill level and musical interest then discussed with the students or parents to set a goal together. Then, she created the lesson plan based on the goal that is set for each students.

“First, I will assess and set a goal with each individual. Evaluate the student's current skill level, musical interests, and goals. Also to discuss with the student or their parents to understand their expectations. Then we can set the lesson planning.”

Participants shared that they usually have “30 minutes individual piano lesson” with young beginners. Some of the participants shared how they manage the time within the class duration. Participant W and Participant L shared that their individual piano lesson consists of two components, which are “piano pieces and music theory”.

Participant W and Participant L had different time arrangement while teaching individual piano lessons. Participant W mentioned she distributed the time as “20 mins pieces and 10 mins theory” while Participant L arranged the class time as “15 mins work on pieces and 15 mins theory”.

Lesson Structure in Group piano lesson

According to Participant N, she opined that lesson plans are needed for group piano lessons to “ensure the lesson is manageable and effective”. She emphasized the

importance of lesson plan for group piano lessons. Lesson plans “break down complex musical concepts into manageable steps, guiding students through the gradual acquisition of musicianship skills”. She believed that this systematic approach allowed students to “build upon their knowledge and abilities progressively, from basic to advanced levels”.

Other than ensuring the lesson plan helps students to absorb the music knowledge better, it also help teacher to monitor the learning progress throughout the journey. Participant N believed that the lesson plan provides “assessment strategies that allow teachers to monitor students' progress effectively”. According to the plan, she gave “feedback provided through assessments helps students identify areas for improvement, set goals for their musical development, and refine their musicianship skills through focused practice and study”.

The duration of lesson may vary from “45 minutes to 1 hour each lesson”. Even when some teachers “no longer require a lesson plan to carry out the lesson”, they always had a “rough plan in mind” to achieve effective time allocation to each topics that need to be covered in a lesson.

According to Participant W, she usually conduct “45 minutes group piano lessons”. This is how she would manage the time, she will spend “10 minutes on revision and warm up group activities”, then “listen and play on the keyboard for 25 mins”, lastly spending “10 minutes on music theory”.

Another participants, Participant S conducted the group piano lessons for “50 minutes each lesson”. She allocated the lesson time based on a few aspects, such as “singing, keyboard playing, ensemble playing and rhythm exercises”.

Participant L, shared her time allocation for the “45 minutes group lessons”. She allocates “15 minutes musical activities”, another “15 minutes on keyboard playing” and “15 minutes on music theory”.

Other than making lesson plan, participants shared about the importance of setting classroom rules from the beginning of the lessons would ease the classroom management. Participant N mentioned that she applied “clear behavioural expectations and classroom rules from the beginning”, in order to “convey the expectations to students and reinforce them consistently to maintain a focused and respectful learning environment”.

Participant S also shared that she set classroom rules in group piano lessons too, similar to what Participant N was doing with her group lessons. For example, Participant N set rules such as students are not allowing to turn on the keyboard until teacher allow them and make sure the keyboard volume is not too loud.

She added, “It can be difficult to manage them sometimes but if we set the rules from day 1, usually won’t have too much issue with them.”

Another lesson tips were “using auditory cues in the lessons”. Participant W shared about her teaching tips, she used sound cues to “maintain students’ focus and attentions” such as “eyes on me”, and “consistently setting boundaries are also essential in classroom management”.

Participant N also mentioned that she use “visual aids and auditory cues” to give clear signals to students, “facilitating understanding and engagement”.

A group piano lesson should be carried out in a space which is sufficient to meet the criteria of group piano lessons. Participant H shared that she always “ensure the classroom arrangement allows her to look at every single student in the classroom”. Her teaching tips would be, “arrange pianos in a semi-circle for visibility and interaction. Rotating seating for engagement, keep materials accessible, and ensure a clean, organized environment to enhance learning.”

4.3.2 Musicianship Skills in Piano Teaching

Rhythmic sense

Participant L shared her teaching practice on training students’ rhythmic sense is through sensory approach. “If the students have weaker rhythmic sense, I will usually tap the beat on the shoulder of the students.” The sensory approach is “easier to be carried out during individual piano lesson because teacher is able to focus better”.

Participant L also adapted music activities such as stomp beat to the beat and incorporate body movement to the music. She opined that this kind of activity is “more fun to do in group while it is less suitable for individual piano”.

Participant N also believed in “developing rhythmic sense through kinaesthetic approach”. She emphasized rhythm practice by starting every lesson with rhythmic exercises “where students clap or tap rhythms together”. She added, this approach is more suitable for group piano lesson where “students can benefit from the collective energy of the group”. She emphasized that “group practice encouraged a sense of unity and timing which is useful for rhythmic training”. For more advanced training, she suggested “use rhythmic patterns that increase in complexity” in order to make

progress, “focusing on accuracy and synchronization”. However, complex rhythm are usually more challenging in group piano lessons. She mentioned that when teacher was “unable to give individualised attention”, it might lead to “gaps in rhythmic training” for some students.

Participant S also opined that rhythm is very important, and she will let students use some other percussion instruments to incorporate the rhythmic training. She mentioned that she let students to “play the rhythm with percussion instruments first then they only play on the piano”. She also think that this activity is easier to be carried out in a group setting, “when students played in a group, they will notice easily whether they are in the same time as their friends”. In individual piano lesson, Participant S used another methods to train rhythm such as “creating lyrics for students to catch the rhythm”. The benefit of creating lyrics was also to “generate students’ interest and make the learning process fun”.

Participant W had a similar teaching approach when it comes to beat keeping activity in both individual piano lesson and group piano lesson. She also incorporate percussion instruments, guide students to play on constant beat to any music. Participant W mentioned that she “let students use the small percussion instruments to play the constant beat (minim) with the backing music or when I demonstrate the song”. She opined there were pros and cons of carrying out this rhythm activity in both class setting. It was easier to focus on only one students so that she was able to “correct any mistake immediately”. While in group lesson, she felt “there were ensemble opportunities however it had higher chance to overlook the details”. Other than that, Participant W also use “Kodaly rhythm such as ta and titi to symbolise quaver and crotchet”. She gave an example, “students vocalize the rhythm with ta, titi and two-oo to the song first before they play it on the piano.”

Note recognition

Participant N believed that note recognition can be developed through “little games” with students. She shared how the games work with the students such as “use flashcards for note identification or create board games that quiz students on note recognition”. Participants N applied this activity to both individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. She noticed the same activity may result in different outcomes. While having note recognition game in group setting, students were motivated through collaborative learning. Group activities generate “a sense of community and friendly competition” to keep students engaged. Having this training in group also allowed teacher managed time effectively by “covering basic concepts within a limited time”. On the other hand, training note recognition in individual lessons allowed teacher to “focus solely on the specific student’s progress and weaknesses”. Teacher may “adjust the complexity of note recognition exercises” based on the progress, also able to provide “immediate feedback to correct misconceptions”.

Participant W always “run note recognition activities with students before learning a new piece”. This will help strengthen their memory on note recognition. She shared her teaching practice, “revising note recognition before diving into the whole piece”. She shared some examples, “ask students to take turns drawing notes on the stave on iPad or whiteboard”. She also make fun activities for them to recognise the note. “I draw some notes on the staves, I would randomly point to some of the notes and students have to recognise them and play them out on piano.” Participant W mentioned that she was using the same teaching to both class setting and she observed the different challenges. Having note recognition exercises in individual piano lessons might make students “feel boring especially when students learning more complex note”. On the other hand, group

piano lessons tend to “take longer time to develop note recognition” compared to individual lessons because “mistakes could not be corrected immediately”.

Participant H shared that she developed note recognition by “introducing the notes on the grand staff”. She would prepare students with “finger drills where students had to name the note instantly”. She used this method in both class settings and she felt it was effective. She also incorporated sight reading to improve students’ note recognition. However, she mentioned that “sight reading exercises are more suitable for individual piano lesson” because it was difficult to carry out in a group of students.

Singing

Participant S conveyed that “her teaching practice is inspired by Yamaha”, she believed that “singing and solfeges are important in both individual and group piano lessons”.

According to Participant S, “in order to train my students’ aural skill, I always use singing as an important part, no matter it’s singing lyrics or solfeges”. Especially in her group piano lessons, “We usually start with singing, then playing some songs together”. Participant S also applied singing approach when students were struggling to get the correct rhythm. For example, she would “compose some lyrics that fits in the specific rhythmic pattern” for students to catch the rhythm. After that, students sang out the lyrics for that particular tune. She found out that “students in individual piano lessons were more shy” when it came to singing, however she always tried her best to encourage students to sing to “prepare them for aural training”.

Participant W who think “Kodaly method is helpful in her teaching”, emphasized “sound first and notation later”. She also believe that “students should know how to sing before they start playing on the piano”.

“When I teach my students, I approach the song through singing in solfege. Before students played a new song, they learned how to sing the song in solfege first.

Especially at the beginner level where students are just starting to get familiar with the piano and the songs are easier to sing.”

Even though participant W taught the same melody or song in both class setting, she found out that students are “more willing to sing out when they saw their friends were singing too”. On the other hand, students in individual piano lessons felt less comfortable to sing alone. However, the benefit of having singing approach in individual piano lessons was the “mistakes can be corrected immediately therefore students can learn faster”.

Coordination

“Coordination often involves fine motor.” Participant L shared about her teaching practice on developing coordination in students. She will help students’ to refine coordination through involving body movements. She will approach coordination by “asking students to present the song through body movement first”. If students are able to execute it, then she will let them play on the piano. She emphasised strongly on the stand that “feel it before they execute it”.

She mentioned “another way to guide students in achieving coordination is through observation”. She shared that “students can learn through observation of other students”. In group piano lessons, “their peers have different kind of methods and ways to do it”. She also said that it is a regret that “student did not get the exposure in individual piano lessons”. However it “required more time and effort to train coordination in group lesson because it was challenging to control the whole group”. While training coordination in individual piano lessons was “more effective because she could give immediate feedback however students might felt boring and refuse to do it”.

Participant N shared her approach to achieve hand coordination is to have “warm-up exercises”, she believes these exercises helps “develop finger dexterity, hand

coordination, and technical skills” based on students’ level and goals. Some of warm-up exercises includes “scales, arpeggios, and other exercises” to improve finger technique.

Participant N approached coordination training with the same teaching method in both class setting. Along the teaching journey, she found out that there were some advantages and challenges in cultivating coordination. In individual lessons, teacher was able to “adjust the pace or level of difficulties based on students’ capabilities” and teacher could spent extra time working on it “without accommodating other students’ progress”. However, she mentioned there was often “less emphasis on playing in sync with others” in individual piano lessons that caused “lack of rhythmic synchronisation”. Participant N added group piano lessons provided “a natural setting to develop coordination such as playing duets or large ensembles”. However, group piano lessons may sometimes lead to students developing bad habits if the teacher did not notice therefore not able to correct their mistakes.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview of the Study

This study used the interpretivist approach to inquire about the impacts of individual piano lessons and group piano lessons on the musicianship cultivation of young beginners. Previous research literature validated the effectiveness of group piano lessons on musicianship cultivation (Ajero, 2007; Chiu, 2017; Pike, 2013). The study explained teachers' perspectives on the differences between group piano lessons and individual piano lessons and how the teaching approaches are different in developing musicianship in young beginners. It also described the relationship between group piano lessons, individual piano lessons and musicianship cultivation.

The researcher chose the semi-structured interview for this qualitative research. The purpose of the chosen methodology is to retrieve highly descriptive data to answer the designed research questions. The researcher used purposeful sampling to ensure the information and experiences are sufficient with the phenomenon to represent the targeted population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Five participants agreed to participate in the research with consent, and the researcher successfully conducted 5 interviews. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or Zoom. The average time duration of each interview for this study was one hour. The interview questions were all semi-structured, allowing the participants to express themselves on their perspectives on the relationship between musicianship cultivation within individual piano lessons and group piano lessons.

The researcher used thematic data analysis for the current study, not only to understand the participants' perspectives but also to identify the themes that answered the research questions and provide a storyline of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.2 Discussion of findings

In this section, the findings of the study will be discussed in relation to the research questions that guided the investigation. The study aimed to explore two research questions.

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons for young beginners aged 6-8 years old?
2. How is musicianship cultivated in group and individual piano lessons from teachers' perspectives?

Through the analysis of interviews, this section provides a deeper insight into the complexities of teaching piano to young piano beginners in different lesson settings, highlight the key patterns and implications for educators.

5.2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons

To discuss research question 1:

What are teachers' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons for young beginners aged 6-8 years old?

Group piano lessons

From the result obtained from the interview, most of the participants opined that peer influence in group music lessons plays a critical role in shaping the learning experience and outcomes for students. Peer influence fosters a supportive environment where

students share feedback and encouragement to one another, leading to a positive and collaborative learning atmosphere. Ultimately, the peer interactions in group music lessons contribute to a richer, more dynamic educational experience that supports both individual and collective growth. From teachers' perspectives, students are often inspired by their peers' progress and achievements in a group lesson. It resonates with the existing literature stating that group piano lessons can lead to increased motivation and a desire to improve (Creech, 2010). Furthermore, Zhao & Wong (2024) also underscored that learning music in a group setting can promote both academic excellence and social development, creating an enriching educational environment that support musical growth.

In this study, teachers mentioned that the opportunity to observe and learn from peers' techniques and approaches provides additional perspectives that may not be covered in individual lessons. This exposure to different styles and interpretations enhances students' overall musicality and creativity (Hallam, 2002). This social dynamic encourages students to push their boundaries, striving to keep pace with their classmates. From teachers' perspective, another advantages of group piano lessons is allowing students to gain friendship while learning piano. Friendship is a major contribution to child's social and emotional development (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

Majority of the teachers in this study shared that the presence of peers can reduce feelings of isolation, making the learning process more enjoyable and less stressful. Peer interaction is undeniably important in young beginners' music education. They look forward to attend the lessons with their friends and make music together. According to Jorgensen (2015), a sense of community and belonging can enhance motivation and commitment to learning the piano. Another advantage is that students

with similar age resonates with their peers easily because they share similar way of thinking. During the interview, teachers shared that they witnessed that students were often inspired by their peers rather than the teacher.

Next, most participants shared that learning in a group setting encourages collaboration and performance opportunity. In a collaborative setting, students learn to work together, developing teamwork and communication skills that are crucial for ensemble playing. According to Zhenyu & Suttachitt (2024), group piano lessons allowed students to perform together in a supportive atmosphere. King (2009) emphasized the significant impact that working in groups has on students' development. According to King, collaborative learning environments, such as group piano lessons, encourage students to engage in shared problem-solving and collective decision-making. The study highlights that when students collaborate, they are more likely to explore different interpretations and approaches to music, which enriches their learning experience.

Most of the participants also believed that the structure of group lessons can reduce performance anxiety, as students become accustomed to playing in front of others regularly, building confidence over time. Group piano lessons provide a holistic educational experience that extends beyond musical proficiency, contributing to students' personal and social development. King (2009) emphasized the significant impact that working in groups has on students' development. According to King, collaborative learning environments, such as group piano lessons, encourage students to engage in shared problem-solving and collective decision-making. He also argues that group settings provide more frequent opportunities for performance, which are essential for building confidence and stage presence. These performances in a peer-supported environment help students to manage performance anxiety and become more comfortable with public displays of their musical abilities.

Most participants also believed that creativity and expression can be discovered through social interaction. The input from each students from a group often provide a more complex and creative musical expression compared to what an individual can achieve. In the book, Sawyer (2011) also mentioned the role of scaffolding where teachers often guide and support while students are developing their creativity. When teachers run group piano lessons in a democratic way, it not only encourage students to be creative but also to be able to express themselves (Burnard, 2012). Burnard mentioned in his book chapter that one of the role as a teacher is to facilitate a healthy learning environment in order to flourish students' creativity. Teachers should be a guiding star, encouraging students to take challenges, experiment with new ideas and learn from one another.

Group piano instruction presents various benefits, however also having unique challenges that require careful navigation by educators to ensure a productive learning environment. The major finding of challenges in conducting group piano lessons included personalised attention, classroom management and diverse individuality. Firstly, the research results demonstrated that group piano lessons may lack individualised attention compared to private lesson. The majority of teachers shared the same thought during the interviews. This point of view resonated with the existing literature, mentioning one of the primary challenges in group piano teaching is to balance the needs of each students with the dynamics of the group, especially in group piano lesson (Baker, 2011).

The research result also included teachers mentioned that there must be a solution when handling a group of students who needs personal guidance or attention. During the interview, teachers shared that they had to assign different tasks among the students, in order to give personal guidance yet not slowing down the overall progress. According to Baker (2011), personalised feedbacks can be one of the way to maintain

the flow of the group lessons. It can be small group activities and rotating between the students to address individual needs. In another existing literature, Kim and David (2015) suggested both formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress. Teachers may do informal check-ins during lessons and provide immediate feedback. Teachers may also do summative assessments, such as end-of-term recitals to evaluation of each student's progress.

Secondly, the research result showed that classroom management is one of the challenges to make successful group piano lessons. During the interview, teachers shared their opinion that group piano lessons required experience to make the lesson successful. Teachers mentioned that teaching group piano lessons were challenging at first, however it became more fun along the way. The research finding resonated with the existing literature, Bastien and Bastien (1997) highlighted teachers might face with challenges in classroom management when they first started teaching group piano lessons. Therefore, effective classroom management is crucial to ensure every students' benefits (Baker, 2011). It is critical to maintain students' engagement and motivation in a group piano lesson. Kim and Davis (2015) recommended a combination of individual and group activities to keep the lessons interesting.

Lastly, the research results demonstrated that another challenging part in conducting group piano lesson is students having different progress even though they are in the same class. This research result resonated with Johnson's (2006) study, where a group of students received regular group piano lessons and their progress was examined. Johnson found that students exhibited different level of progress even though they attend the same group piano lessons. The study discovered that prior musical experience and learning style are the main factors contributing to the difference. In this study, teachers shared that they strived to ensure every lessons delivered were equally beneficial for everyone in the lesson despite their progress level might be different.

Pike (2014) mentioned that students often progress at different rates in a group piano lessons, teachers may develop strategies to balance the faster learner and slow learner. Johnson (2006) suggested piano teachers to develop some teaching strategies to overcome it, such as offering additional support to slow learner and provide more challenging tasks to advanced students.

Individual piano lesson

Individual piano lessons have long been recognized as a cornerstone of music education, also known by master-apprentice relationship in piano education (Jørgensen, 2000). The major finding is that individual piano lessons offer tailored instruction which is beneficial to the unique needs and learning pace of each student. Lesson plans that was tailored by teachers tend to target different needs, strengths, weaknesses, and interests of each students. The interview responses conform to the trend noted in the existing book, Uszler, Gordon and Mach (2000) discuss strategies and techniques in delivering personalised instruction. Teachers may differentiating the teaching approaches based on students' skill level, musical preferences and goals. In another words, teachers adapt their teaching style according to students' learning pace and provide additional support to needed aspects. Wong et al. (2023) opined that individual piano lessons allowed teachers to provide immediate feedbacks for each musical aspects.

Next, the research result showed that when teachers focused on teaching one students at a time, it allowed immediate feedbacks especially when there were mistake or issues. Therefore students realised the mistakes on the spot and they are able to correct them immediately. The interview data aligns with previous studies by Kennell (2002), discussed the personalised learning experience allows teacher to give immediate and specific feedbacks to students. The chapter mentioned that the immediate feedback helps students to correct mistakes, refine techniques, and develop musical

understanding. Lehmann and Davidson (2002) also mentioned that individual piano lessons unlike group settings, allowing personalized feedback and focused attention, which can significantly enhance the development of technical skills and musical expression.

During the interview, teachers strongly encouraged students who required more personalised attention or learning needs to attend individual piano lessons. It is because teachers are able to provide personalised lessons cater to every needs of that particular students. The interview data collected here parallel those identified in the book, Adamek and Darrow (2018) emphasized the importance of tailoring music lessons to the special needs of each students, particularly for those with learning differences and disabilities. The book provides teaching methods to create a supportive and inclusive learning experiences so that they can enjoy learning the piano. Wong et al. (2023) also opined that in individual piano lessons, teachers tailored lesson plan according to students interest or specific needs, increasing engagement and motivation.

The research result also demonstrated that individual piano lessons are able to develop more refined piano playing skills. Teaching one student at a time allowed teachers to have deeper exploration and refinement of the student's musical abilities. Technical aspects such as finger dexterity, hand position, and control over dynamics and articulation which build a stronger foundation for advanced piano playing. The flexibility in individual piano lessons allow teachers to consistently fine-tuning their teaching method until it meets the optimum learning outcome. According to Kennell (2012), teachers are always adjusting their teaching approach in real-time based on students' respond and progress. The research result also aligned with the existing literature where Creech and Gaunt (2012) discussed about the personalised experience in individual piano can provide students a better learning outcome. Without having the

pressure to keep up with their peers in the group lessons, students are able to focus their weaknesses and improve what is needed.

Lastly, conducting individual piano lesson also fosters a stronger teacher-student relationship. The interpersonal dynamic between teacher and student is able to foster a supporting and motivating environment to students (Kennell, 2002). During the interview, one of the teacher shared that she enjoyed getting to know the students on a personal level, understanding their motivations, challenges, and aspirations in music. Fostering a positive and supportive teacher-student relationship can only be achieved when there are trust, respect and encouragement. The rapport from teachers often encourage students to take risks, ask questions and engage more during the lessons (Uszler, Gordon, & Mach, 2000). According to research, Heimonen (2012) discuss when a teacher shows respect towards students' individuality and musical interest, students are more likely respond with respect for the teacher's guidance. This mutual respect contributes to a healthy and productive learning environment.

During the interview, teachers also believed that conducting individual piano lessons allow the flexibility to adapt the right teaching approach based on the individual student's learning style and personality. This approach can lead to more effective and enjoyable lessons. This point of view also showed in Burwell (2013), the research suggested that students in individual lessons often progress faster and exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to those in group classes. By prioritizing the individual needs of students, piano teachers can create a learning environment that not only promotes technical proficiency but also nurtures a lifelong passion for music.

Conducting individual piano lessons may display a various benefits but also a few challenges for piano teachers, who adapting different teaching method for every piano students. The current research found out that individual piano lessons showed progress however it could not fulfil the emotional state of a student. The article discussed about

students experiencing both solitude and loneliness while attending individual piano lessons (Wexler, 2009). Solitude can be a positive aspect which providing students space for focus and personal growth. On the other side, loneliness is a state of mind result from lack of meaningful social connections. When the students' emotional state were not taken care of, they started to feel boring and lead to students losing motivation to continue their piano journey. The interview data collide with the existing literature about loneliness and losing motivation. According to Wexler (2009), piano journey is a lonely journey for many students. Piano practice always take place in private spaces such as at home or practice rooms.

Moreover, students typically works with the teacher alone, limiting their social interaction. The feeling of loneliness often impact students' emotional well-being that can affect their motivation and satisfaction of music learning. According to Burwell (2013), the lacked of social interaction in individual piano lessons can lead to impacts on students' emotional and psychological well-being. Peer interactions often provide students the motivation in their music journey.

The current research also found out that there was lack of creativity and understanding in individual piano lessons. When there was only one students in the lessons, the knowledge exchange happened between only the teacher and the student. Unlike in group piano lessons consisting more students, the knowledge exchange happened among a group of students. Group activities took a big part in group piano lessons and they were essential to build musicianship in students. Group musical activities were designed to be carried out in group setting. Young beginners loved to join group activities where they can have fun and learn music. The research result showed that students would rather do the activities with their peers, they are less comfortable to carry out the activities with teacher. The interview data resonates with

the existing article, Welch and Sullivan (2013) argued while on-to-one lesson may be beneficial for technical and personalised teaching approach to student, it often lack in collaborating part in music education.

Furthermore, individual piano lessons limit the opportunities for students to collaborate. Collaborating with others to perform or create music together is also essential in musicianship development. During the interview, teachers shared that children at this age should exposed themselves to any sort of musical aspect and never limit themselves. Students who lack performance and ensemble experience may miss out important learning opportunities (Pitts, 2004). The interview data resonate with the existing article, Nerland (2007) recommended teachers to incorporate more collaboration opportunities for students in order to promote a more balanced learning experience for students. There might be challenges incorporating ensemble skills and performance skills into the individual piano lessons, however teachers may organise collaborative project and recitals that involve students coming from different background and levels.

5.2.2 Cultivating musicianship in group piano lessons and individual piano lessons

To discuss research question 2:

How is musicianship cultivated in group and individual piano lessons from teachers' perspectives?

Musical aspects

The research result showed that teachers expected young beginners to achieve a few musical aspects: rhythmic sense, note recognition, hand coordination and singing. During the interview, teachers opined that these four aspects are the foundational skills. The rhythmic sense helps students to express the music and play in an ensemble. Note

recognition skill are beneficial for students to grasp new pieces of music with good sight reading. Hand coordination skill is also crucial because piano playing involves hand, arms and shoulders muscles. In order to play on the piano, these muscles had to work together and they also required fine motor skills. Lastly, many educators believed that a student have to learn how to sing before playing on the instruments.

Lesson structure

Structured lessons act as a guideline for teachers and students to communicate effectively in order to make improvement in a more systematic way (Mahdi, 2023). According to the research finding, each group piano lessons are usually 45 minutes to one hour. Teachers usually have a lesson plan in mind or written out to ensure each topic could be presented effectively in every lesson. While teaching group piano lessons, teacher often make lesson plans consisted of manageable steps to guide students through the gradual acquisition of musicianship skills. The lesson plans also help teachers to keep track of the progress effectively and set goals for the students. An existing research compared the structured lesson and unstructured lesson, the authors mentioned that systematic approaches are crucial to achieve high level of musical expertise (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe, 1994). The article suggested a well-structure lesson plan allow students to develop technical skill, have deeper understanding in music, stay passionate and received useful feedback.

On the opposite, individual piano lessons are usually 30 minutes long. Teachers carried out lessons by distributing time to two major aspects which are piano pieces and music theory. Most teachers often carry out individual piano lessons without lesson plan and they felt individual lessons are manageable. Even without a lesson plan, teachers usually have a clear idea in mind on carrying out the lesson with standard procedure such as warm up exercises, piano pieces and music activities. However, there were teachers who prepared lesson plans for individual piano lessons. They believed that

lesson plans provided a framework for specific goals and outcomes. Also, teachers often discussed with the students or the parents to understand their expectation and music interest. After that, teachers designed the lesson plan for the students based on these criteria. This research result aligned with the article, mentioning the teacher's role in structuring the lesson based on student's current level, expectations and progressive growth in music learning (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe, 1994). According to previous study, Kostka (2002) highlighted that teachers have to set a clear goal for students and guide them with useful practice tips to ensure their learning progress. This action not only improve students' performance, it also build up students' practice habit which plays a big part in piano education.

Classroom management

Other than lesson plan, the research result also demonstrated the importance of classroom rules, auditory cues and classroom arrangement in classroom management. Teachers mentioned that it was important to set classroom rules in piano lessons. It was crucial to communicate the behavioural expectations from the beginning in order to maintain a focused learning environment. This interview data resonated with Bridges (2006) mentioning classroom rules play an important roles to keep group dynamics, manage students' behaviour and create a positive environment.

Other than classroom rules, the research result also included auditory cues and visual cues. There were time where students started to lose concentration, and teachers had the students engaged with clear sound signal. Whenever, teachers gave a clear signals to students, it drew their attention back to teachers. According to Falkenstern (2010), auditory cues are sound-based signals normally used by teachers to give immediate feedback to students through sound. The auditory cues are able to maintain students' attention and correct students' errors.

Lastly, classroom arrangement is especially important for group piano lessons to ensure teachers were able to look at every single students in the group. Therefore, group piano lesson should be carried out in a space that is able to fit in pianos arranged in semi-circle for visibility and interaction. This finding aligned with Zhenyu & Suttachitt (2024), the effectiveness of group piano lesson can be affected by teachers' observation and interactions with students. In the existing article, O'Neill (1999) discussed that the visibility in a classroom provides a clear sightlines. Strategic seating arrangements allow students to observe and follow teachers' movement in a group piano lesson.

Rhythmic sense

The research result demonstrated that rhythmic sense can be achieved using different methods. Teachers trained rhythmic sense through sensory approach, kinaesthetic approach, percussion instruments and music games. The research result aligned with previous study that suggested multisensory approach to help students internalise rhythm through physical activities. This approach connected sensory perception with music understanding which is beneficial in long-term musicianship training. During the interview, teachers shared that they applied these approaches for both individual and group piano lessons. The differences in nature of both class settings resulted pros and cons in these rhythm training. Rhythm training which carried out in group piano lessons were more fun to do in group while the ensemble activities encouraged a sense of unity and timing. According to Zakaria and Mahzair (2022), the collaborative activities in group piano lessons improved students' sense of timing. This research result aligned with Phillips (2013), mentioning students learn rhythm by repeating same movement until they are comfortable with that motion. While having rhythm training in group, students also observed whether they are aligned with their friends. On the other hand, training rhythm in individual piano lessons allowed teacher to give immediate feedback and individualise attention. It was more effective because teacher had the chance to

correct any mistake immediately, even possible to carry out more complex rhythm in the activities.

Note Recognition

The research result showed that teachers developed note recognition by using flashcard, music staff and iPad. Teacher usually did little activities with music tools to revise the note recognition in both individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. According to the teachers, having these activities in both class settings showed different benefits and challenges. In the group piano lessons, note recognition training created a healthy competitive environment to keep students engaged. Also, note recognition training in group lessons were more effective, able to cover basic note recognition in a limited time. However, group lessons took longer time to develop note recognition when the notes became more complicated. On the other hand, teacher developed note recognition in individual lessons were able to adjust the difficulty level based on each students' progress. Teachers could provide immediate feedback whenever there was misconception (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997). However, students might feel boring to participate in the note recognition activities when they were alone in the lessons. This finding aligned with Zhao and Wong (2024), students attended group piano lessons shower higher motivation level towards learning compared to those in individual settings. Sight reading a short excerpt can be a training for note recognition too. However, it is more suitable for individual piano lessons rather than group piano lessons.

Singing

The research result showed that teachers incorporate singing training while teaching both individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. According to teachers, piano lessons should not be entirely playing on the piano because singing was closely

related to instrumental playing. Wagner (1965) mentioned that students should know some simple and catchy songs to sing first then only play on the instrument. Existing piano method, such as Yamaha always incorporated singing solfege in their piano teaching method. Kodaly method, also emphasized on sound first and notation later. According to Conway (2003), the concept of singing could be a sign that a child is ready to play on the instrument. Another existing study aligned the point of view, Cantan (2021) opined that piano lessons should not be restricted to piano playing alone while singing helped students to be more expressive. The research result demonstrated that it was possible to have singing in both class setting, however there were varied restrictions in individual lessons and group lessons. While teachers trained students to sing in group lessons, they engaged more because they saw their peers were also singing. While teaching trained singing in individual lessons, it was easier to give immediate feedback and correct their mistakes however students were usually shy and less comfortable to singing in individual piano lessons.

Coordination

The research result demonstrated that teachers often train students' coordination through music games involving body movements and warm up exercises. Both activities can be applied in individual piano lesson and group piano lessons, however they displayed different advantages and challenges. In group piano lessons, students were given a chance to observe how their peers achieve, and they were exposed to various methods that will promote their creativities. This finding aligned with Zhenyu and Suttachitt (2024), which showed that interactive and cooperative atmosphere in group piano lessons enabled students to observe the approaches used by their peers. Also, group piano lessons were natural environment to develop coordination because students were trained to synchronise with the backing music or ensemble playing. However, it was challenging to control a group of students especially training

coordination. Teachers need to put in more time and effort into group lessons, still there were chances that teachers might not notice the mistakes in time which will result in students developing bad habits. On the other hand, individual piano lessons offered students immediate feedback from teachers and teachers were able to customise the pace of learning based on students' progress. On the contrary, individual piano lessons did not offer much focus on playing in sync with others and students might feel less interested to have music activities without their peers. Individual piano lessons often lead to isolated learning experience, limiting opportunities for students to develop synchronisation with others (Schiavio et al., 2020).

5.3 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study focused on how individual piano lessons and group piano lessons enhanced the learning experience of young piano beginners and how the differences in both class settings impacts the musicianship cultivation. The narrative interviews between the researcher and the participants contributed a detailed insights towards the musicianship cultivation of young beginners in individual piano lessons and group piano lessons from teachers' perspectives in Kuala Lumpur.

In the context of this research, the participants were experienced in teaching both piano class setting and witnessed children's learning progress over several years. As they taught both individual and group piano lessons, teachers felt there were benefits and challenges in both class settings. The young beginners expectations and personalities were the main concern when students were to enrol into either individual piano lessons or group piano lessons. Teachers also strived to improve their teaching practice along the way based on students' personality, background and expectation.

Therefore, this research collected point of view from several experienced teachers in order to understand the situation better.

Musicianship cultivation of young beginners was every piano educators' concern. This research answered many questions regarding the different teaching approaches in both class settings and the impacts on the young beginners' musicianship cultivation. This research discussed the differences from the angle of lesson structure, classroom management and lesson planning. This research also provided several recommendations on the concern topic from teachers' perspectives.

5.4 Implication of the Study

This research provides new insights into the different teaching approaches when cultivating musicianship in young beginners. Teachers may examine on how their own teaching practices align with the experiences of their peers, adapting strategies from both individual and group piano lessons to better suit their students. By highlighting the benefits and challenges of both class settings, teachers can make better decisions on which class settings might be more effective to each students or balance both teaching approaches in their teaching.

Schools, academies and music education programs may refer the findings to re-evaluate their educational offerings, balancing group and individual piano lesson opportunities for young beginners. This study also may give some recommendations for institute to provide more performance opportunities, ensemble playing and diverse learning environment to cultivate a well-rounded piano education.

Based on the findings, students and parents should consider both the pros and cons of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons while considering child's need. The study's insight may help students or parents to make informed decisions about the type of class setting best suited with their learning style.

5.5 Recommendations for future study

Departing from previous studies, the current study is the first one to investigate teacher perspectives on the relationship between musicianship cultivation, individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. Based on upon the findings in the current research, the researcher would suggest a few topics for future studies:

- (1) Future research could investigate piano students who are learning intermediate level or advanced level to access how group and individual piano lessons impact their long-term musicianship cultivation.
- (2) Future research could investigate how cultural and socioeconomic context influence experienced piano teachers' perspective and teaching practice during group and individual piano lessons. Different environments might affect the musicianship cultivation in diverse ways.
- (3) Future research could focus on how teacher training programs and professional development prepares piano teachers to cultivate musicianship in young beginners in group and individual piano lessons.
- (4) Future research could explore the effectiveness of incorporating digital tools in group or individual piano lessons to develop musicianship in piano students.

5.6 Closing Remarks

This study has attempted to explore the insights of musicianship cultivation in young beginners through group piano lessons and individual piano lessons from teachers' perspectives. The research result had provided information on the pros and cons of group individual piano lessons and group piano lessons. The research result also investigated the differences in lesson structure and teaching practice of group piano lessons and individual piano lessons and the impact of both class settings on musicianship development of young beginners. This research may facilitate not only

piano teachers in Kuala Lumpur, but also music schools, music program, parents and students to understand better the current situation of the relationship between group piano lessons, individual piano lessons and musicianship cultivation.

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