

Analyzing Piano Teaching/Learning for Young Children

An Investigation of Beginner's Piano Method Books for Children

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Abstract	
<p>Within this paper the author discusses the main tenets that exist within piano teaching/learning activities. Three beginner piano method books for children were selected as sources of data to be analyzed. The study's goal is to find the qualities that the author(s) of the method books aim to present with regards to piano teaching. They are then analyzed from various viewpoints, such as how aligned they are with children's learning, developmental, and early childhood music education theories, and how flexible they are to facilitate different teaching and learning contexts. The pedagogical paradigms that the books' authors have are also investigated in depth and analyzed against the conceptual frameworks.</p> <p>The findings discuss the principles extra- and intra-musically. Extra-musical aspects are the paradigms that generally surround music teaching/learning activities, but they do not have to specifically be exclusive to music, whereas the intra-musical aspects specifically relate to music and piano playing. The extra-musical elements include the social, creative/playful, and cultural aspects of music teaching/learning activities. Intra-musically, the teaching approaches that were laid on the books are discussed. They emphasize approaches that are multi-faceted, comprehensively incorporating various aspects of music while at the same time aiming to present the materials to be simple and easy to grasp for children.</p>	
Keywords	
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1 Introduction

The research idea originates from the author's personal experience as a piano teacher. As a teacher, the author has encountered students of various ages and levels. He quickly found out that teaching beginners – especially children – is more challenging than other levels and ages. It has been more challenging for him to describe complex ideas using simpler terms, or having to divide them into their simple components that are graspable by children. Not to mention the short attention span some of them have, and sometimes the lack of motivation in learning. The author also realized the conflict of interest that children and the teacher may have: often children are more motivated to play or to do something that is fun, while teachers may not view them as useful learning process. Children may not yet necessarily understand the benefit of learning in a more disciplined manner, while teachers may not yet possess the skill to direct play onto learning.

Fortunately, piano teachers have in their disposal a large amount of piano teaching method books that will serve as useful tools in their teaching. These method books are usually targeted towards a specific age group and are published in series of increasing levels or difficulties. Some also are based on famous music education philosophies such as the Suzuki method. Although on one the hand the author has found much benefit in employing method books in his teaching practice, on the other hand, he finds that the various method books that he uses to teach usually have deficiencies one way or another. It may stem from various reasons, for example either they are laid in ways that he deems to be too complicated, or the progression of materials are not connected well enough between one to the next, or there are not enough practice materials of the same kinds. He also realizes that the various personalities and ways of learning that students have, also determines how a suitable teaching or learning approach should be laid out, and there is no one methodical approach that will fit all.

Due to these reasons, the author aims to analyze existing piano method books. The analysis would be focused on the qualities of the approaches that are presented on the books. Similarities and differences between them would be analyzed to find out what underlying principles should be present when teaching children beginners, while at the

same time to examine the diversity of approaches that exists. By doing this research, the author hopes to present analysis of how various piano teaching approaches connect with learning theories (such as the Piagetian cognitive development model as well as Jerome Bruner's learning theories). The author hopes that the findings of the study would encourage piano teachers to reflect on their practices as well as widen their teaching approaches.

2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Keyboard instruments, including piano, have a long history of development. In line with the development of the instruments themselves, so too does the instruments' teaching methods and approaches posit a rich history. Numerous teaching pieces, methods, and books have been written throughout history, and previous studies attempting to describe, survey, and analyze them have been done (such as Ballard, 2007; Bies, 2006; Broadbent, 2016; Brubaker, 1996; Macchioni, 2011; Mayer, 2017; Muck, 2009; Nelson, 2013; O'Toole, 2019; Sezen, 2021). However, most of the analysis that have been found in the literatures were generally done either only in a descriptive manner, or focus more quantitatively, or relatively only discuss the qualities quite narrowly against only several criteria. The author feels the deficiency in them, that they have quite narrow impact and/or applicability towards assessing teachers' practices reflectively. Therefore, in this chapter various teaching and learning points of view relating to music teaching and learning for children will be presented. They will lay as groundworks for more comprehensive analysis to be done, as followed in subsequent chapters. The discussions are by no means exhaustive since it would only be focused for the limitations within this study.

2.1 Brief History of Piano Teaching Materials

Music teaching materials, methods, and books have undergone significant changes since the first written treatises of the seventeenth century. With regards to keyboard instruments, their teaching materials change along with the conception towards keyboard instruments themselves, their place in society, as well as their mechanism development. (Brubaker, 1996: 6–13.)

Until the eighteenth century, keyboard instruments were regarded more as accompaniment instruments. Therefore, during this period keyboard musical treatises usually were written to include broader ranges of topics, not only regarding the technicalities of keyboard playing, but also improvisation, counterpoint, transposition, harmony, and other related topics. In the early 1700s, the piano emerged as a new keyboard instrument. During this century, many soloistic work for the keyboards were written, and by the end of the century, heavier key action was manufactured. Keyboard

started to gain popularity as a virtuosic instrument. Virtuosos such as Muzio Clementi, Johann Baptist Cramer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart dominate the soloistic music scene. Treatises written by the virtuosos themselves started to appear, offering much more demanding approach technically, that serve as paths towards virtuosity for the professionals. (Ibid, 14–27.)

The trend continued to the nineteenth century. Much more pedagogical materials were written with increasing technical demands. However, as the craving towards virtuosity deepens, the more comprehensive style of music teaching materials that was present in older treatises seemed to be forgotten. In fact, most of them were essentially technique books. Although at this period less intensive works designed for students of leisure were also found, it was unclear how other areas of music such as improvisation, composition, and harmony were taught. It is such an irony that as the Romantic era was supposed to hold music's expressive qualities in the highest regard, 'such qualities received little attention in beginning teaching materials' (ibid, 138). Countless amounts of studies were written with the sheer aim to address every single hand mechanism imaginable, with the idea to achieve virtuosity from finger independence and strength. (Ibid, 135–139; Deahl, 2001: 28–29.)

Things started to take a U-turn during the mid of nineteenth century. The Enlightenment movement changed men's conception of humans, of children, and therefore of education. Naturally, it also influenced music education. Piano teaching methodologies began to change, previously from being focused on achieving mechanically fantastic feats, now to promoting a more holistic approach musically, artistically, and humanistically. Including back composition, improvisation, ear-training, and music theory started to be called for. Musically interesting teaching materials, for example Robert Schumann's and Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young*, started to appear. Conceptions about piano technique also became more holistic, incorporating greater arm involvement for touch and weight control as well as muscular relaxation. Discourse about child-centered curriculum also began to raise among pedagogues. (Brubaker, 1996: 227–233; Deahl, 2001: 25–31.)

These new ideas continued to be developed until today. Compared to the previous century, during the twentieth century less emphasis was given towards skill acquirement and technical proficiency. Instead, self-expression and enjoyment were

sought. The development of printing technologies helped method books to look more attractive for children. Creative ways of teaching such as using cards and different approaches emerged. Materials for targeted audience, such as based on age group, speed or learning, or level, were mass produced.

During the last few decades of our history, technological advancements enabled CD recordings to be included together with the method books. Advancements and research within educational psychology, music pedagogy, and other sciences have also influenced the authors themselves (Brubaker, 1996: 494–509). The abundance of teaching/learning materials are now unprecedented. They have wide range of coverage in terms of styles, repertoires, approaches, or target audience, but still each still owning some specialty. The availability of smartphones has also enabled learning from digital software and applications.

That being said, it does not mean that piano method books nowadays are without problems. Many teachers find that the materials presented in these method books to be outdated or irrelevant. Some do not even use books anymore, claiming that they make their own materials. Among those who still use method books, many use multiple books, extra materials, or depart from the teaching sequence the books themselves lay (Burrows & Brown, 2020). The author is one among the teachers who encounters similar problems, hence the motivation to conduct this research.

2.2 Children’s Cognitive Development Theories

The development of children’s cognitive capabilities happens in stages. It begins before birth up until about eleven years of age.

Approximately during the first two years, infants are in the stage that eminent Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget called the *sensorimotor stage*. During this stage, infants’ cognition is highly dependent from their senses. Around the first 18 months of infants’ life, ‘information is represented at a very basic behavioral or perceptual level’ (Taylor, 2005: 8). Although there are theories saying how infants were born as a ‘blank slate’, recent research evidence suggests that the ability to make sense of environment is an innate capability that children are born with. During the first months of life, infants’ senses develop rapidly. Infants will then develop a sense of time and perception of

events. They would then be able to access representations and draw relational conclusions, such as responding or recognizing stimuli. However, they are all very sensual, perceptual, or behaviourally based and could fade quickly. Infants' memories are implicit in nature, meaning that they can only be accessed if immediate perceptual stimuli trigger them. They are not yet available to consciousness. During this period cognitive development is very environmentally based. (Ibid, 22–37.)

Although infants have innate learning capabilities, the ability to represent information *mentally* is not inherent. According to Piaget, the capacity for mental representation does not develop until the second year of infants' life. This is the start of the *preoperational period*. Piaget stated that 'symbolic thought is evidenced by the ability to retain a mental representation in the absence of perceptual input' (Ibid, 39). From these abilities, prototypical mental definitions for both things and events will start to emerge. These are important development points since they serve as gateways for more effective organization of information. It also enables explicit memories. The capacity of working memory increases as children age, because of the acquired knowledge and strategies that children employ to organize information. Long-term memory also emerges as we organize information, which also stems from our formations of concepts of events and objects. They are again connected to our prototypical understanding of similarities. (Ibid, 38–55.)

The ability to discern symbols also takes root from the same ability. The ability to symbolize is a prerequisite to understanding of the nature of symbols themselves. Tracing along the same route, further abstraction of symbols would be models. To understand models, children would have to be able to put aside their 'mental representation of the model as an object, and concentrate on its symbolic function' (Ibid, 56). This ability would require *dual representation*. Two simultaneous mental representation of the same thing would be needed: the representation itself and the representation as a representation. (Ibid, 55–56.)

This is in line with Jerome Bruner's learning theory, which says that children learn first enactively, then iconically, then symbolically. During enactive period, children learn and understand something through repeated action. Within iconic period, children learn through pictures, which look like the item they represent. Symbols, however, do not look like the item they represent. They are further abstraction of icons,

and they lead toward the ability to sustain abstract ideas (Nelson, 2013: 8–10). Bruner stated that the development of intellect will run the course of the three systems until the human being is able to command all three (McDonald & Simons, 1989: 29).

The next steps of cognitive development rise from the awareness of one's own cognition itself and how to employ them. Children would start to actively use cognitive strategies to solve problems at about 4 years of age. These are called *metacognitive* abilities. For example, strategies to memorize by organizing information, or focusing on a certain point for a longer period. Similarly, *metamemory* is the 'conscious awareness of how much and what knowledge we have as well as an understanding of how our memories work' (Taylor, 2005: 57). As children age, they will realize the possibility to employ strategies to enhance learning and memorizing and will soon actively use the strategies. (Ibid, 57–60.)

As children's prototypical organizations widens and deepens, their *reasoning* capabilities will start to grow. One of the simplest types of reasoning is analogical reasoning, which is based on how different things are related. At first, infants' analogical reasoning ability is limited to the realization of perceptual similarities and implicit reactions toward them. Many argue that this is not true reasoning. Within relational similarity understanding however, true reasoning is shown since explicit identification of perceived relationship is needed: the conceptual relationship needs to be addressed and understood. According to Piaget, analogical reasoning develops during the preoperational stage, where inconsistencies in thinking are still apparent. Only when children's metacognitive strategies have matured, will they start to think logically. Piaget saw logical thinking as a key development, marking the entrance to *concrete-operational stage* of development, which he claimed to start at around 7 years of age. At this stage, children would already be able to apply logical rules. (Ibid, 70–72.)

Piaget also claimed that only at this stage would children start to *consciously* problem solve. In previous stages, the kinds of problem-solving children do is not real problem solving since children only act based on perceived similarities. Real problem solving should involve *means-end analysis*, which includes goal identification and planning a course of action as a response to the problem. Very young children are known to problem solve through trial-and-error method. This may be due to the necessity of

planning within problem solving that could be more difficult to grasp. Older children, on the other hand, deliberately employ the means-end analysis and plan steps to reach the goal. (Ibid, 62–69.)

The next step of Piagetian development would be the *formal-operational stage*, which should start at around 11 years of age. During this period, children would already be able to reason scientifically. However, subsequent studies have pointed out that even adults may not be able to reason scientifically, or at least not do so spontaneously. This might be because humans do not really need to reason scientifically to sustain a basic survival. (Ibid, 75.)

Socially, people also learn by imitating and observing others. Albert Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, where knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs are acquired by modelling and imitation of behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others, as well as the consequences that follows specific actions, leading to the adoption of observed behaviors. This means of learning enables men to speed up their learning process without having to undergo tedious trial-and-error: it takes advantage of others' experience and knowledge (Bandura, 1971). Taylor (2005: 58) also mentioned that the role older people play in guiding children to use metacognitive and metamemory strategies show how inter-related social and cognitive developments are.

Bandura theorized four mediational processes within observational learning.

1. Attentional processes: this is crucial since an exposure to a model does not ensure that observers need to pay attention. The model must capture the observers' interest and must be deemed worth imitating. The observer must then pay attention to the model.
2. Retention processes: after paying attention to the model, the observer has to actively aim to store the information to memory.
3. Motoric reproduction processes: ideally, the learner should be able to reproduce the behavior that has just been modelled
4. Reinforcement and motivational processes: this determines whether the learner would be willingly reproduce the learnt behavior. 'When positive incentives are

provided, observational learning ... is promptly translated into action' (Ibid, 8), and vice versa inhibited if negatively perceived. (Ibid, 6–8.)

2.3 Childhood Music Education Theories

2.3.1 Musical Skills Development in Early Childhood

The following description explains how the direction of development generally happens and is not meant to be precise chronological mapping. It might also be different between individuals.

First of all, it is important to note that both nature and nurture play important role in musical development. Heredity and environment complement each other. Even though there are views about inherent talent, and that only what is inherently owned can be developed, training will always help develop skills regardless of heredity or familial background. As educators, our main interest should lay within aiming towards the skill development itself. (McDonald & Simons, 1989: 40–41.)

Infants are naturally sensitive and curious towards sound. Especially during the first year and a half of life, when perception is very sensory-based and is 'particularly responsive to various kinds of stimulation' (Ibid, 42). They would be able to give fixed attention to sources of sound, associate sounds with the object source, react to sounds with movements (although not yet synchronized), imitate sounds, and distinguish individual songs that they repeatedly hear. They also show significant interest in their mother and her sound. During the second year of life, infants would start to do spontaneous music-making. They would start to emit tones and pitches and invent spontaneous songs or vocal plays. Melodic and rhythmic patterns would start to be recognized and invented. They also start to be able to play with existing songs or musical patterns, just as they play with words. They would start to be interested in joining others in making music by clapping, dancing, or swaying. Everyday objects and musical instruments would start to be used to produce sounds. (McDonald & Simons, 1989: 41–48; Pound & Harrison, 2003: 22–25.)

Children's motoric coordination would keep developing and during the third year of life children would show increasing ability to match movements such as clapping to

music. Exploration of the sound potentials of items and toys would start to be done more deliberately. Longer phrases of songs start to be understood, reproduced, and invented at will, although initially rarely with total accuracy. Exploration and experimentation with voice and instruments continue and their increasing vocal stamina and control enable longer singing. Increasing motoric coordination also enables children to produce more synchronized movements during the fourth year of life. (Pound & Harrison, 2003: 25–28.)

During the fifth year of life children would be able to sing with greater pitch accuracy and growing awareness of rhythm enables growing range of interpretative movements. They would start to be able to assign vocabularies to describe music, such as the instruments they hear, character of music, and height of pitch. By this time they would have a large repertoire of familiar songs. However, their interest in spontaneous song creation would start to diminish, due to their increasing interest in details and enjoyment of repetition. It may also simply due to being not required anymore to invent, and thus could be encouraged back to enhance creativity (Ibid, 28–31). The next years starting around the sixth year of life would be the transition years from playful to deliberate music-making. Changes in children's life such as through schooling enables them to be more culturally aware to understand contexts and conventions of music. Musical competencies would mature and children would at last be able 'to sing in tune, to control dynamics, and to perform and respond rhythmically in time' (Ibid, 31). Edwin Gordon (2003: 143) also theorized that starting the age of five children would start to be able to 'hear and comprehend in one's mind the sound of music that is no longer or may never have been physically present', an ability he called 'audiation'. He likened audiation to thought in language (Ibid, 25).

This shows how children are inherently musical and creative beings. They can express themselves intuitively through music. They naturally learn through exploration, and enjoyment is central in their learning. Musical learning happens in stages (Pound & Harrison, 2003: 46). Studies have shown that 'response to and discrimination of dynamics and timbre' develop first, followed by understanding of pitch, melody, and rhythm, then lastly form, texture and harmony (McDonald & Simons, 1989: 44). However, it is important to note that these concepts cannot be taught, but are acquired through meaningful experiences (Ibid, 80).

2.3.2 Approaches and Methods for Early Childhood Music Education

Ideally, music teaching for young children should encompass wide topics, such as listening, singing, rhythm, movement, and playing instruments. They should happen in alignment with their natural musical development capabilities. For example, when infants start to produce vocal plays, they should be encouraged by adults and responded. By the age of two they may already produce ‘phrase-songs’, which usually are ‘rhythmic repetitions of a word or phrase, with undulating pitch inflection close to the pitch of speech’ (McDonald & Simons, 1989: 89). This kind of speech play, vocal chants and rhymes should be exploited by parents and teachers by employing musical conversations as a start towards song instruction. Children’s instinctive movement response towards music should be encouraged by giving them various motor tasks and progressive motoric learning through action songs, finger plays, or dances. However, synchronized movement such as clapping or marching to a beat pattern should not be expected early, since they are quite complicated. Children’s natural curiosity towards sound-making materials should be encouraged by exploring basic ideas such as timbre, duration, and volume. When they are ready, more complicated topics such as rhythm and melody can be introduced. Instead of taking these activities separately, all of them should ideally be done in conjunction with one another. As an example, ‘listening experiences that involve identification of such concepts should be accompanied by many activities using movement, instruments, or visual representations of the sounds’ (Ibid, 86). Finally, children are naturally creative and teachers should use these tools as ways to encourage creativity from children. (Ibid, 77–107.)

The ‘Grand Methods’ of music education by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Zoltán Kodály, Carl Orff – Gunild Keetman, and Shinichi Suzuki also serve as comprehensive approaches for childhood music education. In fact, many basic principles are shared among them. For example, Orff’s, Dalcroze’s, and Kodály’s approaches ‘belief in each person’s innate musicality, emphasize active music making, begin with the ear rather than the eye, incorporate some form of movement, and see music as essential to the total education of the child’ (Goodkin, 2001).

Regarding movement, ‘Dalcroze argues that music, especially its rhythmic component, has its origin in natural body movements and thus is physical in nature’. It is thus most natural to ‘develop a sense of rhythm through body movement’

(Juntunen, 2016: 4). In Dalcroze teaching, students explore various kinds of rhythms and meters through movements such as clapping, walking, running, skipping, hopping, and swaying. The movements are in the beginning simple before they develop to whole-body explorations. Not only rhythmical elements, form, style, dynamics, tempo, and other nuances and expressions of music are realized through the body (Ibid, 4–6). With Orff, there is a strong emphasis on body percussion for rhythmic learning. Body percussion rhythm activities follow rhythmic realizations from speech patterns. Orff realized the inherent natural quality within speech and his philosophy is based on a gradual, natural process. Within this, activities such as rhyme games and speech canon can be done. While for body percussion, echo, ostinato, or accompanying songs can be done by clapping, stamping, finger-snapping, and so on. (Harrington, 1972: 3–6; McDonald & Simons, 1989: 151.)

Dalcroze and Kodály also emphasized the importance of singing as a form of ear training. Within solfège, the main goal is to develop the mental ability to produce exact sound image without having to physically hear the sound (developing the ‘inner ear’ or ‘inner hearing’). This can be done for example by practicing alternating singing aloud and internally. Dalcroze emphasized the importance of developing aural perception before instrumental studies and criticized the mechanical nature of how instrument and music theory teaching could be. Movements and solfège are used in ways that complement one another: ‘listening inspires movement expression, while moving guides and informs listening’ (Ibid, 7–8). Kodály discouraged the continual use of accompaniments and believed that singing without aid should lead to pitch sensitivity and internalized sense of musicianship. Dalcroze used fixed-do system while Kodály used movable-do. Kodály also developed a series of hand signs to represent each step in a scale. He also adopted rhythm syllables as a tool for teaching rhythm. Orff believed that melody evolves from rhythm and thus the next step after rhythm exploration is melodic exploration. Both Kodály and Orff avoided the semitones by preferring the pentatonic scale, since semitones are harder to sing accurately. (Harrington, 1972: 7–8; Juntunen, 2016: 6–10; Liu, 2008: 111–120; McDonald & Simons, 1989: 157–163.)

Improvisation is also a key topic. Within Dalcroze, improvisation could be done not only through singing and playing instruments, but also through movement.

Improvisation encourages spontaneous expression, imagination, and satisfaction. It also has the capacity to teach social skills and values such as to lead, follow, initiate, communicate, and be responsible. Within Orff, the improvisatory paradigm is brought to the overall level of teaching/learning activities themselves. In the classrooms, children should be allowed to act in a way that explores thoughts, questions, or continuously devising and discovering new experiences. (Goodkin, 2001; Juntunen, 2016: 10–12.)

Regarding notation, Orff emphasized the importance of its early introduction. Rhythmic notation is taught in relation to speech patterns, while melodic notation is taught gradually from two-line staff upwards. This however, is in contrary to Suzuki's 'sound before symbol' paradigm, preferring rote-learning in the beginning. Simple percussive and pitch instruments are also used to accompany or play melodic patterns within Orff. (Harrington, 1972: 6–9; McDonald & Simons, 1989: 152–157.)

The importance of the incorporation of the 'mother tongue' or folk music is called for both by Kodály and Suzuki. Kodály believed that it would serve as a driving cultural force and would build a healthy relationship between music and language. Suzuki is also widely known for his 'mother tongue' method. In this paradigm, children should be taught to play music in the way they learn to speak. Listening and playing are done before understanding notations, just as how children learn to speak before being able to read. Rote-learning is done intensively and parental involvement is key. Parents attend lessons with the child and learn to play the instrument alongside. Thus, they would be able to help the child practice at home. (Liu et al., 2022: 120–121; Mason, 2008: 11–12; McDonald & Simons, 1989: 165–168.)

2.4 Perspectives in Teaching and Learning

In this subchapter various viewpoints regarding how both students and teachers might view and/or employ teaching and learning activities will be discussed.

2.4.1 Teacher's Orientations

Within music learning, the apprenticeship teaching model has ancient roots, and it is pervasive among musical cultures and genres from classical musics, jazz and popular

musics, up until world musics. The main principle is that students build expertise under the close guidance of a master teacher. Clear power structure is evident, as the student is expected to accept the master's authority and the master guides the student actively and deliberately exerts authoritative influence to the student. It is especially common in one-to-one teaching context. (Gaunt et al., 2021.)

However, growing interest in self-directed learning, learning agency, as well as insights from the popular music genres have widened the discourse. Jones (2005) has articulated the discussion as a triangulation between teacher, learner, and content. He identified three teaching/learning orientations. The first one is called the 'gatekeeper' orientation, which is very hierarchical in nature. Just like in apprenticeship, teacher has lots of influence and responsibility deciding what, when, and how to approach learning. This orientation 'risks encouraging passive learning focused largely around diagnosis, correction, imitation and repetition'. The second one is called the 'midwife' orientation, placing 'the learner and content in close alignment, with the teacher's role being to guide the learner-content interactions'. Rather than direct, teacher mainly guide and scaffold learning. Although learning outcomes may be defined in a hierarchical manner, learning processes are discussed cooperatively and are responsive towards learners' need. The downside of this approach is that more time would be needed to urge learners to find solutions more independently rather than just being told directly by the teacher, and thus it could lead to frustration. The last is called the 'fellow traveller' orientation, in which the learner is in close egalitarian relation with the teacher. Together they engage in collaborative 'exploration of the content, each contributing ideas and sharing leadership'. There is a strong focus in reflection, exploration, and dialogue. The downside of this orientation is that focus might be lost, contents overlooked, or relevance obscured. (Gaunt et al., 2021.)

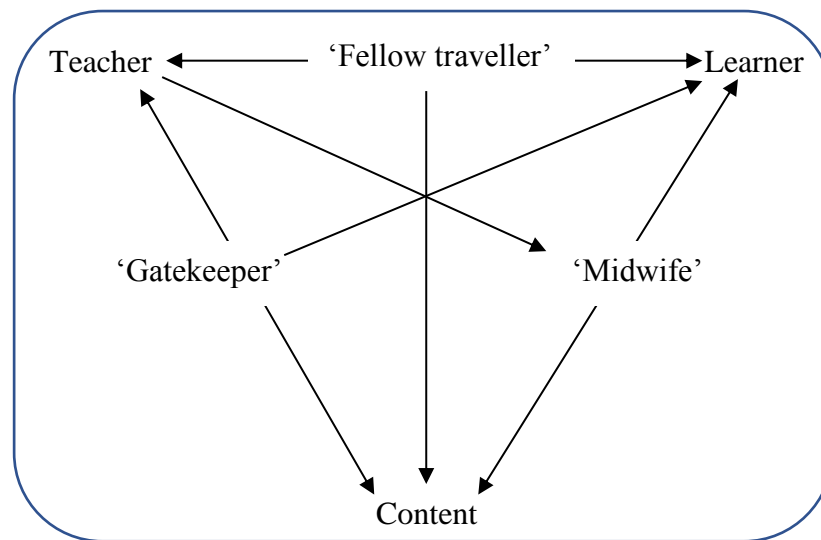


Figure 1: The triangulation of teacher, learner, and content described by Jones (2005)

These orientations are somewhat similar to what Väkevä et al. (2015) described as teacher as explicator, facilitator, and emancipatory music master respectively. However, within the emancipatory music master model, Väkevä et al. (Ibid) widened the definition to contain a sense of ‘ignorance’, understood as an ‘inevitability to make distinctions between different ways of becoming knowledgeable’. This model views that somehow all knowledge, skills, and intelligence are radically equal without presumption, and that all people are ‘being equally able to find their own ways of learning’.

As compared to older, stiffer traditions, conception of learners’ agency and student-centered education has been on the rise. López-Íñiguez et al. (2022) simply described student-centered education as ‘none other than that which starts with the students’ own traits’. This means considering students’ prior knowledge (including intuitive or embodied knowledge), their conceptions of learning, ways of learning, learning process, goals, up onto being emotionally connected with them. Gouzouasis and Ryu (2015) asserted the need for teachers to build close personal rapport with children during music lessons and brought up the possibility of ‘extra musical’ learning during lessons: that in building the rapport, learning can happen through ‘sharing stories, questions, conversations, emotions, and aesthetic experiences’. Within this kind of teaching, teachers would need spontaneous decision-making skills and lessons would become interactive and ‘improvised’.

Discourse of standardized schooling has also given birth to discussions on curriculums. One of the most notable topics within them is about ‘hidden curriculums’.

Curriculums should be read as texts with its underlying relevant contexts. The practical application of them often include what are ‘left-out, implied, or veiled’ from the texts themselves but ‘subtly signaled as the norm’ (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008). Cochran-Smith and Demers (Ibid) proposed the reading of curriculum as a political text. There is always a sense of ‘politics of official knowledge’ which has implications towards elitist social models (Apple, 1996: 22–23). Curriculums are therefore never neutral and it would be wise for teachers to be aware of the background contexts and be reflective when applying curriculums.

2.4.2 Students’ Orientations

If we agree that teaching should uphold the student-centricity principle, then teachers would need to understand their students as much as possible. This can be challenging because children do not always state what they think, or that the reasons behind their actions may be complex (Carter, 2018). Teachers must have empathy, be open to children’s experiences, observe, think, and interpret children’s behavior (Broderick & Hong, 2020: 74).

First, children are naturally curious being. Teachers should support ‘children’s continued interest in questioning, discovering, and learning’ (Ibid, 10) by employing materials and tasks that ‘invite and challenge the children to explore, imagine, create, interact, and problem solve’ (Ibid, 30). Curiosity can also be *provoked*. ‘Provocations are processes that motivate individuals to act or respond’ (Ibid, 57). Provocations would work better if they are more aligned with students’ interests. Provocations can be in the form of objects, statements, questions, activities, and so on. Through provocations students are engaged to think, to ‘move forward and construct new knowledge’ (Ibid, 57). Open-ended models may be favored as provocations, as they encourage students to work creatively, independently, and divergently. Open-endedness may also end up in unexpected territories. Therefore, it takes eagerness and courage to ask questions, investigate, explore, discover and solve different viewpoints together with the student. It also takes a great deal of sensitivity to understand students’ differing perspectives. Provocative materials can also be used to make thinking visible, understand ideas better, gain new perspective, or learn new properties. Letting and/or leading children to pursue their own questions and theories using open-ended models would enhance their critical thinking. (Ibid, 116–117, 137–142.)

Secondly, it is widely acknowledged that play is critical for children's development (Essame, 2020). Smith (2009:4) emphasized the fun, enjoyable, and amusing aspect of play. The benefits of play can be debated, especially with regards to its immediacy. Children usually do it for the sheer amusement they get. Nevertheless, we can still say that children may develop strength and agility from physical play, or creativity from pretend play. With regards to music, forms of baby songs, vocal chanting, dancing games or other ritualized forms of movement and touch are observable in every human society to stimulate play (Flohr & Persellin, 2011: 5). Flohr and Trevarthen (2008) stressed the importance of using open-ended child-centered approaches of movement and gestural activities to encourage children's fluid experience as naturally creative beings. This is completely in alignment with the aforementioned early childhood music education literatures.

3 Implementation of the Study

In this chapter, description regarding how the implementation of the study will be presented. It will consist of research purpose, research question methodologies as well as data collection and analysis. Lastly, ethical considerations would also be presented.

3.1 Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study is to analyze existing piano method books for children in a comprehensive way, using various angles or viewpoints. The analysis and discussions raised within this study would be beneficial for teachers and educators to be used as ideas to be reflected upon and employed to develop their pedagogical outlook. It would also help aspiring pedagogues to gain insights regarding teaching approaches, student/teacher interactions, as well as to better understand children's cognitive states. The research community would also find benefit from the analytical approach and framework that are presented, that may be applied to future research. The study aims to answer the following question:

What are the qualities that the author(s) of the method books aim to present with regards to piano teaching?

3.2 Methodological Starting Points

The research is a theory-driven content analysis. The focus of the analysis would be qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is 'a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data' (Bryman, 2008: 366). It uses 'relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis' (Hammersley, 2013: 12). Content analysis is done by systematically investigating texts and materials *unobtrusively*, meaning that the materials should be investigated without any manipulation of the source. The analysis should be done not merely on the surface of the contents, but also investigating the context in which it was created (Leavy, 2022: 159).

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data originate from three piano method books for children. Only the first volume from each book series would be analyzed. The books are

1. *‘Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten’* (English translation: *‘Two Hands – Twelve Keys’*) Volume I by Klaus Runze (1971)
2. *‘Vivo Piano’* Primer by Kristiina Jääskeläinen and Jarkko Kantala (2003)
3. *‘Colour Keys – the Piano ABC’* Book A by Arja Suorsa-Rannanäki (2013)

The books were chosen firstly because they are targeted towards very young children under 10 years old. The author also aims to analyze books of different orientations, to get wide insight regarding various ways to approach piano teaching for young children. The author also finds these books very interesting, due to the creativity and ingenuity of the books’ authors in presenting their teaching materials.

The analysis in this study is based on the theories and concepts presented in chapter 2, hence the theory-driven nature of the study. It would be based on several parameters, such as how comprehensive they are, how aligned they are with children’s learning, developmental, and early childhood music education theories, and how flexible they are to facilitate different teaching and learning contexts. Discussions regarding the books’ strengths and weaknesses would also be presented.

3.4 Research Ethics

The research is conducted within the principles of Finnish National Board on Research Integrity guidelines TENK (*Tutkimuseettinen Neuvottelukunta*) 2019 and TENK 2023. All publications used as sources within this paper are cited in the reference list (TENK, 2023: 17–18). The literature used in this paper originates either from academic books, dissertations, journals, or peer-reviewed articles.

Regarding the contents of the research, ethical considerations would include but not limited to

- didactical paradigms that the authors of the books hold on,
- nationalistic, religious, and other cultural tendencies that might arise from the music and the approaches that the book presents,

- the author's subjectivity when judging the qualitative nature of the contents,
and
- the author's previous experience, education and training within the area.

4 Findings

In this chapter, main findings from the analysis of the method books would be presented. The main paradigms within piano teaching and learning activities for young children that the authors of the books aim to propose would be discussed. There are lots of crossovers between the points since in many ways all of them are connected to one another, so often there would be references back to what have been previously stated. Subchapters 4.1 until 4.3 will focus on ‘extra-musical’ aspects: the paradigms that generally ‘surround’ music teaching and learning activities. Subchapter 4.4 is dedicated on the ‘intra-musical’ aspects: the aspects that especially relate to music and specifically piano teaching and learning activities themselves. There are lots of similarities regarding the paradigms that the books’ authors proposed. However, within this last subchapter the differences between the books will be brought to light in more details.

4.1 Music Learning as Social Activity

Firstly, the authors intended for their books to be used together with the presence of a teacher. Instead of learning alone or through other means, the authors mandated teachers specifically to guide children’s learning. Thus, often the ‘gatekeeper’ role of the teacher would be required to lead lessons and interpret the materials presented (cf. Jones, 2005). After all, the books are equipped with guiding texts for teachers which young children would not understand, explaining exactly how the materials should be used complete with suggestions regarding ways to expand further. Teachers are required to introduce concepts, convey the meaning of symbols, explain and show how the music should be played, to teach the music by rote, and so on.

Rote learning is done by the teacher showing exactly what notes should be played. It is learning solely by modelling and thus can be explained by Bandura’s social learning theory. First it requires the understanding that the teacher is worthy of attention and the effort to pay attention to model the behavior. Then the student would have to store the learnt music in memory before being able to reproduce it back. The speed of which this process should be implemented has to be individually tailored: some students might be able to retain faster than others, while the rest might need more repetition. The student’s willingness to perform this task would at the end be influenced by their

motivation. The motivation could be influenced externally by rewards and punishment, or internally by the student's own willingness to play the music. Bandura himself claimed how social learning theory differs from reinforcement theories in a way that social learning theory also considers internal self-reinforcement. (Bandura, 1971: 9–10.)

Rote learning is also a way to learn enactively. Most of the authors emphasized the importance of rote learning to be introduced in the beginning. This is completely in alignment with Jerome Bruner's learning progression from enactive towards symbolic, and Suzuki's 'sound before symbol' paradigm: that music should be learnt just the same way children learn language. Listening and playing are done before understanding notations, just as how children learn to speak before being able to read. The 'Vivo' book also includes a CD full of recordings of the pieces themselves as well as their accompaniments which will aid students' listening, enjoyment of playing with recorded accompaniment, as well as appreciation of the music.

Teachers do not always have to pose themselves as the gatekeeper of knowledge. Often the authors also called for the 'midwife' and 'fellow traveller' orientations (cf. Jones, 2005). This is especially apparent in more creative and/or collaborative activities such as improvisation, games, drawing, composition, and story-telling. For example, during improvisation tasks, the teacher may act as 'midwife' and still guides in a way that is cooperative and responsive towards the learners' interests. The teacher might guide the improvisation using the stimuli of the piece that have just been introduced, or the notes or pictures that are presented on the book. However, the teacher should also be sensitive towards the curiosity of the pupils, for example when reacting or presenting his or her own idea regarding the pictures.

The teacher should always be prepared to move further towards the 'fellow traveller' or even to the 'emancipatory music master' role (cf. Väkevä et al., 2015). This potential is especially apparent within the story-telling tasks presented by the 'Vivo' and the 'Piano ABC' books. Within these books, there are some pages full of merely pictures. The idea is to use the pictures as stimuli for story-telling and free improvisation. The session could potentially be a very stimulating one for the pupil, with the pupil ending up wanting to create his or her own story and trying different kinds of improvisatory gestures. The teacher could willingly 'sit back' and explore

playfully together with the pupil. Thus, the social aspect of music learning is done with play and learner's agency at hand. It also has huge potential for the 'extra-musical' learning that Gouzouasis and Ryu (2015) pointed out: through this orientation teachers would be able to build personal rapport with the student and employ a more 'improvisatory' lesson.



Figure 2: Example of picture stimuli for story-telling and free improvisation task
(Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2003: 10)

In his *'Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten'* book, Runze (1971: 3) stated specifically that the use of his book necessitates the willingness for teacher to see himself as a partner of the child. He then connected this to the idea of music as language: joint action must be included right from the start just like how language is learnt. Children should be surrounded by others in their learning, be it with group or in the family, with other instruments, and so on. He even called for the mother to learn the basics of piano playing. It is also to be done through interplay within those involved, through questioning, guessing, clapping, singing, speaking together, calling, and answering through which children would live the experience of music as language. This is in conjunction with Suzuki's paradigm (cf. Liu et al., 2022; Mason, 2008; McDonald & Simons, 1989). The book itself is full of texts which the teacher and student are supposed to sing to help with the internalization of the music. Question-and-answer

styled playing tasks are also presented, which will enhance student's listening skill and help internalize further the experience of language.

All of the authors mentioned the possibility to apply their books towards group teaching. To do that, the authors urged teachers to be creative in their implementations of the materials provided. For example, when only provided with materials for two players, the teacher could expand its usage to group of bigger size by dividing the musical parts to be played by more players. Roles could be assigned to different students, for example one who adds improvisation, or dividing onto question-and-answer styled playing, or playing only specific section(s), and so on. The 'Vivo' book is especially interesting, since its authors not only provided materials for usage in piano classrooms, but it is also connected to other books for different instruments in the 'Vivo' series. Simple arrangements for chamber music playing are included, and pianists can play either as the soloist or the accompanist with other instruments. The authors also encouraged participation in concerts as part of the learning, and especially providing selected pieces as concert pieces. Jääskeläinen and Kantala (2005: 4) encouraged to do so as early as possible, and that materials for performances are to be suited right from the first lesson.

4.2 Music Learning as Creative and Playful Activity

Within the books, the authors presented the materials and concepts with metaphors. For example, the '*Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten*' is especially themed around the animal world (Runze, 1971: 3). Many of the pieces try to picture animals such as the cuckoo, camel, crocodile and turtle either in their sound, movement, physical appearance, or through other connotations. The 'Vivo' and the 'Piano ABC' encapsulates the learning activities within a metaphorical journey that children would travel through. As they open the pages of the book and learn together with the teacher, they would enter a new world and encounter various characters and fun events (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2003: 3; Suorsa-Rannanäki, 2013b: 2–3). These are excellent ways to stimulate children's imagination and provoke their curiosity. It would make learning much more playful, amusing and enjoyable. It may also fasten learning and memorization as abstract concepts are represented by more concrete, day-to-day ideas. For example, the 'Piano ABC' book presents the difference between major and minor tonalities as costume

party: when the music change to minor, the doll who is going to the party got dressed sadly (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013b: 36–37). It also presents theoretical explanations as metaphors. The note durations, for example, are presented within a seesaw that balances the lengths of the note duration groups.



Figure 3: Note duration balancing on a seesaw (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013a: 78)

Runze (1971: 3) linked this metaphoric representation to the idea of embodiment. He argued that the base of his methodology is the fact that every musical and technical tasks could be clarified through comparisons from the environment, especially from the animal kingdom. He believed that all musical manifestations can be conveyed by stimulating the imagination for movements. This way, important basic facts of music and of piano playing could be conveyed in a concise and memorable form. He also stated that through this way further modifications and developments could be done in many ways. For example, the author proposed the metaphor of a creeping tiger to represent the action of playing with a gripping hand. The task is to be carried out by mastering at first the grip (it should not be too loose nor too strained), then playing the musical gestures, as if a tiger is creeping along.

Runze also stated the necessity to be willing to relate to the fantasies that is presented and pursue them forward. This serves as a complement to seeing music as a means of communication. Runze suggested to implement it through improvisatory approaches that is presented in the book, such as playing with octave relocations, through mirror image of the keyboard and hands, and so on. These further converting and expanding are basic actualities within piano playing, and it will charm children: it is the music pedagogue's task to release children's inner imagination. (Ibid.)

Runze had a specific paradigm regarding improvisation. Improvisation is not only done to the elements of music, but it is to also be implemented as mode of conduct or behaving (*Improvisieren als Verhaltensweise*), and he called for variability and interchangeability as the path and goal of music practice (Ibid). This is completely in

alignment with the previously discussed more collaborative roles of the teacher to employ ‘improvisatory’ lessons (cf. Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015). In the book the author encouraged to employ this idea for example by changing and/or improvising the texts or the music-making contexts such as by including different musical gestures, by clapping, tapping or by employing movements. Creativity is not only fostered for the students, but is especially required from the teacher to lead different ways of music-making. Similar improvisatory paradigm is also called for by Carl Orff (cf. Goodkin, 2001; Juntunen, 2016).

The story telling and free improvisation tasks that have been discussed previously are also ways to foster creativity and learn playfully. They are open-ended and thus are perfect to encourage students to work creatively, independently, and divergently (cf. Broderick & Hong, 2020). Open-endedness may also end up in unexpected territories, thus it is important for teachers to have the right mindset and adjust themselves accordingly. Teachers would need to be eager and have humbleness, courage and sensitivity to position themselves more towards the role of ‘emancipatory music teacher’, to be open-minded to let and/or lead students to pursue their own questions and theories (cf. Väkevä et al., 2015). It would thus be a great avenue to develop students’ critical thinking skills. Open-ended models are also apparent within composition tasks. In the ‘Piano ABC’ book, the author also encouraged to use the blank pages with composition exercises where the student has to write notes and compose either rhythm patterns or simple melodies (Suorsa-Rannanäki, 2013b: 9). The ‘Vivo’ book also presents a composition exercise in the form of a dice game: first the student has to come up with musical gestures, draw them, then assign the gestures to each of the dice number. The dice would then be thrown several times, and the form of the played music would be determined by the order of the dice (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2003: 31; Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2005: 10). Other kinds of games are also presented for other purposes. For example, ‘note bingo’ where students have to randomly drop their finger to the keyboard, then see if the key they hit show up on the bingo board. The student then would have to repeat this for seven times, and see if they succeed to make a bingo. Later, they would have to make their own bingo board. The aim of this game is to memorize the name of the white keys on the keyboard (Ibid, 8). These games are excellent ways to make learning fun.

With regards to improvisation, Jääskeläinen and Kantala (Ibid, 3) coined the word musical ‘phenomena’ (in the original Finnish language: ‘*ilmiö*’). They proposed that right in the beginning, children should get acquainted with the instrument itself by playing and exploring through improvisation. The goal is for children to familiarize themselves with as much musical phenomena as possible. They emphasized the importance for children to experience the richness within music through listening, playing and imitating, while at the same time developing motoric skills and musical understanding. Through this, it can be noted that for the authors, the emphasis of music learning for young children is on creativity and expression. Instead of starting with learning factual knowledge or developing motoric skills as fast as possible, the authors took time to let children play, be creative and express themselves. This is shown by the first section of their ‘Vivo’ book, which is specifically directed to the musical phenomena themselves: at the beginning learning is done through improvisation and by rote, while understanding note is not yet required (Ibid). The ‘*Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten*’ book also does not require student to master note reading yet, as it would be introduced only by the second volume.

Runze also encouraged teachers to include drawing activities during lessons. He recommended the use of drawing notebooks where the student could draw not only drawings of the keyboard and hands, but also all other kinds of pictures that might aid learning, or that the students might want to draw. He also claimed that all the pictures that is included in his book originated from his students’ drawing which were done during their lessons (Runze, 1971: 3). If we were to analyze this, it means that Runze emphasized extra-musical activities as part of his lessons. He viewed the piano lessons not only as occasions where children merely learn to play piano and make music, but he also encouraged them to do the activities they naturally would enjoy doing. He might view that both are of the same importance, and he took great care to make sure his students enjoy themselves. His outlook towards the piano lessons was based on openness, care, versatility, creativity, exploration, play, and enjoyment. This is totally in alignment with the idea of ‘improvisation of conduct’ that he proposed.

Vocabularies of musical gestures, facts and phenomena keep being widened through various metaphors. The ‘*Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten*’ book approaches widening musical vocabularies through cycles of metaphorical representations. For example, the

sound of a minor third played one after another is represented with a metaphor of the cuckoo's call. Later on, it is widened to a full major chord and called the cuckoo's triad ('*Kuckucksdreiklang*') (Ibid, 16, 37). These are great ways to ease memorization: rather than having to memorize them through the technical jargons, children would be able to assign more concrete names to the musical phenomena.

To analyze cognitively, understanding metaphors would require children to be at least in the Piagetian *preoperational stage*, where the capacity of mental representation started to develop. This is because mental representation of the metaphorical images needs to already be held without the presence of the perceptual input itself. Mental definitions, conceptions about the things and events that underlie the metaphors should be understood in order to be able to relate them to the represented facts. Runze (Ibid, 3) himself recommended the use of his book for children aged 4 until 7, which is exactly when the preoperational period lies. Both in the 'Vivo' and the '*Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten*' book the pupils are first guided in their learning through metaphors and by rote before starting with note learning. This also correlates well to children's cognitive development: during the preoperational period children would start to develop their logical thinking and would start to develop the capability of analogical reasoning, which is needed to process the more symbolic note reading. Thus, the task of the teacher here would be to guide the students as they develop and enter the *concrete-operational stage*. The 'Piano ABC' book however, although still aiming to progress from concrete to abstract (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013a: 4), is slightly different since note reading is directly introduced since the beginning, starting from simple rhythm recognition, and gradually adding different pitches one after another.

4.3 Music Learning as Cultural Activity

Cultural-related materials are also present within the books. The 'Piano ABC' and the 'Vivo' book include well-known children tunes such as the 'Mary had a Little Lamb', 'Hot Cross Buns', the French '*Frère Jacques*' (the tune in English: 'Brother John'), and the Finnish '*Pienen-pieni Veturi*' (translation: 'Small Locomotive'). Learning these materials would help children to be more engaged in their learning, since they are more relevant to children's day-to-day life. In addition, other well-known music such as Christmas music, birthday song, and even film theme tunes such as the

'Mission: Impossible' film is included (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2003: 60). Through this exploration children would be able to get in touch with the cultural phenomena of our world today. Teachers should also introduce children by explaining the cultural contexts of the pieces. For example, they could show the films to their students. The 'Vivo' book develops the pieces creatively by putting unexpected twists to the original tunes. For example, the tune 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' is varied to become 'Matti's Lamb' (in the original text '*Matin Karitsa*') while the Finnish tune '*Satu Meni Saunaan*' ('Satu Went to Sauna') is varied to become '*Satu Meni Metsään*' ('Satu Went to Forest') since the notes are changed (Ibid, 58). This is an amusing way to keep children engaged as well as to ignite children's creativity. They serve as excellent ideas to stimulate further improvisation.

The 'Vivo' book is particularly interesting. One section of the book is dedicated especially to introduce pieces from different parts of the world. Different kinds of tonalities are introduced, such as the middle eastern tonality which include the enticing augmented second. Different styles of music such as rock and blues chord-progressions are also introduced. This helps children to widen their cultural awareness and get acquainted with different kinds of sound and music.

Teachers should however be aware of the ethical implications of this, especially as they have strong authority over very young children. Every child comes from a certain background that has cultural, nationalistic, or religious implications. Some religions, for example, forbid celebrating different events such as birthday or Christmas. In this case it would be wise for teachers to refrain from teaching birthday or Christmas songs to believing children. Conflict might also arise if the family of the child has a certain prejudice or resistance towards other cultural or nationalistic expressions. It would be wise for teachers to gain information and/or consult with the family or carers of the students.

4.4 Skills and Intellectual Development within Music Learning

This subchapter will focus on the 'intra-musical' aspects, which mean the aspects that are directly and almost exclusively related to music itself. This should be the most obvious of all. After all, students come to the piano lessons to learn music and to play

the piano. The method books would be discussed one by one. The strengths and weaknesses of the books would also be analyzed. Only the most distinctive features of the books would be discussed.

4.4.1 *Zwei Hände – Zwölf Tasten*

The author of this paper finds this book to be especially intriguing, since it is the only book he has found so far that very thoroughly provides learning materials iconically, hence the motivation to analyze it. As mentioned in chapter 2, Jerome Bruner theorized that children learn through a progression from enactive, iconic, towards symbolic learning (cf. Nelson, 2013; McDonald & Simons, 1989). Within music, it is rare to find materials that provide iconic learning materials. Usually, it is skipped and directly students must learn symbolically. This is partly due to the standardization of western music notation system. The music notation commonly used in our era now is not iconic representation, they are symbolic since they do not look like the item they represent. It is a further abstraction of the sound that is intended, and a much further abstraction of the *means* to produce the sound. Children who just started to learn music might already find it challenging to find their way around the keyboard, let alone to understand further abstractions in the form of symbols. This book, however, visually presents the *means* themselves in details. It diligently maps the step-by-step process to play the musical gestures and short pieces. For each piece, step-by-step positions of the hands are shown and the individual keys that should be played are highlighted, complete with markings of arrows and numbers to indicate the successions. After all, the author intended this book for children aged 4–7, which is when the Piagetian *preoperational period* lies. At this stage, although children are already able to represent information at a mental level, it is still poorly organized and thus logical reasoning is still not apparent (Taylor, 2005: 62). It is therefore a great idea not to introduce them to symbolic learning yet, where organized thinking is required. In fact, the author did not expect students to understand any musical notation at all during this book. It is introduced only on the next chapter of the series.

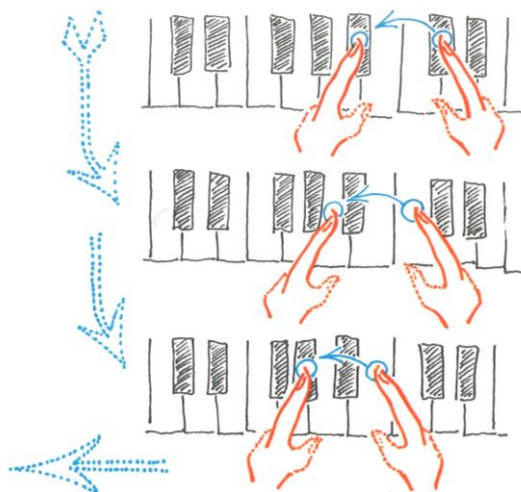


Figure 4: Step-by-step process that is shown by the book (Runze, 1971: 17)

The downside of this, however, is that at some point the drawings become insufficient as the complexity increases: just by looking at the pictures, it becomes too confusing even potentially for the teachers themselves to figure out how exactly the author's music compositions progress. There are too many arrows and lines, but too little pictures (potentially to save printing spaces, repeating successions are omitted). Luckily, the pages are full of text explanations and notations of what exactly should be played. They are however, to be conveyed by the teacher and thus at the end, potentially the student is left mostly learning by rote. The second downside is that due to this approach, rather than learning tuneful melodies, the pieces that are presented within the book are mostly gestural and pattern based. It might lead some students to get bored to the repetitive nature of the materials and be less engaged, compared to when learning well-known tunes or other interesting pieces. It may also lead the learning to lose its sense of structure and be based on merely 'trying around' of the gestures and patterns. Although it would work for younger children (the author anyways recommended this book for 4 until 7 years olds), or those who prefer more relaxed pace, it may not be best for those who are ready for more deliberate learning.

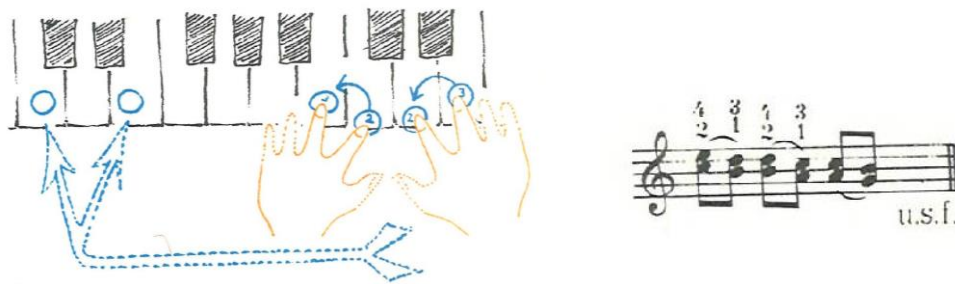


Figure 5: Confusing representation of the playing succession, and the notation of how the author intend (Ibid, 55)

To counter this, the teacher should be creative. After all, as has been previously discussed, the author demanded a lot of ingeniousness when using his book. Firstly, all melodies within the book are assigned words matching the metaphorical themes of the pieces. Teachers would have to sing and encourage their students to sing the melodies, and/or sing and play at the same time. The author encouraged to invent new verses together with the student. This would help to build the sense of learning structure and would lead the student to engross himself in the metaphorical world, thus provoking creativity. The author also mentioned that singing would help to connect the inner notion of the piece with the hand and finger movements (Ibid, 3). The gestural ‘mini-melodies’ are also great exploration of vocal play. For example, the call of the cuckoo representing the minor third interval, is later widened to a full major triad question-and-answer vocal play (Ibid, 16, 37). The author intended that speech and body movement are used to address rhythmical learning. For example, the understanding of time signature can be attained by using texts that have steady downbeats. Second, as already discussed in subchapter 4.2, the author suggested to keep a drawing notebook where the student would be able to draw pictures. The author also noted that the learning of the notation does not have to fully be done exactly as the order of the volume (note reading is only introduced on the second volume of the series) and has to be decided on a case-by-case basis (Ibid, 3). Personally, the author of this paper would use this book alongside other materials to counter the deficiencies found in this book and employ more dynamic learning.

Another main strength of this book is the presentation of the motorics of piano playing. It is thoroughly introducing a wide range of motorics by employing step-by-step scaffolded approach. They range from common techniques such as *staccato* and *legato*

playing, finger exchange (playing repeated notes by changing fingers), abduction and adduction of the fingers, glissando, sideways curving movements of the arm, palm rotation movement, chromatic scale, until more difficult ones such as holding one key while the other fingers play other keys. It even introduces the technical execution of the notorious Chopin's A-Minor Etude (Op. 10 No. 2) chromatic scale (the author mentioned that this exercise is specifically inspired by this etude)! Within this etude, rather than the regular usage of the thumb for the white keys to play the chromatic scale, pianists have to use the middle, ring, and little fingers instead since the other two fingers are already occupied to play the right-hand chords. The playing of scales, for example, is introduced step-by-step by firstly getting used to the chromatic scale (of regular fingering) before slowly making its way towards the 'thumb-under' position. Special attention is also given towards learning the mirroring nature of the keyboard: the keyboard has two mirroring centers, which are on the keys of D and Ab. By centering to mirror on one of these keys, we would be able to play mirrored versions of both hands with exactly the same motoric effects. Understanding this nature and finding it on the keyboard may be difficult for young children though.

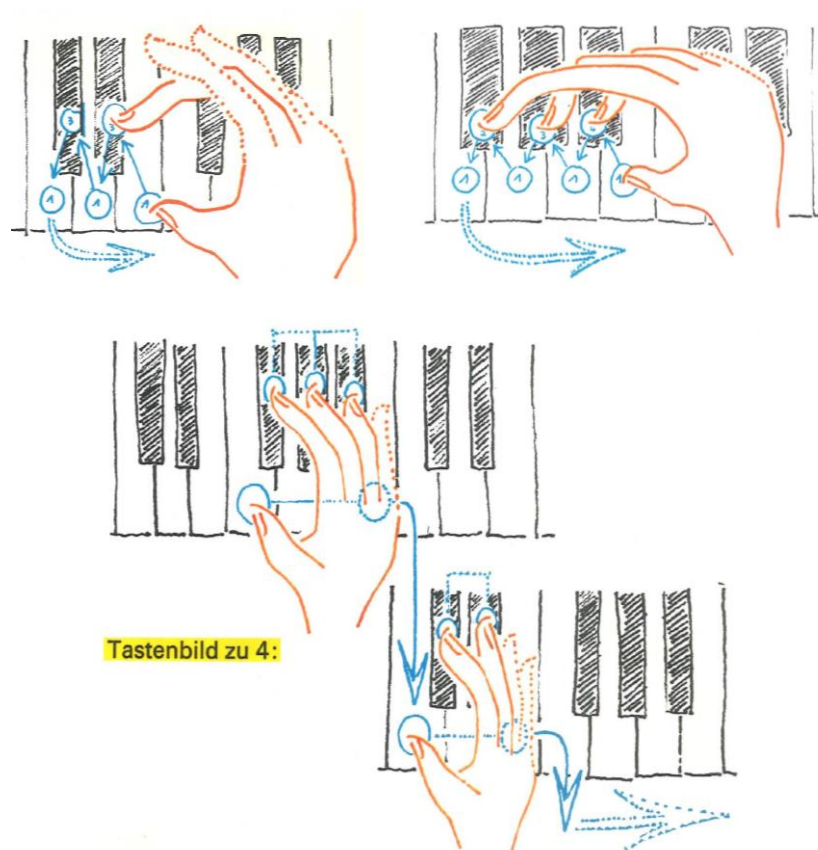


Figure 6: The progression of motoric introduction for scale-playing (Ibid, 25, 41)

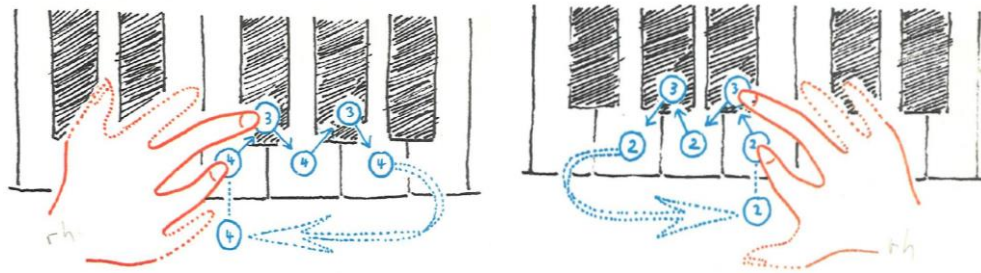


Figure 7: Introduction of the chromatic scale to be played using the middle and ring fingers only (Ibid, 53)



Figure 8: Chopin's Etude Op. 10 No. 2, measures 1-4

The author also recommended that students are taught transposition early. The melodies and patterns are to be transposed using the help of learning through the iconic representation of the keyboard and hand positions, as well as through listening combined by rote imitation of the teacher. For example, the first five tones of the major keys are to be transposed towards other keys one by one chromatically both upwards and downwards. This is where the author might have gone too far in his approach. It might be very difficult for young children to understand this transposition concept and to look for them through listening without any understanding of musical notation, let alone music theory. Although he realized the risk of fatigue of the overly schematic practice, he still argues that it would still make more sense to learn this by ear. However, one might argue that even learning by ear might still cause fatigue. Nevertheless, he mentioned that this task is to be handled on case-by-case basis.

The same is true when the author recommended the learning of modes such as lydian and phrygian. He recommended for students to be able to recognize and play the first

five tones of the major, minor, lydian, and phrygian modes, and then to transpose them. He connected them with the idea of the whole-tone and half-tone relations since through changing the relationships between the tones, the modes would be produced. These all require high-level theoretical understanding that is really difficult to attain only through learning by ear and realizing the visual and hand grip patterns. Young children might also not be able to grasp yet the relevancy of understanding these concepts. He also introduced canonical playing of simple melody, with various rhythm combinations to be implemented between the hands. This can be really difficult to do for young children, who have limited motoric coordination capability.

Cognitively, such transposition tasks also require problem-solving skills as well as *meta*-awareness of how pitches and hand/finger coordination behave. As mentioned in chapter 2, very young children tend to problem solve through trial-and-error. The author, after all, has mentioned the risk of fatigue from overly schematic practice, which may also stem from the trial-and-error attempts of searching the correct pitches. Moreover, awareness of how the similarity and difference of the pitch relations is also required to recognize the correct transposition. Meta-awareness of them would eventually be more beneficial as strategies would be employed to find the right pitches. All of these require high-level thinking, in which conscious problem-solving itself is said to develop only until when the *concrete-operational stage* is reached. It is entered only until around seven years of age, which is beyond the target audience of this book. (cf. Taylor, 2005.)



4.4.2 Vivo Piano

This book may be the most versatile compared to the others. It does not only include different styles of music (as mentioned in subchapter 4.3), and applications for various settings (as mentioned in 4.1), but also includes various activities and learning approaches. For example, there are exercise and game pages where students have to write down and fill the tasks with the correct answers. These tasks are excellent ways to provoke curiosity and motivate learning. As previously mentioned, the book starts with learning musical gestures, phenomena, and short pieces by rote only. They are aided with various graphics to help characterization and to lead towards music notation. Only until the second section of the book does music notation start to be introduced. The pieces that are introduced in the book are also of a wide variety,

starting from folk songs from different parts of the world, themes from films, using various tonalities, up until arrangements for small chamber group. It also touches wide range of topics such as music theory, technical motorics, improvisation, accompaniment and keyboard harmony. Almost every page has pictures of cartoon characters that are connected to the theme of the pieces, making learning more engaging and encouraging creativity and expression.

Compared to the other books, this book presents materials more deliberately and progresses faster. Just this primer chapter of the series goes to the level far beyond the other books reach, which suggests that it is targeted for slightly older children who are ready for more deliberate learning. For example, music theory tasks such as counting note durations require logical and mathematical reasoning skills. For this, children would need to be at (or at least nearing) the development stage of *concrete-operational period*, which Piaget claimed to start around seven years of age (Taylor, 2005: 62). Due to the fast pace of the book, teachers should be sensitive towards their students' capabilities. The note durations, for example, are presented all at once and within one page students are expected to understand the mathematical differences of all of them. Immediately two pages after that, different time signatures are already introduced. It may be wise for teachers to give supplementary materials, or use the book more flexibly, such as skipping parts that the student might not be ready to learn yet and returning to them later. The book's authors themselves recommend teachers to adapt the book towards each student's needs. They also mention that the known repertoires and the rhythmic syllable use are continuation from the Finnish music kindergarten (*musiikkileikkikoulu*), indicating that the authors target more experienced students and suggest the usage of this book comprehensively in conjunction with other musical studies (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2005: 3).

AIKA-ARVOT

Kahdeksasosanuotti ja -tauko			1/2
			
Neljäsosanuotti ja -tauko			1
Puolinuotti ja -tauko			2
Pisteellinen puolinuotti ja -tauko			3
Kokonuotti ja -tauko			4



Mikä nuottijoukkue venyy pisimmälle?

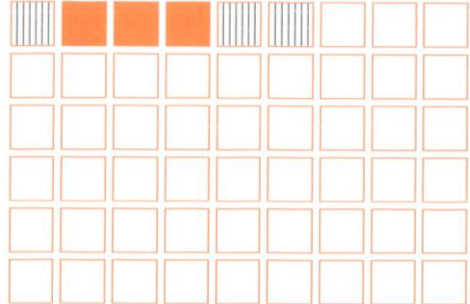
	
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Figure 9: Note duration task, introducing all note durations at once (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2003: 46)

The difficulty of the pieces that are introduced also progresses quite quickly. It continually increases from one to the next, and becomes quite advanced towards the end of the book. Even the ones that are meant to be learnt through rote may already be quite complicated for some. Towards the middle of the book, they become quite long with different sections to be memorized one after another. To tackle such challenge, it would be beneficial if children have mastered their *metacognitive* and *metamemory* skills, which start to be employed around four years of age (Taylor, 2005: 57). During rote learning sessions, teachers may also help employing and developing *metacognitive* and *metamemory* strategies such as encouraging students to focus more

on more difficult sections, implementing steps of action and ways of organization, or recognizing the patterns that are being played.

To keep up with the pace, it is essential that students commit to regular practice sessions. To practice effectively, students should be aware regarding how their mind and motoric coordination should be trained. *Metacognition* is therefore also required here. Teachers should discuss effective ways to practice to not waste time and gain more immediate results. The authors also described various common strategies to practicing, such as by at first playing the simplified version of some of the figurations, before developing it to the more intricate version (Jääskeläinen & Kantala, 2005: 23). This is a good way to train the mind firstly to get used to the sound progression and for the muscles to feel the overall required procedure, before attempting more advanced execution.

Improvisation is also a major topic within the book. After all, the book's authors have put special attention towards it (Ibid, 3). In the beginning, the authors emphasized the importance for students to familiarize themselves with musical phenomena through experience. To achieve this, improvisation tasks are introduced right in the beginning. At first, improvisation is done freely through the stimuli of pictures and stories. This approach is an excellent way to foster expression and creativity. The focus to experientially understand music at first (rather than learning concepts or develop skills) will also give more context regarding the upcoming learning points when conceptual understanding and skill development are required. It encourages a more holistic understanding of music, and has major implications on fostering expression, emotion, and embodiment. Later on, the book presents other stimuli for improvisation which requires more conceptual understanding, such as improvisation on a given pitch selection, or rhythm.

The authors also often called for the pieces themselves to be implemented improvisatorially. They encouraged teachers to be creative in their teaching and implement various ways the pieces could serve as base for other musical implementations. For example, improvising the melody of the piece, exploring the musical gestures related to the playing techniques, or applying towards group playing. This is somehow similar to Runze's 'improvisation of conduct/behaviour' paradigm. From these, one can see how the authors regard playing musical pieces as far more

than merely a question of accuracy of execution. Every piece is to be viewed from many angles, the inherent possibilities within it to be explored extensively. Rather than merely executing what is written, the pieces should serve as ideas, stimuli, and starting points towards the end goal of musical expression and exploration.

4.4.3 Colour Keys – the Piano ABC

This book is also special, since it aims especially to apply the pedagogical ideas of Zoltán Kodály. The author emphasized Kodály's own idea regarding the importance of developing the inner hearing skills through audio-visual means, that 'what is learnt using different senses will have the longest lasting effect' (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013a: 4). The approaches within the book that is clearly Kodály-inspired are the usage of movable-do system, the rhythm syllables, and the adoption of Kodály's solmization hand signs. The author also strongly urged teachers to encourage students to sing and for teachers to lead singing practices, just as how Kodály urged solfège to be done as early as possible.

Although only Kodály is mentioned in the book, the author also called for activities that Orffian and Dalcrozian in nature, such as Dalcrozian movement exercises to express *crescendo* and *diminuendo* and Orffian body percussion rhythm exercises. The book introduces music notation right at the start. It firstly introduced rhythm learning before moving onto pitches and melody. With regards to the pitches, they were presented by gradually adding the number of lines within the staff. These are all also called for by Orff. (cf. Harrington, 1972; McDonald & Simons, 1989.)

The author also mentioned that in this book she implemented the 'Colour Keys' approach that she had previously developed within her research and development work. That is why the notes and staves in this book are full of colour. The idea is that every octave area (from C to B) is marked with different colours to aid learning. The lines of the staff are also coloured according to the octave areas they represent. The book is also equipped with a coloured slip which should be placed behind the keys on the piano. The colours of the slip mark the octave areas of the piano (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013a: 4). This is a great way to help children focus their attention and find their way around the piano, especially at the beginning stages of the symbolic learning. The book is also equipped with transposing and transforming slips. They are

made of plastic so therefore are transparent. On them are written solmizations of several tonalities, such as the regular major or ionian mode, the whole tone scale, as well as middle-eastern tonality. Since they are transparent, they could be put on the keys of the piano and moved around to aid solfège learning of various key centricities.



Figure 10: Division of the octaves with the different colours (Ibid, 15)

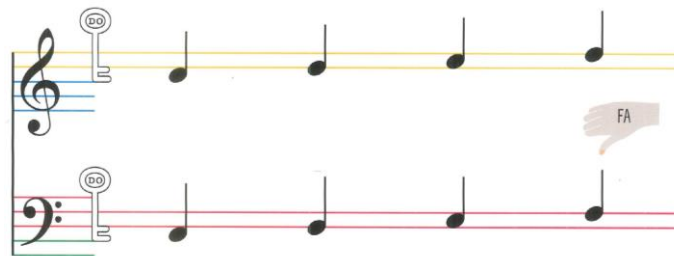


Figure 11: Colouring of the staff according to the corresponding octave area (Ibid, 90)

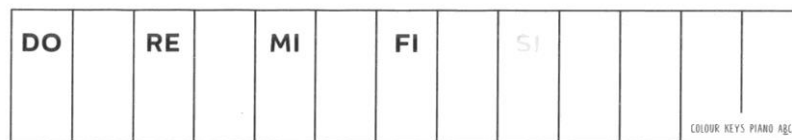


Figure 12: Transforming slip of whole-tone scale

The book introduced materials very systematically. It is very clear and well-structured, and it presents concepts at a pace that is comfortable for children. The approach is very conceptually based, slowly building musical vocabularies one-by-one, fully equipped with exercises. It starts by realizing the different octave areas of the keyboard (with the help of the colour slip), then basic rhythm realization assisted with word play, rhythmic syllables, body movements and body percussion, then introduction towards dynamics, arm movement motorics (such as movement towards different octave areas as well as hand crossing), before starting with pitches. The pitches and keys are introduced one-by-one following the movable-do paradigm, and staves are simplified using only the necessary lines (which amount gradually increases). The same goes for note duration. Hand signs accompany the introduction and are taught one-by-one from

do until fa (so, la, and ti are introduced in the following chapter of the series). Each time a new pitch and/or key is introduced, it is accompanied by short pieces, containing pitches that have only been learnt so far.

These step-by-step approaches are excellent ways to help ease towards the symbolic learning, and nurture reasoning capabilities while children enter the *concrete-operational stage*. In the teacher's guide, the author also presented words for the pieces that can be taught to students to aid learning by singing. In between the pieces, musical concepts such as articulation, tempo changes (like *ritardando*), or time signatures are continuously being introduced and are applied to the pieces. Pages for composition exercises and other writing or drawing tasks are also provided in between. Well-known children tunes such as the 'Hot Cross Buns' as well as the Finnish '*Pienen-pieni Veturi*' ('Small Locomotive') are also included.

The movable-do paradigm has a major part to play within this book. However, it may not always be easy to teach such a theoretical concept to young children. To deal with this, the author used metaphors to present the concept. 'Do' is a key-character that will open the note house (staff). 'Do' can jump and travel around the keyboard. Students are taught from the beginning the difference between the actual name of the keys and the solmization to avoid the confusion of fixed-do. Pieces are also called based on their tonalities (for example if 'D-do' for D major and 'E-do' for E major). (Suorsa-Rannanmäki, 2013b:18–21.)

The movable-do is applied in depth throughout the book. It is especially significant for the solfège training. For this, the author recommended various singing exercises, such as singing learnt and already memorized tunes on different tonal pitches. When learning new pitch step, she recommended practicing singing back and forth between the pitch steps, and especially for the skips (such as do-mi, re-fa, and do-fa). When fa is introduced, teachers should lead their students to realize the semitone difference instead of a tone. The author recommended *glissando* singing between a tone and semitone to feel the difference. The transposing slips also come as aids. It provides visual representation of the relationship of the pitches. It could be put on the keyboard to help find the keys of the desired tonal center. Thus, the learning within the movable-do paradigm that the author intended is done comprehensively combining aural, visual,

kinesthetic and theoretical learning through singing, playing, transposing, and improvising. (Ibid, 32–33.)

At the end of the book, the student is preliminary introduced to transformation. It happens when the tonality of a given tune is changed towards other tonality, such as from major to minor, or to whole tone scale. As mentioned in subchapter 4.2, metaphors are also used to explain the concept. Transformation slips are also included in the book to help students find the notes on the piano. As discussed in subchapter 4.4.1, this topic requires higher levels of thinking and problem-solving skills, and thus it is a good idea to introduce it only at the end. By this time students should have already gotten acquainted with the inner workings of music, and thus would be ready to understand the relevancy of transposition and transformation. The students would have gotten slightly older and thus are more ready to consciously problem solve.

5 Conclusions and Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the main qualities that are present within music teaching/learning activities for children. It was done by analyzing beginner piano method books as sources of case studies. The analysis was done qualitatively as it examines the approaches, perspectives, and pedagogical standpoints of the books' authors. Theory-driven content analysis was employed as methodological starting points, examining the content of the books on several conceptual parameters, such as how comprehensive they are, how aligned they are with childrens' learning, developmental, and early childhood music education theories, and how flexible they are to facilitate different teaching and learning contexts. Content analysis should be done *unobtrusively* (without any manipulation of the source) and it should aim to reveal the 'deeper layers' of the content (cf. Leavy, 2022). Qualitative research has a subjective tendency (cf. Hammersley, 2013), and therefore readers are advised to understand the background, perspectives, and goals of the researcher to fully understand the study. It may also help to take what is stated in this paper with a grain of salt, since these are all subjective evaluations of the author. It is very likely that some readers have different judgments.

There are many similarities that can be found among the books. Extra-musically the authors call for piano lessons that nurture the social, creative/playful, and cultural sides of music education, while intra-musically they emphasize teaching approaches that are multi-faceted, comprehensively incorporating various aspects of music while at the same time aiming to present the materials to be simple and easy to grasp for children. The approaches and materials that are presented in the book have a strong potential to be used for teaching that is student-centered in nature, promoting learners' agency and focusing on exploration, creativity, and enjoyment within learning.

The study has helped the author immensely to understand better the possible cause of the challenges he faced in his classrooms. It might stem from the lack of awareness regarding the intellectual states of young children. If students are not able to relate to the concepts that are presented, they might switch off and cause the seeming 'conflict of interest' that the author experienced. It might also stem from the author's own outlook that might be in discordance with the students' interest and capabilities. Understanding the paradigms laid within this paper has helped the author to have better

insight regarding other possible ways to view and/or structure piano teaching/learning activities.

Although the study is specifically aimed for piano teaching, it has the prospect to be applied to any subject. It would be particularly interesting to use similar analytical approaches to reveal the ‘hidden curriculums’ within different teaching materials and approaches (cf. Apple, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008). Taking an example from this study, the multi-cultural aspect of the music that is presented in the ‘Vivo’ book may infer to an intention to promote societal and cultural diversity. It prompts children to be aware of the world around them, and thus has implications towards personal, societal, and cultural values as well as identity. The fact that the authors encourage drawing in lessons, or free interpretation of pictures even as early as during the first lesson points to the constructivist model of education, where learning is an active process, and understanding can only be attained actively through experience and by the interaction of previous knowledge and new events (Arends, 1998). The ability to interpret the pictures and apply it as musical gestures need active participation and require previous experience of the objects themselves in real life. It is only when the learner has experienced them, would he/she be able to relate to the musical gestures. Anyways, the willingness for teachers to position themselves more socially rather than authoritatively has been attributed as constructivist teaching behavior (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

Discussion of ‘hidden curriculums’ can then be easily connected to ethics. How should one relate towards diversity and constructivism as ideologies within education? Should one regard them as target ideals in every case? Are they more elitist? Are or should they be the norm? How should pedagogues approach them in their classrooms? A less than ideal example has been presented in subchapter 4.3. Similar instance could be raised with regards to the constructivist models. What if a society values obedience more than active participation, or views them as contradicting one another? Curriculums are after all akin to ‘propaganda’ that the authority tries to instill into the minds of others. These debates show how deeply immersed in ethics the profession of an educator is.

Useful next steps for future research within this topic would be to widen the studies to other age groups, other instruments, various difficulty levels, other method books, and

so on. Applying different methods such as interview may also be useful. It would be particularly interesting to hear from the authors themselves their thoughts regarding the aspects discussed within this paper. As mentioned, it has the possibility to be applied to other subjects, not only music and arts but also language, mathematics, social and natural sciences, and so on. Similar research on other subjects and topics alongside further development works have the impactful potential to change our way of structuring curriculums in schools and institutions, as well as generally to influence our way of thinking about education.

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