

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

To be an established pianist, piano learners practice extensively. From learning the repertoires to mastering musical interpretation, practicing is one of the most crucial aspects in delivering satisfying performance. The time consumed in piano practicing might differ among pianists: some pianists took much time in memorizing, some in mastering piano techniques, some in musical interpretation, and many more. As a piano student at the Conservatory of Music in Pelita Harapan University, I am curious about how classical piano students practice during their practice sessions. Thus, I conducted a survey to uncover how they practiced, which methods they used, and their practice effectiveness.

On February 2020, I distributed digital questionnaires to classical piano students at Conservatory of Music in Pelita Harapan University about the ways they practiced. 38 students participated on the survey: half of them were from cohort 2016, 15.8% from cohort 2017, 28.9% from cohort 2018, and 5.3% were from cohort 2019. All of them are majoring in classical piano studies, but with different specialization: 44.7% are from Classical Performance, 34.2% from Music Education, 10.5% from Music Therapy, and 10.5% from Sound Design respectively.

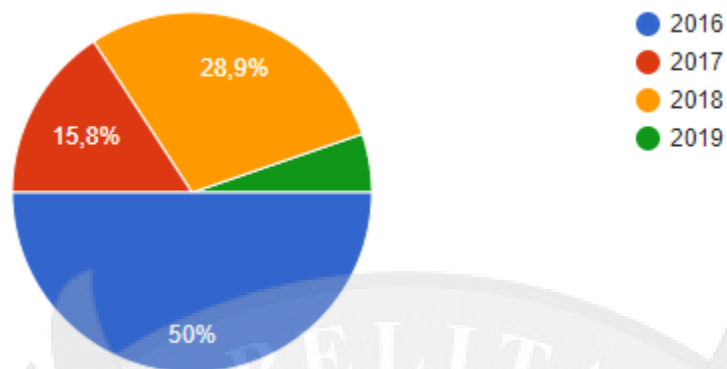


Table 1.1.1 The Proportion of Cohort Distribution of Classical Piano Students at Conservatory of Music UPH

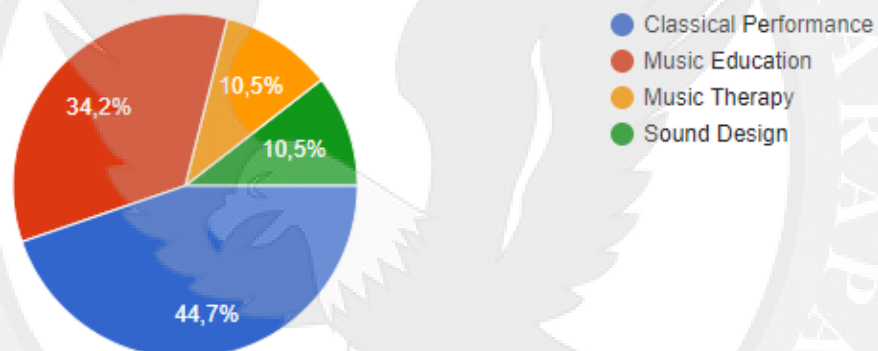


Table 1.1.2 The Proportion of Specialization Distribution of Classical Piano Students at Conservatory of Music UPH

The survey shows that three-quarters of the students at the conservatory practice 2 to 3 hours a day. 16% of them practice for about 4 to 5 hours a day, while 8% of them practice less than an hour a day. Half of the students claim that they are quite productive during the practice sessions. However, there is always room to improve the effectiveness in practicing.

Number of People

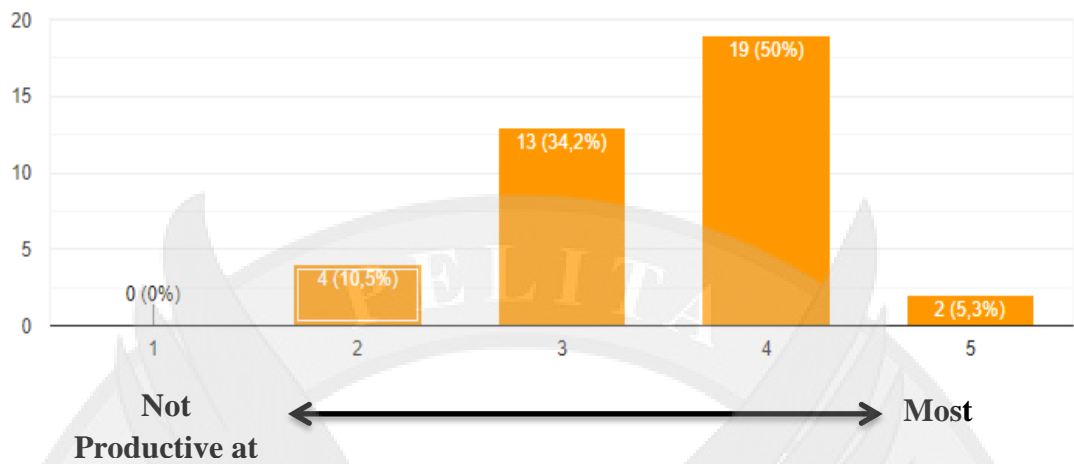


Table 1.1.3 The Percentage of Productivity Outcome in Practicing Piano of Classical Piano Students at Conservatory of Music UPH

More than half of the students consider that the biggest challenge they encounter during their practice is in mastering the piano technique. 23% of them are having problem with slow speed of sight reading, whereas 13% of them are having memorization problem. The remaining students point out other issues, such as figuring out musical analysis, being distracted and bored, and mastering the musical expression.

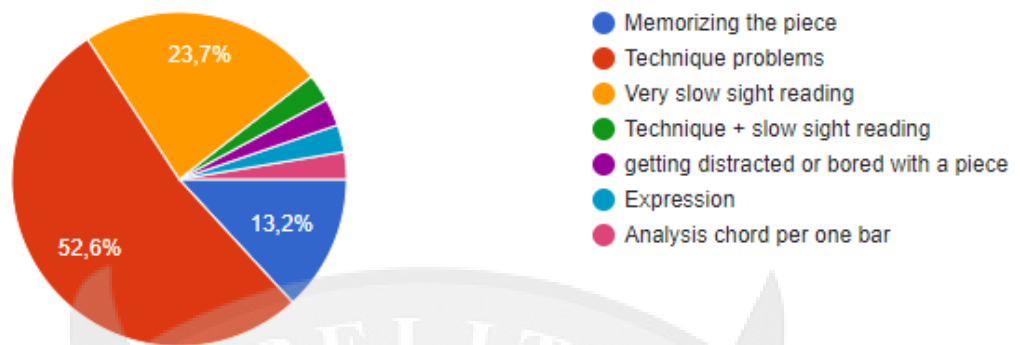


Table 1.1.4 The Proportion of Various Practicing Problems of Classical Piano Students at Conservatory of Music UPH

From the survey data given, three-quarters of the respondents claim that they have known about systematic practicing in piano, and more than half of them are using practicing methods during the practice sessions. 34% of them have been taught by their teacher or read about systematic practicing in piano, but they have almost never used it.

The methods they use in their practice focus on technical mastery, using a variety of rhythmic patterns in mastering running notes, practicing in a slow speed with metronome to enhance the technique, grouping running notes and played in a blocked way, and practice the challenging sections instead of endless repetition on a piece. Furthermore, some of the respondents also focus on other aspects, such as understanding the piece theoretically for the sake of interpretation and mental practice to be more efficient and productive.

In conclusion from the survey data given, the knowledge about piano practicing methods and systematic practice at the conservatory is still

undemanding and unimportant. The methods that most students use in practicing are merely specific practice topics for particular practice sessions, and are not considered as a fully systematic practice.

Chuan C. Chang, the author of the book “Fundamentals of Piano Practice”, agrees that most piano learners only practice certain skills according to their needs and do not often utilize systematic practice method. Moreover, there are many books throughout the history that discuss about skills, but there are not enough references that provide complete and systematic instructions on how to practice, and to memorize at the same time.

There are many practice methods books that teach certain skills to improve the technique in playing piano, such as “The Leschetizky Method” book that shows the exact hand positions with pictures, Neuhaus’ “The Art of Piano Playing” that combines technique and the artistic image in music, Cienniwa’s “By Heart: The Art of Memorizing Music” that explains about the stages of memorization in general, Snyder’s “Music and Memory” that discusses about short term and long term memory, and how our brain works scientifically, in a complex and detailed explanation. However, I personally favor C. C. Chang’s “Fundamental of Piano Practice”, as it provides complete and systematic highly efficient practice methods, especially in accelerating learning rate drastically.

C. C. Chang’s research shows that the most important matter in learning the piano is practice methods, to practice systematically. The talent, effort, and time each student has is the secondary problems, as by having a highly efficient

practice methods, students can be more talented than they are, develop musical brain, and improve intelligence level. From the survey data provided, it shows that 60% of the students often had memory loss during performance with a scale of 5 and above out of 10. The highest scale is 7 out of 10, with almost a quarter of them. This data shows that memorization problem during performance is the main problem for conservatory students at Pelita Harapan University.

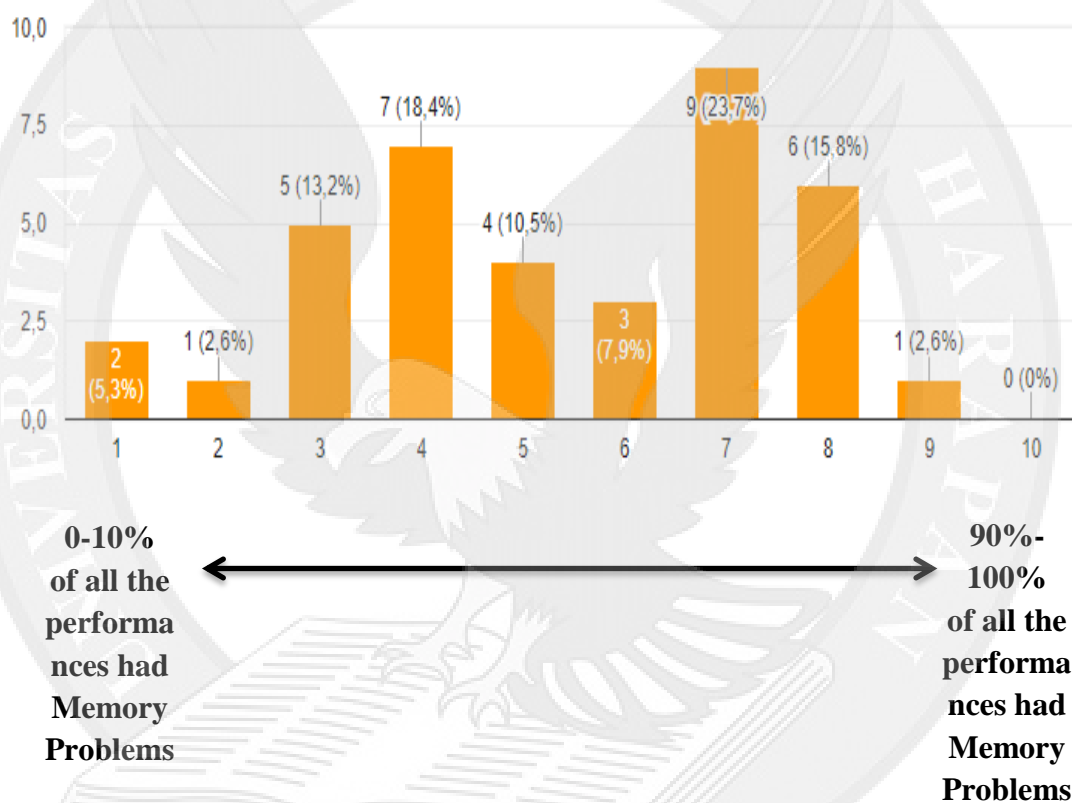


Table 1.1.5 The Proportion of the Scale Classical Piano Students at Conservatory of Music UPH had Memory Problems in all their Performances

To quote from C. C. Chang, she claimed that the data from her researches explained about the following:

“Scientifically, human brain is effectively infinite, the more human memorize, the more they can memorize. As memory resembles a hologram consisting of memory fields, and memory recall is an associative process in which memory is recalled by the over-lap of these fields. These have been verified partially by experimental evidence and plenty of circumstantial evidence to indicate that they are correct¹.”

From her quote, we can simplify that our brain actually work limitlessly. Therefore, we should train and practice our brain frequently by challenging ourselves to achieve a higher outcome, so that we are able to master memorizing prior to reach the limit of each of our own capacity. In the area of learning music, C. C. Chang said that there are five kinds of memories used to memorize: muscle, photographic, music, keyboard, and theoretical memory.² Every pianist uses various kinds of memory in memorizing their pieces.

This research intends to conduct a Qualitative Research and Experimental Design to see whether the application of the systematic practice referred from the book “Fundamental of Piano Practice” by C. C. Chang is effective in accelerating the learning process of memorizing. The Experimental Design used in this research is Independent Measures Design. The respondents will be classical piano students of the conservatory, in which they will be divided into two groups. The first group which consists of three respondents will be asked to utilize the

¹ Chuan C. Chang, “Fundamentals of Piano Practice Methods Enquiry”. Interview by Valerie Wellington.

² Chuan C. Chang, *Fundamentals of Piano Practice* (2020), 110.

systematic practice, whereas the second group will practice as usual using their own practice methods.

1.2 Research Question

The research question is how does the systematic practice method of Chuan Chang enhance memorizing process of selected piano students at Pelita Harapan University? Intention of Research

This research aims to demonstrate the effectiveness in memorizing of pianists at Pelita Harapan University, and also to evaluate the advantages and challenges of applying systematic practice method during practicing.

1.3 Research Objectives

The limitations of this research are as the following:

1. The total participants needed to conduct this research are six classical piano students from Conservatory of Music at UPH. These students will be divided into two groups: three students in each group. The first group consists of three students will be using the systematic practice taught from the Book “Fundamentals of Piano Practice” by Chuan C. Chang, in their practice sessions, and three students from the second group will not be using the systematic practice.
2. This research will be using one Intermediate Level Classical Piano Piece titled “Invention No.13 in A minor” by J.S. Bach. This

particular piece is suggested by the book. All six participants claimed that they have not learned this particular piece before.

3. The duration needed to conduct the experiment is three days, with a total of one hour of practice in each day for one participant. The first group (with systematic practice) is expected to finish the piece in three days.
4. This experiment will be conducted in each participant's practice room and the practice outcome is to be recorded by each student using any phone or camera in any video format (ex.: wav, mp4, mov, etc.)

