An investigation of Taiwanese teachers' experience, beliefs and practice in piano teaching: exploring the scope for creativity

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs about good teaching, and their practice, particularly teachers who teach beginners or young children; and to gain understanding of how Taiwanese piano teachers perceive creativity in their teaching. The perceptions of piano teaching of seven Taiwanese teachers were explored through using a qualitative methodology, which included an open questionnaire, two interviews separated by observation of classroom practice, and a reflective diary prepared by the participants which was facilitated by video-stimulated recall. The principal areas and findings of my research were that Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs about what constituted good lessons are diverse. These were explored from three perspectives, namely, the characteristics of effective teachers, the components of effective lessons, and effective teaching strategies. The participant teachers’ attitudes towards creativity in teaching were also different, and can be categorised as ranging from fixed and rigid, to flexible and open. They identified several teaching strategies as creative teaching, such as using metaphor, storytelling, and Internet resources. Additionally, their various purposes in using creative teaching were observed to be to develop learners’ musical abilities; for enjoyment; and to impart a specific teaching point. Although the teachers’ own experiences were found to have a positive effect on their teaching beliefs, the influence of these benefits was not always evident in their actual practice. Pupils' low motivation to learn and insufficient
practice were considered as the common challenges and, when reflecting on their own teaching in the second interview and in the diaries, most of the participants focused mainly on analysis of pupils’ playing errors, and tended to believe that repeated practice by the learners was the best approach to improving performance. In contrast, two teachers believed their expertise in both music and teaching could help their learners to deal with learning difficulties. Based on these research results, I conclude that creativity in piano lessons can be understood from two perspectives. The first relates to how teachers perceive their own teaching and whether they are content with what they do or seek to develop their teaching competence; the other is associated with teachers’ own philosophy of the function of education, which affects how teachers develop their teaching.

**Keywords:** piano teaching, teaching beliefs, creativity, teachers’ reflection
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research purpose

There were two research aims in this study. One was to explore Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs and their practice, particularly for teachers who teach beginners or young children. Taking the understanding of teachers’ beliefs and practice as a starting point, I intended to explore further what contributes to the teachers’ current perceptions of piano teaching. Relevant factors included their past learning experiences when students, their own teaching experiences, and their reflections on their practice. The second research aim was to gain understanding of how Taiwanese piano teachers perceive creativity in their teaching. In order to do this, the perceptions of piano teaching of a sample of Taiwanese teachers were explored through a qualitative methodological research study.

1.2 The background of piano education in Taiwan

Western music in Taiwan can be traced back to the 17th century, when Dutch and Spanish armies occupied Taiwan for a short time; however, the Western influence was limited to church music (Chiang, 2009). With the new Taiwanese government established and the armies having left Taiwan at the end of the 17th century, Western music gradually disappeared until the 19th century, when Christianity was introduced to Taiwan (Chiang, 2009). In 1865, the English Presbyterian Church arrived in Taiwan and not only introduced Western
musical instruments, such as organ and piano, but also set up musical training programmes that played an important role in promoting Western music in Taiwan (Li, 2001). At the same time, piano educators such as Margaret Gauld and Isabel Taylor taught Western classical piano music. The first generation of Taiwanese pianists was made up of their students (Tzeng, 1994).

From 1895 to 1945, Taiwan, under Japanese colonisation, used Westernised Japanese songs as the major repertoire for music classes in schools. In this connection the piano or other keyboard played a special role as an accompanying instrument, establishing the predominance of the piano as the preferred instrument for children to learn. Gradually, Western music began to dominate in Taiwan’s music education (Ho, 2006).

In Taiwan, the main preconception for most people in the definition of musician often relates to ‘greatness’ and ‘being gifted’ in performance. The Taiwanese system of ‘specialised music classes’ may be the reason for this preconception. In order to provide good education to potential professional musicians, a special music-training programme has been offered in a few public schools since 1948 (Ho, 2006), each year grade being constituted by only one specialised class. In this professional music training system, the piano is the instrument which must be learned.

However, because of the economic growth around 1960, this privilege of learning music was gradually extended by the popularity of having an
instrumental lesson after school. At the same time, Yamaha music studio appeared in Taiwan with an advertising slogan: ‘Children who learn the piano will learn to be always good’. This marketing strategy compelled many parents to send their children to learn the piano. According to Huang (2004), nearly 70% of primary-school students went to music schools or had one-to-one instrumental lessons.

The more recent motivation for taking such instrumental lessons appears to be related to physical and mental relaxation or to learning a new skill, rather than being particularly focused on nurturing musicianship or musical creativity (Yeh, 2007). Furthermore, primary-school age is the best time for Taiwanese pupils to have extra-curricular activities, because when students enter junior and senior high school, they face a heavy emphasis on academic learning. Piano learning has become one of the popular options amongst non-academic subjects (Chu, 2003). According to Lin (2001), many Taiwanese children before primary school attend group music-training programmes that are offered by Yamaha, Kawai, or the Orff musical society. These programmes mainly provide diverse musical activities such as body movement or musical games to develop learners’ musical abilities. The private piano lessons usually begin either simultaneously with these music groups or one year later. Learning music is a popular activity in Taiwan. However, the predominance of technical training in the very early stage of instrumental learning in Taiwan, has led to learners' aesthetic development seldom being addressed (Tzeng, 1994).
Current pedagogical practice of instrumental lessons in Taiwan can be roughly grouped into two educational systems. One is set by musical organizations, such as Yamaha, Kawai, and the exam board of the Royal Schools of Music. These establish their own musical curriculum and teaching materials and run their graded examinations. Teachers who would like to teach in these systems have to be trained by a specific programme or have successfully passed the graded examinations, and mostly they teach in the way they have learned from this programme. Students who attend one of these musical schools are usually expected to follow the set syllabus. Therefore, learning content is basically bound to the graded examination. The other learning approach is characterised by music teachers who graduated from the department of music in a university. Normally, these teachers follow a conservatory style that is mainly based on Western classical music, and they pay more attention to performing skills and sensitive interpretation.

1.3 Rationale for undertaking the research

In my own experience of learning Western classical music, I found that my previous piano teachers, even with beginners, tended to adopt the same teaching style as that used in teaching advanced learners, such as focusing mainly on the technical skills of playing the instrument. Many current analyses of instrumental teaching have also identified technique-mastery as the predominant focus, and a teaching style based on one-way-communication teaching style (Young, Burwell, & Pickup, 2003). Most research studies have
taken place in higher education, where the focus is presumably on advanced and professional musical development, so that it may be considered reasonable to put an emphasis on playing technique. However, do this focus and teaching style also occur at the level of beginners or young children? Or was my learning experience a unique case? The current teaching practice of Taiwanese piano teachers at non-advanced level, therefore, has become the focus of this study.

For over a decade, creativity has become a popular issue both in the commercial industries and in the field of education. In terms of school education, how to cultivate learners’ creativity arouses a great deal of discussion in many countries including the UK and Taiwan. On the other hand, more and more researchers believe that creative learning plays a significant role in personal development (Lipscomb, Hodges, & Sebold, 2004; Sefton-Green, 2008). These researchers believe that learning how to learn is much more important than accumulating a body of knowledge related to a specific subject. In order to promote individuals’ ability to learn, a one-to-one learning environment or a master–apprenticeship model may be more efficient in enabling teachers to pay more attention to a learner’s specific needs (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007). In addition, it seems that private instrumental lessons without academic pressure or a specific curriculum to follow are an appropriate context in which to develop personal creativity.
In order to match new educational thinking, the teaching style of transmitting information to students through a one-way communication process needs to change. Although the advantages of the type of one-to-one instrumental teaching deriving from the conservatoire tradition have been noted earlier, it seems to belong in a kind of isolation from modern trends (Gellrich & Sundin, 1993; Triantafyllaki, 2005). If we wish to try to promote creativity in piano teaching and learning, it makes sense to explore first teachers’ perceptions of creativity in teaching. Only then will we understand whether we can or cannot proceed in that promotion and carry out further research in creative learning in this context of one-to-one teaching in the conservatoire tradition.

Furthermore, educational philosophies in Taiwan have been greatly influenced by Confucius, which results in teachers being given authoritative status and dominance in the classroom (Hsieh, 2010). Therefore, I presume that the potential for exploiting creativity in piano lessons will mainly depend on teachers themselves. Without teachers’ own creativity, it is almost impossible to evoke a learner’s creativity in this one-to-one educational setting.

Consequently, I am interested in piano teachers’ own personal creativity as it is expressed in the context of their primary intention of developing their teaching effectiveness. In order to pursue this research interest, I planed to examine how piano teachers cope with the teaching challenges they face in their professional work.
1.4 The research questions

In accordance with my research purposes, three research questions have been developed:

(1) What are Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs about good teaching?

(2) How do Taiwanese piano teachers understand the role of creativity in piano teaching?

(3) How do Taiwanese piano teachers reflect on their teaching?

1.5 The study

1.5.1 Methodology

The first topic to be considered concerns teachers’ beliefs about how to teach effectively, and how their practice reflects, or sometimes differs from, these beliefs. This involves also looking at how their own past learning and teaching experiences contribute to these two. Thus, the nature of this research topic is determined by the nature of its subject matter, which is people’s perceptions, opinions, and beliefs. People’s beliefs are formed and reshaped by interpreting life events that they have experienced personally. When I explore these beliefs, I also inevitably bring in my personal interpretation in order to understand the significance of the data. As the knowledge arrived at in my research is mainly built on the individual interpretations of the participants and myself as the researcher, the ontological position is realism and the epistemological position
is inter-subjectivism. These philosophical and epistemological concepts and their relevance are discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

With regard to creativity, as a socially constructed concept, the definition greatly varies depending on different cultural backgrounds and the individual mind. In this study, I looked at creativity from two perspectives. First, I examined teachers’ own perception of creativity and also how their personal experience affected their perceptions. Second, in order to explore the scope for creativity in piano teaching, I constructed my theoretical framework by adopting certain specific theories of personal creativity. In other words, the notion of creativity in piano teaching is constructed by the participants and me, and this kind of knowledge is based on a specific social environment. Although the nature of this research topic can be classed under the broader umbrella of interpretivism, this places the main emphasis on how people discover significance in specific events, which places the focus on personal meaningfulness. Therefore, I attempted to adopt constructivism into my methodology, because I believe that constructivism has a necessary heuristic role in bringing out the degree to which the knowledge arrived at is dependent on the social context in which it is generated.

In order to look at each participant as a whole person, the participants’ past experiences, beliefs, practice, and reflection were explored in this study. I did not attempt to test any existing theory but to enrich the understanding of piano teaching. Therefore, qualitative methodology is adopted in this study.
1.5.2 Methods

Five research methods were used in this study, in the following sequence. (1) Open-questionnaire: the participants were asked to describe three significant events affecting their teaching careers. (2) Semi-structured interview: this focused on teaching beliefs. (3) The observation of two piano lessons. (4) and (5) Reflective diary completed by the participants aided by video-stimulated recall. The data from (4) and (5) were insufficient to provide materials for my research questions, so I decided to conduct a second interview in which I discussed with the individual teachers how they responded to teaching challenges. In total, seven female Taiwanese piano teachers were involved, two for a pilot study and five for the main study. These teachers were selected by purposive sampling method (more details in 5.5.2). The data collection of the main study was carried out in April, May, and June 2012.

1.5.3 Findings

The research findings provide an understanding of Taiwanese piano teaching. First, I located teachers’ beliefs about good piano teaching and their attitude towards creativity along two spectrums, one for teaching and one for attitude, orientated between the same poles, namely, at one end, open-minded, and at the other end, limited and fixed. Most importantly, the beliefs of the individual teachers about piano teaching and about creativity were found to register in the exactly corresponding segments of the two spectrums. In addition, the
teachers’ own learning experience had a positive impact on shaping their teaching beliefs, although in some cases, the beliefs may not be evident in the actual teaching practice. I identified three different factors in how teachers developed their practice, namely, (1) intuition or teachers’ own learning experience, (2) new ideas from reading or attending teaching workshops, and (3) a habit of continual reflection on teaching.

Based on teachers’ beliefs about effectiveness and their attitude towards teaching challenges, three teaching styles were distinguished: mastery of technique, educational teaching, and creative teaching. These are not separate disconnected categories but can be flexibly mixed and modified according to the students’ needs. When teachers are categorised as creative, this means they involved all three teaching styles in their teaching.

The potential for creativity in piano lessons is dependent on teachers’ educational assumptions, because these assumptions affect how they address teaching challenges and how they develop their teaching career. In addition, three teachers’ roles are recognised: monitor, instructor, and mentor. The more teachers combine different roles in their practice, the greater the potential for creativity in piano lessons that can be observed.

1.5.4 Significance

Four significant features of this study can be highlighted. Most academic research into instrumental teaching has been carried out in higher education.
This study aimed to explore lessons at the level of the beginner or young children. Second, rather than only focusing from one perspective to understand the participants as teachers, I attempted to explore each participant's beliefs from different perspectives, including their past experience, my observation, and teachers’ own reflection. Third, I tried to connect instrumental teaching to creativity, not only identifying the features of creative teaching, but also relating teachers’ own creativity in practice to their educational assumptions, their personal attitude to challenges, and their way of reflecting on their teaching. Finally, I conducted my research in Taiwan. Although the conservatoire teaching style is adopted worldwide, it is worthwhile to explore the potential for creativity in a teaching environment that is influenced by Eastern culture and Confucian philosophy.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The thesis comprises eleven chapters. Chapter One, the present chapter, provides a rationale for the study, including why this is an area of particular interest, why it is worthy of research, and how this led to the development of the research questions. It concludes with this outline of the chapters.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four are my literature review, which covers the last three decades up until the writing of the final draft of this thesis (September 2014).
Chapter Two examines the historical context of instrumental lessons, which can be traced back to the 18th and early 19th centuries. Over this period instrumental pedagogy has changed from learning by creating music with a master to developing technique-mastery and the interpretative conventions. Although the one-to-one master–apprentice convention has been maintained, the changed relationship between teacher and student can be examined from diverse perspectives, such as modes of teaching and the formality or informality of the teacher’s role. Another focus of Chapter Two concerns certain significant factors contributing to good instrumental lessons, discussing the literature that investigates students’ practising and motivation to learn, and also teachers’ effectiveness.

Chapter Three focuses on professional teachers’ opinions about instrumental lessons, including teaching purposes and pedagogical practice. Two general teaching purposes emerged: teaching for practical skills or subject knowledge, and teaching for learners’ enjoyment of music. Different educational assumptions among professional teachers about whether learning attitude can be developed in students by teachers or depends on the student’s personality appear in the literature. The focus then shifts to explore pedagogical practice. Three significant teaching focuses have been picked out in this literature review: musical literacy, technical mastery, and learning by ear. As mentioned in Chapter Two, musical interpretation plays an important role in Western
classical music. I therefore further explore how instrumental teachers address this area, and conclude by looking at teacher-led teaching style.

Chapter Four addresses the literature on creativity, looking first at broad theories of personal creativity, then at creativity in education, and finally at the specific field of music education. First, as creativity is an ambiguous concept, it is important to know how existing research defines and approaches this research topic, before narrowing the focus down to research into personal creativity. When it comes to music education, creativity can be understood from two different perspectives. Some researchers believe that creativity is domain-specific. Therefore, the relevant cultural convention has a great influence on evaluating what has been created. On the other hand, some academics believe that creativity can simply relate to and be evaluated in terms of personal musical expression or thinking. Finally, the research results relating to professional teachers’ opinions and practice are reviewed.

Chapter Five explains my theoretical and methodological framework and practical procedures. First, I describe my philosophical position and explain how I decided on my methodology. The justification of each of the research methods I used in my study is followed by an ethical statement of my research practice. I briefly describe the results of my pilot study and my reflection on it. The sampling and the process of the main study are then explained, and lastly, I describe the tables and charts used to analyse my data.
Chapters Six to Nine present my research findings.

Chapter Six covers three main points. The first part sets out important information for us to understand the context in which my research was conducted, including the background information about participant teachers and the observed pupils, and the nature of the observed lessons. The second part presents the experiences which the teachers view as critical events in their teaching career. In the last section, I point out three possible factors impacting on the teachers’ approach to their job.

Chapter Seven answers my first research question, which dealt with teachers’ beliefs about effective piano teaching. The findings centre on three areas: characteristics of effective piano teachers; components of effective piano lessons; and effective teaching strategies. Having presented the participants’ opinions, I explore the relationships between the teachers’ own experience, beliefs, and practice, presenting my analysis in terms of each individual case and by cross-case comparison.

The focus of Chapter Eight is shifted to the teachers’ concept of creativity. This includes their general definition of creativity and their perceptions of the potential for creativity in piano lessons. Again, having presented teachers’ own opinions, I explore the relationship between teachers’ own creative experience and their concept of creativity.
Chapter Nine addresses the teachers’ reflections on the observed lessons and also on past teaching challenges. The findings come from the teachers’ written reflection on critical moments of observed lessons and discussion with me about their pupils’ learning difficulties. Following that, the time-scope is enlarged to their reflections on past teaching challenges.

Chapter Ten is the discussion. To begin with, I summarise the completed findings by grouping my participants into three categories, and then I discuss significant points, interacting with other research findings. Additionally, comparing the similarities and differences of the three teacher groups, the diagrammatic model of my theory is introduced. In the last section of this chapter, I take the teachers’ response to musical graded examinations as an example to test the validity of my model by applying it in a specific area.

I conclude in Chapter Eleven. In the first of two separate sections, two charts are provided to explain the potential for creativity in piano lessons. These show that, in terms of the teachers’ own personal creativity, their attitude towards challenges and their reflection on challenges impact on teachers’ responding strategies and thus, ultimately, on teachers’ effectiveness. Furthermore, teachers’ effectiveness is influenced by their assumptions about the effectiveness of teaching as compared with the alternative of leaving the pupil to work out their own solution to problems by practising on their own. If teachers are more confident of their impact on learners, they tend to more actively develop their teaching skills. In the second and final section of the
chapter, I indicate the significance of my contribution to the understanding of piano teaching as a professional practice, I reflect on my methodology and on the limitations of this research, and also, finally, sum up what I have learned.
CHAPTER 2: INSTRUMENTAL LESSONS

The three sections of this chapter consider literature concerning the historical context of instrumental lessons (2.1); the educational context of current instrumental teaching (2.2); and three significant factors contributing to good instrumental lessons, namely, learners' motivation to learn, and practising, and teachers' effectiveness (2.3).

2.1 Historical context of instrumental lessons

2.1.1 Pre-nineteenth century

In the Western classical music tradition, the master–apprentice relationship has been identified as the dominant style of teaching and learning: ‘where the master usually is looked at as a role model and a source of identification for the students, and where the dominating mode of student learning is initiation’ (Jørgensen, 2000). Generally speaking, this teaching and learning interaction is based on a hierarchy of knowledge. Based on his experience of being a recognised member of a specific cultural community, a master knows how to guide his apprentice to become familiar with the discipline in order to be a part of the community. According to Doll (1987), when Western classical music was considered as contemporary music, music students learned primarily by creating their own pieces and studying their teachers' compositions as a source of ideas for their own work. Gellrich provides a fuller description.

Teachers presented musical passages aurally and then showed their pupils how to invent their own. Many of the teaching methods of the time were made up almost entirely
of these passages. The passages were intended to develop subtlety of expression and technical skills, and to teach rhetorical and declamatory aspects of musical language of music, as well as cadences, sequences, and modulatory patterns. (Gellrich & Sundin, 1993, p. 183)

This description clearly depicts how instrumental learners in the past were immersed in a specific culture. They started from four- or eight-bar phrases to develop musical knowledge and skills by creating variations and studying others’ works. In this learning style, the ability to improvise and compose and the ability to perform were both cultivated. Learners were then able to work independently of their master, often visiting other masters in different places to expand their knowledge. The development of musical craft was maintained by ‘the combination of reproducing the rules handed down by the masters, elaborating on them, and inventing new ones’ (Gellrich & Sundin, 1993, p. 140). In this learning environment, learners obtained and internalised a progressive understanding of musical discipline through interacting closely with their teachers, who taught through feedback on learners’ creation of musical passages. Apart from becoming familiar with the musical tradition, the main point of this teaching method was to encourage learners to become ‘independent reflective practitioners, …intuitively combining practical and theoretical knowledge’ (Hultberg, 2000, pp. 25-27). This kind of teaching could be classified as ‘student-led’ (Young et al., 2003, p. 152) or creative learning (Gellrich, 1992). However, this kind of apprentice approach gradually declined in the late 19th century in Western classical music.
2.1.2 Post-nineteenth century

In the 19th century, virtuosos, such as Liszt, were more interested in overcoming technical difficulties and wrote down their experience and methods of effective practising. In other words, the nature of apprenticeship changed from a kind of cultural internalisation to the transmission of specific skills and experiences. Hence, Gellrich (1993) argues that ‘the art of playing an instrument was transformed into the specialist art of interpretation’ (p. 142). Such change further implies that ‘in interpreting a composition, students now were expected to concentrate on playing accurately according to their teachers’ instructions, and to follow markings on expression’ (Hultberg, 2000, p. 30). This also meant that creative learning, learning by invention on the part of the pupil, was superseded by reproductive learning (Gellrich, 1992). This led to the gradual separation of learning improvisation and performance in Western classical music as far as the learning process was concerned. The downside of this consequence is mentioned by Odam (1995), who believes that lack of improvisation or composition may hinder instrumental learners from making their own musical decisions.

There is one other phenomenon that needs to be noted. With the increase in the numbers of people learning an instrument, a clear separation between the professional virtuoso and the amateur also emerged. Although current instrumental teaching still remains a one-to-one relationship, the nature of the master–apprentice relationship seems to be different to that of the past,
including the purpose for which the student learns and the approach to
teaching. For example, learners are more likely to have an instrumental lesson
once a week for up to an hour, rather than more intensive working with their
teacher over a continuous period of time.

Currently, a master–apprentice relationship is still observed in higher
education and master classes. The characteristics of this relationship are
described in detail by Burwell.

These include the acquisition of experiential knowledge or skill; the use of demonstration
and imitation; the master (is) positioned as representative of the practice, with a high
level of expertise; the apprenticeship as a source of identity for the learner. (Burwell,
2013, p. 287)

This quotation points out the public recognition of being a master. Not all
current instrumental teachers are regarded as masters, but nevertheless it is
reasonable to view them as experienced members of the classical music
community and as playing a role of encouraging novices to be familiar with the
musical conventions surrounding playing an instrument.

2.1.3 Musical interpretation

The dominance of technical mastery in instrumental teaching has been
criticised for at least twenty-five years, if one measures from the publication of
Priest's journal article (1989). He noted that this concern with mastery of
technique resulted in most learners giving up their lessons. This issue
continues to be discussed up to the present day (Hallam, 1998; McPherson,
Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012; Mills, 2004; Reid, 2001). On the other hand, the consequences of lack of performing technique have also been identified, where, for instance, limited musical progress leads to frustration and disappointment (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Lehmann et al., 2007; Philpott & Plummeridge, 2001; Plummeridge, 1991; Spruce, 1996). Mastery of technique should be a means to musical interpretation or expression, not the sole teaching purpose. As mentioned earlier, however, the nature of instrumental learning has transformed from an integrated approach (i.e., developing one’s improvisation and other musical skills simultaneously) to focusing exclusively on performance.

Current music educational theories have targeted understanding the development of musical ability, such as McPherson and Williamon’s (2006) adaptation of Gagné’s (2008) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) to explain musical giftedness and musical talents. In this model, musical talent is seen as a developing ability which could take the form of performing, improvising, composing, arranging, analysing, appraising, conducting, and musical teaching. Musical talents are influenced by natural abilities (intellectual, creative, social, perceptual, muscular and motor control), environmental factors (milieu, people in contact, pedagogic and administrative engagements), intrapersonal aspects (physical, and mental capacities, awareness, motivation, and volition), and developmental process (activities, progress, and investment of time, money, and energy). This conception of
musical gift and talent is helpful for educators in clarifying the nature of innate and learned abilities. It implies that each individual has a different starting point for learning, and their talent develops influenced by a variety of factors. Hence, instrumental teachers cannot teach music simply based on their own musical expertise and without knowledge of students’ learning background.

Learning to play an instrument is a part of music education seen as a whole. Therefore, learning purposes should be integrated into a holistic philosophy of music education. In Western classical music tradition, the learning aim seems to be mainly concerned with performance and musical interpretation. Therefore before proceeding to review the research literature on instrumental teaching and learning, I consider here musical interpretation and related concepts in order to understand the aims of instrumental teaching.

Elliot (1995) points out that musical interpretation goes beyond simply the reproduction of a musical score and should also combine the attempt to realise the composer’s intention, the performer’s view of the piece, and take account of the audience’s expectation. This also means that interpretation requires performers’ musical understanding as a tool to enable them to connect notational cues in the score to their emotions. Instead of dealing with musical interpretation from the cognitive perspective, Sloboda (2000) pointed out that there is an assumption that expressive performance relies on intuitive spontaneity; Lindström, Juslin, Bresin, and Williamon (2003), on the other hand, have identified the relation between expressive performance and the
experiencing of certain emotions. These different views of musical interpretation may lead to different teaching beliefs, such as whether or not expressive performance can be taught. Therefore, teachers’ beliefs play a role in the development of learners’ expressive capacity.

Playing is an act of self-expression and a way of communicating with others. These two elements make each human performance unique, compared to machines which can make 'perfect' music in terms of accuracy (Sloboda, 1993). Sloboda (1993) further identified musical expression as a combination of slight fluctuations in duration, loudness, pitch, and timbre. This analysis may make it easier to understand how performers make their own musical interpretation different from others', but it is less useful for helping us to understand how individuals arrive at their own interpretation in the first place.

With regard to musical understanding, at the level of cognitive psychology, fully musical understanding requires the ability to record, organise, and store aural stimuli in the memory in a new mental form (Lipscomb et al., 2004). This research argues that musical cognition is more than the simple perception of pitch, dynamics, timbre, and rhythmic features of sounds. Musical understanding combines personal responses to the music in itself and the individual's reflection of the cultural environment that gives the music meaning, and this is demonstrated by acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of prior knowledge. More concretely, Mursell (1932) identified the development of musical understanding based on five progressive levels of what the listener is
attending to: dynamics and qualities of tone, the sequencing of tonal patterns into melodies, rhythm, harmonic content of the music, and ‘general architectonic design of the music’ (p.215). From this perspective, musical understanding is strongly associated with listening.

In this section, the historical context of instrumental teaching has been discussed, and the change has also been identified from a ‘creative learning approach’ (Gellrich & Sundin, 1993) to becoming a musical interpreter of Western classical music. Corresponding to the change of learning purpose, teaching approaches have gradually transformed from cultural internalisation to transmission of performance experience, even though the convention of master–apprenticeship still remains. Consequently, different teaching modes have been identified. However, it is wrong simply to identify the master–apprenticeship model with a one-way teaching approach, a confusion that leads to criticism of the model as being undesirable teacher-led learning. Therefore, it should be clearly understood that current teaching approaches are different to the historical teaching approach.

2.2 Educational context of instrumental lessons

2.2.1 Modes of teaching

With regard to current teaching and learning relationships, two modes have been discussed by Lehmann, Sloboda, and Woody (2007): the master–apprentice model and the mentor–friend model. These researchers attempted
to understand one-to-one relationships in instrumental lessons in terms of teaching style. Young (2003) referred to Reid’s (1997) ideas of the master–apprentice relationship, in which teachers share their experience and demonstrate their craft, and went on to infer that ‘in this relationship, learners were directly copying the teacher’s modelling’ (Lehmann et al., 2007; Young et al., 2003), resulting in a one-way communication from teacher to student. On the other hand, the friend–mentor mode means that teachers are given more freedom to be responsive to different learning conditions and also to facilitate learners’ autonomy. Although these researchers mentioned that real practice is located between these two teaching modes, these two categories imply that it is better to adopt the friend–mentor mode, because the master–apprentice mode appears to be negatively associated with a passive learning style (Hallam, 1998).

2.2.2 Teacher’s role

From an analysis of the literature (Hallam, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2007), there appear to be three teachers’ roles involved in instrumental lessons, namely, instructor, mentor, and critic. As to the first of these, Swanwick (2003) states that instructors need to clearly understand the pre-specification of objectives and the measurement of the expected outcome, and how to bring these into their practice. In terms of certain musical skills, such as musical literacy or understanding of harmony, it may be appropriate to teach these by direct instruction. Secondly, mentoring plays an important role in developing
individual learners’ independence and also aims to enable them to integrate as a whole person within a broader community and context (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2014). This means that instrumental teachers as experienced members of the musical community should invite the learner’s deeper engagement with music, not simply aim for teaching specific musical skills. At the same time, the mentoring role should not be interpreted as a free teaching style or as simply taking the role of friend. Thirdly, it is necessary for instrumental teachers to evaluate students’ performance based on their understanding of the convention. This means that teachers should be more than skilled performers. In this case, music teachers should offer their judgment on artistry or musicality rather than dealing only with correctness in performing. Instrumental teachers should flexibly adjust their roles according to an individual’s learning situation or the teachers’ teaching purpose (Hallam, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2007).

Pratt (1992) analysed the opinions of 253 adults and teachers of adults in Canada, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States and identified five modes of teaching conceptions: engineering or delivering content; apprenticeship or modelling ways of being; developing or cultivating the intellect; nurturing or facilitating personal agency; and social reform or seeking a better society. The degree of teacher domination decreases from ‘engineering or delivering content’ to ‘social reform’. Hallam (1998) has applied this theory in instrumental teaching, and interestingly, she
argued that although teaching is dominated by the teacher in instrumental lessons, learning an instrument is a practical skill; pupils are required to undertake individual practice and therefore they are actively engaged on their own. Furthermore, she explained the apprenticeship model from an educational perspective, using concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1980) explains ZPD as follows:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p.86)

Another concept she uses to help explain her educational understanding of apprenticeship is scaffolding, which was formulated and named by Bruner (1983). This means that instruction is adapted to meet the individual’s needs during the learning process with the intention of helping a learner to achieve their learning goals.

Based on these two educational theories, Hallam (1998) states:

The individual music lesson provides opportunities for the operation of aspects of the apprenticeship model. The idea of joint problem solving is particularly relevant. For it to be successful, the gap between the teachers’ assigned task and the students’ current capabilities must not be too narrow or too wide. The existence of a manageable gap in the Zone of Proximal Development is crucial. (Hallam, 1998, p. 234)

The nature of instrumental teaching is clearly depicted in this theory. It deepens the understanding of instrumental teaching beyond the impression that it is simply a master–apprentice relationship, and avoids being trapped in the prejudice against teacher-led teaching style. Additionally, the difference between masters and instrumental teachers seems to emerge here. Unlike a
master who may aim to convey their own successful learning experience, instrumental teachers now seem to have a wider educational agenda.

Concerning the one-to-one teacher and student relationship, most learners value this kind of intense association with an adult over an extended time. This relationship may make them view themselves as special (Gaunt, Creech, Long, & Hallam, 2012), or at advanced levels, teachers may be in a position to offer the student professional work and help build up useful professional contacts (Creech & Gaunt, 2012). As for teachers, it is easier to develop personalised teaching (Burt & Mills, 2006) and to meet the specific needs of individual students (Lehmann et al., 2007). However, this private one-to-one relationship may lead to tension.

In this section, the historical context of instrumental lessons has been briefly explored and the change in instrumental learning has also been identified from the creative-learning approach to specialised instruction in musical interpretation in terms of Western classical music tradition. Corresponding to the change of learning purpose, teaching approaches have gradually transformed from cultural internalisation to transmission of performance experience, even though the convention of master–apprentice is still retained.

2.3 Factors involved in effective instrumental lessons

2.3.1 Students' learning motivation
Mastering an instrument requires a great deal of time and effort, and learners’ motivation and commitment play important roles in continuing learning. Motivation is defined as ‘the psychological state of engaging or the predisposition to re-engage with particular classes of objects, events, or ideas over time’ (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 112). This psychological state can be positively or negatively affected by diverse factors, such as parental support, interaction with siblings and peers, or a sense of personal value (Hallam, 2001a; Lehmann et al., 2007; McPherson & Williamon, 2006). Teachers may feel challenged when their students are uninterested in learning (McPherson, 2005). Therefore, it is beneficial to understand motivation to improve teaching effectiveness.

McPherson and Renwick (2001) have explained music learning motivation under two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. Love of music and enjoyment of playing an instrument are recognised as intrinsic motivations, which are crucial for learners to develop their musical potential (Hallam, 2001a; McPherson & Williamon, 2006). Extrinsic motivation is associated with material rewards or winning a musical competition. This kind of inspiration may have a possible long-lasting negative impact on musical learning, because learners’ focus is not placed on music itself but on prizes or public recognition (Mcpherson & McCormick, 1999). However, this dichotomous conception of learning motivation seems to be insufficient to explain the complexity of teaching and learning. Two examples are provided here. When it comes to obtaining social
approval, such as winning a musical competition or a sense of feeling special through playing an instrument, a more complex explanation seems to be required, because the motivation may involve the need for public recognition and also intellectual curiosity. The other example is derived from my experience as an instrumental teacher. Pupils started their music lessons with an interest in music and then gradually lost interest because of learning challenges and the amount of practice that was required, even though their parents encouraged them by positive verbal feedback or establishing a routine, which are defined as extrinsic motivation. The practical point is how adults can find ways to also maintain learners’ intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it may be practical for teachers to understand motivation to learning within the learning process.

Looking from the perspective of personal development, Hidi and Renninger (2006) argue that motivation comprises four phases: triggered, maintained, emerging, and developed. The first two are defined as situational interest and the other two as individual interest. Situational interest applies when a learner’s attention is affected by others, while individual interest involves more a sense of personal value and emotional engagement. Love of music belongs in the category of triggered interest, which may be promoted by intense aesthetic experience (Whaley, Sloboda, & Gabrielsson, 2008) or parents’ supportive attitude. In the maintained phase, learners discover what is meaningful for themselves in what they are doing, and then they may enter the
third interest stage if they have an appropriate model such as teachers or famous people to follow. Finally, in the developed phase, learners can motivate themselves if encountering frustration. This theory attempts to depict how personal interest is affected by specific context. McPherson (2012) has pointed out that others’ playing or parents’ reaction to children’s learning are significant for triggering and maintaining motivation to learn. This suggests that, according to their understanding of their pupils, teachers may encourage them by providing diverse approaches which are meaningful for each particular individual. Alternatively, Suzuki (1993) required his students to observe others’ playing, thereby creating a competitive learning environment where the presence of the peer group, Suzuki expected, would reinforce learners’ motivation. This four-phases model of interest explains how personal motivation can be fostered by an event, such as attending a music concert which arouses an individual’s emotions.

Rather than focusing on how personal interest develops, Hallam (2008) provides a complex framework for understanding motivation in music which attempts to explain interactions between individual and environmental factors. The framework includes characteristics of the individual (for instance, gender and age); aspects of the personality and self-concept; set goals, cognitive characteristics, the environment, and cognitive process. It takes into account the impact of predisposition and points out the interrelated complexity of human motivation and behaviour from the psychological perspective.
Particularly, the importance of self-efficacy is clearly noted by drawing on several research studies (Austin & Berg, 2006; Lehmann & Jørgensen, 2012; Mcpherson & McCormick, 1999; Mcpherson & Renwick, 2001; McPherson et al., 2012). For example, based on the examination results of 190 pianists aged 8–18, McPherson and McCormick (1999) found a strong predictable relation between self-efficacy and actual performance. It is reasonable to assume that those who obtain satisfactory feedback will motivate themselves more. This implies that intrinsic motivation as a state of psychological engagement is not simply an interest in or love of something but also involves the self-concept, and therefore can be reinforced by different elements of social interaction.

With regard to the application of motivation theory in teaching, Hallam (2008) notes that different stages of learning require different motivational support. She suggests that teachers can encourage the beginner by providing relatively uncritical feedback so that learners can build their confidence to learn. However, when learners progress to a higher level, this kind of teaching style needs to be adjusted to one giving more constructive feedback or presenting the teachers themselves as role models for learners. As for parenting, parents may hinder learning development by pushing too much (Lehmann et al., 2007) or missing a good opportunity to encourage their children (McPherson et al., 2012). The importance of emotional climate in the home is also noted by Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007). Therefore, cooperation with the parent is also crucial to enhance or maintain motivation to learn.
In this section, I have explored the concept of motivation based on three related theories. The earlier research found that intrinsic motivation contributes to continuous learning while extrinsic motivation may not benefit learning in the long term. However, the reality of learning is more complicated than this dichotomy. Hidi and Renninger’s (2006) and Hallam’s (2008) research helps us to understand how to conceptualise the development of the individual’s motivation and how others can enhance learners’ motivation through support.

2.3.2 Students’ practice

‘Classical western musicians may have accrued up to 16 years of individual practice to achieve levels that will lead to international standing in playing an instrument’ (Hallam, 2012b). This points out how greatly practice influences learning effectiveness. One of the aims of practising is to enhance automaticity, which benefits the development of expertise (Hallam, 2012b). At the macro level, when increased expertise has been achieved, it enables learners to be flexible in using prior knowledge and advances their problem-solving skills (Kalakoski, 2007). At the micro level, the higher the level of automaticity developed, the more working memory can be used for other tasks, thereby enabling learners to engage more deeply in meaningful thinking. These studies imply that practice is not simply a time-consuming activity but a means to enable learners to engage more deeply in music, while different skills may be gradually cultivated during this process. Furthermore, the relation between successful learning and the quality of practice has been investigated by
Sloboda (1993) and McPherson (1999). Sloboda (1993) found that learners who spend less time in formal task-oriented practice in the initial stage of learning demonstrate more musical expression in their performance. In other words, musical exploration in the early development is likely to improve the development of musicality. This idea is in agreement with McPherson’s research (1999). He also asserts that high-achieving students tend to find a balance between required practice and creative or motivating activities, such as playing a favourite piece or improvising.

Practice is important in learning. The next crucial point concerns what effective practice is. Several pieces of research have addressed aspects of practice, such as time spent (Gaunt, 2008; Hallam, 2012b; Lehmann & Ericsson, 1998; McPherson, 2005; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996; Williamon & Valentine, 2000) and the quality and strategies of practice (Cheng & Durrant, 2007; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Jørgensen & Hallam, 2008; Mcpherson & Renwick, 2001). With regard to practising time, the amount of time may increase before a weekly lesson and decrease during holidays (Sloboda et al., 1996), and a large amount of practice time has been accumulated before learners reach a high performance level (McPherson, 2005; Sosniak, 1985). However, the quality of performance is not simply predicted by the total amount of practising time. Williamon and Valentine (2000) criticised previous research into practice for not explaining why certain learners have the capacity to practise longer than others, and they also
challenged the ‘monotonic relation’ (p.370) between practising time and performance. They analysed observation of practice of 22 piano students aged 11–25, asking three experienced piano teachers to evaluate their performance. The statistical result indicated that the quantity of practice was not strongly reflected in the quality of performance, even though pianists with a higher level of performance spent more time in practising. They believe that employing certain strategies is likely to reduce the total amount of practising time necessary.

Public performance involves not only technical skills but also aural, cognitive, communication, and learning skills. Therefore, simple repetitious practice on its own does not improve musical expertise (Jørgensen & Hallam, 2008). Hallam (1997) has defined effective practice as ‘that which achieves the desired end-product, in as short a time as possible, without interfering negatively with longer-term goals’ (p.181). Certain useful practising strategies have been discovered, such as practice with different tempi (Drake & Palmer, 2000), mental practice (Ross, 1985), and metacognitive strategies of objective self-analysis and procedures for improvement (Hallam, 1997). Furthermore, Williamon and Valentine (2000) found that effective learners tended to quickly shift their focus from technique to enhancing other musical aspects, such as musical expression and effective communication with audiences. This implies that the quality of practising, more than time spent practising, is productive of effective learning. However, based on the observation of learners' practice, it
has been pointed out that some inexperienced learners do have a misapprehension about practice effectiveness. For example, Gruson (1988) and Hallam (2001b) identified that novices tend to have a problem in coping with technically difficult sections and practise by playing through the music repeatedly rather than focusing on difficult sections, while experienced players tend to combine ‘part–whole strategies’ together (Jørgensen & Hallam, 2008; McPherson et al., 2012).

On the other hand, it has been stated that ‘practice behaviour must be taught and learned; it does not evolve without support and knowledge’ (Lehmann & Jørgensen, 2012, p. 686). Apart from learned strategies, diverse factors which may also influence practising outcome have been explained by McPherson (McPherson et al., 2012). He has adapted Trautwein’s (2006) schematic depiction of practice process factors to provide a theory of practice in instrumental learning which attempts to understand the relations between practice and influencing factors. However, this complexity of practising seems not to be understood by all instrumental teachers. According to a qualitative investigation in a higher-education context by Gaunt (2008), participant teachers tended only to judge the outcome of learners’ practice rather than to understand how students practise at home, and to try to further improve the quality of students’ practice. This research result indicates that these teachers did not realise their role in improving learners’ practice outside lessons, although the correlation between teaching structure and learners’ practising
structure has been clearly identified (Barry, 2007). Further evidence that teaching focuses, teaching style, and teaching behaviour have significant influence on practice has been presented by McPherson (2012). This suggests that to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, instrumental teachers need to be aware of the impact of their role in encouraging learning rather than simply viewing themselves as critics.

To sum up, practice at home is central to learning outcome, and the way to effective practising needs to be guided by teachers’ support; improvement does not depend solely on the amount of practice time.

2.3.3 Teachers’ effectiveness

According to Welch and Ockelford (2008), ‘there are many different musical genres and each has its own customary view of what counts as musical learning, or at least the outcomes of musical learning in relation to performance, as well as the traditions in how learning is usually fostered in relation to the genre’s characteristic features’ (p.308). Hence, in this literature review it is necessary to explain what teaching effectiveness means. In the convention of Western classical music, the conception of teacher effectiveness is tied particularly to success in enabling learners to perform music well. A number of researchers have investigated what contributes to teaching effectiveness from diverse perspectives, such as teachers’ musical expertise and teaching planning (Colprit, 2000; Gaunt, 2008; Hallam, 1998; Lehmann et
al., 2007; Price, 1992), teaching strategies (Duke & Simmons, 2006), or selection of teaching material (Hallam, 1998). Here I examine further three broad areas: teachers’ expertise both as teacher and reformer, teachers’ awareness of the nature of their role, and teaching strategies.

2.3.3.1 Teachers’ expertise

Instrumental teaching requires teachers to master musical and teaching expertise to achieve their teaching goals. The most important teaching approach which requires teachers to demonstrate their musical expertise is modelling. Modelling is more effective than verbal instruction (Dickey, 1992). In modelling, teachers need to imitate students’ inappropriate performance and also be able to demonstrate alternatives. Therefore, sensitivity to music and competence as a performer appear to be basic requirements of teacher effectiveness.

Modelling is also useful for learners to create an internal model in their mind, a mental representation of the piece as music (Hallam, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2007). Spruce (1996) is one researcher who emphasised importance of the inner ear, which is essentially the faculty that facilitates the forming of musical images. This faculty is developed from the interaction of intuitive musical expression and analytical sifting, which can be considered to be the core part of making music. If the instrumental teacher is viewed by the student as a master who has rich performance experience and knowledge of how to create
sound musical interpretation, their musical expertise takes on its full significance in effectiveness.

As for teaching expertise, it includes selecting appropriate materials, giving good feedback, and communication skills. Firstly, selecting a suitable repertoire is key for effective teaching. This process is important and complicated, because when teachers make their decisions, they not only have to consider how to situate their learners in an appropriate learning sequence but also need to evaluate their own musical and pedagogic skills (Davidson & Scutt, 1999; Hallam & Creech, 2010). Secondly, the normal sequential teaching pattern is: the teacher demonstrates a piece or sets a target, followed by students’ playing, and then the teacher provides specific feedback. The crucial point, however, concerns the quality of feedback (Gaunt, 2008). The participant teachers in Gaunt’s research mentioned that they can immediately provide their judgement of students’ performance based not only on the musical knowledge of both teacher and pupil but also their understanding of the specific needs of the individual. Thirdly, communication skills not only help teachers to clearly convey the information to learners, they also involve negotiation with related adults, such as parents. Additionally, as well as in their own studio, some instrumental teachers work in diverse workplaces, such as a school or band, which involve different types of learning group or timetabling requirements (Cheng & Durrant, 2007). Therefore, negotiation with other teachers may also impact teachers’ effectiveness.
The range of features that enter into effective instrumental teaching appears in Duck and Simmons’ study (2006) of three instrumental teachers in higher education. They chose three professors with good reputations for instrumental teaching and then examined twenty-five hours instruction spread over three lessons of instruction given by each teacher. They then identified 19 elements of their teaching. Generally speaking, the results involved two aspects: teachers’ teaching competence and their professional musical competence.

The pedagogical aspect focused on the following areas: enabling students to achieve teaching goals which are set by teachers; sustaining a high evaluation standard in terms of judging sound quality or correct technique; and establishing an appropriate learning pace. The second aspect identified elements addressing how to advance students’ own musical professionalism. For example, they precisely assigned appropriate repertoire to meet students’ technical and musical capabilities. The teachers’ judgements were based on appropriate stylistic character and musical interpretation, while their feedback concerned ‘how an audience in a concert hall would perceive the performance’ (p.169). From this research, it is clear how these three teachers applied all their strengths, such as acquired performance knowledge and teaching strategies, to advance students’ performance.

2.3.3.2 Teachers’ awareness of the nature of their roles

Carr (2003) analysed how teaching knowledge involves not simply subject-content knowledge, but has multiple dimensions: common sense, folk
wisdom of teachers, skill-knowledge, contextual knowledge, professional knowledge, educational theory, social and moral theories, and general philosophical outlook. These suggest that teachers need to be aware of how subject knowledge, educational theories, and individuals’ needs meet. For example, Hallam (2012a) asserts that good teaching should balance challenges and enjoyment, which leads to better motivation and a positive learning attitude. Therefore, effective teachers not only set challenges which are located in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) and provide an appropriate scaffolding (Bruner & Watson, 1983), but also realise how to motivate students by organising a friendly learning environment.

Plummeridge (1991) has explained that the identification of objectives and detailed planning are insufficient for good teaching, because effective pedagogy is far more complicated than simply getting things right at the preparation stage. Consequently, although teachers’ expertise and teaching preparation are crucial, being flexible in order to cope with different possible challenges in the way students fulfil the set target is also important, because teaching and learning do not occur in a linear manner. Teachers’ flexibility can be observed in how well they are meeting individuals’ needs. For example, the teaching guideline of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) requires their members to ‘take responsibility for providing a varied and balanced course of study appropriate to the age and ability of each pupil, with regard to both technique and repertoire’. In other words, teachers need to adjust their
teaching practice and targets accordingly, rather than simply blindly push students to achieve set teaching aims. Therefore, a learner-orientated attitude seems to be important to teaching effectiveness. However, certain instrumental teachers tend to simply think from their own point of view as a performer, not adjusting their perspective to being an instructor.

There are certain differences between being a performer and being a teacher. Although Kemp (1996) based his observations on a sample of school music teachers, he mentions that the personality of the performer tends to be introverted, intuitive, emotionally inconsistent, whereas music teachers seem to be extroverted and emotionally stable, while exhibiting a ‘feeling–judging’ temperament. Although the finding is useful in depicting the differences between the two in terms of personality, this dichotomy seems too simplified because good performers or teachers both need to keep a balance between themselves and others, whether audiences or students. Lehmann et al. (2007) provide a better perspective for understanding the core difference between being a performer and being an instrumental teacher. They assert that music teachers should adopt an other-oriented perspective, which means encouraging learners’ abilities in making music. On the other hand, a performer has to concentrate rather on developing their own musicianship and pursuing their own fulfilment.

The complexity of musical development has been explored in previous sections. Hallam (1998) mentioned that students need different kinds of
support from their teachers at different stages. For example, teachers’ passion for music and friendly attitude may greatly encourage the beginners, while teachers’ modelling or teaching expertise may inspire young adults or advanced learners. In reality, pupils of instrumental teachers range over all ages and levels of ability (Hallam, 2012b; Hallam & Creech, 2010). Therefore, teachers should be aware that they need to offer different kinds of emotional and technical support. Additionally, according to McPherson’s paradigm (2012) for the changes in learning orientations during stages of developing musical expertise, the diversity of activities and freely chosen recreational playing decreases as expertise develops. This underlines the inappropriateness for instrumental teachers of persevering with only one way of organising their teaching, such as following the same teaching pattern: teacher modelling, student performing, and then teacher giving feedback (Price, 1992).

Teachers’ reflection on teaching also plays a significant role in teachers’ effectiveness. Schmidt asserts that ‘no one definition of good teaching can be taught directly to teachers’ (p.38). Therefore, he concluded that reflection by the individual teacher is the best way for advancing their practice. In addition, Gaunt (2008) believes that reflection on practice is a sign of a teacher’s active engagement in their student’s learning. Schön (1987) distinguished two forms of reflection. One is ‘reflection on action’, which happens when practitioners think through their previous work and come to a conclusion about what to do.
differently when they meet a similar situation; the other is ‘reflection in action’, which happens when someone encounters a unique problem or decision that cannot be solved by the application of routine or standard solutions or rules. The professional must reflect ‘on the fly’ and decide what to do. The importance of reflection on teaching is also confirmed by Schmidt (1998).

2.3.3.3 Teaching strategies

The importance of teachers’ modelling has been mentioned in the previous section on teachers’ expertise. Apart from building students’ capacity for internal aural representation through the teachers’ modelling, there are other strategies which facilitate musical learning, such as helping students to connect the written notation with the sound as produced. McPherson (2001) discovered that students who have insufficient opportunity to learn to associate their aural schemata with the notation often play new and unfamiliar repertoire too slowly. This hinders their understanding of what they are playing, which in turn diminishes the meaningfulness of practising. Therefore, he provides detailed advice about teaching approaches; for example, demonstrating to the student how they played, as compared to how the piece should sound, or teaching them mental routines to use before they commence playing. Such routines might include consciously searching for and thinking about the time- and key-signatures; silently singing the melody of the opening phrase before playing to establish an appropriate tempo and interpretation; and scanning the music to identify and rehearse separately possible obstacles. These strategies
may help learners to connect the sound and the visual staff, and also encourage them to pay more attention to their own performance rather than passively waiting for teachers' feedback. In this way, the objective of creating independent learners may be gradually fulfilled.

A different approach is taken by Spruce (1996), who describes good instrumental teachers as teachers who base their teaching methods on the use of metaphors, mental images, and mind pictures of the action of playing. Along the same lines, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education report (1999), defines creative teaching ‘using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective’. If used in this way, creative teaching approaches may be a means to facilitate teaching effectiveness. It should be noted, however, that while creative teaching may be useful to stimulate motivation to learn, these interesting teaching strategies do not infallibly lead to the achievement of teaching purposes. This issue will be discussed in a later section.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter reviewing the historical context and educational factors of instrumental lessons two main themes emerge. First of all, the nature of instrumental lessons has changed since the latter part of the nineteenth century in terms of learning approach and teachers’ role. Prior to this, when classical music was considered as contemporary music, the learning approach involved learners' musical creativity. By working with their pupils, masters could offer their knowledge to encourage learners to internalise a specific musical culture. This learning approach was gradually replaced by specialising
in musical interpretation and the mastery of performing technique. In this chapter, two teacher–student relationships (the master–apprentice model and the mentor–friend model) and three teaching roles (instructor, mentor, and critic) have been identified. This literature brings a range of educational perspectives to this relatively isolated, self-contained, teaching world and also enhances our understanding of the complexity of instrumental lessons.

The other key theme in this chapter concerns factors which contribute to instrumental learning and teaching. Students’ motivation and the way of practising have been explored through different research approaches, and the findings make clear that, although the love of music is vital to effective learning, how to stimulate or maintain learners’ motivation in different learning stages is an important aspect which teachers can put their effort into. On the teachers’ side, effective teaching is more likely when teachers with performing expertise are also aware of their broader educational role in developing learners’ performance. After reviewing the context of instrumental lessons and different theoretical perspectives of effective teaching and learning, the focus of the next chapter will be to explore teachers’ beliefs and values in order to gain further insights into what informs teachers’ practice.
CHAPTER 3 : INSTRUMENTAL TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

This chapter aims to explore teachers’ beliefs about instrumental teaching. The two educational functions of learning the arts as identified by Fleming (2011) are: learning in the arts and learning through the arts. The former emphasises that learners obtain related knowledge about a specific subject, while the latter views learning a specific discipline as a means to develop broader abilities, such as self-regulation or skills that facilitate learning. These two categories can provide a helpful framework for this literature review on instrumental teachers’ beliefs about teaching purposes. With regard to learning in the arts through performing, Gaunt (2008), Mills (2006), and Mills and Smith (2003) have identified several significant emphases in the goals that teachers have in mind in their teaching: developing practical skills for a career as a performer, or preparing for public competition or examinations. On the other hand, teaching purposes relating to learner-oriented development, such as learning-skills (Hallam, 2012b) or enjoyment of music (Creech, 2006), appear to be similar to the concept of learning through the arts. Additionally, teachers’ assumptions about what they can achieve in moulding students’ attitude to learning and about their own reflection on practice are also included in this section in order to understand the complexity of the relations between beliefs and practice.
3.1 Teachers’ beliefs about instrumental teaching

3.1.1 Teaching for practical skills or subject knowledge

Gaunt (2008) interviewed twenty part-time instrumental teachers in a conservatoire in the UK. Half of these participants aimed to provide their students with a general vocational toolbox, which included the skills for finding a job or being a performer. One fifth viewed lessons as an education which encourages learners to engage in their musical heritage, while just a few aimed to develop a personal artistic voice or skills to encourage lifelong learning. Interestingly, the author pointed out that there are differences among instrumental disciplines. For example, wind, brass, and percussion teachers held the most diverse views about teaching purposes (e.g., developing a personal voice and lifelong learning skills), while piano teachers mainly focused on developing learners’ future career skills or appreciation of their musical heritage. From this result, it can be noted that teachers in higher education tend to teach for practical skills for professional development, while artistry seems to be less valued. However, there seem to be different views among the interviewees about the relative importance of different tools in the vocational toolbox. These teachers expected their students to work in music professions or as concert soloists, so one would expect that attaining a personal artistic voice should be seen as a significant component of professional development, especially at the advanced level. However, just a few participants viewed the cultivation of artistry as their teaching purpose. In
other words, these teachers appear to have interpreted their role as transmitters of experience or conventions rather than as facilitators inspiring students to find their own voice in music. In this regard, craftsmanship seems to be separated from artistry.

For teachers whose students may be located at the amateur level, Davidson and Scutt (1999) found that the main two teaching targets were acquiring performing skills and successfully passing musical examinations such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. As a result, their participants rated highly the importance of technique and understanding of musical notation were highly rated by these participants. In a survey, conducted among students in music departments in higher education in the UK and Australia who were placed as instrument teachers of beginners or young learners, Mills (2006) found that the kind of teaching goals just mentioned were not affected by the teachers’ background or nationality. Such as those Mills investigated are likely to rely heavily on their own learning or teaching experience of Western classical music when it comes to their own teaching, teaching in a similar way to how they have been taught, without considering that the learning requirements of their pupils maybe different to theirs. Cheng and Durrant (2007) conducted a case study to explore one violin teacher’s beliefs. This teacher worked in different learning groups, such as small ensemble and rehearsal groups, as well as individual lessons. Her pupils were mainly school
They found that this teacher also aimed at enabling students to perform in public and ‘the learning goals appeared to be non-negotiable’ (p.198).

The consequence of teaching towards practical music examination or public musical performance tends to be that teaching content is controlled by the criteria of the musical examination (Davidson & Scutt, 1999). The advantage of the criteria is that they may provide an agenda as a nationally agreed curriculum for teachers to follow and develop their own musical and pedagogical skills. However, the impact on learners should also be considered. McPherson and McCormick (2006) discovered that students’ musical development may potentially be hindered by the experience of attending these musical events. According to Jinks and Lorsbach (2003),

Students make judgements about how they will perform on a test based upon two sets of experiences: how they performed on similar tests in the past and how the test at hand appears. A test that opens with the real ‘cranium crunchers’ will have a negative impact on all of the students – particularly the lower self-efficacy ones – because the most immediate concrete evidence of the task at hand is one of extreme difficulty. This leads to a sense of futility and, subsequently, an unwillingness to try. And, of course, lack of effort typically leads to lower achievement. (p. 115)

Instrumental teachers may build their own teaching confidence through their learners’ attending these public music events to demonstrate their learning outcome. However, this kind of teaching goal needs to be combined with teachers’ attention to developing students’ technical and musical capabilities and also to the need to give emotional support.
In order to explore how the purpose of teaching differs between school-age and advanced learners, Mills and Smith (2003) conducted a qualitative study using a semi-structured questionnaire to collect 134 instrumental teachers' opinions. The instruments of these participants were diverse, including voice, woodwind, string, and keyboard, and they worked in eight different areas of England. They were asked to distinguish their teaching aims in relation to age and level of attainment. The study showed that for advanced learners, teachers focus on technique, but also take account of a wider repertoire and personal development. Relatively speaking, for school-age learners, enthusiasm in music and a positive learning attitude were given more attention. These teachers also believed that different levels of learners require different teaching competency. For example, they ranked enthusiastic and patient teachers much higher for school age than for advanced learners, while reviewing high teacher expectations and technical focus as more important for advanced learners. These researchers also compared teaching beliefs between teachers with and without qualified teacher status (QTS). Generally speaking, teachers with QTS tended to value more highly the personal quality of teachers, such as a positive attitude and enthusiasm, while teachers without QTS emphasised more that the teacher should encourage the individual voice to develop, and should provide wider repertoire. Interestingly, having a detailed teaching approach was ranked much more highly in importance by teachers without QTS than teachers with QTS. This does not match the
impression that teachers with training are more likely to organise their lessons more.

3.1.2 Teaching for enjoyment of music and taking account of learners’ needs

Creech (2006) argues that instrumental teachers do demonstrate their concern for non-musical aims in their teaching rather than simply focusing on technical issues. Based on her qualitative survey of 263 British violin teachers, she found that 41% of participants viewed pupils’ enjoyment of music and enthusiasm and love for the instrument as important to their teaching purposes, while 30% of teachers focused on musical skills. Although quantitative research methods are efficient for recording the distribution of different opinions about teaching purpose among the group of participants in terms of categories, it cannot represent the complexity of personal beliefs. Therefore, qualitative case study may be helpful in understanding teachers’ beliefs more holistically, even though this research finding is based on a very few participants, which makes generalisation difficult. For example, the single participant in Cheng and Durrant’s research (2007) indicated her teaching priorities were: ‘having fun and interesting lessons; high expectations and informal targets; developing problem-solving skills; developing independence in learning; appropriate repertoire; motivation in learning; engaging pupils’ learning; and providing performance opportunities and positive experiences’ (p.199). From this result, we can see clearly the emphases and diversity of
goals that an instrumental teacher may have, not only addressing subject knowledge transmission but also aiming at creating a friendly environment to facilitate learning. In other words, being more inclined to the role of being a mentor.

The mentor role in instrumental teaching has been identified by Odam (Odam, 1995). ‘Although the physical and technique demands of each instrument are different, the basic principles of instrumental teaching lie in the development of an individual musical response in students, giving them problem-solving skills which enable them to continue to learn and develop with positive self-criticism away from the teacher for the rest of their lives’ (p.103). Similarly, based on a literature review and her own experience of being an instrumental teacher and a researcher, Hallam provides a spectrum of the skills which can be acquired in learning to play an instrument. These consist of aural, cognitive, technical, musicianship, performing, and learning skills (Hallam, 1998). Rather than simply addressing musical performing, Hallam believes that learning skills and social skills are also important to instrumental learning, because learning skills can help the learners to tackle music that they have never seen or heard before, or enable learners to develop new musical interpretations. Later, Hallam and Bautista (2012b) clarified this concept further. Learning skills were analysed into three types of skill: creative, evaluative, and self-regulatory skills. Self-regulatory skills enable learners to manage the process of learning and practice, thereby enhancing concentration and motivation. Evaluative skills
can support the development of listening with understanding to different types of music. In other words, the conception of learning how to be an independent musician through learning an instrument is theorised.

3.1.3  Educational assumptions: nature or nurture

Certain skills pupils can develop which benefit learning music have been identified in the research just mentioned. This suggests that it is better for instrumental teachers to integrate these skills into their teaching. However, these non-musical skills raise a debate about educational assumptions: whether these attributes such as self-discipline are innate personality or the outcome of education. The issue can be explored from two perspectives: personal experience and the conceptual definition of these non-music abilities. Independence will be discussed here as an example. Gaunt (2008) has addressed teachers' attitudes towards facilitating learners' independence based on a qualitative study which involved 20 part-time instrumental teachers in a conservatoire in the UK. According to the teachers' learning and teaching experiences, some tended to believe that independence is more like a part of personality, so that it cannot be taught effectively. Similarly, the researcher also argued that some successful cases in her observations may be because these learners had developed their abilities before having instrumental lessons. In fact, simply based on a short-term observation, it seems difficult to verify whether these learning qualities are innate or nurtured by participant teachers.
Rather than arguing whether these good learning attributes are or are not an educational outcome, Jorgensen attempted to approach this issue from the angle of the responsibility of the teaching institution (Jørgensen, 2000). He has pointed out ‘many institutions’ neglect of the institutional responsibility for the development of the students as independent, responsible musicians and learners’ (p.74), and he suggests that ‘the institution needs a thorough understanding of its dominant values, like “what knowledge is of most worth”, “what is a good musician” etc.’ (p.75). This implies that taking student independence into consideration as part of the teaching agenda is the teachers’ obligation. This notion is supported by Bandura (1986): ‘educational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children’s beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative’ (p. 417). However, this belief seems to be only mentioned in the theoretical world, it is not revealed in the professionals’ voice or in their practice.

The stated definition of these learning abilities may bring into the open tension between the views of researcher and researched, as can be identified in Gaunt (2008). One of the participants in his research asserted that ‘he trained his students to think for themselves’ (p.223) and that the professional success of his students was the evidence. However, the researcher commented that the
students' continuing to come for lessons is in contradiction to 'the nature of their thinking for themselves' (p.223). This kind of interpretation may possibly be true if being an independent learner means that there is no need for any support from others. However, the idea that being independent means that you would not choose even to seek advice and guidance is misplaced. Being independent can also mean being able to make decisions about how and what you learn and from whom. Therefore, choosing to go to a teacher is not necessarily a sign of dependence.

3.1.4 Teachers’ reflection on practice

The importance of teachers’ reflection has been revealed in the previous section (Teachers’ effectiveness 2.3.3). Gaunt (2008) discovered, however, that most teachers tended not to reflect on their teaching, even though half felt guilty about it. This research asserted that ‘the intensity and emotional demands of the one-to-one relationship’ (p.234) might be the reason why most teachers did not reflect on their practice. Another conflict discovered in this study is that these teachers tended to believe that formal reflection could offer no support to their teaching. Therefore, their lack of reflection only evoked their sense of guilt in terms of moral concerns, not in relation to the development of their own professional expertise. This accords with Fredrickson's observation (Baker & Green, 2013; Fredrickson, 2007) that there is a relatively weak connection between teachers’ perception of the best and worst aspects of their teaching and the best and worst aspects of student learning.
Teachers’ lack of reflection can also be revealed from their opinions about teaching. The agreement among teachers about their general beliefs has been identified in previous research (Creech, 2006; Gabrielsson, 1999; Gaunt, 2008; Lindström et al., 2003; Mills, 2006; Mills & Smith, 2003; Sloboda, 1993; Woody, 2000). As to the purposes of their teaching, it is clear teachers who teach advanced learners tend to consider developing musical skills as the most important teaching aim, while teachers of young learners or beginners appear to teach towards enjoyment of music or for musical examinations. These beliefs appear to be ones they have simply absorbed without reflection, mainly shaped by their own musical learning experience rather than their teaching experience. This is why their teaching may simply replicate that of their previous instrumental teachers, and it can be an explanation for why, as Lehmann et al. (2007) have mentioned, teachers who attempt to adopt a mentor–friend teaching mode may feel challenged.

Another study that can serve to show teachers’ lack of reflection is Ward (2004). This researcher surveyed 55 private musical teachers about the comparative importance they gave to good performance and good teaching. The findings revealed that the averages for the components of each aspect listed in the questionnaire were very close. The author argued that ‘teachers do not appear to view any of the elements as contradictory, and generally seem to believe that a performer's enjoyment of a performance is as important as their possessing a thorough knowledge of the music’ (p.208). She
further concluded from the very similar scores for the various components that these teachers hold very broad performance criteria, and suggests as an explanation of this fact that their beliefs are impacted by musical examination boards, because the guidelines they offer demonstrate a very wide assessment standard. It may be the case, however, that the lack of differentiation in the scores is a sign that instrumental teachers do not develop their critical thinking, so that as a result their teaching beliefs are greatly influenced by musical convention and their past learning experience (Gaunt, 2008). Consequently, teachers may not develop enough pedagogical skills or knowledge to put their own teaching beliefs into practice (V. Ward, 2004), and even worse, teachers will 'impose' their own learning style indiscriminately and unwittingly on all of their students (Green, 2012).

3.2 Pedagogical practice of instrumental teaching

Having examined instrumental teachers' beliefs, the focus in this section is shifted to pedagogical practice. There are two types of approach to music teaching: instrumental-technical and practical-empirical (Hultberg, 2000). The former means that in the course of a lesson teachers present information or conventions applicable to the instrument and its repertoire and then students are given time to experience in practice what has been taught. The practical-empirical approach enables learners to experience music first without themselves playing, followed by instruction in making sense of the musical symbols. Based on this classification of teaching approaches, I organise the
literature into four areas, the first two corresponding to the instrumental-technical approach, and the second two to the practical-empirical approach. The four areas are: teaching based on visual notation; technical mastery; learning by ear; and developing musical expression. Under each heading, I consider theoretical ideas, researchers’ suggestions about practical teaching based on their observation, and teachers’ opinions.

3.2.1 Teaching based on visual notation

Hultberg identified two teaching approaches to printed score: reproductive and exploratory (Hultberg, 2002). In the reproductive approach, performers have to represent the music as accurately as possible as indicated by the written notation. The exploratory approach views the musical scores as process. Hultberg surveyed 11 pianists’ interpretation of the given musical score and their comments about their experience. She discovered that, although certain of the pianists considered the musical score as an ‘explicitly normative document’ (p.189), most participants flexibly shifted between these two approaches. Furthermore, Hultberg confirmed that teachers who adopt a reproductive approach tend to be more focused on the markings and on precise performance, while teachers who have a more open-minded attitude towards printed scores are likely to create more room for developing a personal voice. Hence, she suggests that the exploratory approach seems to be better for the learner’s musical development in the longer term. This
research pointed out that teachers’ attitude towards the musical score has a great influence on their teaching.

Another factor affecting teachers’ practice is their assumption about priority or sequence in what is taught. Take Mill’s research (2006) as an example. She found that her participant teachers ‘give greater weight to the teaching of staff notation from the earliest stage of tuition’ (p.387), and also ‘believe in getting the notes right first and adding expression later’ (p.381). This makes a clear separation between the two aspects of reading notation and playing with expression. In practice this means that knowing the notation should be taught before being familiar with the sound, and personal expression should be based predominantly on accuracy and fluency in reading the music score. However, the negative impact of emphasising the musical symbol in the early stage of learning has been stressed by McPherson (2001), which is that learners appeared deaf to the sound of what they were trying to play. They concentrated on the visual stimulus so much that they were unable to listen to the music they were playing. This may be the reason why Karlsson and Juslin (2008) make the criticism that instrumental learning seems to be too often a sight-reading exercise, and teaching is simply regarded as identifying performing errors. Of course, ability to read accurately is important, but there are strategies useful in improving players’ sight-reading skills which are more effective than verbal correction. For example, recognising broader meaningful units across bar line and phrase boundaries; scanning forwards and
backwards between the current of point of performance and what follows (Waters, Underwood, & Findlay, 1997).

3.2.2 Technical mastery

A great deal of research (Allsup, 2003; Dickey, 1992; Gaunt, 2008; Haddon, 2009; Sloboda et al., 1996; Spruce, 1996) is in agreement that instrumental teaching is dominated by an emphasis on technical mastery. Spruce (1996) and Young et al. (2003) believe that this tendency is associated with the conservatoire tradition, which provides teaching with a particular emphasis on excellence of performance. This mastery is acquired by automaticity, freeing performers to engage more in musical expression.

It has been noted that learners’ practice and personal commitment are crucial to develop this expertise (Hallam, 2012a). This statement implies that it is the amount of time of spent practising and learners’ own attitude that are key to developing this expertise, rather than teachers’ pedagogical support. However, Kramer (2013) has indicated that, although motor skills are part of instrumental learning, instrumental teaching may lose its aesthetic/artistic value if it does not incorporate emotion or musical thinking. Here is where the meaning of music education may be lost. In addition, Eisner (2002) has brought out a deeper significance in learning technical skills: ‘techniques represent ways of doing something but techniques also reflect ways of thinking about the thing to be done. Thus the acquisition of
technique is not merely a technical achievement; it is a mode of thought’ (p.146).

The relationship between where the players’ attention is focused and the artistic application of motor skills in music was addressed by Duke et al. (2011). These researchers conducted an experiment on sixteen music majors in various programs in university schools of music in America. These participants repeated a simple keyboard passage and were asked to focus first on their fingers, the keys, and the piano hammers, and then on the sound produced. The assessment, measured by a computer program, concerned only timing and volume and evenness of tone in the sequence. The results showed that participants performed more evenly when they focused on the sound quality than when they focused on the physical movements of their fingers. These researchers suggest that ‘the sound produced by a musical instrument, under the control of a performer, seems to function as a movement goal similar to physical movement goals’ (p.9). In other words, performance was most accurate when participants focused on the effects their movements produced, rather than on the movements themselves. These research findings, and the researchers’ opinions mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, suggest that teachers should pay more attention to the cognitive and psychological levels when guiding students to develop technical skills, rather than simply considering time and energy investment.
3.2.3 Learning ‘by ear’

Aural learning, defined as learning music mainly on the basis of aural input rather than visual stimulus, has been studied by McPherson (2002) and Varvarigou and Green (2014). This learning approach is regarded as an efficient way to enable learners to engage deeply with music (Priest, 1989) and also as a powerful way to develop musicianship (Mcpherson, Bailey, & Sinclair, 1997). McPherson (1997) has noted that the skill of playing by ear is strongly related to the capacity to improvise. This creative ability plays a crucial role in learners’ enjoyment and musical growth. Two teaching approaches that give emphasis to the role of the ear in learning to play are introduced here: the Suzuki teaching method and the Ear-playing Project (EPP).

The Suzuki method was developed from Suzuki’s observation of how children learn their first language (Suzuki, 1993). He believes that music can also be learned by absorbing repeated stimulation. Therefore, repeated listening is considered the best approach to learn a new piece of music. In the early stage, learners are required to listen to the whole piece until they become familiar with the music, and then to pay more attention to details such as rhythm or dynamic. Gradually, learners’ sensitivity to music can be established during intentional listening. After that, teachers help learners to play the music on the instrument and encourage them to practise more until they can master the music in detail. Musical notation in the form of a score is not excluded in this method, but is introduced in the later stage when learners’ aural sensitivity has
developed and learners know how to play the instrument technically. In this learning process, a CD recording is regarded as a master to provide a good aural model to imitate so that artistry is gradually internalised. As a result of considering music learning as a kind of language development, Suzuki (Suzuki, 1993) insisted that teachers and parents need to corporately create an appropriate music learning environment to allow students to be immersed in music. Teachers have to provide soundtracks with good quality and motivate students by positive feedback, while parents need to enable learners to listen to this music as much as possible when children are playing and eating or before they go to sleep.

The basic idea of the Ear-Playing Project (EEP) (Baker & Green, 2013) derived from informal music learning, such as is the case with most popular music or jazz. This project emphasises the development of pupils’ aural skills by copying music from a recording. The participant students in the study were involved in the programme over a period of six to eight weeks. In the first stage, learners intentionally listened to a recording which played repeatedly and then explored the melody on the instrument to find out how to play the notes on their instrument. Teachers only offered support when necessary, such as guiding a student to intentionally listen to the music. Teachers provided their modelling only after the students had almost worked out the whole melody. In order to motivate learners, students could choose to explore the music they
liked, such as rock or jazz, along with the classical music provided by teachers.

Although these two ear-learning approaches are based on aural ability, there are different focuses. Firstly, the Suzuki method emphasises learners’ practice and detailed imitation of a recording, while the EEP focuses on musical exploration by intensely working with a recording. Secondly, for the Suzuki method a recording seems to be seen as an expected standard to be reached. Learners repeatedly listen to the music so that they can internalise it. In contrast, the EEP views a recording as a good tool to help learners to increase the sense of musical flow, which means that learners can ignore mistakes they make and keep going. Thirdly, the Suzuki method aims to gradually build learners’ artistry, but EEP is concerned to foster learners’ general listening skills and musical appreciation of classical or other style of music. Finally, the attitudes toward mistakes in performance are different. Musical notes which are different from those on the recording are accepted and viewed by teachers as improvisation in the EEP.

3.2.4 Developing musical expression

Musical expression is highly valued by recent studies as an element in musical development (Creech & Gaunt, 2012; Gabrielsson, 1999; Hallam, 1998; Lindström et al., 2003; Persson, 1994; Sloboda, 1993; Woody, 2000). Its significance is recognised not only by researchers but also by professional
teachers. For example, Lindström investigated 51 instrumental teachers from music conservatories in Sweden and England. The participant teachers were willing to spend time in developing learners’ musical expression. From the theoretical point of view, several factors fundamental to musical expression have been identified, such as the performers’ emotional involvement (n.d.), cultural understanding (Mcpherson, 1995), and self-efficacy (Silverman, 2008).

In a study of eight UK students in higher education using qualitative methodology, Van Zijl and Sloboda (2010) explored the relation between emotion and expressive performance. Four stages were identified. In the first stage, players tend to move towards an appreciation of the feeling of a piece of music by playing it throughout. This is followed by the second stage, in which the player focuses on technical mastery. At this point, they may experience negative emotions caused by technical difficulties. In the third stage, ‘feeling the musical emotions is transformed into knowing the musical emotions’ (p.211). Finally, performers can play music expressively in a way which is liberated from concern with issues of technique and musical theory. The nature of performers’ emotions is further clarified in this study. The authors classified two types of emotion: music-related and practice-related. The former is the reaction of ‘just feeling and enjoying the music’ (p.213), while the latter relates to ‘a sense of awareness of the act of performing and being engaged with the emotions found to be present in the music’ (p.213). The preceding analysis, with its four stages and identification of two types of emotion,
suggests that instrumental teachers have not only to guide learners to feel the
music and help them to express their feelings by developing the necessary
technical skills, but also have to deal with students’ frustration emerging from
difficulties encountered in practising.

Cultural understanding is also crucial for performers to develop authentic
musical expression. It was mentioned in section 2.1.2 that performance is
more than reproduction of written scores. Performing involves an
understanding of the composer’s intention in combination with the performer’s
own personal aesthetic. These two are based on the understanding of a
specific musical style, particularly in Western classical music. Kramer (2013)
explains that this kind of understanding is informed by an appreciation of
diverse aspects of cultural background, such as the historical and social
context. In addition, Silverman (2008) analysed a particular performer’s
experience of musical interpretation and found that the factors involved in
developing musical expression included a steady growing knowledge of the
relevant musical culture, appropriate level of technical challenges, a sense of
achievement, intrinsic motivation, and a commitment to music. This researcher
concluded that self-efficacy is crucial to development of personal voice. All of
this indicates that teachers should support learners not just in the area of
technique but also in their emotional and cognitive development, and they also
need to create an appropriate learning environment to facilitate students’
self-efficacy.
With regard to teaching strategies for musical expression, various approaches have been identified, such as awakening a sensation (Persson, 2001), using metaphor (Lindström et al., 2003), and aural modelling (Dickey, 1992). Persson (Persson, 2001) believes that conscious recall of some memories and visual imagery are useful for performers to create the emotion corresponding to a piece of music. Lindström (2003) and Woody (2002) agree about the value of arousing emotions; however, they prefer using metaphor to create a link between music and emotion. Interestingly, Woody (2002) invited seven music performance teachers in higher education to write down what kinds of descriptive image or metaphor they used to elicit their students’ expressive performance. The findings showed that there was a relatively limited affective vocabulary used to describe the emotion and found that there was a considerable similarity among the images and metaphors chosen by the participants. In other words, when it comes to appreciating a piece of music, ‘there is great consensus about matters of expressivity among musicians’ (Laukka, 2004). However, some researchers argue that metaphor seems not to be the most effective or most commonly used teaching strategy. Karlsson and Juslin (2008) analysed five teachers’ practice and found that expression was often taught implicitly with vague description. Additionally, feedback on performance and employment of normal verbal instruction were dominant rather than metaphor. From the learners’ point of view, Persson (1996) also found that not all students find metaphor unproblematic. Metaphor may generate some confusion for learners, firstly, at the level of understanding
what the metaphor is referring to, secondly, at the level of learning how to apply the metaphor to their practice. Hence, teachers need to evaluate the students' understanding of the metaphor and then help them to connect the metaphorical image with the expressive qualities of their performance.

Burwell (2003) and Matsunobu (2011) considered the pedagogic value of teachers’ aural modelling and learners’ imitation. The importance of teachers’ modelling has been mentioned in section 2.2.2. More specifically, ‘accuracy in rhythm and notation, tonal quality and certain aspects of technique can be quite specific in nature and it seems possible that they can be learned in no more effective way than by imitating a model. Even aspects of interpretation, such as the use of expressive gestures, can be usefully acquired’ (Burwell et al., 2003). This viewpoint seems to relate to the idea of learning as a personal internalised process rather than the accumulation of information. Interestingly, this kind of concept is not unfamiliar in Eastern educational philosophy. According to research addressing Japanese culture (Matsunobu, 2011), it is generally believed that creativity can be culturally constructed by years of practice and imitation of a master of the basic artistic conventions. Similarly, Wang (2008) noted that Chinese education is inclined to require skills first so as to provide a basis for creative expression. If musical expression is viewed as a form of personal creativity, then emulation appears to be an effective approach.
Many researchers have set out to analyse the methods of instrumental teachers. They identify the prevalence of a focus on technical development and musical literacy (Mills, 2006; Rostvall & West, 2003) using a teacher-dominated teaching style (Creech & Gaunt, 2012; Persson, 1994). Rostvall and West (2003) observed four participant teachers (with college degrees in music and instrumental teaching) in Sweden. They found that these teachers seldom modelled and all focused on studying the musical score. This kind of teaching style was also noted by Persson (1994) and Reid (2001). They believe that in instrumental teaching in general, relatively few opportunities are left to learners to express their own ideas. This passive learning style can also be identified in the common teaching routine, which, as described by Price (1992) and Colprit (2000), follows the sequence of teachers’ presentation, students’ practice, and teachers’ specific feedback. Although these two researchers evaluated this pattern as effective, this mechanical routine seems to lead to a passive learning attitude, which means students are only waiting for teachers’ correction or feedback (Hallam, 1998), instead of being actually involved in the learning process and taking responsibility for their self-examination.

In addition to a passive learning attitude, a teacher-dominated style, or as Ganut (2008) one precisely calls it, a subject-oriented style, manifests itself in teachers’ verbal instruction. Firstly, based on her analysis of teachers’
feedback, Gaunt (2008) found that most participant teachers had not attempted to understand the need for students’ reflection on taught concepts. Feedback from these teachers mainly consisted of simple positive recognition such as ‘well done’ and at the end of each lesson a summary of what had been taught. Burwell (2005) carried out a four-year qualitative research study in the UK to further clarify the relation between the types of question teachers asked and their learners’ independence. The results indicated that there are wide dissimilarities between teachers, with the number of questions asked ranging from none to eighty-one. The author classified three types of question: disguised instruction, coaching commands in question form, and rhetorical questions. Disguised instruction shows greater courtesy towards the student, whereas ‘giving direct commands or transmitting information, may have an important impact on student morale and confidence’ (p.212), because it is more confrontational. Rhetorical questions ‘may not seem to call for a response from the student, but may arguably offer the teacher’s thought processes as a model for the student, who is tacitly invited to think alongside him’ (p.212). Such an explanation shows rhetorical questions as being more collaborative. The author discussed the nature of questions in a context where both teacher and pupil saw performance skills as being developed in a master–apprentice relationship. Students ‘simply assume that the ideas of the master are bound to be more valuable than those of the apprentice, and in many obvious ways they are probably right’ (p.213), while teachers do ‘not require a significant response from the students’ (p.213).
3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the focus was on exploring instrumental teachers’ beliefs about teaching purpose and pedagogical practice. Although several researchers believe that instrumental teaching is dominated by musical literacy and performing skills, there are more and more research studies presenting different opinions held by teachers about instrumental teaching purpose, showing that some teachers put their emphasis on cultivating learners’ enjoyment of music or developing students’ learning abilities rather than simply addressing the mastery of performing technique. However, when it comes to developing learners’ non-musical abilities, such as self-discipline, there is more debate about whether these abilities can be taught by instrumental teachers. This lack of consensus may be the result of different definitions of these concepts, for example, what kind of behaviours can be or should be taken into account as characterising responsible learning or independent learners.

There has been criticism for a long time that instrumental teaching mainly relies on notation and focuses on developing the technical skills required for performing. This phenomenon is named the reproductive approach by Hultberg (2002). According to Mills (2006), however, rather than simply focusing on performing technique, instrumental teachers do think about developing learners’ own musical expression or thinking; but before addressing these, teachers consider that basic abilities, such as musical reading and performing skills, must be cultivated properly first. There seems to be an agreement about teaching priorities, even though this kind of teaching sequence may lead to students being insensitive to the sound they are making (Mcpherson & Renwick, 2001). Nevertheless, there are some pedagogies which emphasise developing learners’ listening, such as the Suzuki method and the Ear-Playing Project (Baker & Green, 2013). The Suzuki method puts
more emphasis on cultural internalization by repeated and deliberate listening, while the EEP aims to encourage learners to explore music by ear. In Chapter Two, two different modes of one-to-one teaching have been mentioned: master–apprentice and mentor–friend. Lehmann et al. (2007) asserted that it is better for instrumental teachers to adopt a mentor–friend mode, because this mode encourages teachers to teach flexibly and meet individuals’ needs. Having reviewed the literature on instrumental lessons, it is clear that teacher-led teaching style seems to be dominant in this educational setting. This teaching style may be replicating the teachers’ previous learning experience or constrained by a relatively isolated working culture. Therefore, how instrumental teachers develop their own teaching skills and practice, and how they cope with teaching challenges become the next topic to explore. In Chapter Four, I review the literature concerning the theories of personal creativity and the research on creativity in music education.
CHAPTER 4: CREATIVITY

Because one of my main research interests relates to creativity, the focus of this section shifts to the concept of creativity itself and relevant research findings. Two main aspects are concentrated on in this review: the concept of personal creativity and creativity in music education. The first part aims to provide a picture of diverse definitions of creativity and explore some possible factors which influence personal creativity; the second part focuses on creativity in the context of music education, including theoretical ideas and teachers’ voices.

4.1 Theories of personal creativity

‘Creativity, especially in the arts, seems to be constructed as a mysterious, unknowable process’ (Williamon, Thompson, Lisboa, & Wiffen, 2006); in other words, arts creativity is closely connected to the impression of novelty or to eminent creators, such as Beethoven and Picasso, and their creations. This notion of creativity has been labelled as big-C creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Elliott, 1989; Simonton, 1990) or historical creativity (Boden, 2009). By contrast, creativity can also be understood at a personal level, called personal creativity by Boden (2009) or little-c creativity by Craft (2003). Broadly speaking, big-C creativity focuses on the evaluation of the outcome based on a specific historical consensus or convention, while personal creativity provides a starting notion from which approach the to understanding of personal
thought characterised by novelty and appropriateness to a context of
application (Sternberg, 1999).

With regard to this personal level, Craft (2003) defines little-c creativity as
‘personal effectiveness, a life-wide resourcefulness’, and he explains further
that ‘it is not necessarily tied to a product-outcome, for it involves exercising
imaginativeness. But it involves having some grasp of the domain of
application, and thus of the appropriateness of the ideas’. From this
perspective, the area of creativity can be explored beyond the bounds set by
norms of historic originality and novelty. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) provide
further clarification by distinguishing two categories of personal creativity:
mini-c and professional creativity. The former focuses on personal thinking or
expression; the latter attempts to explain creativity in terms of a specific
working environment. A chef in the culinary would, for example, or a writer in
the literacy or broader cultural world.

With regard to research into thinking skills which may contribute to creativity,
‘possibility thinking’ has been identified as core to little-c creativity (2006). This
concept denotes a process of thinking from ‘what is this?’ to ‘what can I do with
this?’ through posing of the question ‘what if?’ in different ways and contexts.
This approach suggests that personal creativity can be explored by an
understanding of how people guide themselves to complete a task. However,
this kind of concept of creativity seems to overlap with the concept of
effectiveness or even intelligence. In fact, as shown by Weisberg (1993),
creativity is an extraordinary product which derives from knowledge stored in memory. Smith, Ward, and Finke (1995) note that creative thinking encompasses special combinations and patterns of the same cognitive processes seen in other noncreative endeavours. These ideas brought forward by Weisberg and Smith et al. (1993) point out the link between effective cognitive processes and creativity.

Still exploring creativity from the thinking perspective, Amabile (n.d.) explains personal creativity as combining three components: (1) domain-relevant skills which cope with complexities and are given free play by breaking one’s mental set during problem solving; (2) creativity-relevant knowledge which generates novel ideas; and (3) task motivation. This theory suggests that personal creativity can be influenced by different thinking skills which do not relate simply to subject-knowledge but also to other cognitive and psychological processes. A great deal of research into creative thinking skills has been carried out, in areas such as divergent thinking (Guilford, 1959; Torrance, 1968), brainstorming (Osborn, 1953), and ‘six thinking hats’ (De Bono, 1989).

There are other factors which impact on personal creativity. Firstly, habits. Glaveanu (2012) redefines creativity as ‘the ways in which novelties form an intrinsic part of habitual action by constantly adjusting it to dynamic contexts, allowing for transitions between and combination of different “routines” and finally perfecting practices, thus resulting in mastery’ (p.20). This implies that different habitual reactions directed to completing a task can impact on
creativity. Secondly, Wallas (1926) identifies four phases in the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. He also found that positive or negative emotions may impact differently in these different stages. For example, someone who thinks negatively may force themselves to think of more possible alternatives in the early stage, which is likely to enhance creativity. However, if one still retains the same attitude in the final stage, the outcome may be ‘killed’ by the negative prediction. In terms of positive emotion, Vosburg (1998) and Kaufman (2003) argue that a positive mood may facilitate productivity but not quality of ideas. Thirdly, Csikzentmihalyi & Robinson (2014) note that the identification of problems is key to generating creative solutions; an ability which is driven by an intense interest in and curiosity about a topic. The importance of intrinsic motivation is also confirmed by Amabile (2008). Indeed, according to Post (2012), all personal life values, intrinsic work values, social-life values, and extrinsic work values affect creativity.

4.2 Creativity in music education

In Csikszentmihalyi’s theory, what can truly be called creativity involves three interrelated factors: domain, field, and person. Creativity can be identified as from a process in which symbols of certain domains (culture) are used in a novel way, and where new creative ideas are socially confirmed by the gatekeepers to the domain (e.g., an experienced member or critic). Therefore, musical creativity can be seen as specifically creativity in the musical domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Custodero (2002) observe how the creativity
process enables a person to balance artistic freedom with the perceived order imposed by the structural characteristics of the musical content. This theory is similar to Elliot’s ideas about creativity in the musical domain (Elliott, 1995). According to him, creativity is demonstrated by combining previous achievements within a culture, such as expertise, knowledge, and specific traditions, with original ideas. Whether or not the creation (the outcome) can rightly be classed as creative depends on a valuation or judgement from the perspective of the context in which it is produced. This is all looking at creativity in relation to cultural context.

Webster (2002) and Hennessy (2009) provide a broader view of musical creativity. They interpret creativity as musical thinking or personal expression that manipulates musical elements to produce something new relating to music, whether in a form that can be practically realised as music, or in verbal or non-verbal forms (for example, body movement). This kind of viewpoint is similar to personal creativity or mini-c creativity, which focuses more on personal development rather than the cultural evaluation of the produced outcome.

Based on his own literature review, Webster (2002) provides a model of the creative thinking process in music which synthesises different theories about creativity, such as Wallas’s (1926) four phases of creative process, divergent and convergent thinking (Guilford, 1959; Torrance, 1968), and Amabile’s three components of personal creativity (n.d.). In this theory, listening can be seen
as a kind of creativity, and both the written analysis and mental representation of the music can be seen as being creative products. In the music learning context, aptitudes, craftsmanship, and aesthetic sensitivity are accounted enabling skills; personality and socio-cultural impact are viewed as facilitating conditions. Interestingly, the author argues that illumination, which is one of Wallas’s four phases of the creative process, seems not to exist in the musical creative process.

With regard to creativity in performance, it has been noted in an earlier section (2.1.3) that performance or musical interpretation can be seen as a creative process that involves both the composer’s and the performer’s musical creativity. However, Sawyer (2011) holds a different opinion about creativity in performance. He believes that in the Western classical fine-art tradition, the main aim of performers is to convey the originality of the finished composition rather than to demonstrate personal creativity. This debate seems to emerge from the different attitudes towards printed score which were mentioned in the previous section. The written score can be viewed as unfinished work which allows performers to show their own musical understanding of a specific piece of work. On the other hand, the score can also be seen as a finished work where the composer has written down every detail of this work.
4.3 Empirical research on musical creativity

Most research on creativity in music education is associated with school music teachers’ attitude towards musical creativity (Burnard, 2000; Crow, 2008; Koutsoupidou, 2008; Odena & Welch, 2009). Musical thinking and musical interpretation seem to be less often included as part of the research area of musical creativity. The studies are mentioned above mainly related to improvisation and composition, which is reasonable, because they have been carried out in a school context, where pupils are more encouraged to create their own work or to manipulate sounds made by certain instruments, without the requirement of sophisticated performing skills.

Crow (2008) carried out a mixed-methodology research study in which the participants were student school teachers. He found that there was a problematic dichotomy existing in relation to the purpose of musical creativity, because the participants’ definitions of musical creativity were blurred by bringing together creative teaching (storytelling, diverse teaching approaches) and creative learning (enabling pupils to learn how to learn effectively). Most participants aimed to impart subject-knowledge by using interesting teaching methods. In addition, the findings showed that these student teachers had been deeply influenced by their learning experience within the Western classical music tradition. For example, one student teacher, when asked their opinion about creativity in their music teaching, stated that ‘I play the cello. That’s [i.e. creativity is] the odd thing. Like the cello is so
classical…’ (p.384). Moreover, free music-making seems to be unfamiliar to these participants. ‘The problem with music colleges is the fact that it gives you a very narrow view, that they sort of train you up to be the very best musician’ (p.385). Crow believes that emphasis on professional performance appears to ignore other music-making activity such as improvisation or composition. Hence, he asserts that the nature of creative music education needs to be clarified; if not, the meaningful connection between musical learning and creativity may be obscured or lost.

Another piece of research focused on exploring whether or not improvisation is an effective teaching activity to promote pupils’ creativity (Koutsoupidou, 2008). Koutsoupidou compared the learning outcome of two different teaching styles, ‘teacher-centred didactic’ and ‘flexible-creative’, by using Webster’s test of creative thinking in music (Webster, 1990). The statistical results and participant teachers’ opinions showed that creativity can be nurtured by teachers in terms of confidence, original idea generation, and flexibility. In this study, a creative approach allowed teachers to give more time for pupils to explore music. Both the teachers and the pupils were surprised by how liberating the experience was. Yet the norm, as shown by Crow (2008), is that teachers instructional style is shaped by their own experience, and this experience limits teachers’ views.

Recently, several projects have been set up inviting artists or creative professionals outside schools to work within a curriculum framework in the UK.
For example, in a music composition project (Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010) composers worked with students and researchers observed how these composers expanded learners' experience. The researchers found that these composers did not view themselves as teachers but as experienced people able to explore music with students. One participant student described how they were being treated as completely equal to those professionals rather than being told what to do. This kind of learning experience inspired them to engage deeply with music, becoming more sensitive to music and making their own decisions. Thereby learners' ownership of their learning can be gradually established.

4.4 Teaching as teachers’ personal creativity

4.4.1 Concepts of creativity in teaching

The difference between creative teaching and effective teaching has been mentioned in section 2.2.3. Summarising numerous researchers' ideas (Craft, Dugal, Dyer, Jeffrey, & Lyons, 1997; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Woods, 1995) and the NACCCE report (1999), creative teaching can be understood as focused on exciting, innovative, engaging and often memorable pedagogy, which is different from teaching to encourage learners' creativity or creative learning. The relationship between these two concepts of creative teaching and teaching for creativity in the learners has been described by Jeffery and Craft (2004). They further clarified that these two concepts can be seen as a single
integral one. Their explanation is that these two can happen at the same time and that ‘teaching for creativity is more likely to emerge from contexts in which teachers are teaching creatively’ (p.14).

It is worthwhile mentioning here the significant difference focuses of these two concepts. Creative teaching means that teachers use interesting teaching approaches to make lessons more fun, thereby motivating pupils' motivation to learn. That may not, however, provoke learners' creative capacity. On the other hand, teaching for creativity is more likely to promote students' learning ability or creative learning. Creative learning here means learning which focuses not only focus on subject knowledge but also on facilitating students' learning ability. As for developing students’ creativity, Cremin et al (2006) and Craft, Cremin and Burnard (2008) carried out study in early education and then provided certain pedagogical suggestions: standing back, placing high value on learner agency, and offering more time and space for students to explore. Therefore, from the teachers’ point of view, creative teaching seems to require teachers to act more on their own initiative, while teachers who aim for learners’ creativity need to place more emphasis on learners’ initiative. This implies that effective teaching needs to keep a balance between these two agents. In other words, good teaching can be seen as a way of showing teachers’ personal creativity.
4.4.2 Instrumental teaching as creativity

According to McPherson and Williamon (2006), the ability to teach music can be considered a kind of musical talent, and this talent is also influenced by diverse factors, such as natural abilities and tendencies, different experiences, and interaction with other people (McPherson & Williamon, 2006).

Furthermore, teaching is not simply based on pedagogical knowledge. The complexity of learning and teaching music has been explored in chapter two. Firstly, there are the diverse factors which contribute to successful learning. Effective teachers need to cooperate with parents, and also create a friendly learning environment and help learners to cultivate positive learning habits.

Secondly, music teachers can play the role of instructor, mentor, or facilitator. Hence, teachers need to flexibly adjust their teaching role according to learners’ needs. Thirdly, teachers’ beliefs and their practice are shaped by their learning experience and are underpinned by their educational assumptions. Finally, teachers’ reflection plays a crucial part in teaching effectiveness.

Cooper and McIntyre (1996) mention that teaching involves complex skills learned from both study and experience. As far as instrumental teachers are concerned, it has been observed that most instrumental teaching is principally based on intuition, common sense, or learning experience (Mills & Smith, 2003; Persson, 2000; V. Ward, 2004). For example, Mills (Mills & Smith, 2003) reported that only one of her four participants tended to use a different
teaching style to their previous teachers, while over half her participants explained that they developed their teaching on the basis of their own learning experience. In the higher-education context, most instrumental teaching appears to be strongly influenced by teachers’ professional experiences as performers rather than as educators (Gaunt, 2008).

Compared to reliance on the memories of teachers’ own learning, seeking for training opportunities or consulting recent pedagogical literature seem to feature much less (Haddon, 2009). On top of these limiting factors, instrumental teachers often work relatively independently, without being part of a professional social group (Froehlich, 2002). This isolation is further confirmed by Mills (2008), who found that instrumental teachers prefer to overcome their teaching problems individually if they can do so. In other words, lack of diversity of experiences may limit teachers’ professional development.

Considering problem-solving as a perspective for approaching the concept of creativity, Kaufmann (2004) provides a paradigm which presents four levels of novelty in terms of task or solution to explain the differences between routine and creativity. The first level is where a familiar task is met with a familiar solution. From Kaufmann’s point of view, little-c creativity and normal problem-solving have been located at this level. The second level is when a novel task is addressed using a familiar solution. At this second level, a person can be viewed as intelligent but not creative, because the problems, ‘despite their novelty, are amenable to solutions derived from an existing generative
rule system for a given problem space’ (p.160). However, the risk here is that people may solve a simple problem by using complicated strategies, which may leave them unable to adjust to new demands and challenges. The third level is attained when a familiar task is given a novel solution. In order to improve the quality of product or meet future demands, the designer should be looking for possible improvements. In this situation, the person needs to be active in engaging his or her imagination, so this process is classed as ‘proactive creativity’. It is readily seen to be at the very heart of the concept of creativity. The final category is when both task and solution are new. Here, the action of a creator is triggered by a totally new situation, instead of actively discovering a new problem in a familiar situation, so that it is categorised as ‘reactive creativity’. This response is close to ‘reflecting in action’ (Schön, 1987). In such a circumstance, an individual cannot respond using past experience or knowledge. Therefore, what Kaufmann calls ‘problem detection ability’ becomes important, that is, sensitivity in discerning that there is a real problem to be addressed, clear conceptualising of the problem, the visualising of a potential solution.

The advantage of this paradigm is that it considers the task and the individual’s reactions separately. And I adopt it in my own research as I attempt to understand teachers’ creativity in their teaching. Teaching involves a certain degree of teaching routine, such as warm-up, followed by main learning activity, and elements of classroom management, but it also includes
responding to unexpected circumstances or the specific needs of a particular individual. The clear separation of the task and the corresponding solution suggested by Kaufmann’s paradigm is useful in providing a simple but useful structure to deconstruct the complexity of actual teaching taking place in the music room.

My examination of the literature on instrumental teaching and learning and on creativity reveals several gaps in coverage. For example, most studies concerning instrumental lessons focus on advanced learners, and research on creativity in music education mainly addresses improvisation or composition. Therefore, my own study aims to focus on the teaching beliefs of teachers at the level of beginners or young learners in instrumental lessons, and also attempts to understand the potential for creativity in this teaching context from the perspective of teachers.

4.5 Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, one of my research purposes was to explore the potential for creativity in instrumental lessons. Therefore, two purposes of this Chapter were to understand how current researchers approach the concept of creativity and how their findings and theories have been applied in music education. Firstly, it is easier to address this topic by pinning the concept of creativity down to the personal level, such as little-c creativity as seen in thinking or expression. Based on this definition, several theories of developing personal creativity have been provided. For example, Craft (2006) believes that possibility thinking is key to personal creativity, while Amabile considers creativity as a kind of knowledge which is also affected by
domain-relevant skills and task motivation. As for music education, some music teachers were confused about the difference between creative teaching and teaching for creativity, or limited the concept of creativity to a specific musical format, such as improvisation or composition. Rather than linking creativity with a specific definition, I attempted to consider teaching insofar as demonstrate personal creativity, and then to explore the potential for creativity in this one-to-one setting. I ended this chapter by reviewing Kaufmann’s theory, which explores creativity in terms of problem-solving to enable me as a researcher to further explore the reality of the teaching world.
CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

There are three main sections in this chapter. First, I introduce my theoretical framework; I describe my philosophical position and how I chose my methodology. The second section includes a description of how I conducted my pilot and main studies, and my ethical considerations. The final part consists of an explanation of my methods of analysis and a chronological account of how I developed my theoretical framework.

5.1 Theoretical framework

I had two research aims: (1) to explore teachers’ beliefs about effective instruction and their perception of creativity in one-to-one instrumental teaching; (2) to explore the potential for creativity in piano teaching, in terms of both routine teaching practice and how the teacher responds to problems and challenges from different sources. Although there were two research aims, three research questions arose, because the first research aim had two focuses: teachers’ beliefs about good teaching and their perception of creativity. The three research questions were:

(1) What are Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs about good teaching?

(2) How do Taiwanese piano teachers understand the role of creativity in piano teaching?

(3) How do Taiwanese piano teachers reflect on their teaching?
Before adopting my own research procedures, I considered what methods other researchers had employed.

The first research aim involved teachers’ beliefs about their practice, their actual practice, and the effectiveness of their practice. Different methodologies have been applied by researchers in this area: quantitative, qualitative, and a combination of these two. Gaunt (2008) and Cheng and Durrant (2007) adopted a qualitative approach. Gaunt interviewed instrumental teachers in higher education, examining their teaching beliefs. Cheng and Durrant studied a single case, employing both interview and observation in different teaching setting, in order to explore different dimensions of instrumental teaching. Mills and Smith (2003), on the other hand, applied quantitative procedures in researching the differences of teaching beliefs between student teacher in the UK and Australia. However, in her 2006 articles concerning student teachers’ thoughts about instruction, Mills combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

All the studies referred to in the last paragraph looked at beliefs alone. Beliefs and practice together have been examined by various researchers, who have chosen not only to look at specific narrower topics within the broader field, but have presented their results from using different perspective. Some researchers mainly present teachers’ own opinions (Gaunt, 2008; Mills & Smith, 2003), while others aim to provide a critique of observed practice from their own academic point of view (Haddon, 2009; Priest, 1989; Triantafyllaki, 2005). As for teachers’ effectiveness, Price (1992) set up three experiments to examine which teaching
pattern produced the best outcome. He combined in different proportions and sequence, the basic elements of instruction, students’ practice, and feedback from the course instructor and then statistically analysed the participant teachers’ opinions about the three patterns. In another study, Mills (2006) presented a Likert scale survey which explores teachers’ opinions about effective teaching. In contrast, several researchers provide results based on qualitative observation (Colprit, 2000; Duke & Henninger, 2002; Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1997). These different types of research findings all contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of instrumental lessons.

With regard to research in the area of creativity, there are three different relevant research focuses: creativity in general, creativity in education, and creativity in music education. The concept of creativity in general has been researched using different approaches, such as biographical (Sayer, 2000; Simonton, 1990), psychometric ( Guilford, 1959; Torrance, 1968), or computational (Boden, 1996; Denscombe, 2002). These studies are useful in showing us different understandings of creativity and providing different methodologies for dealing with it. For example, Simonton (1988; 1990) has conducted numerous studies in which the level of creativity, as measured by the number of eminent practitioners over large spans of time in diverse cultures, has been statistically linked to environmental variables such as cultural diversity, war, availability of role models, availability of resources, and number of competitors in a domain.
Guilford (1959) noted that creativity could be studied in the normal population, rather than simply focusing on eminent artists or scientists, with a psychometric approach, and many researchers followed his lead. For example, The Torrance test of creative thinking (1968) became a popular measurement tool for several decades.

As for teachers’ role in creativity, Fryer (1996) pointed out the features of creative teaching by using a quantitative methodology, while Craft et al. (2008) figured out the characteristics of pedagogical practice for fostering students’ creativity based on their observations of creative teachers.

Finally, research on creativity in music education has concentrated on two dimensions: learners’ musical creativity and teachers’ opinion about musical creativity. Most researchers have approached musical creativity in the school music context, such as exploring children's thoughts about improvisation or composition (Brophy, 2002; Burnard, 2000; Rozman, 2009), or student teachers’ opinion about musical creativity (Crow, 2008; Denscombe, 2002; Koutsoupidou, 2008). Two examples of research into improvisation and composition (Brophy, 2002; Burnard, 2000) using different research methodologies have been discussed in the previous section.

The process of examining and reviewing literature on instrumental teaching and creativity enabled me to discover the significant concepts and terminology that enabled me to establish my own theoretical perspective on instrumental teaching, and also to recognise certain possible perspectives on creativity that
could enable me to connect the concept of creativity to instrumental teaching. However, in order to make sure that my results were well grounded philosophically, I felt I should examine research philosophy as well, so that I could clarify my theoretical position and understand the nature of the knowledge I was acquiring. Therefore, before explaining my research methodology, I discuss the philosophical assumptions and research paradigms I have adopted.

5.1.1 Ontology and epistemology

The significance of research philosophy as determining the methodology of research and the nature of it has been recognised by several researchers (Barbour, 2013; Creswell, 2012; Guba, 1990; Hesse-Biber, 2003; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001; Wellington, 2015). Philosophical research assumptions are ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’ (Guba, 1990). This theoretical framework, whether at the deeper philosophical level of ontology and epistemology or at the functional level of research paradigm, will determine what types of data will be collected, how researchers collect the data, how the information will be analysed, and finally what sort of conclusions can be evaluated as knowledge. It is crucial to clarify these fundamental assumptions underlying the paradigm in order to avoid putting together ‘logically incompatible assumptions’ (Grix, 2010, p. 83). The theories of research philosophy have become more and more varied and sophisticated. The terminology used by philosophers and theorists may indicate different perspectives when applied to a specific concept. For example, ‘relativism’ can be explored at ontological or epistemological levels, or can be a
theory elaborated for a particular field (e.g., cognitive relativism). In this section, I have not attempted to cover the whole field of philosophical and operational presuppositions in detail, but have aimed to provide a general understanding by showing the contrasting positions.

One of the aims of research is to provide knowledge that has validity. However, there are different beliefs about knowledge, which lead to different kinds of research philosophy. For example, some people believe that reality exists objectively ‘out there’ and knowledge is constructed only if it accurately represents reality, as in the case of natural science. Social science researchers look for evidence that is constructed by human thoughts and experiences, and in this definition, knowledge is only ‘true’ in a particular context.

The definition of ontology is well explained by Blaikie (2009). He states that ‘ontological claims are claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality’ (p.8). Generally speaking, two broader ontological categories are commonly evidenced in the research world: realism or objectivism, and idealism or constructivism. Realism is ‘the doctrine that there are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge of their existence’ (Schwandt, 2007, p. 219). Take ‘scientific realism’ as an example. This is the view that there is a real world which ‘causes the phenomena that we perceive with our senses’ (Schwandt, 2007, p. 220).
Therefore, researchers aim to observe the patterns of the phenomena and then to provide a ‘scientific’ explanation, which should go beyond personal statements and should be generalisable. In other words, the world the researchers observe objectively exists. What accounts as good knowledge should be evaluated according to the accuracy of representation of the world. In opposition to realism stands idealism. Idealists believe that ‘the world does not exist independently of minds’ (Schwandt, 2007, p. 121). Idealists argue that the world is interpreted by humans’ thoughts and emotions. Therefore, they pay more attention to sociocultural and historical phenomena rather than material or physical ones. As Schwandt (2007) explains, ‘the spirit of idealism—its recognition of the importance of mind, life, emotion, and so forth— is a wellspring of qualitative inquiry, although not all so-called qualitative inquiries are necessarily philosophically idealist’ (p.121). Therefore, for idealists, good knowledge is constructed in a specific cultural context.

As for epistemology, this branch of philosophy ‘focuses on the knowledge-gathering process’ (Grix, 2010, p. 63). Alternatively expressed, it concerns the nature of the relationship between the object of research and the type of enquiry that can be conducted. Following from the contrasting ontological assumptions mentioned in the previous paragraph, two epistemological positions are explored here: objectivism and intersubjectivism. Bernstein (1983) provides a detailed definition of objectivism:

The base conviction that there is or must be some permanence. A historical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality,
knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness. An objectivist claims that there is such a
matrix and that the primary task of the philosopher is to discover what it is. (p.8)

This corresponds to ontological realism. Reality is independent of the human
mind; therefore, researchers should objectively discover the world without
allowing the interaction of personal values or bias, as far as possible. In contrast,
and based on ontological idealism, the corresponding epistemological position is
intersubjectivism. According to Schwandt (2007), this term can be explained as
the nature of the life-world or social constitution of the self. As reality is
constituted by a sociocultural context, researchers cannot be fully objective
when they observe the world. They carry their own pre-understanding to
interpret the collected data. ‘These subjective meanings are negotiated socially
and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed
through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that
operate in individuals’ lives’ (Creswell, 2012, p. 8).

5.1.2 Research paradigms

Different methodologies, such as quantitative or qualitative methodology, are
developed based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions.
Quantitative methodology corresponds to realism and objectivism. Qualitative
methodology implies views closer to idealism and intersubjectivism. In other
words, such paradigms of inquiry are viewed by researchers themselves as a set
of theoretical ideas, even though ‘the paradigms discussed are all still in
formative stages; no final agreements have been reached among their
proponents about their definitions, meanings, or implications’ (Guba & Lincolin,
Generally speaking, positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, interpretivism, and constructivism are commonly used inquiry paradigms in social science (Grix, 2010). The major difference between positivism and post-positivism emerges from their ontological foundation. Positivism reflects empirical realism, which views the world as 'consisting of observable objects, with no unobservable qualities’ (Sayer, 2000), while post-positivism tends towards a critical realism which attempts to combine the explanation (why) and understanding (how) approaches by closing the gap between positivism and interpretivism. The nature of positivism shows a strong relation to natural science. As a social science researcher, I do not address this positive paradigm further in this study.

Post-positivists believe that ‘there are patterns and regularities, causes and consequences, in the social world just as there are in the natural world’ (Denscombe, 2002, p. 14). Indeed, it is easier to understand a topic by knowing the patterns or significant features embedded within. However, the quality of this kind of research is influenced by the number of participants in the sample and how researchers develop their research design. For example, Brophy’s work (2002) aims to investigate the age-related differences in selected melodic, rhythmic, and structural characteristics of the improvised melodies produced by 280 children aged 6–12 by using quantitative methodology. The author developed his own scoring system to transfer the children’s music into quantitative data so that he could do statistical analysis. The research findings indicated that the changes in the melodic characteristics were not significantly
age-related, but the observed changes appeared to be developmental in nature, moving toward increased motivic repetition and development, greater attention to the pulse, increased generation of rhythmic patterns, and greater structural organisation. The positive value of this piece of quantitative research is that it helps the readers to understand the possible relation between children’s age and their improvisation. However, using this kind of research, we could not understand how these children engaged in their music making, or what other variables might influence the interactions of findings, such as prior experience, attitude or disposition.

On the other hand, ‘Interpretivism is an umbrella term which covers a very wide range of perspectives in the human sciences’ (Grix, 2010, p. 82). This position holds the view that ‘virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallised over time’ (Grix, 2010, p. 24). Reality is inextricably bound to a stream of experiences we have had throughout our lives. Therefore, researchers coming from this point of view are more interested in exploring individuals’ own perception of what they are doing. Take research on children’s improvisation as an example again. Burnard (2000) observed eighteen self-selected 12-year-old pupils in their school music sessions and individually interviewed twice over a period of six months, in order to examine how children’s improvisation and composition changed through their musical experience. The researcher analysed the data using constructivist elicitation tools to understand what these children reflected on in their music-making processes. Although her findings cannot be generalised due to the small number
of participants, they enable readers to understand children’s thoughts about improvisation and composition, and promote the value of considering such thoughts when teaching composing and improvising.

Whether it is positivism or interpretivism that provides the paradigm for researchers to advance their own understanding of a specific concept, it is crucial for researchers to understand the pros and cons of each research paradigm. The most important implication of these research paradigms is to encourage a researcher to carefully consider their own fundamental beliefs about the nature of the world. This basic idea will inform the research interest and the research approaches. Thus, they can then select an appropriate methodology to approach their research topic.

5.1.3 Underpinning perspectives influencing my research methodology

The first focus of this study is to understand teachers’ beliefs about good piano teaching. However, I am not only interested in what instrumental teaching is, but also in what contributes to teachers’ beliefs, such as how their previous learning and teaching experience impacts on their practices and their perceptions. Therefore, the ontological basis underlying the methodology and purpose of this study, which addresses individuals’ lives, experiences and thoughts, belongs under ‘idealism’. This means that I need to be cautious that I am exploring individuals’ personal experience of learning and teaching music through their interpretation of these life events. Accordingly, my epistemological assumption is intersubjectivism, which involves the ‘double hermeneutic’ described by Giddens
A researcher sets out to understand what a person already knows and how they received these ideas. At this level, a social actor interprets their own action or intentions. Based on these interpretations, a researcher constructs the relevant concepts or theories to explain what the participant was doing, which means that the researcher also interprets the data. Therefore, there is a double process of interpretation.

The second focus of this study is to explore the potential for creativity in private piano lessons. According to my review of the literature, it seems that there is an absence of creativity in instrumental teaching practices, particularly in the teaching traditions of Western classical music. Although I am keen to promote the development of creativity among music teachers, I need first to examine the connections between instrumental teaching and creativity. In order to do so, two kinds of knowledge are used to inform my theory, namely, teachers' perceptions of creativity in instrumental teaching and general theories of personal creativity. The nature of teachers' ideas about creativity is also epistemologically located in idealism and intersubjectivism. However, it is insufficient to establish my theory of creativity in instrumental teaching if I only rely on this kind of fieldwork evidence. Therefore, I also synthesise other researchers' theoretical perspectives to inform the theoretical framework within which I understand creativity. In other words, the nature of this knowledge involves a combination of interpretivism and constructivism. Constructivism here has the sense clearly explained by Schwandt (2007).
Constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction. (p.30)

Having clarified and adopted the my research philosophy set out above, I could confidently take interpretivism (in a broader definition) as my research paradigm. Additionally, I chose qualitative methodology to approach my research topic.

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study the problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (Creswell, 2012, p. 37)

Creswell’s statement clearly points out the characteristics of qualitative research. The research findings not only represent participants’ voices but also a researcher’s personal perceptions. Therefore, the results of this research methodology do not establish definitive causal explanations in the social world but ‘might be open-ended rather than complete’ (Denscombe, 2002, p. 22). As mentioned above, knowledge emerging from the interpretative paradigm is bound to a historical or cultural context. In such a situation, language obviously plays a significant role when a researcher is trying to understand the data and to explore the meaning. In order to explore in depth participants’ intentions and actions and to provide meaningful research findings, the researcher’s own
understanding of the research topic and mastery of the informants' language play an important role in the whole research process. For this reason I conducted my practical research in Taiwan.

5.1.4 Appropriateness of case study

Following an interpretive paradigm, I selected case study as the methodology of this study. There are two reasons why I made this decision. One concerns the advantage of presenting real situations, which help readers to understand the concepts more clearly than do abstract principles offering explanation on their own (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). The other relates to my research purposes. I not only intended to investigate teachers’ beliefs about good piano lessons and creativity in teaching, but also to explore how individuals’ past experiences shaped their current teaching beliefs and practice. Case study allowed me to carry out in-depth analysis of the data from each participant to explore the relationship between past experience and current beliefs and practice, and also enabled me to compare all cases to find out the recurrent themes. Therefore, this study can be seen as seven individual case studies with a cross-case comparison. Stake (1994) identified three purposes of adopting case studies: understanding the particular case in question, gaining insight into an issue, and depicting a fuller picture. This study mainly focused on the first two. I did not systematically collect my data from the whole range of stakeholders, but concentrated on the teachers. Data concerning the other stakeholders, namely pupils, parents, and the owner of the private music schools, were considered simply as supplementary to build up the context of instrumental lessons,
because I aimed to understand teachers as whole persons, not present the phenomenon of instrumental lessons.

5.2 Research design

Wellington (2015) defined methodology as the activity or business of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating, and justifying the methods the researcher uses. In this section, I would like to explain how I developed my research tools and why I chose these research methods. There are two focuses: (1) a description of how I collected my research data; and (2) an explanation of how I used or adjusted each of the research methods. The whole research procedure is shown in figure 5.1. Furthermore, table 5.1 indicates how I coordinated different research data to answer my research questions.
Table 5.1: Methods, formats, and research questions (RQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-questionnaire</td>
<td>Electronic document</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview preceding observation (90mins)</td>
<td>Digital sound files (all transcribed in Mandarin; parts transcribed in English)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-participant observation</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview following observation (60mins)</td>
<td>Digital sound files (all transcribed in Mandarin; parts transcribed in English)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective diary</td>
<td>Electronic document &amp; emails</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Video and pilot study transcribed</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1 Open-ended questionnaire

Before the first interview, participants were invited to answer an open-ended questionnaire about their musical career. In particular, I was interested in significant events that affected their teaching career, no matter whether these experiences were as a learner or as a teacher. This approach was provoked by the notion of ‘musical river’ (Burnard, 2000) and ‘critical events’ (Woods, 1995). Burnard devised a river metaphor to guide children to recall certain significant musical moments in sequential order. Although the original concept of musical river used a simple s-curved line on the paper as a visual stimulus, the participants in my study were more used to responding in electronic forms such as email or Word, which are difficult to format within the ‘S’ shape. Therefore, I
did not draw a line in my questionnaire but gave the participant verbal instruction to guide their response. Woods (1995) defines critical events as ‘exceptional kinds of activity that occur from time to time in schools and that bring radical change in pupils and sometimes teachers’ (p. 118). I adjusted this research tool by providing participants with some examples of what type of event they might include in their questionnaire. They were asked to recall three ‘critical events’ of their musical teaching career. This tool aimed to collect baseline data concerning the teachers’ previous musical learning and teaching background and the experiences which influenced their music teaching practice and beliefs. The information was used as a starting point in the first semi-structured interview, and then in the following data analysis.

5.2.2 Semi-structured interview

Interview is a common research method in qualitative research. As Tuckman (2012) notes, this method provides an opportunity to discover how people perceive a particular issue, and also to elicit their preferences and personal perceptions. In total, I conducted two interviews with each participant in my main study. One took place before the lesson observation and the other one afterwards. The former mainly focused on teachers’ beliefs about good piano teaching, while the latter was generally a discussion about their observed teaching. The key questions used in these two interviews are listed in Appendices 1 & 2. The second interview, which involved video-stimulated recall, will be explained later. There are three focuses in the first, semi-structured,
interview, namely, the motivation for being a piano teacher, the teachers’ current practice (which involves their typical teaching pattern and challenges), and their beliefs about what makes a ‘successful’ piano lesson. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed in Mandarin and in English.

5.2.3 Non-participant observation

Although I videoed all observed lessons using a digital camera, I was allowed by the participants also to be present to observe the teaching. Both video recording and my personal observation were useful in understanding the reality of the lessons. There are several advantages in using a camera. First, it gives the observer the ability to capture people’s facial expression and the piano keyboard from an appropriate angle. Normally, if they have their lessons in a private musical institution, the piano room is small, allowing at most a piano and two people sitting in the front of the piano. Hence, it was impossible for me to sit next to the participants. Second, in order to minimise the effect of my presence as observer, I sat behind the participants. This means that my observation was limited by physical position. This weakness can be overcome by using a camera, which was set up in front of the teacher and the student on the left side and next to the piano. My personal presence allowed me to focus on teacher–student interaction and the whole teaching environment, such as noise from another room.
5.2.4 Field notes

I observed and videoed the teaching over two weeks to allow me to observe two consecutive lessons. Extending the time period in this way was aimed at enabling piano teachers and their pupils to become accustomed to the camera. I presumed that my presence and the camera might impact the participants' behaviour in the first week and then by the second week they would be used to the camera. Another reason for extending the period was to empower piano teachers by letting them analyse one lesson of their own choice which they were satisfied with.

My field notes recorded teaching procedures, teaching materials (e.g., the printed textbooks and homework book), and interesting interactions between teacher and student (for an example of my field notes, see Appendix 3). Something that happened before or after lessons but was interesting to me was also recorded in my notes, such as the interaction between a teacher and the pupil's parent, or a special event in school which affected the pupil's emotions or mood during the lesson. Such information may not be directly relevant to my research aims; however, it is useful for enabling me to know the participants and their particular teaching environment better. Sometimes this evidence is more powerful than the teachers' words.
5.2.5 Video-stimulated recall

Recently, video-stimulated recall has been used in the field of education, for example, in teachers’ professional development (Reitano, 2005; Sherin & Han, 2004). The advantage of this method is that teachers can review and reflect on their teaching without time restriction. According to Reitano (2005), this research method enables participants to freely choose what they want to focus on, and also allows researchers to build up a collection of recordings for further research. Furthermore, ‘the participants could provide a valuable insider perspective on the recordings, to complement the researcher’s outsider observations’ (Rowe, 2009, p. 434). However, Rowe (2009) also noted that this research method may cause the reviewers to feel anxious when they are watching themselves on video. In order to deal with this issue, Pirie (1996) suggests watching part of the recording informally before moving on to serious questions. In my original idea, which was inspired by Rowe (2009), I planned to watch the video with my participants and then conduct the second interview. However, they preferred to watch their teaching in their own time. Therefore, I combined this method with the reflective diary. This means that they reviewed their teaching and wrote down their reflections independently.

5.2.6 Reflective diary

According to Spalding and Wilson (2002), reflective writing can promote teachers’ reflective thinking and can be seen as a window for researchers into participants’ thinking so as to enhance engagement with the participants.
However, most of my participants reported that they had difficulty in reflecting on their teaching, even though I provided an introduction and examples in the reflective diary (see Appendix 4). Some tried to complete the form as requested. However, I found that none of those completed dairies seemed to contain enough information for me to analyse. Therefore, to make up the deficit, I adopted two different research procedures here. For those who tried to complete the form, I attempted to discuss the content with them in order to discover more of their thinking about a specific event or moment that they mentioned. And for those who could not finish the diary on their own, I took my questions emerging from my observation as a starting point in the second interview. Meanwhile, I also tried to understand why these teachers felt it difficult to reflect on their own. After the second interview, all participants were still asked to send their reflective diary for me to analyse.

5.2.7 Video

There are two benefits of using video. First, as mentioned in 5.2.5, it allows participants to recall certain specific moments and then to explain what thoughts were in their minds in their reflective diary. Second, I could watch the video before the second interview and thoroughly analyse their teaching. Therefore, I could create appropriate questions to further probe participants’ perceptions of their practice.

In total, there were 14 separate video of one hour each — 4 videos from the pilot study involving 2 teachers outside the main study; 10 videos from the 5 teachers
of the main study. It should be explained that I did not analyse all videos of the seven cases in minute-by-minute detail. I transcribed the video of the four lessons in the pilot study to orient my analysis by carrying out an in-depth examination. In other words, my main point here was to gain a sense of what areas would need to be analysed and in what detail in the main study. In other five cases, I carefully reviewed these videos at least two times, three times if necessary, but I did not transcribe them all, because I considered this type of data simply a help in identifying the questions for the second interview, and also as background information for exploring each case. In addition, as I have mentioned, the non-participant observation had its limitations – I could not see the participants’ facial expression, and might possibly ignore certain significant matters. These limitations could be overcome by using the video recording.

5.3 Ethical concerns

As researchers, when we observe and talk to people, analyse what they do and say, and publish our interpretations to the wider public, we are engaged in a process with an inescapable ethical aspect (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007). According to the British Educational Research Association (2011), the issues of informed consent, right to withdraw, privacy, and the impact on the participants should be all addressed in the conduct of the research.

5.3.1 Informed consent and right to withdraw

Before conducting this study, participants were offered an outline of the research including the research aims, procedure, and their right to withdraw at any time.
As well as seven piano teachers and seven pupils chosen by their teachers, occasionally the pupils’ parents were involved in this study. Therefore, the introduction to this study and a copy of the consent form were sent to pupils and their parents before I observed their lessons. Some of the piano teachers work for private musical institutions, some have a private studio, some give lessons in the pupil’s house. If the observation was to take place in a private musical institution, the outline of this study and the consent form were also provided to a person in charge to obtain permission to undertake the observation. As I was in the UK, in order to minimise delays in carrying out this research, I sent the outline and the consent form to the piano teachers first of all in an electronic version. When I went back to Taiwan, I provided a hard copy for them so that they could answer and sign more conveniently. The consent form was also translated into Chinese to aid understanding.

Additionally, I asked the participant teachers to obtain verbal permission from pupils and their parents after the teachers had decided who might be the one involved in the observation. I gave pupils and parents the outline of this study and the consent form in hard copy in person. The informed consent for pupils and their parents was translated into Chinese as well. Examples of the consent forms can be found in Appendices 5 and 6.

5.3.2 Confidentiality, anonymity, and the impact on the participants

Records of data collected (including transcripts and any audio recordings) are stored in a secure place. Electronic information can only be accessed by the
researcher with username and password. This information will be stored on a secure system with recognised virus protection. Personal information included in the document is coded to ensure anonymity. The transcripts of the two interviews were provided to the piano teachers for them to correct or expand any point in Chinese. Before collecting the research data, both piano teachers and pupils were informed that the research aim is not to judge or inspect their performance, but to uncover what seemed to me, as the researcher, to be the meaningfulness of the teaching and learning process for both teachers and pupils, and also their own personal understanding of it. The footage can only be shown to the relevant people, such as the two university supervisors and my critical friends, with the piano teachers’ consent. During the non-participant observations, I as a researcher, attempted to be aware of any possible predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research. In principle, unexpected detriment to a participant which arises during the data collection must be brought immediately to their attention or to the attention of their guardians or responsible others as appropriate. In practice, I found it difficult to judge such situations. I return to this problem in section 5.4.2.

5.3.3 My role as a researcher in this study

In my reflection on the pilot study, I already mentioned various matters that have an ethical implication. These include the potential conflicts and problems that could arise because some piano teachers are my acquaintances. Additionally, as a private piano lesson takes place in a relatively closed teaching environment
compared to a school classroom, I was careful about how I set up my research equipment (e.g., the audio recorder and the Sony camcorder) and where I was to observe the lessons, in order to reduce the impact on the teaching and the students’ emotions during the lessons.

As Grix (2010) indicates, ‘social phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation of them and it is these interpretations which affect outcomes. Thus researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched’ (p.83). Inevitably, I must bring my personal pre-understanding or bias about instrumental teaching and creativity into my analysis. I have been aware of my position as a researcher and have tried to be open-minded and allow myself to be challenged by theoretical ideas or participants’ opinions. Indeed, my understanding of the research topics is still changing according to my reading and my analysis, even during my writing.

5.4 Pilot study

5.4.1 Procedure of my pilot study

My pilot study was conducted in February 2012 in Taiwan. Two piano teachers (AC and Chen) and their pupils were involved. Before I went back to Taiwan, I sent them the outline of my research, the consent form, and the open questionnaire.

Having received back their open-ended questionnaire and having done an initial analysis, I interviewed the participants where it was convenient to them, such as
the teacher’s studio or the student’s home. This interview lasted around 80 minutes, and not only explored the meaning of the participants’ experience recorded in the open questionnaire, but also asked questions about teachers’ beliefs about teaching. The content of the interview was recorded and transcribed in Chinese so that the participants could check whether I misunderstood what they said. Additionally, the teachers’ consent form was completed before the start of the interview. The consent forms for students and their parents were provided to the teachers so that they could give them to the students and the parents before I observed the piano lessons.

Before I videoed the lessons, I introduced myself and explained the research aims to the participant students, or their parents if they were there. Meanwhile, their right to withdraw was emphasised particularly. When they had given their informed consent, the lesson, involving both teacher and student, was videoed by digital camera on a tripod which was set up next to the piano. If the participant teacher was available to talk, I discussed with them points emerging from the observed lesson immediately after the lesson.

Piano teachers were provided with the recording as a tool for video-stimulated recall one day after each observation. After two weeks, they could decide which segment they wanted to reflect on, either from week one or from week two, or from both if they were willing to do so.
Participants were given the opportunity to change the data they had provided. When this had been done, the data was analysed. An extract of the analysis process is in Appendix 7.

5.4.2 Reflections on the pilot study

Having done my pilot study, some advantages and disadvantages of this research design emerged. The first advantage was that the information from the open-ended questionnaire helped me to interview my participants effectively. Answering the questionnaire before the interview served as a warm-up exercise for them to think about their teaching. Second, the observation of their teaching revealed their teaching beliefs in a different form, even though I was struggling with dealing with the contradictions between what they said in the interview and how they taught in reality. Third, it seems that in these two cases, in the pilot study both teachers and students were not affected by my presence and the camera.

On the other hand, I had to improve my research design as far as using video-stimulated recall was concerned. It is better for teachers to watch the video on their own and think about what they want to clarify further. As for teachers’ reflection, I initially thought that everyone would have a different way of reflecting. Therefore, I did not provide a specific template for teachers to record their reflection. Instead, I told them that they were free to write down any thoughts about their teaching. However, these two teachers expressed their difficulties in both reflecting and writing down their thoughts. This was the reason why I
created a reflective diary with the question: ‘What if?’ to provoke teachers’ thoughts about how they might respond differently to specific situations.

Because these two piano teachers are my acquaintances, I was aware that in my role as a researcher I had to avoid two risks. One was to ensure the interview was treated as formal conversation instead of chatting, by adopting appropriate interview techniques. For example, I set my recorder and the interview outline on the table to remind them that we were in interview mode. I also needed to ensure a suitable academic distance from them to be neutral and objective while I analysed the research data. In particular, I needed to avoid expressing any critical attitude towards their teaching practice.

The pilot study also prompted reflections on ethical issues that were suggested by my procedure and attitude. The students and the parents were informed before I conducted the pilot study. However, on the basis of the pilot study, I came to believe that I should be more active in communicating with the student about my research purpose, because teachers might not express my research aims clearly enough.

5.5 Main study

The procedure of my main study was almost the same as the pilot study.

5.5.1 Sampling: whom to study and in which context

Schwandt (2007) notes that interpretations of data do not result simply from summarising or averaging them; they are essentially intersubjective and socially
constituted. The background of a researcher is crucial to their suitability for conducting a specific type of research and to the quality of their research findings, so having considered my personal background, such as my music learning and teaching experiences and language advantage, I decided to take one-to-one piano lessons in Taiwan as my research context. Both my piano learning experience and seven-year experience of teaching piano could help me to communicate effectively with my participants and also enabled me to interpret the research data. In addition, Gaunt (2008) noted that there are differences of teaching style between instrumental disciplines. Vocal and piano instructors in particular normally work in a conservatoire-style isolation, and results from research in other teaching contexts and involving other instruments may not apply. Therefore, piano teaching seemed to be an area worthwhile exploring.

5.5.2 Purposive sampling

Seven Taiwanese piano teachers engaged in this study: two in the pilot study and five in the main study. Two sampling strategies were applied: convenience sampling and purposive sampling. As mentioned above, piano lessons take place in a relatively isolated teaching setting, so it was not easy for me to adopt random sampling. Above all, I was in the UK but attempting to do my research in Taiwan, therefore piano teachers who are my friends were the first group I invited to take part in the pilot study. During the conduct of my pilot study, I tried to look for other piano teachers who were interested in my research topic. In
order to enrich the diversity of my research results, I attempted to purposively select my participants by following a maximum variation approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). To that end, I had contacted friends who come from a different background from myself, friends whom I met in a non-music environment. I hoped that I would be able to invite piano teachers who have a different learning background and teaching experiences from mine, because the two piano teachers in the pilot study were my classmates in my master’s degree. Another consideration taken into account in purposive choosing of the participants related to participants’ attitudes. As they were going to be asked to watch the video of their teaching after the lessons and then to reflect on their teaching and discuss with me, and additionally, they needed to spend time in confirming the validity of my transcripts, lack of enthusiasm in their teaching or about teaching as a practice would not allow me to collect the data effectively. Nor was I a friend of most of the potential participants. I contacted ten piano teachers in total. However, in accordance with my considerations concerning maximum variation and teachers’ attitude, only five piano teachers participated in my main study.

5.6 Data analysis methods

Three concepts relating to data analysis taken into account in my study are described in this section 5.6. First, the concept of the hermeneutic circle enabled me to appreciate the to and fro of influences between the literature, my participants, and myself. Second, analysis of the qualitative study data was mainly based on grounded theory, as I attempted to uncover the significance
within the raw data rather than apply an existing theory as my analytical structure. Finally, the interpretivist criteria laid down by Klein and Myers (1999) for qualitative research provided guidelines to help me to uncover the significance of the data, and at the same time to evaluate the quality of my interpretation.

5.6.1 Hermeneutic circle

In the earlier section 5.1.3 concerning the nature of interpretivism was made of the ‘double hermeneutic’ (Giddens, 1984): that two levels of interpretation enter into the findings, namely, that of the participants themselves and that of the researcher. Another hermeneutic theory indicating my position during the whole investigative journey: that is the hermeneutic circle, as described by Gallagher (1992), which explains the relations between existing knowledge, a researcher, and what is researched.
Figure 5.3: The hermeneutic circle

Tradition in the figure refers to the shaping (a) of a researcher’s understanding by prior knowledge; (b) indicates that a researcher employs their own concepts to interpret the object of research (e.g., data or participants). During this process, a researcher’s understanding is also impacted by the research data (c). For example, the opinions or ideas of a participant may provoke the researcher to see a new meaning in an object. Finally, (d) indicates that a researcher’s pre-understanding may be challenged and remoulded by the inquiry process. In other words, the relation between a researcher and a particular tradition of thought or knowledge is likely to be changed.
5.6.2 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is an approach to inquiry in which the researcher generates a general, abstract theory based on the collected data. ‘Researchers seek relationships between concepts among the data and code the data shortly after initial data collection and interpretation’ (Grix, 2010, p. 111). This process involves using different kinds of data analysis and interrelating the emergent categories with the information so that data analysis and formulation of interpretation categories proceed together (Corbin & Strauss, 1994). Most importantly, by avoiding imposing any preconceived coding system, a researcher will develop their own specifically appropriate theory by grounding their analysis in the data. This is what I tried to do in my own analysis. The initial coding system was for labelling the features, and then the significances of the data emerged from the analysis of the raw data collected from the participants. The code system was further developed inductively, while the appropriateness of the information underlying the codes was simultaneously checked. After these stages of analysis, the higher-level codes were grouped or distinguished by comparing and contrasting the embedded meanings to generate the main themes that enabled me to answer my initial research questions.

As expressed by Creswell (2012), ‘two primary characteristics of this design are the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information’ (p.13).
5.6.3 Evaluation of the qualitative research

In the previous section 5.1.1, the differences of philosophical assumptions between positivism and interpretivism have been discussed. These two positions are logically incompatible, giving rise to the debate on whether the quality of all research can be evaluated by the same criteria, such as validity and reliability. These two concepts derive from positivist philosophy, that holds that reality can be objectively observed; consequently, research results can be assessed in a logical and systematic way. However, the philosophy of the interpretive paradigm is derived from the view that the world is constructed through human experience; therefore knowledge is evaluated under different criteria.

Creswell (2012) explains that ‘qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures’ (p.190). The following validity strategies were used in this study. (1) Data triangulation: examining and coordinating different data sources, such as open-ended structured questionnaires, interviews, and observation. (2) Member checking: the final transcript and the interpretation of the researcher were checked by the participants. (3) English–Mandarin translation checking: the translation of the final analysis results and coding systems was checked by a Taiwanese professional with a degree in translation studies in the UK. (4) Rich description: detailed description of the setting, theme, data collection, and analytical procedures are provided in the following immediately sections and in chapter 6–
9. (5) Supervisor checking: I translated the whole dataset of one case (Iris) and the field observation notes of one case (AC) into English. After considering these examples, my supervisors used their wider experience to provide suggestions for me to improve my analysing skills.

Gibbs (2002) highlights the importance of checking the accuracy of the transcripts and making sure of the consistency of the definitions of emerging codes. I have kept a detailed record of the course of my research, including written memos about the codes and their definitions. This proved to be a necessary control, as in reanalysing my data four times, I found that my concept of what came under a specific term or label was sometimes slightly adjusted. I also found one participant piano teacher in the pilot study who helped me to check the consistency of my coding system.

Klein and Myers (1999) believe that qualitative research should be evaluated with criteria appropriate to the philosophical presuppositions. Therefore, they provide seven principles as guidelines for evaluating interpretive field research.

(1) The foundation principle of the hermeneutic circle: all human understanding is achieved by iterating consideration of the interdependent meanings of parts and the whole that they form. I attempted to build up a picture of each participant as a whole person. Therefore, I did not take into consideration only single elements such as participants’ beliefs or opinions, but my interpretation of events or ideas referred to by the participants evolved as I learned more
about their past experiences and observed their practice and entered into
discussion with them.

(2) The principle of contextualisation: critical reflection is required on the social
and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience
can see how the current situation under investigation emerged. The chapters
presenting my findings begin with contextualising information about
Taiwanese piano lessons so that the effect of this environment on teachers’
belief and practice can be taken into account.

(3) The principle of interaction between the researchers and the subjects: the
research must reflect critically on how the research materials (or data) were
socially constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the
participants. Already during the second interview I was aware of how my thinking
was affected by my reading and by what my participants said, and I tried to
evoke their responses and avoid leading or limiting their responses. This
awareness continued as I processed the data of the second interview and the
reflective diary.

(4) The principle of abstraction and generalisation: this requires relating the
idiographic details revealed by the interpretation of the data through the application
of principles one and two to theoretical general concepts that describe the nature of
human understanding and social action. When I analysed my data, sought for the
emerging themes, and formulated my theory, I adopted inductive and deductive
approaches at the same time to evaluate whether I had sufficient evidence to
support my generalisation.
(5) The principle of dialogical reasoning: this requires sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings (‘the story which the data tell’), generating subsequent cycles of revision. At the early analysis stage, although I thought that I used an open-coding analytical approach, I did not realise that my coding system was shaped by my prejudice against private instrumental lessons. This situation was improved when I conducted the second and third analyses.

(6) The principle of multiple interpretations: this requires sensitivity to possible differences in interpretations among the participants, as these are typically expressed in multiple narratives about the same sequence of events. I became aware of such complexities at the final analytical stage when I was able to review my data more objectively. In addition, I learned how to uncover the significance that could be read in the data in individuals’ files, and also knew how to cope with the contradiction between what participants said and how they taught.

(7) The principle of suspicion: this requires sensitivity to possible ‘biases’ and systematic ‘distortions’ in the narratives collected from the participants. Personally, I was aware increasingly not only of the particular biases of the participants, which I tried to respect and understand, but also of the danger of distortions as I concentrated on my coding system rather than the raw data as my analysis progressed. With this in mind, when I wrote my draft, I reviewed my data again to make sure that I did not misinterpret it based on my own preconceptions.
All these principles are based on the philosophical nature of qualitative research.

It was useful for me as a novice researcher to consider fully how I construct knowledge through the whole process of research, and also to evaluate the quality of my interpretations from different perspectives during coding.

5.7 Development of the theoretical framework: a chronological account

I collected my research data very early in the process immediately after I had elaborated an initial conceptual framework. The data collecting methods and tools were designed to meet the purposes of my research as I understood them at that point. Additionally, I had not sufficiently thought out and developed my own theoretical perspectives to enable me to analyse my data. Consequently, I found it necessary to readjust the focus of my research questions and reanalyse my data no fewer than four times. In the following section, I would like to describe how I arrived at the research framework and how my coding shaped my research questions and the structure of the finding chapters.

5.7.1 Stage 1: informing my theoretical framework

Initially, I focused mainly on beliefs about instrumental teaching and about personal creativity in teaching and learning. My research was driven by two main research interests: (1) what is good/effective instrumental teaching? (2) could I identify ‘professional creativity’ in the area of instrumental teaching, and if so, explain teachers’ ‘possibility thinking’ in relation to professional creativity?

However, the concepts of professional creativity and possibility thinking were
likely to be unfamiliar to my participants. From my experience, Taiwanese piano teachers may not know much about creativity or even seldom think about it. Therefore, my initial research questions were: (1) How is teachers’ current practice contextualised by their past experience as learners and their beliefs about piano teaching and learning? (2) What is the role of creativity in their practice?

5.7.2 Stage 2: choosing an appropriate methodology

In keeping with my research purposes and philosophical assumptions, I decided to use qualitative methodology in this study. However, I did not realise until late in the analytical process that using interpretivism alone for exploring teachers’ beliefs was inadequate, and I needed to use both interpretivism and constructivism in researching the potential for creativity in one-to-one piano lessons.

5.7.3 Stage 3: developing the open-coding system (first round of analysis)

Having transcribed the recorded interviews in Chinese characters, I started to analyse all the raw data. I completed my first-round analysis using Nvivo9, creating 413 codes in the process. With the aid of technology, I could code each element I was interested in as often as I wanted and record each one of my responses in the analysing process. However, the problem was that I could not manage this huge coding system, even if I had organised them into higher-level codes. The worst effect was that the multiplication of codes in analysing each
statement meant that I could not view each participant as a whole. In other words, I unconsciously coped with this amount of data by using a depersonalised ‘scientific’ approach, which meant that I did not consider the individual context of each case but simply deconstructed and labelled my data.

5.7.4 Stage 4: developing the codes of each case (second round of analysis)

In order to increase my understanding of each case, I conducted a new analysis. Firstly, I attempted to summarise the overall body of information I received for each one, including their words, their teaching methods, and the interaction of teacher and student, and then labelled each element with a code. Secondly, I attempted to explore the possible relations between participants’ experience and their beliefs about teaching and learning.

5.7.5 Stage 5: readjusting the focus of my research questions

Having examined my research data using two analytical approaches, I found that the emerging themes did not correspond well with the original two research questions, especially the second part of research question No.2: How do teachers teach and what is the role of creativity in their practice? Before I collected the data, I presumed that I could reach an understanding of teachers’ possibility thinking from reading their reflective diary. However, although I provided guidance to help participants in preparing the diary, most of them told me that they had no idea how to reflect on their teaching. Rather than obtain
nothing, I asked them to write down any thoughts they had about the observed lessons.

On the other hand, as I mentioned above, I realised that two different research approaches had to be used to build my theory. Teachers’ beliefs and their practice can be explored by interpretivism, while examination of the potential for creativity in this teaching context involves two layers: teachers’ perception (interpretivism) and my theoretical lens (constructivism). More specifically, I approached teachers’ creativity in teaching based on how they coped with teaching challenges and how they reflected on their teaching. Therefore, I formulated my methodology in line with the principle noted by Grix (2010): ‘Interpretivists would not subscribe to the notion of “testing” a theory in the field, but would rather be looking to “build” theory from the data’ (p.108).

Consequently, the final research questions I decided to pose are:

1. What are Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs regarding good teaching?

2. How do Taiwanese piano teachers understand the role of creativity in piano teaching?

3. How do Taiwanese piano teachers reflect on their teaching?

5.7.6 Stage 6: re-analysing the open-coding system in order to answer new research questions (third round of analysis)

In order to answer the three new research questions, I revised my open-coding system. At the same time I reviewed the raw data to see how well it responded to
my new research questions, and also to see whether my change of perspective showed up aspects of the data that I had missed. This reconsideration involved yet again dealing with the reliability of the data and their relationship to my codings. At this stage, certain main themes were emerging. I organised these themes and chose appropriate extracts (examples from the raw data) to present the fuller empirical reality I was analysing into abstract categories. Although I had just seven piano teachers in my study, their opinions involved diverse perspectives and beliefs. Therefore, rather than group them into dichotomous categories, I tried to locate my cases in a comparative spectrum in terms of their perspective on a specific topic. For example, AC and Melody had a flexible attitude towards creativity and Lee and Iris seemed to be neutral, while Chen and Lisa maintained a narrow and rigid definition of creativity. Even with just these three groups, nuanced differences could still be observed. The reason for me to explore the data in this way was because this process enabled me to build a whole picture of the reality I was approaching, not to judge these piano teachers based on my personal values, even though I realised that my personal bias was possibly not totally excluded from the data collection.

5.7.7 Stage 7: developing cross-case analysis based on the second and third analyses (fourth round of analysis)

Based on the third analysis, I had decided which themes, codes, and differences were significant for my purposes, and had then made checking tables using a matrix system that allowed me to compare how I had dealt with the different
cases (see Appendix 8). These tables helped me to check the consistency of my analysis in terms of the relationship and grouping of themes I was using to answer my research questions, and the consistency of the codes from the second and third analyses. At the same time, I also checked whether I had given more or less attention to each case. I also re-checked the appropriateness of my examples by re-reading the raw data. The two criteria I used to check the quality of the results were: (1) whether any miscomprehension was involved, and (2) whether the example I chose was the best representative.

Having reached this stage, my whole theoretical framework was well developed. As a result, I could distinguish which analysis was based on the participants’ own voice and which analysis was constructed by my theoretical perspectives. Although the main purpose of qualitative research is to present the complexity of the observed reality as a contribution to knowledge, I hope that I can advance the understanding of the potential for creativity in one-to-one piano lessons and so promote its acceptance by teachers. Therefore, I have presented my research findings on two levels: factual representation and a theoretical perspective that can have practical implications.
CHAPTER 6: PRELIMINARY CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

Three topics are included in this chapter, which is a preamble to my research findings: (1) background information about the context in which my research was conducted, including factual descriptions of the teachers and pupils and an account of my observation of two weeks of lessons; (2) participant teachers’ own learning experiences, based on their own personal interpretation and; (3) possible factors influencing participants’ teaching identified by myself. Therefore, each section used a different source of information.

As noted in the methodology chapters, one of the aims of qualitative research is to advance the understanding of a specific social or cultural context. Therefore, although this chapter does not directly answer any stated research questions, it is necessary in order to provide basic descriptions of the research context, who the participants were, and the piano teaching environment in Taiwan. This information is necessary if I am to explore what constitutes teachers’ beliefs and their practice later.
6.1 Background information

6.1.1 Participant teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-10 years</td>
<td>Lee (3)</td>
<td>School music teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sabina (5)</td>
<td>Owner of a music school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17 years</td>
<td>AC (17)</td>
<td>Music teacher in different workplaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melody (22)</td>
<td>Music teacher in different workplaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa (42)</td>
<td>Full-time piano teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Studio owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20 years</td>
<td>Iris (15)</td>
<td>Full-time piano teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chen (3)</td>
<td>School music teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1: Teaching experience

With regard to teaching experience, there different points are involved: years of teaching, teaching environments, and the numbers of students per week. As Figure 6.1 shows, I grouped these teachers into three categories according to years of teaching: (1) 7–10 years: Lee and Sabina; (2) 11–17 years: AC, Melody, Lisa; (3) 18–20 years: Iris and Chen. Only two teachers (Iris and Lisa) are full-time piano teachers, Lisa even has her own teaching studio. Two teachers (Lee and Chen) are music teachers in a primary school, but also teach piano after school as a part-time job. Two teachers (AC, Melody) who are not primary school teachers both go into school for specific teaching or to conduct the school choir, for example; AC also, during the day teaches music
in communities of the elderly. AC’s and Melody’s piano teaching is carried out after school. These different work patterns are reflected in the numbers of students per week. Compare Melody and Chen for instance; Melody has 22 students per week, while Chen has three. The weekly number of pupils impacts on the teachers’ working pattern. Normally, their teaching timetable starts by 4:30 p.m. and may end by 10:00 p.m. All the teachers, except Chen and Lee, also teach at the weekend. Lisa is an extreme case in this study: she has forty-two pupils per week. She described:

I have no time to have a proper dinner because my timetable is too full to arrange time for taking a rest. I simply have some snacks in spare time between two lessons. Of course, I have no holiday. I work almost the whole year except Chinese New Year. (IN1, Lisa)

Normally, the number of pupils seen by teachers who teach in private musical institutions ranges from 15 to 22 per week. It should be noted that teachers can decide how many piano lessons they want to teach.

I had ten or more pupils before, however, I found that I was too tired to teach well after school. When pupils lack proper practice and can not play the piano well, I become angry and impatient easily. Therefore, I asked the boss to cut down the number of pupils to three and refused to accept new pupils. (IN1, Lee)

The diversity of participants’ educational background can be seen in table 6.1.
First, not all the piano teachers took piano as their major instrument. In Taiwan, students who show an interest in a career in music enter the music programme in primary school. If they do not choose piano as their major instrument, they are required to choose it as their second instrument. They need to choose piano as their second instrument. The reason for AC, Melody, Lisa, and Sabina to teach piano rather than their major instrument was largely financial: there are more students who want to learn the piano. Second, the subject of the highest educational qualification also varies, including general music education in school, vocal teaching, vocal performance, and arts management. Third, in Taiwan, specialised music programmes are designed to provide further professional musical training for those identified as having musical talent; these students are integrated into the normal education system. These professional development programmes begin from the third grade of primary school (10 years old) and can be continued to senior high school (18 years old).
Depending on the type of career chosen by the students, they would then progress to the department of music or the department of music education in the university. In this study, only Melody and Lee studied in these specialised classes in school before higher education, and only Melody did not study in a professional music-training programme.

As to teacher qualification, there is no specific teacher-training college offering a programme for instrumental teachers. Therefore, teaching qualification for teachers such as AC, Lee, Lisa, and Chen in this study means that they attended a school music teaching programme. Within this category, two different teaching programmes are involved. Lee and Chen were trained as primary school music teachers, which is the four-year specialist programme. This programme emphasises educational subjects such as child psychology or classroom management. In other words, this programme aims to train teachers to become class teachers with a specialism in music. On the other hand, Lisa and AC attended a two-year supplementary training programme which aims to provide basic educational information for those who may be interested in teaching music in a junior, senior, or combined school. Therefore, although four teachers in this study had received teacher-training, the level of teaching preparation is different. The effect of these different background contexts will be revealed later.
6.1.2 Participant students

Table 6.2: Information about pupils and the involvement of their parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil's name (teacher)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Motivation to learn</th>
<th>Pupil's learning attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David (Iris)</td>
<td>10, boy</td>
<td>Sent by his parents</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina (AC)</td>
<td>11, girl</td>
<td>Love of music</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Woo (Melody)</td>
<td>5, boy</td>
<td>Love of music</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William (Lee)</td>
<td>10, boy</td>
<td>Sent by his parents</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina (Lisa)</td>
<td>11, girl</td>
<td>Sent by her parents</td>
<td>Slightly negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo (Sabina)</td>
<td>16, girl</td>
<td>Love of music</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocket (Chen)</td>
<td>10, boy</td>
<td>Sent by his parents</td>
<td>Very negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 6.2 shows, the age of pupils in this study ranges from five to sixteen years old, and their learning level was from beginner to intermediate. Four students are learning to play the piano because they love music and would like to play songs they love. The youngest one (A-Woo) demonstrated high interest in exploring sounds on the keyboard, even when his teacher tried talking to him. In contrast, three other students were not so keen on the piano and had expressed that they want to cease learning the piano. However, their parents insisted that they have to have the piano lessons. According to my observation, pupils' learning attitude can be roughly divided into three kinds of response: positive, neutral, and negative. Positive attitude means that the student actively engaged with music by discussing music with their teacher or expressing their interest in playing. Neutral attitude means that the student did
not often express what they thought, and most very obediently followed their teacher’s instruction. Although most pupils tended to be quiet most of the time, their facial expression, their body language, and their responses distinguished neutral and negative attitudes.

Tina (Lisa’s student) almost kept silent during all her two lessons. Her teacher asked her some simple questions and her answers were very brief. Overall, Tina looked unhappy and did not enjoy the music or the lessons at all. Although William (Lee’s student) was also quiet, he demonstrated his curiosity when he read something new on the musical score. (My field note. 05252014)

The most extremely negative attitude was observed in the case of Chen’s student Rocket, who demonstrated his impatience in his playing of the piano and impolite attitude towards Chen; he even left the piano room without Chen’s permission.

This boy was very impatient about playing the piano. He ignored most of his teacher’s instruction. It seems to me that he only made some sounds without thinking. He did not care about whether it was correct playing or beautiful sounds. He even wanted to save his time by playing a whole note and quarter note in the same way. When Chen corrected some performing errors, he looked unhappy and often questioned Chen by responding, ‘any difference?’ Or ‘It does not matter’ (My field note. 02172012)
Table 6.3: Teaching content of the two weeks observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Iris</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Lee</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Sabina</th>
<th>Chen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading music score</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of beat and rhythm</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Musical expression</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muscle control</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Musical awareness</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The connections</strong></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between the visual, the aural, and muscle control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main teaching focuses observed included musical literacy, the sense of beat and rhythm, musical expression (dynamic, speed, articulation, and pedalling), muscle control, musical awareness, and the connections between the visual, the aural, and muscle control. The order of these teaching focuses in the table indicates the decrease in time spent on them. As for how participants teach, this will be discussed later. The table shows that five teachers gave more time to addressing musical elements relating to the musical score, while only Iris and AC brought more dimensions into their teaching. These two paid more attention to students’ listening to the music they produced and also attempted to help learners to connect performance to personal awareness, such as their emotions and how to use the body to produce the right sound. Iris is the only teacher in this study who created her
own activities to address her student’s integration of the visual, the aural, and physical control.

Table 6.4: Teachers’ time management during lessons (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Iris</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Lee</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Sabina</th>
<th>Chen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil’s playing</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s modelling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction/Feedback</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat/ Discussion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4 shows the lesson length and time allocation allocated to the pupil’s playing, the teacher’s modelling, feedback, and chat / discussion. The statistics were based on my review of the two-week observation video, and do not aim to precisely represent the actual time allocation. I only took an average percentage of the two lessons to map out the general proportions, which could help me to explore participants’ teaching style and the student–teacher interaction. The following significant points show up in the table. First, the pupils’ playing occupied most time, while teachers’ modelling occupied least. Second, three participant teachers almost did not chat or discuss anything with their pupil. All that they said related to lesson instruction and feedback. On the opposite side, AC is the extreme case in this study. She not only started her lesson by asking her pupil what happened in school, but also discussed the music before or after playing. Third, generally speaking, a piano lesson lasted 60 minutes. Melody and Chen had different reasons for their shorter teaching
time. Melody’s student is a five-year-old boy. Melody and his parents agreed that shorter lessons benefit this boy, to take account of his concentration and physical condition. Chen’s student is a ten-year-old boy who was expected to have a 60-minute lesson. However, this student’s learning attitude was too negative to continue his lesson. He finished the lesson when he had played all the music set as homework, and then left the piano room. This is why Chen presents the lowest statistical results.

6.1.4 Parental involvement

Most participant pupils’ parents did not directly involve themselves in this study and I only observed the interaction between teacher and parent in two cases (AC and Melody). AC taught in the pupil’s home. Normally AC and the mother have a short conversation before and after lessons. During my observation, the mother briefly described how the pupil practised that week before the lesson, and then AC summarised the lesson and learning situation after the lesson. In Melody’s case, the parent waited for the child outside the music classroom. Melody also let the parent know what happened in the lesson. A-Woo (Melody’s pupil) usually practises at home immediately he comes home, and his father, who knows a little music, is sitting next to him to watch him practise and writes down any practice problem on the music score. In these two cases, parental involvement is demonstrated by the monitoring of the pupil’s practice and in discussion with their teacher.
Information about the other parents’ engagement was understood from participant teachers’ descriptions. According to five teachers, the support from these parents was low. They seem to believe that their responsibility only relates to paying the fee. Two participant pupils did not even have their own piano or keyboard at home. In addition, these parents seldom monitor pupils’ practice and rarely talk to their teacher to understand their child’s learning. In such a situation, the teacher–parent communication log is a tool for communicating with each other. However, this is not the best tool.

Sometimes, I found that parents are too busy to read my message. Or children did not remind their parents to have a look. (IN1, Iris)

I have mentioned that three pupils would like to give up their piano learning, but their parents did not allow them to stop. Two different reasons were provided by participant teachers.

William is an unhealthy boy with a heart problem. Therefore, although he is interested in sport, his father believes that playing the piano is more suitable for his boy. (IN1, Iris)

Tina has mentioned that she wants to stop learning the piano. However, her mother feels it would be a pity to give up learning, because she has been learning for six years. In addition, they have bought the piano at home. It is an expensive instrument. (IN1, Lisa)

Obviously, these reasons do not relate to musical development. The motivation for parents to send their child to learn the piano will be discussed later in this section (6.3.3).
6.2 Participant teachers’ learning experience

In this section I present only the teachers’ own account of what they regard as significant episodes in their learning experience. The influence of these episodes on their teaching beliefs and practice will be discussed later.

6.2.1 Happy learning experiences

Based on the open questionnaire and the first interview, having a good piano teacher was the most common happy learning experience identified by all participant teachers. Some also mentioned the sense of achievement or enjoyment of performing. Four significant characteristics which made piano learning good include: (1) the teacher’s musical expertise combining with appropriate teaching abilities; (2) satisfactory handling of earning difficulties; (3) the teacher’s own enthusiasm about music; (4) a good teacher–student relationship. I shall consider each of these in turn.

First, not only teachers’ modelling and performing skills are important; in fact, knowing how to effectively enable learners to improve their performance seems to be more important. As Chen recalled,

My piano teacher studied performance in the USA. She could model perfectly. It seemed to me that she could play all pieces very well. The most important thing was that she could not only perform but also knew how to teach. Not all piano performers know how to teach. This teacher was patient and gently guided you by modelling. In addition, she adopted different teaching strategies to develop my musical interpretation, such as explaining the historical background of the music, moving my body to prompt me into feeling the music, or singing the melody. (IN1, Chen)
Good teaching abilities also mean that teachers can adjust their teaching aim or strategies according to different situations. Melody’s learning aim related to improving her piano teaching, rather than her own performance. When she found that her teacher could be flexible to help her achieve her learning goals, she considered this experience as satisfactory.

In the beginning, I aimed to prepare for my master entrance examination to become her piano student, but suddenly I changed my mind about studying further. Even so, I found that having piano lessons regularly was useful for me as a piano teacher. Therefore, I asked her to focus on musical pieces which are popular in children’s musical competitions. My teacher accepted my decision and then met my learning requirement. I am happy about that. (IN1, Melody)

Second, Sabina and Iris mentioned that they were happy if teachers could provide appropriate practising strategies or solutions to problems. Sabina described:

I had a piano teacher who could precisely point out what my problems were and then provide me with certain useful practising techniques. One time, I did not practise enough. Although I knew what I should do, I could not use my muscles properly. My teacher offered some tips and tried them during the lesson. After around fifteen minutes, I suddenly improved a lot. It was beyond my expectation. (IN1, Sabina)

Iris provided another good experience, which happened when she had no idea how to improve her performance; she even doubted that she could ever play the piano well.

I had changed teachers. My new teacher (A) asked me to change my way of playing the piano. I changed to another new teacher (B). I had no idea how I could play the piano in the way suggested by teacher (A). After a semester, teacher (A) left, as she went to
another country. This was the reason that I became a student of teacher (B). Rather than focusing on technique, teacher (B) encouraged me to focus more on musical thinking. Amazingly, when I approached music from the heart, my focus shifted from the physical level to the emotional level, which overcame my problem in knowing how to play properly. In addition, he asked me to listen to different versions of musical interpretation, which helped me to cultivate my thoughts, so that I gradually developed my own personal interpretation. This could not be achieved by simply imitating one teacher's modelling. (IN1, Iris)

It is noteworthy that, Iris’s teacher was the only one who mentioned musical thinking and provided clear learning strategies for developing it. In Chen’s experience, her teacher adopted different ways to inspire her, including theoretical explanation, body movement, and listening to her teacher singing the melody. But these strategies seemed to focus only on addressing issues raised by a specific piece of music, while Iris’s teacher started from personal feeling and thinking, which can be generally relevant.

Third, teachers’ own personal values and enthusiasm positively affect learners’ motivation to learn and learning attitude. AC had been very stubborn about certain kinds of musical interpretation that involved right and wrong understanding. Her teacher not only gently influenced her through teaching but also shared her guiding principle with AC.

She introduced Laozi’s notion to me: ‘When people are born, they are tender and supple. At death they are stiff and hard. All things, like plants and trees, are tender and pliant while alive. At death they are dried and withered. Therefore the stiff and hard are companions of death. The tender and supple are companions of life. Thus strong arms do not win. A stiff tree will break. The hard and strong will fall. The tender and supple will
rise’. She further explained to me that this philosophy is similar to the nature of music. (IN1, AC)

This teacher taught by using herself as an example. Sabina’s teacher also demonstrated her own passion for music during her teaching.

My vocal teacher was a really nice person. When I could not learn well or reach her teaching target, she always tried different teaching methods or provided different kinds of explanations in order to improve my learning. I was truly affected by her endless patience in teaching music and her attitude towards educating people. (IN1, Sabina)

Significantly, these two described teachers who contributed to a happy learning experience were vocal teachers not piano teachers, even though these two participants also had piano lessons as learners. For them, their vocal teachers created a more pleasant learning memory. Compared to the descriptions of other good piano teachers, who concentrated on technical expertise, it seems that good vocal teachers pay more attention to learners in themselves. The features of good piano teachers who were mentioned seem more related to the effective development of musical expertise and the overcoming of performing difficulties.

Finally, having a closer teacher–student relationship also contributed to happy memories of learning. This point was mentioned by AC, Melody, Sabina, and Chen. For these teachers, their relationship with their teachers was expanded into friendship after lessons and into daily life.

All my piano teachers cared about me, including piano learning and my life, which made me happy. Even now, I am not their student, but we still keep in touch. It was funny that
one of them wanted to introduce a man to be my boyfriend several months ago. (IN1, Melody)

6.2.2 Unhappy learning experiences

Five of the seven piano teachers (Iris, Melody, Lee, Lisa, Chen) had negative learning experiences. All the respondents mentioned the teacher’s impatience as a significant element in what made the teaching ineffective. When these piano teachers recalled these bad learning memories, they still felt uncomfortable and their facial expression and manner of speaking tended to be agitated.

For about a month a piano teacher who studied in Austria taught me, which was my most terrible experience of learning music. This teacher wearing a big coat, crossed her arms and shouted to me: ‘Wrong, wrong, wrong!’ without any modelling. In these four piano lessons, she was impatient and blamed me because I could not play the music correctly. I was frustrated. Learning music made me unhappy. Finally, I felt that it was enough! I told my mother about my experience, and then my mother decided to change to a new teacher. (IN1, Melody)

Iris was another extreme case. She described:

In order to prepare for my postgraduate examination, I asked a professor who graduated in the USA and taught in the university where I wanted to study to be my piano teacher. Her style of playing was more relaxed and the focus of her teaching was on how to play the piano relaxed. She asked me to simply practise a single note each time for six months. After half a year, finally, she allowed me to play one of Chopin’s Nocturnes. However, I still had no idea how to use this technique of touch, because it was so different from the previous one. This made me feel that I did not know how to play. (IN1, Iris)
These piano teachers seemed to have excellent performing skills, because my participant teachers emphasised that their teachers graduated in performance from music schools in other countries. However, these performance teachers did not know how to teach and identify learners’ difficulties, which made the learners feel frustrated.

If this kind of sad learning experience is happening in the university, it may not stop until a specific point is reached, such as the end of a semester. Iris, Lisa, and Chen mentioned that it was more difficult to change to a new teacher in the department of music in a school or college than outside, even if the teacher who was assigned by the school was not suitable for them.

I could not accept this piano teacher, including her way of musical interpretation and touch. Her modelling was terrible. She could not correctly demonstrate the music to me. I could not change to a new teacher until the end of the semester. (IN1, Chen)

The worst situation happened in Lisa’s case. Lisa was not allowed to change to a new teacher even at the end of a semester, because her reason for wanting to change, namely that the teacher had a bad temper, was not taken into account.

My teacher had very bad temper. He used to say something horrible to me or even rudely push my body. I always felt anxious about having a lesson. I got stomach ache before a lesson. However, I could not do anything to change this situation. Horrible! (IN1, Lisa)

Changing to a new piano teacher was another reason leading to an unhappy learning experience. Iris, Lee, and Chen were asked to return to beginner level technically, in matters such as the sense of rhythm or touch. In other words,
the musical expertise they had developed from the previous teacher was insufficient.

My previous piano teachers always praised me a lot. However, this changed from the time I began to study in the specialised music programme in the senior school. My new piano teacher was never satisfied with my performance, and also felt weird about my questions. She believed that these questions were too simple to think or ask. Although there was no problem with our teacher–student relationship, I still felt huge pressure during the lessons. (IN1, Lee)

When my new piano teacher attempted to adjust my touch, I had no idea how to use my muscles properly, especially playing music forte. My teacher always said: ‘It is awful! Isn’t it?’ At that moment, it seemed that I was up against a brick wall — you know you should perform with more emotion, but you do not know how to control your body to do it. It affected my confidence. (IN1, Iris)

In these two examples, having a new teacher meant that everything had to be restarted. This destroyed the learners’ confidence. In addition, the teachers’ inappropriate verbal feedback and miscomprehension of learning difficulties made a profound negative impact on the learners.

6.3 Factors influencing participants’ teaching

6.3.1 Motivation to teach the piano

With regard to teachers’ motivation to become a piano teacher, I would like to distinguish two stages: initial motivation and current motivation. Most participant teachers started their teaching when they were in college. As Lisa described:
Most classmates became piano teachers, so it seemed that I should start to teach as well. (IN1, Lisa)

Iris is the only teacher who was asked to be a piano teacher by her employer, because she won a musical competition.

I started to be a piano teacher when I was 17. The owner of a private musical institution had listened to my performance in the music competition, where I got a great result. I do not know how this woman found out the way to contact my family. She phoned my father and asked whether I could be a piano teacher in her institution, and my father took this job for me due to financial pressure. (IN1, Iris)

In contrast, three teachers (Melody, Lee, AC) became piano teachers because they had an additional reason: love of music and of children.

I never define myself as a piano teacher. I was and I am a piano teacher because I love music and love children. Teaching music is the best way for me to demonstrate my enthusiasm in music to my pupils, which enables my pupils to realise that people can enjoy their life in this way. (RT, AC)

Generally speaking, it seems that my participant teachers began to teach the piano just because they could play the piano, and started their teaching without specific teaching preparation. After several years, their motivation to teach gradually changed. Iris and Melody believe that there is no other career option; Lee, Sabina, and Chen view piano teaching as a part-time job; AC and Lisa consider this full-time job as a kind of self-actualisation. These different motivations to teach impact on teachers’ self-awareness and their attitude towards teaching challenges, which is the subject of chapter 9.
6.3.2 The impact of employers and place of employment

Most participant teachers have two kinds of employer: the owner of a private institution and their students’ parents. Both may impact on teaching style or teaching purpose. Three private musical institutions are involved in this study. All these run student concerts twice a year. Therefore, teachers who are teaching within these institutions have to help students to prepare for a public performance. Teaching focus is shaped by these musical events. For example, Lisa was preparing for her student’s two concerts in the following month.

Consequently, both the observed lessons only focused on technical difficulties and correction of error. Lisa explained:

We need to put all our effort into preparing for the concerts. There is no time to talk about musical theory or introduce interesting musical history. Normally, I teach these non-performance areas immediately after a public concert, because at that moment, we do not have pressure to make the music perfect. (IN2, Lisa)

The owner of a musical institution may also affect teaching style. Iris had been asked to ‘soften’ her teaching style by the owner of a music school, because her teaching style was too rigid. This led to her pupils often giving up their piano learning too easily, which the owner was not happy to accept.

Another impact from working in a private institution is that teachers rarely communicate with the parents due to the institution’s regulations. These do not encourage teachers to contact parents in person by phone in their own time. Instead, teachers must contact parents through a third person belonging to the
institution or talk near the music classroom. This is to avoid teachers taking students from the institution. In my case, teachers’ timetables are usually too full to have enough time to talk to the parents. Teachers would delay the following lesson if they took time to talk to the parents. In this situation, it is difficult for the teacher to establish a collaborative relationship and create a supportive learning environment.

Two kinds of private institution were involved in this study: two specialised music schools and one after-school educational institution. The former type is set up only for music learning. Students can ask the owner to find a suitable music teacher for any instrument. The latter aims to provide a learning environment for pupils whose parents are too busy to take care of their children between 4:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. The piano lesson is simply one of the courses provided by the organisation.

Instrument lessons or other learning activities are designed to enable this institution to attract more parents to send their children to study here. Most piano learners in this institution may not be interested in music at all, but their parents thought ‘Why not?’. On the other hand, those who have a piano lesson at home or in a musical institution may maintain a more positive attitude that is helpful to their progress. (IN2, Iris)

One crucial point is revealed here: parents also play an important role in piano teaching and learning. How their influence affects teaching is explored in the next section.
6.3.3 Parents

Three possible reasons motivating parents to send their children to learn the piano were mentioned during interviews for this study: responding to the child’s own interest in music, wanting their children to have a hobby as a balance to their academic learning, and being keen on their children’s musical achievement, such as passing graded musical examinations or attending competitions. The participant teachers were willing to adjust their teaching focus to meet parents’ expectations if parents clearly let them know what they were looking for. However, Iris found that parents might only express their expectations when they began to be dissatisfied with their child’s progress and then decided to change to a new teacher. In other words, it was too late for her to do anything about this situation.

In addition to teaching purpose, teaching style may also be influenced by parents. Three teachers (Iris, Lisa, Lee) were asked to adjust their teaching style by the parents. Teacher Iris, for example.

I have been asked not to be too nice. The mother suggested to me to be stern, otherwise, her boy won’t follow my instruction. Although I know what the mother means, I have my own teaching flexibility and I know how to build a good relationship with my student. (IN1, Iris)

Lisa met a similar requirement differently.

The mother told me that she hopes her girl can learn the piano without any pressure, simply enjoying music during the learning process. Although I could not agree with this
kind of parenting attitude, I still changed my teaching style. Meanwhile, I know that this student will give up learning soon. (IN1, Lisa)

Whether or not teachers changed their teaching style in response to parents’ requests was determined by the teachers’ personal decision. Iris’s decision was based on the relationship between her and the student, while Lisa gave more consideration to the parent than to her professional integrity or her responsibility to her pupils.

Additionally, students’ learning attitude appears to be affected by whether their parents are around during the lessons. Iris, AC, and Melody observed that students tend to be more positive if they teach in the students’ home and the parent are at home. As Iris explained,

Students pay more attention to their learning when they have the piano lesson at home, because their parents may know how the piano lesson is going. (IN1, Iris)

The crucial point is whether parents are actually at home. Chen also teaches at a student’s house; however, the student’s parents are busy working and seldom at home. In the observed lessons, her pupil demonstrated a negative learning attitude. Chen explained after the lessons:

This student knows that there is no adult whom he cares about at home. It does not matter if he is rude or impatient. His attitude is totally changed when one of his parents is at home. (IN2, Chen)

AC and Melody support this statement. They also mentioned the other advantage of having piano lessons at home, which is that teachers may have
an opportunity to communicate with parents and establish a collaborative relationship.

If the parents and I have time, we not only talk about the child's learning, but also exchange our ideas about education or parenting. When we reach an agreement about how to cooperatively create a supportive learning environment, the student’s attitude and learning outcome would improve and be more satisfying to everyone. (IN1, AC)

6.4 Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, although this chapter does not directly answer my research questions, these data are still useful to gain insight into piano teaching in Taiwan. Firstly, the participants in this study presented a diversity of teachers’ learning backgrounds in terms of their major instrument and teaching roles. People aspiring to teach piano need no formal teaching qualification, and they may find themselves involved in other aspects of musical activity, such as conducting a choir, alongside their piano teaching. People who can play the piano and are interested in teaching can teach the piano as a part-time or full-time job. As for students having piano lessons, their motivation for learning could be roughly categorised as either self-driven or parent-driven, and which one applied affected teachers’ teaching and learners’ attitudes. In general, a one-way teaching approach was most common in observed lessons, with different degrees of variety of teaching activities.

The second section of this chapter depicted participant teachers’ own learning experience in terms of happy and unhappy learning memories. This usefully explored the relationship between teachers’ previous experience and their teaching beliefs. Three main themes emerged when it came to happy piano lessons: the teaching and performing abilities of their teachers; their own sense of achievement, and a good mutual teacher–student relationship. On
the other hand, the unhappy learning experience was mainly constituted by teachers being bad-tempered and by having to change to a new teacher. Moving to a new teacher almost always meant that learners had to be retrained as if they were beginners again in terms of technique.

Finally, before exploring the relationship between previous experiences and teaching beliefs, three factors which appeared to impact on teaching were identified: the teachers’ motivation to teach the piano, the pupils’ parents’ expectation, and the location of the lessons. This chapter has provided detailed information on how the participant teachers giving private piano lessons, were taught, how they now teach, and how other elements outside the lessons affect their teaching in Taiwan. In the next chapter, the focus shifts to present teachers’ beliefs about good piano lessons.
CHAPTER 7: TAIWANESE PIANO TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT GOOD TEACHING

Research question No. 1 is: What are Taiwanese piano teachers’ beliefs about good teaching? When I analysed the first interviews, I realised that participant teachers answered my questions from two different perspectives, either combining these or with one predominating, namely, being a good teacher, or what made a good piano lesson. Therefore, I constructed this part in three sections: (1) characteristics of effective piano teachers; (2) crucial components of good piano lessons; (3) effective teaching strategies.

The findings of research question No. 1 mainly come from the first interview. I did not restrict participants’ answers to my questions according to their own teaching experience, so the answers I obtained mixed their own experiences both as a teacher and as a learner. In this chapter, my aim is to present their beliefs about good teaching as a whole, so I depict their beliefs without distinguishing whether these beliefs emerged from teaching or from learning experience. Later, I will deal with these two kinds of experience separately in order to clarify what contributed to teachers’ beliefs and practice.

7.1 Characteristics of effective piano teachers

Three broader themes emerged from participants’ opinions: musical expertise, teaching competency, and personality. There are strong similarities between
participants’ opinions about features of good piano teachers. Therefore, I mainly present a cross-case analysis and then add some significant points to complement what I discovered in my data.

7.1.1 Musical expertise

All participants agreed that musical expertise is a fundamental requirement. However, the importance of this ability was only emphasised by three teachers (Lisa, Sabina, Chen). As mentioned in the last section, Chen’s teacher in college could not model the music well. Consequently, Chen doubted whether she could learn anything from her teacher.

She could not model a musical piece correctly and fluently. I always had question marks about what she taught me. During that time, I had another piano teacher outside college. (IN1, Chen)

Sabina provides a positive learning experience to support her view.

My piano teacher can easily demonstrate the difficult parts of right-hand melody by her left hand, which surprised me and encouraged me to practise more. (IN1, Sabina)

Musical expertise not only allows good piano teachers to demonstrate appropriate modelling, but also supports learners’ trust in their teacher. Trust affects the quality of teaching and learning. For example, Chen’s teacher might even provide good modelling or have other advantages as an instructor. However, Chen lost her trust in her teacher’s abilities, and as a result would not be able to learn more from this teacher.
7.1.2 Teaching competence

Musical expertise is not the only element of being a good piano teacher. Iris’s learning experience is a negative example of being a student of a talented pianist without proper teaching ability.

One of my piano teachers was a Korean pianist who was identified as a talented student and sent to study abroad by the Korean government. She lived in Taiwan due to her marriage. At that moment, her Mandarin was not good enough to express her teaching clearly, so she asked me to learn how to play by observing and imitating the physical movements. However, I was too young to observe what she was doing in order to learn how to control my muscles. For example, I simply recognised that she was agitated when she played music marked forte. This was the main cause of my hand injury. (IN1, Iris)

Due to lack of linguistic proficiency, the Korean teacher attempted to teach by her modelling. However, this teacher was not aware of the student’s learning problems, so she could not provide better teaching. Insensitiveness to learners’ problems could also be revealed in teachers’ inappropriate feedback. For example, Lee described how her teacher could not understand her need to ask simple questions. This teacher’s attitude had a negative impact on Lee’s confidence. Even now, eight years later, Lee cannot perform in public, because she believes that she is not good enough. Iris had a similar experience, which was mentioned in the previous chapter. In other words, teachers’ sensitivity to learners’ difficulties and then awareness of the appropriateness of their feedback are crucial to being a good piano teacher.
Another teaching ability is making good use of motivational strategies. The importance of using both reward and penalty was noted by Lisa, Melody, and Chen. Lisa is the best example in this study. She developed her complicated own reward system. Her students could collect stickers from Lisa, and a certain amount of stickers could be exchanged for a valuable gift at the end of the year, such as an expensive toy or a free lesson. The latter was welcomed by parents. As for penalty, Lisa also has her own methods.

I encourage students who behave or perform well by giving stickers each lesson. If pupils with low learning motivation are not encouraged by my stickers or gifts, I require them to practise for one further hour after the lesson. This is the reason why my studio has two piano rooms. It is a very useful strategy to force learners to immediately pay more attention in their piano lesson. (IN1, Lisa)

In contrast, AC, Lee, and Sabina believe that a good teacher can motivate students by selecting interesting musical materials or adjusting lesson structure. AC can serve as an example.

I usually start my piano lesson with a lovely melody or pieces pupils love, and then follow with some ‘boring’ parts such as musical theory or technical practice, and I try to end the lesson with four-hand piano, which is more fun. I hope that happy starting and ending can enable pupils to accept the difficult parts more readily. (IN1, AC)

Establishing a friendly learning environment was mentioned by Iris, Melody, Sabina, and AC. This means not only that teachers can adjust their teaching to meet individuals’ needs, but also that teachers provide emotional support.

Children are very sensitive to the responses from us [teachers]. They determine whether to share secrets or ideas with us according to our responses. Trust is built on the
interactions. If we teachers show our sympathy and do not judge them dogmatically, they gradually believe that they are safe to share their true feelings. (IN2, AC)

7.1.3 Personality

Having explored features of good piano teachers in terms of musical expertise and teaching competency, I found that whether or not teachers can make full use of these two abilities is bound to elements of the teachers’ personality. Sensitivity to learning difficulties has already been mentioned. In this section, I look at patience, kindness, and passion.

All the participant teachers noted that being patient is very important, especially when students meet learning difficulties. The negative impact of teachers’ impatience has been described in the section on teachers’ unhappy learning experience (6.2.2) Here are two good examples which demonstrate the importance of teachers’ patience.

My teacher never blamed me when I could not learn well, she even tried to relieve my stress caused by poor performance. She guided me how to accept my current situation and then to be patient with myself. (IN1, AC)

When the technical difficulties irritated me, my teacher’s patience reminded me to calm down, because if my teacher can tolerate my slow progress, there is no excuse to give up practising. (IN1, Sabina)

Good piano teachers really care not only about their students’ learning situation but also their emotions or daily life.
My piano teachers not only taught me how to play the piano, but also became my close friends. This good interaction motivated me to learn happily. (IN1, Melody)

This personal care of students is also valuable in teaching. As AC explained,

I believe, that to understand students’ feelings and life experiences is very important. This benefits not only the teacher-student relationship, but also makes my teaching better, because I know how to educate each individual according to their own preferences and personal values. (IN1, AC)

Additionally, teachers’ passion for music also inspires learners. AC, Melody, Sabina, and Chen were motivated by their previous piano teacher.

When I was a learner, I was moved by my teachers’ passion for music. Her enthusiasm not only encouraged me to continue having music lessons with her, but also inspired me to be a good piano teacher like her. (IN1, Sabina)

Most participant teachers’ beliefs about good piano teachers centred on the three themes of musical expertise, teaching competency, and personality, although they gave them different importance. However, an interesting distinction appeared between two groups of teachers. Four teachers (Iris, AC, Melody, Lee) did not consider the development of performing skills as so important that they pursued it rigidly. They all mentioned that good piano teachers should be able to learn from their experience interacting with their pupil during their lessons and adjust what they were doing. In contrast, three teachers (Lisa, Sabina, Chen) emphasised the prime importance of musical expertise, and did not provide any opinions that related to learning from their teaching or the pupils.
7.2 Components of effective piano lessons

In my research, I have identified four key components that make piano lessons effective for the beginner learners: (1) teachers have in mind explicit teaching purposes; (2) pupils love music and practise sufficiently; (3) there is good teacher–student interaction; and (4) good family support.

7.2.1 Teachers have in mind explicit teaching purposes

Participants’ teaching purposes were roughly grouped into three according to emphasis: mainly teaching for musical achievement, teaching for non-musical ability, and mixed. Overall, the teaching of most participants could be classified as mixed but with different proportions. Therefore, according to my judgement about each case, I present the results in a spectrum here.

Lisa, Sabina and Chen believe that the purpose of good teaching is to enable learners to obtain certain music skills. Chen states:

> Good piano lessons enable students to obtain basic musical abilities, such as reading notation, the sense of rhythm, and basic performing skills, which help students to easily prepare for school music lessons. (IN1, Chen)

It is clear that this level of musical achievement benefits learners in their musical experience beyond the piano lessons. Another type of musical achievement that has general acknowledgement is to participate in public performance, such as student concerts or musical competitions. Therefore,
Lisa and Sabina considered the purpose of good piano teaching as being enabling students to attend these musical events.

The opposite opinion about teaching purpose has been presented by Iris and AC. They mentioned positive learning attitude, self-discipline, and the sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Learning the piano is kind of a miniature of our lives. Through learning the piano or music, we can understand our own strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, piano lessons also provide a good environment for learners to cultivate their sense of responsibility. Compared to school education, it seems to be closer to a whole-person education, which is not only concerned with subject learning and development. (IN1, AC)

I can train a student to play the piano well, but what is it for? Especially I noticed that most students today do not keep a positive learning attitude or the sense of responsibility. These are much more important than playing the piano well if we consider from the long-term impact on students’ later life. This is the reason that I put high value on ‘correcting’ my pupils’ learning attitude. (IN2, Iris)

Both teachers noted that public education seems not to be sufficient for students’ development. Therefore, AC focuses on guiding students to know themselves and cultivates the learners’ sense of responsibility through learning an instrument, while Iris, having reflected on her teaching purpose from the point of view of its wider impact on the learner, decided to teach a better learning attitude rather than to focus on learners’ performing techniques or musical achievement.

As for the third group, Lee’s beliefs about good piano teaching also related to musical achievement, which means students’ musical development.
Piano lessons should teach students how to play the piano and obtain musical knowledge. It does not mean that they should be a performer or professional in music. The significance of learning is that they can enjoy playing the piano and express their feeling through playing. (IN1, Lee)

The difference between Lee and those who teach for musical achievement is that Lee emphasises learning for one’s own personal enjoyment of music, while the other teachers focus on the public recognition.

Although Melody mentioned that a good piano lesson should enable students to achieve a specific musical outcome and to develop their sense of responsibility, in practice, she put the greatest emphasis on creating happy childhood memories for her students.

Having a piano lesson should be just a happy memory of childhood. When I was young, I had a lot of time to learn new things. The piano lesson is one of these interesting activities. For me, the most important thing is that pupils enjoy my piano lesson. (IN1, Melody)

Alternatively expressed, Melody’s account showed that she considered learning process more valuable than learning outcome, no matter whether it is directed towards musical ability or general learning attitude. This is the reason for her name being located to the right of the box.

7.2.2 Pupil’s love of music and sufficient practice

All participants considered pupils’ love or enjoyment of music as a crucial element contributing to good piano lessons. Generally speaking, these teachers believe that when students can enjoy the beauty of music through
playing the piano, a lesson can be evaluated as a good piano lesson. Lee provided a detailed description,

To me, a good piano lesson means pupils can play their favourite music on their own accord. In other words, they play the piano without any pressure from parents or me. Also, they can explore new songs using what they have learned from me when they are at home, which means that they actually have learned something successfully. (IN1, Lee)

More specifically, Iris and AC provided further explanation about the enjoyment of music. They believe that this enjoyment is based on an ability to freely express one’s feelings through music. However, acquiring this ability requires sufficient practice. As Lisa states,

Piano lessons only take place once a week, one hour at a time. Practice at home can have a huge effect on learning outcome. (IN1, Lisa)

Both Lee and Iris further explained that playing the piano well depends on proficiency of muscle control, which takes time to master. In reality, if a student does not practise enough, it leads to slow progress, which has a negative impact on motivation to learn.

When students do not practise enough, their learning progress will be slow because most of the lesson time is occupied by their practice, which lowers their interest in learning piano. (IN1, Iris)

Lisa and Chen think that the student’s practice is the most important element in relation to good piano lessons.

When students cannot practise properly for a sufficiently long time, the piano learning becomes boring because teachers always monitor them practising in the piano lesson.
Finally, they lose their learning passion. At that moment, an interesting teaching style or material rewards cannot help a lot. (IN1, Chen)

In Melody's case, it could be clearly observed that the student's love of music and sufficient practice enabled the teacher and the learner to enjoy the piano lesson.

A-Woo really loves music. If he hears a melody from the TV, he will try to figure out the music on the keyboard. He seems to be interested in every piece of music. In addition, he practises the piano every day and could play the homework well. Therefore, we get good progress almost every week and enjoy the lesson. For me, it is much easier to teach. (IN1, Melody)

7.2.3 Good teacher–student relationship

Lee, Melody and Sabina believe that good interaction between student and teacher makes piano lesson more interesting. However, this interaction seems to be mainly influenced by the student's response rather than the teacher's leadership.

If a student is very quiet and shy, the only thing I can do is to focus on playing the piano, rather than having an interesting conversation or exchange of ideas. Sometimes, I feel bored. (IN1, Melody)

Actually, I prefer to teach in school music classes, because there are always some active students who can immediately react to my instruction. This makes my teaching go smoothly. In individual piano lessons, there is only one student. I would feel stressed when the student is very introverted. (IN1, Lee)
7.2.4 Family support

Parental involvement has been explored in the previous section, which focused on parents’ motivation to send their child to learn the piano, and how parents impact on teachers’ instruction. Here, I would like to focus on how parents contribute to good piano lessons, namely, monitoring children’s practice at home, and creating a suitable music learning environment. Again, take Melody’s case as an example. Her pupil’s parents were highly involved in their child’s piano learning, which enabled Melody to teach effectively.

The father knows a little about music, and he spends time in accompanying the child during his practice every day. If this boy has some difficulties, his father will teach him at first. If his father cannot teach him, the father will mark the score, which enables me to quickly understand where the problems are. (IN1, Melody)

If this child hears some music from the TV and tries to explore the melody on the keyboard, his father would download the musical score from the Internet. (IN2, Melody)

A-Woo’s father not only paid attention to A-Woo’s practice, but also engaged with the music learning.

In addition to monitoring learners’ practice, parents’ arrangement of musical activities benefits children’s music learning.

Serbian loves music very much, as she first approached music when she was very young. Her mother is learning the flute as well. They both attend a choir. At the weekend, they often go to music concerts, which is good for Serbian to develop her sensitivity to music. (IN1, AC)
Chen mentioned another possibility of parental support.

In the beginning, pupils are usually curious about learning something new. However, no matter whether the pupils are learning the piano of their own accord or whether their parents force them, most pupils tend to lose their learning passion, especially after two to three years. At this moment, parents’ insistence becomes a powerful means of keeping piano learning continuing. (INT1, Chen)

7.3 Effective teaching strategies for the beginners

In this section, the focus is on teachers’ practice concerning the teaching of reading notation, the fluency of performance, and musical expression, and the connection between playing the piano and conscious musical engagement.

Two sources of data were involved: teachers’ accounts of what effective strategies they used and what I observed in their actual teaching.

7.3.1 Notation reading

According to the observation, most participant teachers place an emphasis on musical literacy. Lisa, Sabina, and Chen believe that notation is the basis of musical language so that learning notation is the learners’ first task. Without this foundation, learners cannot learn music successfully. The most commonly used strategies I observed were that teachers highlighted the notes students played wrong or repeatedly used verbal correction. Only Iris and AC attempted to find out the reason why students keep playing wrong notes several times, simply by asking students questions or guiding pupils to discover the reason. Lisa indicated certain strategies for teaching the beginner.
I not only provide certain mnemonics to help learners to read effectively, but also use flash cards to enhance pupils’ learning. If I realise that a student is simply reading the fingering number but not the musical notation, I would erase the fingering, which forces them to really learn how to read the score. (IN1, Lisa)

Chen provided an even more a extreme approach to teaching musical notation.

If my pupils learn music by ear, I would not model pieces of music for them, because I want to correct this ‘bad habit’. I would rather allow them to learn to read music by trial and error. During the process, they may play the wrong notes or wrong rhythm. It is okay, we as teachers can put some marks on the musical score to help them to be familiar with these symbols. (IN1, Chen)

Chen’s view of the importance of musical notation is clear from her statement, and her belief about what makes piano learning successful is also demonstrated in her words, such as ‘bad habit’, ‘trial and error’. The relation between beliefs and teaching practice will be discussed later.

7.3.2 Fluency of performance

The fluency of music involves accuracy of rhythm and pitch, and the sense of phrasing and musical structure. However, according to participants’ practice, fluency was mainly related to the right notes and steady rhythm. Accuracy of reading and reproducing musical notation has been mentioned under the previous headings. Three teaching strategies aimed at encouraging strict rhythm were offered by these teachers. First, Lisa, Lee, Chen, and Sabina tended to teach by providing theoretical explanation, such as one crochet (quarter note) equals two quavers (eighth notes). Second, Lee and Chen used
to tap the beat on the pupils’ shoulder to help them to feel the pulse of the beat.

Third, AC and Melody used spoken language to help learners to grasp the rhythmic pattern. However, AC found, that although she had tried to use language to help learners, the sense of rhythmic pattern is often distracted by concentration on melody or on other playing skills. She explained:

My pupils know exactly that you can say ‘bon-chia-chia’ (the name of a famous Taiwan entertainer) when you are in triple time. However, perhaps we seldom use this pattern in Chinese speech. This rhythm is not imprinted in our brain. Therefore, most pupils gradually lose the sense of triple time after they start playing the music. Later, I found that rather than repeating saying ‘bon-chia-chia’, teachers can play an introduction in triple time and continue to play the base line to help learners to keep their feeling of three beats when they are playing. (IN1, AC)

AC learned from her teaching experience that teaching music by music is more effective than by language or visual aids. Furthermore, Iris found that the range of patterns of rhythm in textbooks used by teachers and issued to their pupils is limited. If teachers simply follow the textbook, this leads to pupils often experiencing difficulty when they play rhythmic patterns they are not familiar with. Hence, Iris creates her own different patterns for her pupils for each lesson based on her pupils’ needs, which are written down on the teacher–parent log.

The variations of rhythmic pattern found in music can be complicated but rhythm patterns in tutorial books are repetitive. This is the reasons why I create a new pattern each week for them. Sometimes the pattern I have created is easier, sometime I make it a little more difficult. The biggest advantage of this is that pupils are not sure whether the rhythm they tap that day is an easy one or a difficult one. Without this prejudice, they can tap and learn them ‘naturally’ without self-restriction. (IN2, Iris)
7.3.3 Musical expression

According to these piano teachers, musical expression mainly relates to articulation and dynamic balance. Four of the teachers observed often demonstrated the musical phrase by singing (Iris, AC, Lee, Sabina). Sabina explained:

It is easier for me to demonstrate musical expression through singing, because I majored in vocal performance and it is my natural reaction. Pupils can get more sense of what I want to say about this music by listening to my singing. (IN1, Sabina)

Lee believes that pupils are good at memorising, so teachers’ modelling would be helpful for them in learning how to play new pieces of music expressively. Enabling pupils to compare different ways of playing is another of her strategies.

It is common for pupils to play the music without any feeling. I would imitate their dull performance and then demonstrate my performance with musical interpretation, so they can compare the two. I would ask them which one they liked and encourage them to play with feeling, not simply like a robot. (IN2, Lee)

Lisa, who believes that musical interpretation should be based on the Western classical music convention, asks her students to perform in a certain way she suggests. She prefers combining her modelling with verbal explanation as she plays to show students how to perform ‘correctly’. When she listens to the students themselves playing, she is also busy shaping the students’ music through her words and her body movement.
When my pupils are playing the piece, I imagine that I am playing as well next to my pupils. My pupils can sense my dramatic body movements, which may help them to ‘feel’ the music, even though my pupils feel that I am too excited. At the same time, the ‘right’ music is playing in my head; if my pupils’ playing cannot fit with the sound in my head, I would stop their playing to correct them. After repeating many times, I talk less and less until pupils play the music automatically. (IN2, Lisa)

Iris and AC have a different view concerning the Western classical music convention. They believe music interpretation should reflect one’s own thinking about music. Hence, to help learners play their own music they would discuss the title of the piece or create an interesting or amusing story. In addition, based on her own learning experience, Iris stated that the best way to create one’s own musical interpretation is to accumulate different experiences and sensations. These could range from imaging quite everyday things such as standing in a field and feeling the breeze, to specifically musical experiences. She encourages pupils to listen to a variety of performances by others of a particular piece of music as a way of developing one’s own ideas. However, there are difficulties in implementing this approach.

I was encouraged to listen to others’ performances, which was really useful for me to inform my ideas about music. I also suggested to my pupils to listen to music, especially as it is very convenient to do it on the Internet. However, most pupils did not take my advice at home. Another difficulty is pupils’ experience is so limited to academic learning that pupils do not have enough information to understand my metaphor or explanation. (IN2, Iris)

Touch is an important issue for musical expressivity. However, it is an abstract concept to teach. Lee and Chen use their body weight pressing down on their
pupils’ arms or back with their hands, which allows learners to really feel the weight transmission. Iris makes this teaching strategy more sophisticated. In the lessons I observed, she placed her fingers on the pupil’s hand to demonstrate the transmission of weight from the shoulder to the fingers, gently and smoothly applying pressure as distinct from pressing strongly and abruptly. At the same time, she described this gentle and smooth process as like a lift for passengers or cargo which is suspended from iron chains so that it can decrease slowly and steadily.

Furthermore, Lee pointed out another problem relating to touch, which concerns dynamic expression.

I found that it is difficult for learners, especially for those who are primary school age, to keep a good touch and interpret the music with expression. When I ask them to play the piano softly or loudly, pupils may lose the quality of sound. In my opinion, touch is more important. Hence, I do not ask for musical interpretation until learners have their own touch. (IN2, Lee)

7.3.4 Conscious musical engagement

Most teachers in this study, except for Iris and AC, put great emphasis on ‘how to play’. However, Iris believes that playing the piano does not simply rely on mechanical reproduction. It should incorporate musical awareness.

Iris asked her pupil to play the right-hand melody with his right hand and to tap the left-hand rhythm with his left hand on the chair while singing the melody. After the lesson, she explained to me that she attempted to enable her pupils to concentrate on different musical abilities at the same time, such as listening to their vocal sound, and tapping a different rhythm. She found that most pupils play the piano without any awareness,
simply moving their fingers on the keyboard. By this kind of activity, pupils are compelled to pay attention to processing different musical elements — pitch, musical phrase, rhythm, and to think whether they are dealing with them correctly. (FN2, Iris)

AC is the only one who explored musical styles with her pupil in the observed teaching.

AC modelled a new piece of music, which involved a strong rhythmic pattern in the left-hand part.

Serbian quickly said: Gypsy!

Then without a break, AC played a different melody.

Serbian responded: Arab! AC changed to a new melody again.

Serbian: Bohemian!

AC stopped playing and said: but Gypsy is a kind of Bohemian.

Serbian said: Could you play the first one again?

AC played the first melody again.

Serbian said: It is like music for a carnival. The Gypsy is enjoying a happy party!

AC asked: Is it like Taiwanese aboriginal music?

Serbian did not respond and looked unhappy.

AC played a fourth melody.

Serbian said: It is South Fujian, not Taiwanese aboriginal.

AC said: Could you think of any Taiwanese aboriginal music?
After a few minutes silence, AC played a piece of Taiwanese aboriginal music which is taught in the school music class. (FN2, AC)

7.4 Relationships between teachers’ own personal experience, teaching beliefs, and their practice

In the previous sections, I presented teachers’ opinions about good piano lessons and effective strategies by pointing out the broader themes emerging from my cross-case analysis. Although this organisation of the material is effective for creating an overall whole picture of my research findings, it is hard to understand how each participant’s beliefs and practice were contextualised by their past experiences. Therefore, in this following section, I intend to pay more attention to individual cases to discuss the relations between past learning experience, teaching beliefs, and teaching practice.

7.4.1 Summary of participant teachers’ beliefs and their practice

7.4.1.1 Teachers’ beliefs about the aims of piano teaching

This chart indicates the tendency of teachers’ beliefs about the purpose of their teaching. Generally speaking, two contrasting teaching beliefs are observed in this study: learner-oriented and performance-oriented. By posting each individual’s relative position, I intend to present the teacher’s tendency, not to indicate that they simply kept to a single teaching belief. Group A (Chen, Sabina, Lisa) emphasised the importance of musical outcome, especially musical literacy and performing skills, so I label them performance-oriented.
Group C (Iris, AC) believe that through piano learning, students can cultivate their own sense of achievement, building their confidence and a positive learning attitude, and so understand themselves better. In other words, they focus on the student’s learning attitude more than on developing the musical expertise. Therefore, I label this group learner-oriented. Obviously, teachers in group B had a mixed attitude.

![Beliefs diagram]

Figure 7.1: Participants’ teaching aims

7.4.1.2 Overview of teachers’ practice

![Practice diagram]

Figure 7.2: Participants’ teaching style
As for the teachers’ practice, the spectrum between the two opposite teaching styles is also useful to summarise what I learned about teachers’ opinions on effective teaching strategies, and the degree of correspondence between these beliefs and their actual teaching practice. Conventional teaching style means that teachers tend to focus mostly on musical notation and performing skills, following the same pattern each week: the student plays what they have been practising, the teacher give feedback, and finally the teacher sets an assignment for the following week. On the other hand, flexible teaching style means that teachers give more time for discussion and use different kinds of learning activities in their teaching. According to my analysis, there is a correspondence between teachers’ beliefs and their practice, namely, teachers who are learner–oriented tend to adopt a flexible teaching style, while teachers who are performance–oriented appear to keep to a conventional teaching style. This indicates that the teaching beliefs do impact on teachers’ practice. In most cases, teachers’ beliefs could be evidenced in their teaching. However, in two cases I struggled to relate their stated beliefs about good piano lessons to what they said in their reflective diary and to their teaching. These conflicts will be revealed later in this chapter.

In order to facilitate my discussion, I grouped participant teachers into three categories according to the similar features of their beliefs about good teaching purpose. In the following sections, I look first at critical events in
teachers’ lives, and the impact of these significant events on their beliefs and/or practice.

7.4.2 Individual case analysis: life history, belief, and practice

7.4.2.1 Group A: performance-oriented (Lisa, Sabina, Chen)

Lisa is the only teacher who has dramatically changed her teaching style. In her early career, her teaching was influenced by her negative learning experience.

As I met an impatient and bad-tempered teacher, I felt huge stress. Therefore, in order not to become a teacher like this horrible teacher, I believed that good teachers should always encourage students with positive feedback, be patient and nice all the time, even when the student did not learn properly. However, I found that my students progressed very slowly and then lacked motivation to learn. Finally, they gave up learning piano, which really destroyed my teaching confidence. (IN1, Lisa)

Having reflected on her teaching strategies, she suddenly changed her teaching style.

I felt that it was enough, and I needed to make a change. I totally altered my teaching style and teaching aim. I became strict, and set a clear teaching target, and that was to enable my pupils to perform in public. With the number of students who pass the graded examination or win competitions increasing, more and more parents come to me to ask me to be their piano teacher. As you can see, I do not advertise my piano studio. My parents come here for these [medals and trophies]. (IN1, Lisa)

Lisa tried to require her students to practise more and set each one a teaching goal such as passing graded examinations. The effective results of this change strengthened her conviction about the rightness of her teaching style.
Progressively, she came to believe that good teaching was indicated by the musical achievement of her pupil. In the observed lessons, there was a clearly identifiable power relationship. Lisa demonstrated her dogmatic teaching attitude in imposing her shape on the pupil’s musical interpretation.

Another strategy that Lisa regarded as effective, her reward token system, was also developed simultaneously with her teaching experience. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lisa combined a reward system with penalties. This combination of reward and penalty emerged from her reflection on the teaching outcome; in order to fulfil her teaching target of musical achievement, she has been trying to improve her practice.

In Sabina’s case, several factors can be seen as influencing her beliefs. First, we can note her positive learning experiences, such as having an enthusiastic vocal teacher and a good piano teacher who used effective teaching strategies. In one way, her teaching beliefs were shaped by these positive learning experiences; she mentioned, for example, that students should enjoy their piano lessons and learn effectively. In other important respects, however, the impact was negligible, as will be explained later. Her beliefs about piano lessons were also influenced by her role as an owner of a musical institution, including the importance she gave to performance.

Students can know where they are in their musical journey. Performing regularly in public or attending the graded examinations are obvious ways to demonstrate the level of learning outcome. (IN1, Sabina)
Taiwan’s educational focus is too narrow; it only emphasizes academic learning, and music and the arts are ignored. Therefore, learning music after school becomes an important chance for students to explore new things. Without really experiencing these activities, how could they know what their interests are or whether they have a talent? (IN1, Sabina)

These two statements represent two sides of her beliefs; on the one hand that of the teacher, and on the other hand, the perspective of the owner of an institution, focused on how to persuade parents to send their children to learn music. However, her teaching appeared very mechanical, which means that she only followed the printed teaching material and adopted one typical lesson pattern: the student playing and the teacher giving verbal feedback. Therefore, it was difficult for me to identify the impact of her own original successful learning experience in her observed teaching.

Chen had good learning experiences, such as meeting an effective piano teacher and having a good relationship with her private teacher. Chen explained that she believed that good piano lessons led the student to love and enjoy music. However, in her teaching, Chen demonstrated an unvarying teaching emphasis on the correction of errors, that is, failures to reproduce precisely the musical notation, and on performing skills. Additionally, her student’s learning attitude was so negative that I could conclude that the student–teacher relationship was not good. Therefore, it was a little difficult for me to discern her teaching beliefs in her teaching.
Chen mentioned during the interview that her teaching was developed by studying different kinds of musical textbook and adjusting her own teaching. After giving careful consideration to different piano teaching textbooks, she chose that those were suitable for her teaching style as her main teaching resource, and slightly adjusted her teaching strategies according to individual students' needs.

7.4.2.2 Group B: mixed orientation (Melody, Lee)

Melody has a good relationship with previous piano teachers.

For me, having a piano lesson is a happy memory of childhood. I knew that my piano teachers loved me, which made me feel happy. I as a piano teacher also hope that pupils enjoy my piano lesson and I can keep a good relationship with pupils and their parents. Now, if my students travel abroad, they bring me some souvenirs. Or when I need some help, such as moving house, the parents are always happy to give me a hand. (IN1, Melody)

This happy learning experience is reflected in her teaching beliefs and practice. She defines good piano lessons in terms of a teacher and a student enjoying the music and also the interaction between the two. The main focus of her beliefs about good teaching is mainly on the teaching process. She builds her sense of achievement on establishing a good relationship with students and their parents. In accordance with this belief, Melody makes her teaching fun by using humour, dramatic body movement, role playing, or interesting topics in which children are interested. Compared to other participants, she was more like a friend than a teacher. Melody did not attend any teacher-training.
programme. She develops her teaching strategies by attending music teaching workshops or reading textbooks for kindergarten music teachers.

Lee believes that piano lessons should enable pupils to know how to play the piano and to have a basic musical knowledge. She did not explicitly explain what past experiences contributed to her belief about what constitutes a good piano lesson. However, her learning experience may have shaped her beliefs indirectly. As mentioned in chapter six, Lee’s confidence was shaken by her new teacher, who could not understand why Lee could not play well or had to ask very simple questions. She was also being asked to relearn the basic skills, such as the sense of rhythm and touch. This unpleasant learning experience may be the reason why she emphasised students’ performing skills.

Lee’s teaching seems to be shaped by her own learning experience and her educational background as a primary school teacher. In Taiwan, school teachers would regularly attend professional development workshops. Lee adopted from them some teaching strategies to apply in her piano teaching.

According to my observation, her teaching involved technical practice, such as musical scales and arpeggios, as a warm-up activity, then pieces of work from two different stylistic periods. In addition, she always reviewed what she taught at the end of each piece and summarised the whole lesson at the end of the lesson. The structure of the lesson and her spoken tone were consistent in both observed lessons. The relationship with the student also tended to be
formal, a school teacher and a student, which meant that the hierarchy was
easier for the student to identify. At the same time, it would give a wrong
impression if the notion of hierarchy suggested a domineering attitude. The
participant student recognised and accepted the authority of the teacher,
which was gently exercised.

7.4.2.3 Group C: learner-oriented (Iris, AC)

Iris is a teacher whose beliefs are greatly influenced by her own learning
experience and her own reflection. Two critical learning events influenced her
beliefs about good teaching and her practice. First, as mentioned in 7.1.2
(teaching competence), she met a Korean teacher who could not speak good
Chinese, and who therefore asked Iris to imitate her modelling. The worse part
of this experience was that this Korean teacher did not notice young Iris’s
inappropriate playing technique, which led to Iris’s serious hand injury, and
consequently changed her performance career. Due to this unsuccessful
learning experience, Iris places more emphasis on how her pupils are playing,
whether or not her pupils know how to use their muscles properly. Second, Iris
reflected on her experience studying in the Graduate Institute of Collaborative
Piano as its name is translated on its webpage, where the learning focuses on
how a pianist accompanies other instrumentalists. Her experience then
encouraged Iris to change her performing habit as a soloist. Iris described:

I had to get used to listening to other music while playing, which made me crazy, when I
learned how to accompany another instrument. Before that, I did not realise that playing
the piano should be addressing many issues at the same time, such as thinking about how to follow others and how to play in a way that makes the whole performance better. This learning experience enabled me to think beyond being a soloist. And then, I implemented my reflection in my teaching. I ask my pupils to sing when playing the melody with the right hand while beating the rhythm with the left hand to train them to deal with different elements at the same time. (IN2, Iris)

Iris is the only teacher in the study who addresses the connection between the visual, the aural, and physical control. Iris reflected on her past learning experience, no matter whether it was positive or negative. She could learn something from these experiences and then use them to improve her teaching.

AC believes that she can develop her students’ learning attitude in her piano lessons. Beyond that, she also tries to demonstrate, through her teaching, her own positive personal values, and so encourage her pupils to develop their own. Two people in her life played crucial roles in leading her to hold this kind of teaching philosophy. One is her vocal teacher, as mentioned in 6.2.1. This teacher cultivated her flexible attitude. The other important person is her mother.

I had been a very bad girl when I was a teenager. However, my mother never expressed her intolerance or got angry with my bizarre behaviour. I knew that I was not alone and was loved, even if I was not good according to other people’s standards. My past life has enabled me to be sensitive to a student’s emotions and understand how to communicate with children and teenagers. The most important thing I learned from my mother was to be myself. This is why I always encourage students to explore their own values or ideas. (IN1, AC)
Children are children. We have been a child before, so we understand what kind of problems they cope with, and even know their intention behind the tricks they play. Especially, I was very badly behaved before. I can understand the feeling of doing something wrong. Also, children are very sensitive to adults’ responses, so I attempt not to judge what they say immediately. To understand the pupils’ situation is very crucial for me. From how they talk, I can know how to interact with this student properly. (IN1, AC)

AC’s experience helped her to develop a strong confidence and sensitivity to her students’ emotions. All of this, from the influence of the two people described above, not only makes AC keen to demonstrate her passion for life and for music, but face difficulties.

If I meet a student who is learning the piano by their parents’ decision, I will try to establish a relationship with the student and to see whether I can make them enjoy the lessons. If I cannot, I would negotiate with their parents. I believe that each pupil has their own preferences or talent. If the parents insist on sending their child to learn the piano, I will tell the student, ‘It is reality, let’s face it.’ But I will try to teach in a way acceptable to the student, such as I play and they draw a picture to correspond to my music. (IN2, AC)

### 7.4.3 Cross-case analysis

#### 7.4.3.1 Improvement of professional practice

Interestingly, within each group, I found that the ways of improving their practice discovered by the teachers were similar. Group A (Lisa, Sabina, Chen) placed a great emphasis on tutorial books. Therefore, their practice was strongly influenced by the quality of their selected teaching material. From their past experience of life or as learners, they seldom reflected on what they might have gained, and showed little motivation to learn new skills or teaching techniques. Group B (Melody, Lee), in contrast, mainly relied on their own
learning experience. Nevertheless, their range of teaching strategies was widened by attendance at teaching workshops, even though these were not specifically set up for instrumental teachers or were focused on group teaching for kindergarten-age pupils. However, Most of the teaching improvement of these teachers was related to incorporating new teaching strategies to enrich their practice. Group C (Iris, AC), no matter whether their past experiences were positive or negative, tended to learn a lesson from these events, and then implement their reflective thoughts to improve their practice organically, changing and adapting their practice over time in an open-ended way. These ideas could be about teaching strategy or personal values.

7.4.3.2 Impact of different teacher-training background

Four teachers who had a teacher-training background showed two different attitudes towards it.

Chen and AC believe that the knowledge gained benefits their piano teaching.

Having a knowledge of educational theories is an advantage, but discussing our teaching difficulties with peers was more useful for me. Through these combined experiences, I gradually realised the importance of musical pedagogy and came to understand the principles behind teaching methods. Additionally, I was afraid of teaching younger children. Having read some concepts about child development, I gradually understood children's thinking is different from adults'. Furthermore, I can see the rationale behind the pedagogy and adapt these concepts to improve my teaching. (IN1, AC)

Although I am not an expert in child development or educational psychology, what I learned from these courses was enough for me to understand better what teaching is. At least, I have a rough idea about child development. (IN1, Chen)
These two teachers believe that learning about educational theories and child development was helpful in enabling them to reduce their fear of teaching younger children. However, for Lisa, such programmes did not make any difference in their teaching, she stated:

For me, attending the secondary school teachers' education programme simply was a means to obtain a certificate, which would be helpful for me to persuade parents that I am a qualified teacher. (IN1, Lisa)

7.5 Conclusion

I have presented teachers' beliefs about good piano lessons, identifying three main themes, namely: characteristics of effective piano teachers; factors which contribute to effective piano lessons; and teaching strategies. A certain level of performance expertise is basic to being an effective teacher. In this study, participants did not exactly describe what kinds of level they needed to reach, but it should be sufficient to enable them to model correctly. As for teaching competence, the elements most valued by the participants were: selecting appropriate teaching material, having explicit teaching purposes, and developing sufficient two-way communication between teacher and pupil. Apart from that, teachers’ patience is vital to their teaching. A variety of useful teaching strategies have been described by teachers themselves or observed by me in their teaching practice. Most of the participants put most emphasis on enabling students to read music or perform correctly. Developing students’ musical thinking or encouraging musical engagement were only observed in two cases.

According to the analysis of individual cases and cross-case analysis, I found that these teachers can be generally grouped into three sub-groups according to their beliefs about good teaching. Analysis of teachers' beliefs and the
tendency of their teaching practice revealed a corresponding match between the two, which means that teachers who focus more on performance are more likely to adopt a conventional teaching style, while teachers who tend to be learner-oriented prefer to teach flexibly based on individuals' learning needs. Looking back to each teachers' previous learning experience revealed that teachers’ beliefs were positively shaped by their learning experience, no matter whether it was happy or unhappy. These teachers attempted to replicate their own good learning experience and also intended to learn something from their negative experience. However, not all their teaching beliefs about good piano lessons were clearly observed in their teaching. With regard to teachers’ beliefs, their perceptions of creativity in teaching is another major focus in this study, which is presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 8: PIANO TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN THEIR PRACTICE

In this chapter, I present my findings in relation to my second research question as stated in the above title. There are three sections: (1) the teachers’ concept of creativity; (2) their opinions concerning creativity in piano teaching; (3) the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about effective teaching and their beliefs about creative teaching.

8.1 Teachers’ concept of creativity

As creativity is an ambiguous concept and as I also presumed that Taiwanese piano teachers might not know much about creativity, I asked for their definition of creativity in general before further exploring the role of creativity in their teaching. In the second interview, I asked an open question: what do you understand by creativity? Normally, their first response was ‘I have no idea’. I needed to explain that there is no ‘right answer’ and encouraged them to describe what they knew about creativity.

8.1.1 General definitions

Four teachers (Iris, AC, Melody, Lee) explained creativity in general terms, using words such as original, new, imagination, freedom.

Creativity could happen when one tries to put two totally different elements together and then create an unexpected and interesting result. For example, I have seen a girl who
tried to play the keyboard, violin, drum, and flute on her own [i.e. like a one-man band]. I never thought it was possible to do that. However, the performance was enjoyable and interesting. (IN2, Lee)

Iris and AC also mentioned that creativity could be interpreted as a way of thinking, and as individual personal expression.

It can be a person developing their own thought, or themselves experiencing something new. Or you can say that someone has a new way of looking at the world or understanding themselves more; finally, their natural talents and abilities. (IN2, AC)

In addition, Iris explained creativity from the perspective of the evaluation of what has been created.

The creative product should combine existing conventions and new ideas. The most important point is that this outcome should convey a specific meaning; otherwise, the result may simply be an experiment or weird idea. (IN2, Iris)

8.1.2 Definitions relating to music and teaching

Three other teachers (Lisa, Sabina, Chen) mainly related creativity narrowly to musical creativity and teaching strategies.

Creativity means that students can create their own music by manipulating musical elements. (IN2, Chen)

Creativity in music only exists in improvisation or jazz. Or it means that teachers use their own imagination to make their teaching effective. (IN2, Lisa)

As for musical creativity, in the interviewees’ mind it seems to be strongly associated with improvisation or jazz. These two musical concepts were not viewed as belonging to Western classical music.
Students learn in order to know how to play the piano rather than how to improvise or compose. (IN2, Sabina)

Jazz music is the only musical genre identified with musical creativity. I only teach jazz when the parents require me to do so. (IN2, Lisa)

**Definition of creativity**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Open-minded</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chen</td>
<td>Sabina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Lee</td>
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<td>Melody</td>
<td>Iris</td>
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<td>AC</td>
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Figure 8.1: Teachers’ perceptions about creativity

Generally speaking, two differentiated perceptions of creativity were revealed in this study. AC, Iris, and Melody (right-hand side) had an open understanding of creativity. They approach their definition from different perspectives, such as novelty of thinking process or evaluation of what has been created. In other words, it seems that creativity is a general ability, which could be explored in its own right and applied in any domain. In contrast, Chen, Sabina, Lisa, and Lee (left-hand side) confined their understanding of this concept to specific musical skills.
### Definition of creativity

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<td>AC</td>
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</table>

**Teaching purpose**
- Performance-oriented
- Learner-oriented

**Figure 8.2: Relationship between definition of creativity and beliefs about teaching purpose**

It is interesting to note that this teacher group pattern matches the spectrum which showed up in the previous chapter in relation to teachers’ beliefs and teaching style. Figure 8.2 indicates how teachers who aim to encourage the personal development of the learner tend to hold more flexible opinions about creativity. In contrast, teachers who aim for musical achievement appear to have a narrow conception of creativity and limited receptiveness to it.

### 8.2 Teachers’ opinions about creativity in piano teaching

Although some participant teachers believe that creativity is just associated with jazz or improvisation, I still tried to explore with all the teachers the potential for creativity in piano teaching. I asked them to describe the role of creativity in their teaching and also what are the difficulties of implementing creativity in piano teaching. First, the potential for creativity in piano teaching can be looked at from two perspectives: that of the learner, including the
learner’s musical interpretation and personal thinking, and that of the teacher, including their teaching methods.

8.2.1 Musical interpretation and musical thinking

Musical interpretation refers to a player’s ability to manipulate musical elements such as dynamics and articulation to express their own personal feelings or musical ideas. As mentioned in 8.1.2, teachers’ beliefs about creativity are strongly impacted by the Western classical music style, which is seen as severely limiting the performer’s freedom. Therefore, personal musical interpretation by the student was viewed as the principle area where creativity could be exercised and accepted in this teaching context by Iris, AC, and Melody.

I do not hold a rigid concept of musical interpretation. I think that it is simply a way of presenting music, so it must be flexible. What I value the most is that pupils enjoy their music and like their own musical interpretation. (IN2, Melody)

Lisa, however, had a completely opposite attitude towards musical interpretation. For her, it is a kind of limit set by her in her piano teaching.

Musical interpretation is a specific way of performing, which is based on the musical culture of a particular period of time. There is no room for performers to play in their own way. I only allow my students to create their own interpretation when they play popular music. This kind of music is like an entertainment, which they only play for fun. (IN2, Lisa)

AC is the only teacher who focused on developing learners’ thinking.
Students can develop their own voice or explore their own preference through playing different kinds of music, such as folk music, or the same piece in different musical styles. Playing the piano is just a way of expressing their own feelings. (IN2, AC)

8.2.2 Creative teaching strategies

Most participants agreed that, rather than developing creativity in the student, creativity in this teaching environment could be most readily implemented in creative formats of teaching. Teachers use metaphor and analogy, storytelling, visual aids, body movement, and Internet resources, such as YouTube.

8.2.2.1 Metaphor

With regard to metaphor, it could be used to create a link between music and the title of the piece.

Normally, I describe the scenario according to the title of the music. This may help my pupils to create a picture to help them to express their thoughts through their playing. (IN2, Chen)

In addition, teachers could connect the music with pupils’ life experience to enable them to generate feelings or ideas about the music. As mentioned in 7.3.3, Iris taught students how to use the muscles and the weight of the arms to play the piano properly by devising a lift metaphor. Another example; Lee’s first piano teacher taught her how to play the piano without actually touching the piano keyboard.

My teacher said to me, ‘Let’s imagine that our arms are like apples dropping from a tree. The power is produced by gravity, not by someone outside applying force. This means
that you should let the weight of your arm naturally transfer from your shoulder to the tips of your fingers.' This is an interesting experience. I never thought that there could be a connection between a piano and an apple. (IN1, Lee)

In Melody’s teaching, she used metaphor as an interesting way to teach musical interpretation. When A-Woo played his left hand too loudly, Melody twisted A-Woo’s left ear (like a volume knob) and said: ‘Please turn your left hand down to give your music good balance!’ Immediately, A-Woo responded to Melody’s instruction and corrected what he was doing.

However, Iris, Melody, and Sabina also mentioned the limitation of using metaphor. The major reason for metaphor being ineffective was that students themselves do not have sufficient knowledge or experience for them to make sense of the teacher’s example.

8.2.2.2 Storytelling

AC believes that this teaching strategy is useful in both inspiring teacher and learners, and in connecting the music and the performer.

I enjoy the process of creating ‘their story’ with them. We have a lot of fun while students generate their images for the music they play. This activity benefits not only their learning motivation but also their musical interpretation, because they really engage themselves with the music. (IN2, AC)

Lisa also viewed storytelling as a creative teaching strategy. The difference between AC and Lisa is that Lisa only used her own imagination to create her own story for learners, rather than encouraging her pupils to create their own
story. Nevertheless, AC pointed out that this interesting activity is
time-consuming.

Although my pupil and I enjoy the whole process, I often struggle with the time restriction. We might get too involved in creating our story and matching this amusing story with the music and then find that we have run out the time without checking the rest of the music set as homework. (IN2, AC)

Actually, AC and her pupil spent almost half an hour making up their funny story and ‘playing’ this story in the music. Consequently, in order to keep up the planned progress, AC planned another time slot with her pupil for listening to the remainder of her homework.

8.2.2.3 Visual aids

Creative teaching can also involve combining different teaching materials or instructional techniques. Visual aids were most commonly mentioned by participant teachers. Lisa uses a set of flash card with different rhythmic and pitch notes. She thinks that it is an interesting tool to motivate her beginner pupils to learn to read music effectively. Furthermore, Melody, Lee, Lisa, Sabina, and Chen believe that visual aids are useful in analysing musical structure and explaining the relationship between time signature and rhythm.

I usually teach the musical form by putting a different colour on different musical phrases with a pen or highlighter. This method enables pupils to understand the whole structure of a musical piece so that it is easier for them to practise effectively. (IN2, Chen)
If I need to explain the relation between beat and rhythm, I would draw a train with many carriages which each symbolise one bar. Then I add dots inside to represent the rhythm. (IN2, Sabina)

During my observation, Sabina did use in her teaching the strategy she mentioned and her pupil seemed to understand intellectually what she meant. However, the pupil still could not play the rhythm with a steady beat.

8.2.2.4 Dancing and body movement

Both AC and Iris mentioned that dancing along with music enables learners to ‘feel’ the music they play. Iris provided an example from her learning experience which related to creative teaching.

In this master class, I could not put good expression into my musical phrasing, or I should say that I had no feeling about what I played. I just played out the notes. The professor asked me to dance with her on the stage. Although it made me embarrassed, the effect was beyond my imagination. Suddenly, I could feel the music inside me and then my music was different. I have done the same thing with my pupils. It also works for them. (IN2, Iris)

However, a small piano room restricts the possibility of incorporating this teaching activity in their teaching.

The piano rooms in a private institution are often very small. Therefore, I still can not really use this strategy in my teaching, even though I believe that music goes well with dancing. (IN2, AC)
8.2.2.5 Internet resources

Three teachers (Iris, Lee, Sabina) indicated that Internet resources could be another creative teaching tool. As mentioned in 6.2.1, Iris had been asked to listen to different kinds of musical interpretation, and she found that it was useful in developing her own personal musical thinking. Consequently, she suggests that her pupils explore music by listening to music on the Internet.

YouTube has a great variety of music. It is easier and more economical to listen to different performers’ music on line. (IN2, Iris)

Lee mentioned another way of using the Internet as a teaching tool.

My friend who is a piano teacher told me that she showed another child’s performance which someone uploaded on YouTube to her pupils by using her smartphone. She found that it was effective, because the performer they watched was the same age as her pupil. This fact encouraged her pupil, ‘She can do it, so can I’. (IN2, Lee)

8.2.2.6 Teaching ideas drawn from the Orff approach

Melody and Chen had attended workshops about the Orff musical teaching approach. Melody highlighted some musical activities from this approach which are interesting, and which she adopts in her teaching if she feels that it is appropriate. However, playing the piano could limit the application of these ideas.

Piano lessons only involve two people and also a piano is not a portable instrument, which makes it difficult to play musical games. (IN2, Melody)
Chen listed different Orff teaching methods that can provoke a student’s musical creativity.

I can teach my pupils how to change the left-hand rhythm, to create their own cadenzas, and to improvise according to set rules. Just like those strategies you see in the Orff approach. However, the problem is that I cannot teach these if students do not have a certain musical competence. (IN2, Chen)

As Chen’s account shows, she believes that creativity in piano lessons is bound to a student’s learning level. In other words, students need to develop musical abilities first, in order to allow teachers to provoke learners’ musical creativity.

8.2.3 Limits of creativity in piano lessons

I have remarked on some limits of creativity in piano teaching in the previous section. Two further possible limitations on creativity in piano lessons are explored here. (1) the learner’s attitude, and (2) the teacher’s own attitude to creativity and the experiences that lie behind it.

8.2.3.1 Students’ attitudes towards learning the piano

The effect of the interaction between teacher and student has been mentioned in the previous chapter (7.2.3) Melody’s and Lee’s teaching styles were influenced by their pupils’ responses. Iris further explained how the learner’s attitude impacted on the potential for creativity in this teaching environment.
Creativity in piano lessons requires the involvement of both teacher and student. Take playing with a ball, for example. When a teacher passes a ball to her pupil, the teacher would expect that her pupil would throw the ball back so that the ball game can continue. It is really boring if a teacher is always throwing a ball without it coming back. Of course, I know that most of my pupils were sent to learn the piano by their parents, so their motivation to learn was low and they were not interested in playing a game with me. (IN2, Iris)

As shown in Iris’s statement, students’ motivation to learn and their learning attitude also play a significant role in enhancing creativity in piano lessons. Indeed, this point is clearly evidenced also in the case of Melody. Her pupil, A-Woo, was highly interested in music and maintained a positive learning attitude.

A-Woo can always quickly respond to my instruction or metaphor. I think that he inspires me as well. (IN2, Melody)

Actually, Melody created a very interesting and dynamic interaction with her pupil by responding to her pupil’s unexpected behaviour. In the second lesson, when Melody was writing something down in the homework book, A-Woo played a melody heard in a TV programme. Melody immediately reacted, saying: ‘It is from a Japanese cookery programme, and this music plays as a narrator describes how to cook step-by-step’. A-Woo had a big smile and continued playing. Melody said: ‘Let’s play our homework first. If you do it well, we maybe can have our own cookery show at the end of this lesson!’ A-Woo was excited about this idea and then started playing his homework. At the end of this lesson, Melody pretended to be a narrator introducing how to cook fried
rice with eggs while A-Woo played the music, just like the programme. The interaction between them made this teaching event interesting for both teacher and pupil. Melody could understand what A-Woo would like to demonstrate to her, while she knew how to respond appropriately to her pupil and still keep the lesson on track. Another point emerges here. Teachers themselves also contribute to the possibility of creativity in piano teaching.

8.2.3.2 Teachers’ pedagogical competency and the role of creativity in their teaching

Apart from the learners’ attitude, according to AC and Melody, teachers themselves may also not be competent to contribute to creativity in piano lessons. Two relevant factors were revealed: the teachers’ own knowledge and the balance between instruction and exploration. First, AC found that her knowledge of worldwide musical styles was not sufficient for her to freely explore music with her pupil. This has been pointed out in the quotation from her interview in 7.3.4.

Second, how to create balance between providing effective teaching and leaving enough space to learners was another challenge for teachers who intend to involve creativity in their teaching. Melody believed that she gave her student enough room to explore music; however, she worried that maybe she gave too much freedom.

I know that A-Woo is a creative child and he does not like to be restricted. Most of the time, I give him the maximum freedom to explore music. However, I am always
wondering whether or not I give him too much freedom. For example, he plays the piano without following all the fingering. Is it necessary to correct the errors or simply leave him to find out an appropriate way of playing? (IN2, Melody)

AC’s reflection also pointed out teachers’ tricky role in teaching.

Teachers should prepare an appropriate syllabus and scaffolding. Within this teaching framework, the question ‘Do I leave enough room for my pupils to develop their own thoughts?’ often appears in my mind. In addition, pupils are like a blank page and I can draw anything I like on it. Does my teaching, such as my verbal instruction or guiding questions, restrict pupils’ learning or their own creativity? (IN2, AC)

In her statement, AC pointed out that, where there is no pressure from parents to prepare the pupil for examination, piano teachers may have full authority to decide what and how to teach. At the same time, she was not very confident that her teaching decisions were the best for her pupil’s development. However, this kind of reflection on practice encourages teachers to develop their teaching competency, which will be explored in the next chapter.

8.3 Teachers’ creative experience and their perception of creativity in musical learning and teaching

8.3.1 Teachers’ own experience of creativity

When participants were asked whether or not they had had an experience relating to creativity, most believed that they could not provide me with a good example. Their responses revealed two different attitudes. Most of the participants believed that their background was too limited to Western classical music for them to allow themselves a measure of creativity in their teaching.
In their responses, two different attitudes were revealed. Most of the participants believed that their experiences were limited to Western classical music. Lisa felt very positive about her own early experiences of creativity, when as a child she expressed herself in playing the piano and improvising. First, take Iris as an instance:

I went to an exhibition of pottery and porcelain in this summer. Through attending this exhibition, I realised that my experience of the arts was simply focused on music. However, I saw I could obtain a lot of inspiration from different forms of the arts. It is always good to know what others have done and learn more from them. This should benefit my musical interpretation. (IN1, Iris)

For Iris and the rest of the majority group, it seems that learning the piano simply relates to how to play the piano well. This learning experience is seldom connected to the concept of creativity.

The minority attitude is represented solely by Lisa, who was confident in mentioning her creativity experience. That experience, however, was limited to improvisation during her childhood.

Piano was my closest friend. I expressed my feelings through playing the piano. When I was a child, I did not have my own study desk, so the piano became my desk as well. I liked to explore the sound with different touch and pedalling and also to create my own music. I cannot remember when I started to play different types of left-hand accompaniment for the same melody. I was keen on this type of performing, so I tried to discuss this style with my classmates in college [the department of music]. However, they could not understand why I did not simply follow the musical score. (IN2, Lisa)

The reaction of Lisa’s classmate concretised this separation between the Western classical tradition music and creativity. The same separation is also
evident in my interviews. When I explored teachers’ perception of creativity, I did not prescribe to my participants what kind of creativity we were talking about. Although they all learned music at a very young age, they described that what they learned was Western classical music, which had nothing to do with creativity. There seemed to be a sense of distance between creativity and their music learning experience.

It was encouraging that Lisa’s interest in exploring music was not affected by her classmates. Lisa started to learn jazz outside school. It was a positive learning experience for her.

I had learned the theory of harmony in a theoretical way. It had nothing to do with my music. Having learned jazz piano, I finally connected the theory with the sound I played. It was an amazing discovery. (IN2, Lisa)

8.3.2 Relations between teachers’ creative experience and their attitude towards creativity in their teaching

As mentioned in 8.1, participants’ attitudes towards creativity roughly divide into two: a more open attitude (e.g. individual thinking and personal expression) and one that is domain-specific (jazz and improvisation, and creative teaching). Although Iris, AC, Melody, and Lee had a limited creative experience, they provided a broader definition of creativity and demonstrated an open-minded attitude towards creativity in piano teaching. On the other hand, Lisa learned jazz, and this learning experience seemed to reinforce her rigid attitude towards creativity both in her general definition and in her teaching. Not only
does Lisa believe that musical interpretation should be based on the accepted
conventions, but also that musical creativity only exists in jazz or improvisation
that has no relation to classical music learning.

I never teach my pupils jazz unless their parents expect their children to learn jazz or
have the ability to improvise so that they can play in a church service. (IN2, Lisa)

Interestingly, Lee devoted ten minutes to teaching jazz in the observed
lessons. Her pupil’s parents expected this boy to be able to play a little jazz
music, because the boy’s granddad likes jazz music.

I had told the mother that, although I just knew a little about jazz music, I could choose
appropriate teaching materials to help me meet their expectation. (IN2, Lee)

Overall, limited creative experience appears not to be a cause which
contributes to a rigid attitude towards creativity. On the other hand, the case of
Lee shows that a teacher’s experience of musical creativity will not necessarily
become an advantage for them to teach effectively or creatively.

8.3.3 Relationship between teachers’ beliefs about good piano lessons
and their opinions about creativity in piano teaching

Almost all teaching strategies except teachers’ modelling could be considered
creative teaching by participants in this study. However, there were different
purposes for using creative teaching. Three motivations emerged in this study.

Teachers use creative strategies for: (1) developing the student's imagination or conscious musical engagement; (2) for making teaching more fun; (3) for obtaining a better teaching outcome.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of creative teaching</th>
<th>Teaching purposes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For learners</td>
<td>Performance  Learners’ attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For fun</td>
<td>Iris AC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For teachers’ effectiveness</td>
<td>Melody</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional teaching</td>
<td>Sabina, Chen</td>
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Figure 8.3 is an expansion of Figure 7.2, both horizontally, to add the category of creative teaching, and vertically, to separate the participants according to their view of the aim of such teaching. Sabina and Chen are placed below the dotted line, because although they did offer certain ideas about creative teaching, the observed lessons showed no connection between their beliefs about creativity and their practice. Therefore, I have added the category of traditional teaching, which means that the lesson teaching simply relied on the student's performing and the teacher’s verbal correction of error and authoritative instruction. I am, of course, aware that I observed only two
lessons, and creative teaching might have occurred on other occasions. However, the teachers’ mindset seemed sufficiently evident.

Furthermore, according to Figure 8.3, there is a correspondence between the participants’ beliefs about good teaching purposes and the purpose of using creative teaching strategies. Teachers who aim to cultivate a student’s learning attitude tend to focus on developing the learner’s musical thinking or awareness. In contrast, for teachers who value performance skilling, creative teaching is a means for them to achieve their teaching goal.

8.4 Conclusion
All participants felt challenged when asked to provide their definition of creativity, but they still tried to describe this ambiguous term by using a specific short sentence or recounting their experience relating to creativity. Their opinions presented different aspects of creativity, ranging from the description of being creative and the ways of evaluation creation to the characteristics of the creating process. When it came to creativity in music teaching, I used one spectrum which ended with two extreme attitudes (a rigid and limited attitude and an open-minded attitude) to show all participants’ opinions. The former believed that creativity in piano lessons only happens in improvisation and composition, which modern training in the classical music tradition seldom deals with. The latter was closer to the idea of musical thinking or personal expression. However, no matter which kind of beliefs they held, all the participant teachers mentioned that piano lessons did have limitations when it came to developing students’ creativity, such as the nature of the tradition of Western classical music.
Although these teachers gave examples of their teaching strategies relating to creativity, most were aiming for an interesting teaching approach to enable their students to learn effectively, not for the facilitating of students’ creativity. In the last section of this chapter, the participants using creative approaches were grouped into three sub-groups in terms of their purpose in using creative approaches: for developing learners’ ability; simply for fun, for achieving teaching goals effectively. Teachers’ beliefs about good piano lessons and creativity have been presented in these two chapters. In order to further explore how teachers themselves demonstrate their personal creativity to solve teaching challenges, the focus of the next chapter is an analysis of their reflections on previous teaching experience and the observed lessons.
In this chapter, in order to answer research question three: how do Taiwanese piano teachers reflect on their teaching? I intended to present how my participants reflect on their teaching and the results of their reflection. As far as possible, I have organized the material into two main sections. First, I look at the teachers’ reflection on their current teaching as represented by their reflective diaries (9.1). This is supplemented by the evidence of the second interview, which attempted to bring out specifically their reflections on learning difficulties (9.2). Second, I try to understand how they have developed professionally to reach their current practice through attempting to cope with their most significant teaching challenges (9.3). Here I use the evidence of the first interview.

9.1 Teachers’ reflection on observed lessons

9.1.1 Teachers’ reflection on critical moments of observed lessons

For their reflective diary, participant teachers were asked to choose one or two lessons and focus on what they regarded as critical teaching moments. What they chose to reflect on would reveal their personal evaluation and how they made their teaching decisions.
Most participants focused on mistakes and deficiencies of performance, such as accuracy and fluency. Four examples follows:

Tina could not play the music fluently. I supposed that she could not read the musical score very well, so I asked her to pay more attention to reading the music, including right notes and fingering. And then I gave her more time to practise. Meanwhile I told myself that I should be patient and keep my temper, even though Tina kept making several mistakes just within three bars. (RT, Lisa)

Jo could not play the music fluently, because her sense of beat was not steady. It seemed also that she could not understand the relation between beat and rhythm. Therefore, I tapped her shoulder to let her feel the steady beat and also explained how to fit the rhythm into the beat. (RT, Sabina)

I found that William could not keep a stable tempo. I speculated that he simply played music without the awareness of the beat. Therefore, I mirrored the melody he performed by singing while tapping the beat on his shoulder to enable him to feel this unstable tempo. (RT1, Lee)

Rocket did not play the rhythm right. I thought that it was because he did not have enough practice so that he could not quickly find the right octave of the keyboard to start on. Sometimes, he did not realize that he started from an octave higher than he should have. Therefore, I attempted to guide him to recognize for himself where his problem was by questioning him. I hoped that he would read the music more carefully before starting playing. (RT, Chen)

On the other hand, although Iris and AC also reflected on their student’s performing errors, they also addressed their pupil’s physical state or emotions.

David seemed not to fully concentrate on what he played, so he made some mistakes. In order to improve his concentration, I provided different kinds of practising strategies and learning activities. However, later on, I found that what he needed was to practise more so that he could control his muscles better. (RT, Iris)
Serbian looked unsatisfied with her performance. I did not make any suggestion or give instruction directly, because I knew that she is a sensitive girl. If I directly addressed her performing errors, Serbian might not be in a good mood to finish the lesson. Therefore, rather than focusing on the errors, I tried to point out where she had done well to encourage her. (RT, AC)

The different focuses and emphases in the reflective diaries show up clearly the underlying mentality and orientation of the teachers. On the one hand, Lisa, Lee, Sabina, and Chen look at their teaching problem only from the technical perspective. On the other hand, Iris and AC have a more rounded and fuller view of the pupil as a whole person.

The two different mental orientations produced two different directions in the participants’ teaching decisions. The first teacher group tended to correct students’ errors by providing theoretical explanation, combined with teaching strategies narrowly aimed at correcting error, and requiring repetitive practice. On the other hand, the second group of teachers sought to improve students’ performance by giving more specific personal support. For example, Iris and Lisa both believed that their students’ performance would be improved if they paid full attention to what they were playing. Lisa verbally required her pupil to focus on the musical score and gave the pupil more time to practise. Iris, however, attempted to provide different kinds of learning activities to help David cultivate his concentration, rather than only giving verbal reminders. Furthermore, AC not only noticed her pupil’s problem but also thought of the overall learning effect; therefore, she prioritized her teaching focuses differently, which did not mean that she ignored performing errors, but rather,
showed her thoughtful consideration of how to deal with her pupil’s performing error.

I noticed that Serbian played a wrong note three times. The first time, I thought that it might be by mistake. The second time, I tried to think about the possible reasons: ‘Was it because of an unusual interval [F and B flat]? Or was it because of the accidental B flat? If due to the accidental, did it mean that Serbian was confused about the symbols for flats and sharps? Or she might know the flat symbol means a lower note, but she was not aware of the need to adjust the position of the wrist to prepare a right position to play this interval.’ (RT, AC)

Sabina was exceptional in that, rather than specifically exploring her student’s performing errors, she mainly explained her teaching style as a whole in her reflective diary.

I customarily let my pupils play through the whole piece and then follow with my feedback. I often guide them by asking them questions and expect them to answer correctly. If they cannot answer my question, I tell them the correct answer and hope that they can remember how to do it later. Usually, I do not think too much when I am teaching, and rely on my intuition or my past learning experience. (RT, Sabina)

A final component of the teachers’ reflections is seen in the form of the reflective diaries (Iris, AC, Melody, Lee). These teachers included their evaluation of whether or not their corresponding teaching strategies worked by observing their pupil’s response.

A-Woo was impatient in playing the piano, even though I tried to improve his attitude. Maybe he was too tired that day. Having tried to help him, I decided to accept this situation and let it be. I told myself to be more patient and lower my expectation, not be too demanding. (RT, Melody)
Although the different learning activities improved David's concentration, it just lasted for a short time, and this plus insufficient practice, led to today's slow progress. However, he had tried his best, so I decided not to push too much. (RT, Iris)

Melody and Iris accepted their pupil's learning situation and relaxed their teaching standards. In contrast, Lee and Chen continued to insist on theirs.

William has certain technical difficulties in playing arpeggios in a piece of music. I tried to provide different kinds of practising exercises and allowed him to practise during the lesson until he could play the music smoothly. However, the time he took to master this technique was longer than I expected. I did not realize that until the end of the lesson. (RT, Lee)

Rocky wanted to finish his piano lesson as soon as possible, so he played the music without the sense of beat and correct rhythm. However, I as a teacher must insist that he has to play his homework properly. (RT, Chen)

9.1.2 Teachers’ reflection on current practice

Having analysed the participants’ reflective diaries, I found that most teachers focused on their pupils' errors and tried to justify their teaching decisions. However, I am interested in teachers' own personal creativity in their teaching. Therefore, I further required them to consider the question ‘How will you attempt to improve your teaching if you encounter the same issues as you have mentioned in your reflective diary?’

Four different areas of teachers’ possible improvement can be identified. First, Iris, Melody, and AC hoped to pay more attention to their students' feelings.

David and I knew that today's progress was not as good as last week. He looked a little disappointed. I only said: ‘Keep going.’ However, I should explore further how he is
feeling to see whether his confidence was affected by today’s performance. I will check this next week. (RT, Iris)

At the end of the lessons, A-Woo became naughty and could not concentrate on performing. I warned him, ‘I will ask your father to come in and watch your performance if you continue this kind of behaviour’. I should not say that. It sounds like a threat. I should gently guide him by positive language. (RT, Melody)

I should give her more encouragement after she plays a difficult part. In addition, I need to emphasize that I always love her no matter whether she plays well or not. The most important thing is that she has to try her best. (RT, AC)

The second area of improvement related to teaching preparation. Melody and Sabina mentioned that they would prepare more teaching material to enrich their teaching.

I think that I need to look for more interesting short sentences which fit different rhythmic patterns, so I will not waste time in brainstorming during lessons. (RT, Melody)

I will investigate more about the current printed tutorial books and then use some to make my teaching more varied. I can also think of different teaching activities, rather than simply focus on the musical score. (RT, Sabina)

Third, Lee reflected on her time management and teaching strategies.

William and I spent over 30 minutes on a specific performing technique. I should notice the time allocation so that I have enough time to listen to all the homework. Also, I should elaborate my teaching so that my pupil can follow my instruction more easily. For example, not only can I tap the beat on the pupil’s shoulders, but also the rhythm. Similarly, I can model on the pupil’s back the way of controlling the muscles to give a good balance between the right and left hands. The sense of touch enables them to understand better what I describe. (RT, Lee)

Fourth, Lisa and AC introduce the idea of adding extra areas in their teaching.
Personally, I enjoy the beauty of harmony, which makes piano music more colourful. However, the current teaching materials I use seldom bring in harmony or simply give a theoretical introduction. I think that it may be a good idea to teach harmony, thereby increasing my pupil’s sensitivity to the sound of music. As for rhythm, I expect myself to have the student make some physical movements to help them to really feel the beat. This idea is inspired by Dalcroze Eurhythmics. (RT, AC)

Some of my pupils are studying in a specialized music programme which includes other musical subjects such as musical theory, training the ear, and sight-reading. I found that my pupils seem not to have absolute pitch or the ability to identify chords and rhythm. Therefore, I can provide a group course to develop their listening skills. I believe that learning in a group, which involves more peer competition, is useful for encouraging them to learn better. (RT, Lisa)

Finally, Lisa thought her teaching was good enough; therefore, nothing specific needs to be improved. I tried in the second interview to guide her to think around her pupil’s learning difficulties. However, I still could not evoke an answer.

Lisa: When I saw the video, I was so satisfied with myself. I looked like a very earnest teacher who put all my effort into my teaching.

Yeh: Can anything be improved? Tina was struggling with certain parts of the music.

Lisa: No. Tina should pay more attention to it.

Yeh: Let’s imagine that I imprison you and Tina in a small room, and say that you are allowed out only if Tina solves her performing difficulties. What do you do?

Lisa: I will ask Tina to practise more and play it slowly until she masters the music.

In the end, her reflection was still restricted to her pupil’s practising rather than considering how she as a teacher could help her pupil to solve the problem.
9.2 Teachers’ reflection on learning difficulties

In the previous section, the findings are mainly based on the written data of the diaries. As I have observed in person and analysed their teaching by watching their video, I could see that there were some issues that had not been approached in detail. Therefore, I brought three focuses into my second interview, namely: (1) how the teachers analyse pupils’ learning difficulties; (2) how they interpret their pupils’ behaviour; and (3) how they develop their pupils’ listening ability.

9.2.1 Analysis of pupils’ errors

Four teachers dealt with the same learning difficulties in each of their two lessons. Lisa’s student could not play octaves smoothly; Melody’s pupil unconsciously played the same wrong notes; Sabina’s and Chen’s pupils could not play with a steady beat and correct rhythm. These teachers all put marks on the score and also asked their pupils to practise more or in a slower tempo. However, these teaching strategies did not improve their students’ performance. After discussion with these teachers, four different reasons suggested by them why they could not solve the problem were further explored.

First, that the student did not pay enough attention to their music.

I found that most pupils play the piano mechanically. What I can do is to remind them to pay more attention to what they play all the time. If they can fully concentrate on their
performing, their progress will increase a lot. Therefore, I always end my lessons by saying, ‘You need to take it more seriously.’ (IN2, Lisa)

The second reason was that it takes time for students to absorb what they learn.

Sometimes, my pupils could not understand what I said immediately. If I have tried my best to explain and they still could not get it, I would say, ‘Let me think how to teach this and I will tell you next time.’ However, amazingly, pupils may come up with their own solution during the week. I think that learning takes time. (IN2, Sabina)

Lee has a similar explanation.

Playing the piano requires us to master the muscles. Students may understand what I say but they cannot quickly translate their understanding into performance. They need to correct their repeated performing errors by re-building their sense of playing. It takes time. (IN2, Lee)

Third, students have their own learning habits, which may not be easily changed by their teachers.

A-Woo used to solve his problems on his own by trial and error. When I try to teach him or provide a better solution, he does not listen to me, and his body language shows ‘Do not bother me’. For example, if I want to model a piece of music, he may sweep my hand away from the keyboard and then start to play the piano. It seems to me that the only thing I can do is to wait for him until he is willing to listen to me. (IN2, Melody)

Fourth, students refuse to learn new things.

Rocket just wanted to finish his piano lesson as soon as possible. For him, the longer he plays, the more time he ‘wastes’, because he would like to keep his time for playing a computer game. Therefore, when I taught him how to play the correct rhythm, he did not take it seriously. (IN2, Chen)
9.2.2 Interpreting pupils’ behaviour

When I was present as a non-participant observer in piano lessons, I was able to pay more attention to pupils’ responses, both emotionally and physically. Iris and AC tended to adjust their teaching flexibly as they were teaching according to their observation of their pupils’ responses. This was evident also in their reflective diary. In contrast, I noticed that whereas the students of the other five teachers did demonstrate different kinds of body language, these teachers did not respond in any way, and they neither replied nor reflected on their students’ behaviour in their diary. Therefore, I discussed this issue with these five teachers in the second interview. Generally speaking, two kinds of response were revealed: (1) I did not notice this behaviour. (2) I did notice the pupil’s reaction but ignored it.

Two different reasons emerge for why teachers did not notice their student’s behaviour or emotions: teachers were too focused on their own teaching aim (Lee, Sabina), or teachers considered the student’s behaviour as normal (Melody). Lee’s student was asked to practise one piece of music for over 30 minutes and expressed his tiredness by moving his shoulders and by his facial expression. However, Lee explained that she was too keen on monitoring her student’s practice so that she did not notice these non-verbal communications. On the other hand, Melody’s student looked like he was too excited exploring the sound he was making and then ignored Melody’s instruction. Even when Melody tried to explain something to him, his hands were still on the keyboard.
playing or making sounds. I asked for more explanation of this behaviour, because I presumed that Melody, as his long-term piano teacher, might have some way of understanding and interpreting this.

Yeh: In the beginning, I thought that A-Woo felt bored, so he played the piano when you were writing something on his score. However, later, I gradually noticed that his casual playing seemed to have some melodic or rhythmic patterns from the music he had just played or from music he heard outside lessons. Sometimes, he seemed to express his unhappiness by playing forte. Have you further tried to clarify what is going on?

Melody: No, I am used to him making a lot of disconnected noises when I am talking to him or writing something in the homework book. So I never pay attention to this behaviour.

Lisa and Chen had noticed that their pupils were not happy during lessons. Their students were not only very quiet, but also their hands sometimes were not in the proper preparation position on the keyboard and they started to play with several seconds delay. Again, the two teachers had different explanations for why they ignored their student's emotions.

Yes, I also noticed that Tina was unhappy and did not want to continue practising. However, if I allowed myself to be influenced by her emotions, I could not keep my teaching going smoothly. I would feel disappointed not to enable my pupil to keep going. So, for me, she should play the piano and follow my instruction. It was a successful lesson. Anyway, students always look tired, don't they? It is not my responsibility to cheer them up. (IN2, Lisa)

Chen’s student was upset about his teacher’s joke about him at the beginning of the lesson, and this emotion lasted the whole lesson.
I knew that Rocky was in tears. However, according to my understanding of him, if I directly addressed his emotion, he would feel embarrassed and become angry. Therefore, I ignored it and continued my teaching, which may help to shift his focus from bad emotion to learning. (IN2, Chen)

Lisa believed that it is not necessary for her as a piano teacher to deal with students’ emotions. This corresponds to her teaching belief that mainly aims for musical achievement. On the other hand, Chen expected that her strategies, shifting the student’s attention, could help her to deal with this issue, in the interests of both her lesson and Rocky himself, even though this seems to be unjustified.

9.2.3 Developing pupils’ listening ability

For the performer, listening ability is not a skill that can be developed in isolation. The teacher must address the connection between the aural, and the skills of reading and physical control. Iris was the only teacher who did this. Most participants in this study only paid attention to the connection between the visual score and physical control, that is, reading carefully and playing carefully, because these teachers mainly focused on the correction of errors. Furthermore, Chen believes that musical literacy is much more important than listening. Therefore, she deliberately trained her pupil to read the score before developing the student’s musical ear. In contrast, Iris and AC had an opposite opinion about the importance of listening. Iris’s account can stand for both.

When I played the piano with other instrumentalists, initially, I felt distracted and a sense of not being in control. However, gradually, I developed the ability to listen to the music
and play the piano simultaneously. I found that I more actively engaged with the music, which benefits my personal musical development. Therefore, I encourage my pupils to listen to what they are playing and also develop their ability to consciously integrate different musical elements when they are playing. (IN2, Iris)

9.3 Teaching challenges and strategies of response

With regard to the biggest teaching challenges, all the participant teachers struggled with two main issues: their pupils’ negative learning attitude and low motivation to learn the piano. In this section, I explore how these participants coped with these two issues.

9.3.1 Responses to pupils’ negative learning attitudes

Generally speaking, two different reasons led to the students’ negative learning attitude. I shall consider these in turn, along with the different responses of the participant teachers.

First, there are the students who are not interested in learning the piano but cannot persuade their parents to stop the lessons.

This pupil stood in front of the music school and refused to go to the music room. I tried to persuade him in a friendly way to go to the music room but in vain, so I pulled his arms to get him in. At that moment, he bit my hand, which really annoyed me. I gave up fighting with him and decided to wait for him in the music room. The room has a big window so that I could observe him from inside. He did not come into the room until ten minuets before his mother came. I did not feel guilty about this situation. It was not my problem. (IN1, Melody)
Melody maintained a firm attitude towards this pupil, and believed that it is not necessary for piano teachers to force a student to learn. Chen met a similar situation. Luckily, she solved this problem through the arrival of the parents.

Rocket has his piano lesson around 4.30 pm. when his parents are not at home. One day, he locked himself in his room refusing to have a piano lesson. Although I attempted to negotiate with him, it did not work. Unexpectedly, his mother came home. His mother appeased the boy and promised that he could stop after one year. (IN2, Chen)

Chen explained that her strategy for meeting such resistance was to couple threats with promises. She refused to give in to the pupil because, although the student was unwilling to have a lesson, he could still learn something as long as he continued playing the piano. However, Chen tried to gain support from the parent, believing that parental support is a crucial component of effective piano lessons.

Iris and AC demonstrated a different reaction.

I can understand these students’ feelings. They have no choice and are unable to persuade their parents. However, rather than complaining about this situation, it is better to face the reality and try to take advantage of it, telling the pupil that they should not waste their time and their parents’ money. It is kind of developing their sense of responsibility. It is a miniature of real life. Sometimes, I might spend half a lesson trying to impart this attitude to them, because I believe that it has profound importance for their later life, and is something which has not been sufficiently addressed in school education. (IN2, Iris)

Rather then viewing herself as simply a piano teacher, Iris’s inclination was to educate her pupil to cultivate a positive attitude that seeks actively to cope with difficulties, while at the same time showing her empathy. AC’s attitude was
similar. The significant difference was that AC more actively communicated with the parents of her pupils. She expected that she could have a role as a negotiator between her pupil and the parents.

The second cause of a negative attitude in students has to do with some significant life event encountered by them that seriously affected their ability to concentrate. Iris faced such a situation.

During the lesson, I asked my pupil to play again after I gave the feedback. Instead of playing the piano, my pupil was silently sitting there. I felt odd and uncertain about what was happening, and then attempted to understand what was wrong with her. Suddenly, she started crying. She told me that her parents were getting divorced and she felt sad and helpless. All I could do was to listen to her and create a space for her to release her emotion. (IN1, Iris)

AC explained further that piano teachers might be the adult closer to the child because trust has been built thorough the one-to-one relationship. In such a situation, the piano teacher should give priority to helping students to face their problems, even though these problems do not relate to what they are learning.

All of life can be found in music, and music is also an expression of people’s feelings or thinking. If I teach music, I cannot say about a student’s problems, that ‘It is not my business’. (IN1, AC)

On the other side, for Lisa and Sabina, their primary focus was on continuing the lesson, not in addressing their student’s emotion that prevented them from playing.

Sometimes, I found that my pupil’s emotion was so bad that I had to give him/her five or ten minutes to relieve their sadness. If I did not do so, I could not teach effectively.
However, it would not be too long. Otherwise, progress would be affected, which I am unhappy to accept. (IN2, Lisa)

If I notice that my pupil’s emotion seriously affects their learning, I may stop my teaching for about five or ten minutes to understand why they are not happy, but it would not be long. (IN2, Sabina)

9.3.2 Responses to low motivation

All the participants agreed that the biggest teaching challenge was that their pupils have low motivation to learn, which leads to insufficient practice and slow progress. The reasons why pupils do not like to practise the piano included: (1) students have too many distracting choices; (2) they are lazy; (3) their timetable is too full to have time and energy to practise; (4) they do not have time management skills; (5) they are unable to deal with advanced performing techniques. On the other hand, there are three explanations for why pupils do practise the piano: (1) the students have their own sense of responsibility; (2) the parents actively involve themselves or monitor the child’s learning; (3) the students have a clear purpose, such as participating in a concert.

The teachers adopted different strategies in response to pupils’ low motivation for practice. The most commonly used strategies were to require parents’ cooperation at home during the week, and to allow pupils to practise more in their lessons. There were differences in the responses corresponding to the three teacher groups. First, the teachers in group A (Lisa, Sabina, Chen)
mainly focused on three tactics: setting a specific learning goal; using a reward system; and selecting interesting or appropriate tutorial books.

When I teach young children, I tend to choose material with colourful printing. For teenage or adult learners, relaxing music or popular songs are good options, because these are easier to play without requiring plenty of practice, which makes learning more enjoyable. (IN1, Chen)

Teachers in group B (Melody and Lee) attempted to develop their learning ability to practise effectively at home and teach them how to do time management.

Normally, I will tell my student how to practise effectively when I introduce a new piece of music. If my young pupil did not do enough practice, rather than assigning a new song, I will ask them to practise during lessons and monitor them to improve their practising skills. (IN2, Lee)

I never expect that my pupils can practise every day. I believe that four or five time a week and 15 or 25 minutes per session should be enough for them to do their homework. If they say, that ‘I am too busy to practise’, I would retort, ‘Do you have time to watch the TV or to play an on-line game? If you do, I cannot believe that you were too busy to practise. You should plan your time better.’ (IN2, Melody)

Group C (Iris, AC) concentrated more on reminding their pupils of the importance of taking responsibility. They were also flexible about standards of evaluation, depending on the stage of learning.

Sometimes, I noticed that students did not play their homework very well. In the first week, I might lower my standard a little and then encourage them to practise more, while I would observe whether they made progress in the following weeks. If this progress continued for a whole month, I would adjust my standard back to normal and become stricter. If I keep a high standard all the time, students may tend to give up too easily.
However, if I ignore their laziness, it has a negative impact on their learning, so being flexible is very important. (IN2, Iris)

AC also attempted to eliminate pupils’ dislike of playing in order to actively motivate her pupils, as was noted earlier.

9.3.3  Personal teaching challenges

In the previous sections, I have explored common teaching challenges seen in the observed lessons. Again, the focus is shifted this time, to widen the time span by looking at and trying to understand the individual participants’ attitudes towards what each one sees as the major teaching difficulties in their professional career as a whole. Table 9.1 in the left-hand column shows the biggest teaching problem selected by each participant. The central column shows the people who, the participants believed, are key to solving these issues. The results in this column are based on my perception of what emerges from the complete file of information supplied by each participant. The teachers’ attitudes are ranked according to their willingness to try to solve the problem.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biggest teaching challenges</th>
<th>Whose responsibility?</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil's dropout (past)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (now)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None identified</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>AC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching young learners (past)</td>
<td>Teacher and pupils</td>
<td>Iris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative learning attitude (now)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient practice</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient practice</td>
<td>Students and parent</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil's incomprehension</td>
<td>Students and parent</td>
<td>Sabina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil's low motivation to learn</td>
<td>Students and parent</td>
<td>Chen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9.1: Teachers’ attitude towards teaching challenges

Lisa had suffered from pupil dropout five years ago. This unsuccessful teaching experience pushed her to reflect on her own practice, and then she changed her teaching style. The increasing number of students that resulted reinforces her teaching confidence and beliefs. Currently, in order to achieve her teaching target of musical achievement, Lisa has developed her professional knowledge to arrange suitable graded examinations or competitions for her students.

Yeh: Does every one of your students pass graded examinations or win competitions?

Lisa: Of course not. However, there are plenty of examinations or competitions, and I have developed my ability to identify which one is easier or which one is more difficult. I can easily find one that my pupils can deal with. (IN2, Lisa)
AC believed that she had not met her biggest teaching difficulty yet, because each teaching challenge was simply another event. This event only reflected the teacher’s insufficient competence or inappropriate teaching attitude. As long as teachers themselves find out how to improve their professional competence or adjust their own viewpoint, nothing cannot be worked out.

Iris had been afraid of teaching young children. However, she solved this issue by asking help from others, reading more relevant books, and through her increasing experience of life.

I did not know how to talk to young children and let them understand what I am saying. I had asked for help from my friends who taught in a kindergarten and also read some books. At that time, my sister had a young daughter and sometimes I needed to take care of this young child. Gradually, I discovered a way of communicating with young children. Finally, I solved my problem by bringing these new skills into my practice. (IN2, Iris)

Currently, Iris views students’ negative learning attitude as her toughest teaching challenge. She has tried to make a contribution to educating her pupils to cultivate a positive learning attitude, while realizing that the impact of a piano teacher might not be significant.

About 10 years ago, I had been struggling with students’ negative learning attitude and slow progress. However, I realized that it was not an isolated phenomenon; it was becoming more and more common. Having reflected on the impact a piano teacher can have on a student’s life, I decided to place more attention on my learners’ attitude rather than their musical achievement. (IN2, Iris)
For Melody, Lee and Sabina, the biggest teaching challenge was students’ insufficient practice and the consequence, slow progress, which has been reported in the preceding section. These teachers emphasized that their pupils and the parents should solve this issue at home. What they can do is to be patient and allow their pupils to practise during a lesson. Sabina noted particularly that sometimes her pupils could not understand her explanation. Up to the date of the interview, her approach was simply to do nothing but wait for students themselves to solve learning problems on their own.

Chen has been a piano teacher for almost twenty years. She found that students, no matter whether they were sent by their parents or not, usually want to give up piano after 2 or 3 years’ learning. Chen reflected on this discovery and believed that students do not have enough motivation to cope with the increasingly difficult performing techniques. In the light of this, she believed that parents play an important role in successful piano learning, because parents’ insistence enables learners to continue their piano learning.

Overall, participants’ attitudes towards teaching challenges could be roughly divided into two categories. One group of teachers tended to solve their problems from their side, such as improving their own practice or reflecting on their teaching purpose. On the other hand, four of the seven teachers seldom reflected on their teaching and believed that pupils and parents were the people in charge rather than themselves.
9.4 Conclusion

I approached the teachers’ reflection from two different perspectives, namely, their reflection on observed lessons and on current practice, and how they coped with their past teaching challenges. Consequently, I have explored the relationships between what they chose to focus on in their reflections, and their corresponding responses to their teaching difficulties. Most of these teachers focused on their pupil’s performing errors and then used theoretical explanation and asked for more repetitive practice. Only a few participants noticed students’ learning behaviours and emotional reactions. As for teaching challenges, students’ insufficient practice and low motivation to learn the piano were most often mentioned. Based on the analysis of how they responded to these two issues, two unacknowledged assumptions emerged concerning whose responsibility the learning difficulties should be: teachers themselves or the pupil and their parents. From this result, teachers’ own attitudes towards problem-solving were identified. In the discussion chapter, I will draw together these three main themes in my finding chapters (teachers’ beliefs about good teaching, the perception of creativity in piano teaching, teachers’ attitudes toward teaching challenges) and my literature review to explore the potential for creativity in one-to-one piano lessons.
10.1 Teachers’ beliefs and their professional practice

Attitude toward teaching challenges:
Positive, active, and reflective

Group B
Lee
Group C
Iris
AC
Group D
Group A
Chen
Sabina

Performance-oriented
Melody
Learner-oriented

Rigid concept of creativity
Flexible definition of creativity

Mainly rely on their own learning experience

Figure 10.1: Model of the potential for creativity in piano teaching

Having explored the participants’ previous learning experiences, teaching beliefs, and practice, and their reflection on teaching challenges, I have created a model to summarise the research findings. In figure 10.1, the horizontal axis symbolises participants’ beliefs in two respects: good piano teaching purpose (above) and their perception of creativity (below). The corresponding relationship between these two results has been reported in...
chapter 8.2. The vertical axis indicates the teachers’ attitude towards their teaching challenges. Rather than categorize my participants under one fixed label, I have carefully positioned them higher and lower, further to the right or the left on the grid to display the spectrum of their relative positions. Representing their variety in this way can enrich our understanding of this teaching context.

In the following section, I discuss three teacher groups that I have identified in my findings chapters and one group which I had not found in my study but may potentially be identified by other research. I also explore significant points emerging from my findings in conjunction with my literature review.

10.1.1 Teacher group A

My participants’ attitudes towards teaching purposes can fit into the two categories which were noted by Fleming (2011): learning in the arts and learning through the arts. Teacher groups A and B can be categorized as prioritising ‘learning in the arts’, because they aimed at imparting to their pupils their musical knowledge of or skills in performing Western classical music. In other words, these teachers appeared to view themselves as experienced members of a specific cultural community. Therefore, teacher groups A and B mainly required learners to copy a demonstration of technique or performance, and then they critiqued their students’ performance. Mills (2006) has highlighted two teaching priorities that student teachers both in the UK and in
Australia as regard essential: musical literacy and accuracy of performance.

This phenomenon can be seen in teacher groups A and B, and indeed in their case musical interpretation is normally addressed only after accuracy of musical reproduction of the printed score has been achieved.

Due to their teaching focus, these participants included in their teaching almost no listening developmental activity such as playing by ear, playing from memory, improvisation, even though these were identified as crucial abilities if learners were to reach their full potential as musicians (McPherson et al., 2012). For over two decades, instrumental lessons have also been criticised for the predominance of technical mastery and musical literacy over listening skills (Priest, 1989), because it has resulted in students giving up music learning. In my study, most participants’ teaching in fact heavily emphasised the accuracy of musical literacy rather than focusing on technical issues, largely because the learners in this study did not belong to the advanced level, and it was too early to address students’ performing techniques.

When it comes to instrumental education, the master–apprentice teaching style was identified in the literature as the most commonly adopted. The master–apprentice style requires learners to copy teachers’ demonstration of technique or performance (Jørgensen, 2000). The advantage of teachers’ modelling is to help learners to create an internal model that will enable them to develop their own musical mental representation of the piece (Hallam, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2007). However, as shown in chapter 6, the participant
teachers seldom demonstrated to their learners. Thus, the participant students of teacher group A could not notice when notes were played wrongly, and heavily depended on the teachers’ immediate corrections. Therefore, the students of teacher group A experienced playing music almost as a sight-reading exercise. Without the sense of melody in their mind, they were, as McPherson (2001) described, deaf to what they were trying to play. As a result, these learners’ attitude tended to be negative and passive towards music learning.

Another feature of teacher group A is that they place more emphasis on learners’ sufficient practice, external rewards, and parental support. The importance of sufficient practice has been reported in the literature review, such as for producing mechanical automaticity (Hallam, 2012a; Young et al., 2003). Increased automaticity allows learners to free their energy to address musical interpretation. This may be the reason why teachers from group A focus on correction of error first. However, this narrow focus creates a problem, because this teaching style treats piano playing as mechanical reproduction: a learner plays what is read on the score and teachers mainly take the role of checking whether learners are playing the score correctly, which may lead to learners being deaf to music. Consequently, the learners cannot enjoy the playing, and then lack the motivation to practise. In such a situation, parental support, (such as insistence on continuing the lessons or monitoring at home), which teachers look to in order to keep their students practising, does not
touch the fundamental problem of the failure of the teachers to help their students appreciate the music as music. Gradually, a model of passive learning, which is defined by Hallam and Bautista (2012b) as an unquestioning acceptance of rigid methods, came to accompany this teaching style. Students may keep their piano lessons going, but they cannot enjoy the process and simply wait to drop out.

10.1.2 Teacher group B

Although teacher groups A and B have some common features and both mainly teach for musical achievement, there are some differences that it is worthwhile to point out. First, the participants of teacher group B considered students’ enjoyment of music more did than teacher group A. In other words, teacher group B attempted to find a balance between transmitting subject knowledge and motivating their learners. Therefore, the teaching not only identified learners’ problems but also provided ‘on-going support’ (Hallam, 2012a). Instead of focusing primarily on correction of errors, teacher group B provided their learners with more diverse practising methods and time management strategies. As the learners’ expertise developed, they appeared to demonstrate a higher level of commitment to music, even though they were sent to learn the piano by their parents and were not there as a result of their own choosing. This is the reason why I divided these five participants into two teacher groups.
Teacher group B combined different teaching methods to enhance students’ learning and also paid more attention to learners’ listening ability by requiring students to differentiate different versions demonstrated by the teacher. However, as far as musical interpretation was concerned, teacher groups A and B both tended to use verbal instruction to shape their students’ interpretation rather than develop learners’ own musical understanding of a piece of music. Without this understanding, the learners had to rely on their teachers to tell them how to make music fit the musical conventions of a specific period. Teachers appear to see themselves first and foremost as experienced member of a specific cultural community (Burwell, 2013; Lehmann et al., 2007). Therefore, they taught musical interpretation by requiring their students to copy how they manipulated the musical elements listed by Sloboda (1993) in his definition of musical expression as a combination of slight fluctuations in duration, loudness, pitch and timbre. Musical interpretation has consequently nothing to do with one’s own personal expression but with simply mechanically following a cultural convention.

Before the late 19th century, learners in the master–apprentice tradition used to develop their musical language by closely working with a master in order to become familiar with the underlying rules. The current form of one-to-one learning maintains the traditional setting, with learners imitating the modeling of a master who has a high level of expertise (Burwell, 2013). The difference, as noted in Chapter Two, is that the learning forms has shifted from creating
music to competence of performance (Gellrich & Sundin, 1993). For this reason, the master–apprentice teaching style is often viewed unfavorably.

The Suzuki approach of learning by ear, however, shows what can still be achieved with this teaching style. He believes that students can cultivate their knowledge of appropriate musical interpretation through punctiliously copying their teachers’ modelling, including interpretation elements such as phrasing and dynamics. Through constant repetition of what they have learned, students come to internalise the music (Suzuki, 1993). This concept of internalisation of what is learned, not simply imitation of teachers’ modelling, is the crucial beneficial element that lies behind the master–apprentice teaching approach. Even then, however, according to my study, there are two areas of weakness in applying this teaching approach that have to be guarded against.

The first areas relates to the teachers’ role of demonstrating their expertise, acting as a master whom the learner will imitate. Suzuki has noted that the quality of modelling is very important, that is, that the students should be sufficiently exposed to the model; therefore he encourages learners to repeatedly listen to the CD of the music at home. However, in my study, participant teachers were the only copying source for the students, and most participant teachers did not model enough for their students to imitate the appropriate technique and musical interpretation. Furthermore, as far as internalisation was concerned, the students did not have enough time or practice to internalise the music. The teachers would assign a new piece of
music when they thought that their learners could play the music accurately and had roughly mastered the proper technique, because they were afraid that their students felt bored and that parents would think their child was not moving forward in their learning. Without sufficient modelling and proper internalisation, these instrumental teachers cannot properly be regarded as masters; at best, teachers were acting more like instructors (group B) or monitors of errors (group A) rather than masters.

The second area where questions arise concerns adopting the master–apprentice teaching style at the level of beginners or young children. It is worthwhile to discuss Iris’s unsuccessful learning experience here. Iris’s Korean teacher was recognised as a talented performer. She asked Iris (ten years old) to carefully observe and imitate her modelling. However, Iris misunderstood her teacher’s physical movement and learned that to perform forte meant playing with great force, which led to her serious hand injury later and changed her musical career. In one way, the Korean teacher did have sufficient expertise and her teaching style could be evaluated as a master–apprentice approach. The problem was that Iris, as a ten-year-old learner, needed more support and guidance from her teacher about how to play, rather than being asked to imitate what she saw. This implies that the master–apprentice teaching approach may be effective at the advanced level, but may not be adequate at the level of the beginner or young child. When teaching these inexperienced learners, instrumental teachers should be sensitive to the
gap between the learners’ present level of competence and the level of what is being taught, and then gently lead them to move forwards, not simply being a model in front of their learners and expecting that learners can follow their path.

Another aspect of the master–apprentice teaching style that is problematic is pointed out by Young, Burwell, and Pickup (2003). The master–apprentice teaching style is a one-way communication from teacher to student, which leads to students simply imitating their teachers. In contrast, Lehmann et al. (2007) proposed the mentor–friend model, indicating a greater exchange between the two. These researchers further explained:

This teaching style may allow teachers to be more responsive to the individual needs of the students. Elements of the mentor–friend model allow for greater contribution on the part of students and, as a result, stronger feelings of autonomy. (Lehmann et al., 2007, p. 189)

This kind of dichotomy between the master–apprentice approach and the mentor–friend approach may imply the master–apprentice teaching style is an inappropriate teaching method, and it is better for instrumental teachers to adopt the mentor–friend model. It cannot be denied that some instrumental teachers tend to adopt a one-way-communication teaching style. However, the aim of the master–apprentice tradition was not limited to merely encouraging the students’ imitation but involved the whole process of cultural internalisation. This outcome is not an inevitable consequence of the master–apprentice relationship, and a more flexible style of communication as in the mentor–
friend model, can be usefully adopted without losing the master–apprentice relationship. In any one-to-one teaching context, the power relationship between teacher and student can be observed. In the master–apprentice mode, the teacher plays the role of experienced member of the cultural community; in a mentor-friend relationship, the teacher will function as a master because of the hierarchy of knowledge. The categorisation proposed by Lehmann et al. seems to be rigid and is misleading.

The confusion in the perception of the teachers’ role because of a strict categorisation such as that of Lehmann et al. is seen in the case of Chen. The master–apprentice teaching style appeared to her as old-fashioned, and she tried to adopt a mentor–friend teaching style. Chen described herself as a mentor or friend, not a piano teacher or master. However, apart from her humour and speaking tone, it was easy to observe her authority as a teacher and the one-way communication. Thus, if the observations I have made about modelling and internalisation are taken fully into account, the master–apprentice teaching approach may be suitable at an advanced level, but it is necessary then to label the teacher-led teaching style separately in order to avoid the negative understanding of the master–apprentice teaching approach.

10.1.3 Teacher group C
Although teacher group C (Iris and AC) also aimed to develop their learners’ musical abilities, this group prioritised the learners as a whole person. This means that they also intended to develop learners’ non-musical abilities through their piano lessons, such as a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, or personal values, which can be applied in different areas of life. The two teachers intertwined subject knowledge with broader learning concepts, ‘learning through the arts’ as Fleming named it (2011). In order to achieve their teaching aims, group C teachers developed their own professional practice, showing an independent mindset, which was seldom observed in the other two teacher groups, where teachers largely copied strategies from workshops or manuals.

Three elements of their pedagogical practice made their teaching outstandingly effective. First, in their teaching Iris and AC both emphasised musical engagement, which looked beyond the level of merely reproducing the music from a musical score. They attempted to guide their learners to connect to the music they were playing by using different methods. Iris explained the title of the music, and AC made up an amusing story with her pupil, whereby they could further evoke students’ responses or emotions. This process seemed to enable their learners to make sense of what they played and then to motivate themselves. Both believed that this kind of learning process could make a profound impact on their learners, which made their teaching meaningful.
Second, these two teachers seldom gave a plain verbal instruction when trying to teach their students how to play the piano expressively. Rather, they encouraged students to pay more attention to musical phrasing and articulation and guided their students to listen to the first three of the five musical elements named by Mursell (1932): dynamic and qualities of tone, the sequencing of tonal patterns into melodies, and the perception of rhythm. Third, Iris and AC created their own teaching materials to supplement the printed scores, because the content of tutorial books did not cover what they wanted to teach, such as the complexity of rhythm or diverse musical styles.

All the participants noted the importance of selecting a suitable repertoire. Among other authors making the same observation, Duke (2006) points out how an appropriate repertoire can demonstrate teachers’ expertise both in music and in teaching, because teachers need to use their professional knowledge of repertoire and the understanding of individual learners’ needs to select music which can advance learners’ ability without too many difficulties. However, leaving aside Iris and AC, most of the other participants simply chose the available tutorial books and mainly developed their teaching based on the content given, even though it might lead to learning difficulties later. Chen pointed out that her students tended to attempt to give up piano lessons after two or three years’ learning, because they could not cope with the complexity of the rhythmic content and key signatures; nevertheless, she continued to use the same repertoire. In other words, the significant gap
between the learning levels of the beginners and the intermediates was ignored. Teacher group A tended to believe that constant practice on its own could help learners to advance their levels; group B attempted to provide different practising methods, while group C actively prevented these issues happening in the early stages by introducing their own materials.

The most significant difference between teacher group C and the other two groups was that in group C the teacher–student relationship appeared closer. This does not mean that group C treated their pupils as friends; in fact, the hierarchy of teachers’ authority could easily be identified. The interaction between teacher and learner was more frequent, whether relating to musical learning or individuals’ daily life. They were sensitive to the learners and showed empathy. According to my observation, the pupils taught by group C were more willing to express their own thoughts than those taught by groups A and B. Unlike Melody in group B, who created a dynamic teaching style by using dramatic body movement and her sense of humour, teachers in group C tended to maintain a more moderate attitude and teaching style, but demonstrated their care of their pupils.

Interestingly, AC (group C) believed that she could gradually convey her own personal values more clearly to her pupils in this close one-to-one relationship. In such a perspective, the master–apprentice approach can be seen as effectively working, but manifested in the transmission of the teachers’ own
cultural values and not limited to transmission of technical skills of performance.

10.1.4 Teacher group D

None of my participants was located in teacher group D, the classification for teachers who mainly relied on their own learning experience and adopted an open-minded attitude towards creativity. The most probable explanation for this may be that all participants were trained in the tradition of Western classical music. They were expected to enable their learners to read music and play the music on the keyboard, not to improvise or compose a new melody. Teachers who had been trained to focus on performing skills and less on development of the habit of reflecting on practice are less likely to think from the perspective of learners. Teachers who are jazz or folk players, however, may be more likely to be located in this group D, because their training more emphasises personal creativity, rather than adhering strictly to a set form. However, this assumption needs to be researched further to discover whether or not there is a relationship between the learning approaches of different musical styles and teachers’ beliefs about good teaching, or simply varies by different individuals. Furthermore, based on my participants, the two horizontal axes of figure 10.1 can be seen as one, because there was a corresponding relationship between participants’ beliefs about good teaching and their perception of creativity. Nevertheless, it can not be denied that these two beliefs may not be necessarily equivalent, which also needs to be further addressed in future research.
10.1.5 Graded music examinations

According to Mills (2006), conservatoire students whom she observed in the UK and who themselves did some teaching outside college hours devoted their time simply to teaching students to pass graded examinations. It appears that this teaching purpose is connected to their inexperience as teachers, so they tended to duplicate their own successful learning experience. However, to judge by two of my participants (Lisa, Sabina), who also aim for learners’ examination success, this tendency appears to be associated with the students’ and their parents’ need of obtaining public recognition, and also with the level of the teachers’ own confidence as professionals.

Concerning the influence of pupils’ attendance at these musical events, Davidson (1999) has pointed out that the teaching may be limited to the content of musical examinations. Chen supported this view.

If my pupils want to pass graded musical examinations, I have to organise my lessons carefully. I should include musical knowledge, aural training, and two pieces of music with advanced performance techniques in order to enable my pupils to meet the criteria set by the musical organisation. Thus, I cannot teach freely and my students learn under this pressure. (IN1, Chen)

On the other hand, this limitation may have a positive effect on students who have low learning motivation. As Iris noted:

Initially, I did not like the idea of encouraging my pupils to attend any graded musical examination, because it should not become a learning purpose. However, students’ learning attitude was gradually getting worse, and they lacked motivation to progress. I
found that once they participated in an examination, at least they have to play two pieces of music well, which may develop a sense of achievement to motivate them to learn more in the end. (IN1, Iris)

Rather than viewing the requirements of the examination as an acceptable bottom line, AC considered it a good opportunity for students to learn how to cope with the stress. In the case of these two piano teachers, musical graded examinations benefit their teaching in different ways rather than restricting them.

As for teaching purpose, only Melody’s case needs further explanation. Overall, Melody’s teaching aim was to enable her pupils to enjoy piano learning. However, she had a different expectation for the participant pupil A-Woo. Melody actively arranged musical competitions for him, because she thought that this student showed musical talent.

I believe that A-Woo is my best pupil to win musical competitions, and I aim for that. (IN2, Melody)

Initially, I could not totally agree with Melody’s teaching attitude. However, A-Woo himself and his parents’ attitude towards participating in musical competitions led me to interpret this attitude from a different perspective. Having had an informal short talk with A-Woo’s mother, who was waiting for A-Woo outside the piano room, I realised the importance of knowing how good their child was for reassuring the parents that they were right to send their child to learn the piano. Carefully reviewing the video, I found that A-Woo’s facial expression and his response demonstrated his excitement when Melody
asked him to attend a competition. In Melody’s case, the meaningfulness of musical examination or competition is built on the sense of achievement, which drives teachers, pupils, and parents to keep going.

10.2 Teachers’ effectiveness at the beginner / amateur level

Having discussed the teachers’ beliefs and their practice, I now discuss their teaching roles from the perspective of enhancing learners’ musical development and how, with that end in view, these teachers tried to improve their professional teaching. As mentioned in my literature review, the research studies addressing teachers’ effectiveness often took place in higher education or in an advanced setting. In the following section, the focus will be on the beginner level or primary school age learners.
Three different roles the participants played in their teaching were as monitor, instructor, and mentor. I do not assign each of these teacher groups to one of the three categories. Instead, I attempt to show how each teacher group incorporated in different degrees all three roles in their practice.

10.2.1 Teachers as monitors

All participants diagnosed their pupils’ problems, functioning as monitors, or what Gifford names as critics (Gifford, 1993). This researcher believes that teachers as models and upholders of certain standards of performance have the appropriate knowledge and the capacity to respond to or evaluate students’ musical performance. Such evaluation is a crucial component of effective teaching, but it should not be the sole part. The teachers in my study tended to point out the problem without providing supportive teaching strategies. This was true of the teachers in all the groups, but those in group A did so most predominantly. This implies that the teachers as monitors did not realise their responsibility also to improve the pupils' learning. As a consequence, the teaching strategy commonly used to deal with errors was to require the learners to practise methodically and repeatedly before progressing to the next stage. It was assumed that the learners could solve the problems by practising on their own, and that parents could monitor children at home. Consequently, less variety of teaching strategy was employed and most of the teachers highlighted the importance of maintaining patience because of the slowness of this process of corrections. Teacher group A relied on their immediate intuition.
in order to deal with teaching problems, rather than having a long-term plan, and only occasionally adjusted their teaching according to their teaching experience. The impact of their own positive learning experience shaped these teachers’ beliefs concerning good piano lessons. However, the connection between teaching beliefs and the practice appeared to be weak, and the teachers in group A rarely reflected on their teaching. In other words, although having themselves received positive teaching, group A seldom brought that experience to benefit their students.

10.2.2 Teachers as instructors

The role of instructor means that the participants not only measured and monitored the students’ performance, but also provided support to help them to solve problems. According to Swanwick (2003), a crucial feature of instruction is that teachers have pre-specification of performance objectives in their mind, and the teaching approach tends to be rational and linear. Teacher groups A and B predominantly taught by using written marks on the score, highlighting or adding comments or reminders, and verbal correction, and failed to address listening skills. Teacher group B, however, brought in additional teaching strategies found in books or workshops, but piecemeal, without radically changing their methodology. It was clear that teachers in group B were more affected by their own learning experience, replicating their own previous teachers’ instruction (Haddon, 2009). It is worth mentioning that the impact of the teachers’ previous learning experience seemed to transmit to
the next generation no matter whether it was positive or negative. For example, two participants in teacher group B had suffered from performance anxiety and could not perform in public, but their own piano teacher could not help them to cope with this issue. When the teachers became piano teachers themselves, they were not able to provide a solution to help their learners, but simply tried to enhance their confidence by giving verbal encouragement, repeating the pattern of their own learnt experience. Furthermore, the learning experience of groups A and B did not address listening skills, and as a result, their own students similarly lacked instruction in listening development. The teachers did not appear to be aware of the impact that this had on their students. These various limitations and failures in instruction may be the reason why researchers have criticised instrumental education generally as an isolated world, which not only maintains the Western classical music convention without innovation, but also replicates teaching routines and problems (Hallam, 2012a).

10.2.3 Teachers as mentors

According to Garvey (2014), a mentor helps their mentees to make their own decisions by fostering confidence and encouraging independence. Creech and Gaunt (2012) note the primary importance of trust and commitment on the part of the mentee. Based on these definitions, I consider that teacher group C not only played the roles of monitor and instructor but also of mentor. Although the teaching style observed in group C was still teacher-led, their sensitivity and
empathy led them to centre on their learners. Rather than considering teaching as one-way communication, the teachers in group C were actively engaged with the students’ learning, and viewed the students as whole persons. Gaunt (2008) has pointed out that piano and vocal teachers tend to address subject knowledge without attempting to connect the learning experience to other learning. This phenomenon was observed in teacher groups A and B, but not in group C. The teachers in group C reflected on their teaching beyond the impact of just piano lessons, which means they also attempted to understand their pupils’ other learning experience. Furthermore, the teachers used their understanding of an individual wisely to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching. Lehmann et al. (2007) note how the one-to-one learning environment enables teachers to be more responsive to the individual’s needs than does group teaching. However, according to my study, this statement seemed to be evidenced only in teacher group C. I agree with Carr (2003) that teachers need more than basic knowledge of their subject. They do need not only (1) their own subject knowledge; they also need (2) contextual knowledge to do with the external circumstances that condition the pupils’ lives and their music learning, and to do with the specific teaching environment, for example, whether in the home or an educational institution, and (3) they need to develop an empathy with their pupil that will enable them to see things from the pupil’s perspective, and so offer them appropriate guidance and support. This complexity of teachers’ thinking and approach to their work was only demonstrated in the case of the teachers in group C.
Compared to teacher groups A and B, teachers in group C appeared to demonstrate higher ability to reflect on their learning and teaching experiences and apply this reflection to improve their practice. This is in accordance with the notion that reflection on practice is a sign of a teacher’s active engagement in their student’s learning (Gaunt, 2008). Furthermore, teachers in group C not only reflected on current teaching, but also on the long-term impact on students themselves of the whole experience of having piano lessons. In Gaunt’s research (2008), most of the teachers seldom reflected on their own practice; a small number stated explicitly that they did not believe that reflection on teaching could help them to improve their practice. In contrast, for teachers in my group C, reflection seemed to be an important part of their routine as an on-going process, not just as end of lesson paper work. Allsup (2003) has mentioned that teachers who tend to adopt a mentor teaching style may meet a challenge to their earlier preconceptions and practices, and to the understanding of teaching based on pedagogic hierarchy and authority. This may be the reason why teachers in group C have a habit of reflecting, because their teaching style may result in teaching challenges they had not previously encountered. In the second interview, Iris described what she learned from her reflections on her teaching:

I was keen to find out solutions, such as through reading or asking other professionals, and I felt frustrated if I could not come up with a good idea to improve my teaching. Gradually, I realised that for some cases, the only thing I needed to do was put the issue aside and calm myself down. Sometimes, to know why I need the answer is much more important than to look where the answer is. (IN2, Iris)
Iris’s statement was at an intellectually more sophisticated level than immediate response and strategy in a specific situation, and also indicated that her reflection did not simply occur over the time when I conducted my research. As for AC, who was in group C, she continued to share her reflections with me, even though it was two years since I had finished collecting my data. From these two cases, it would appear there are two significant elements that contribute to teachers’ effectiveness; these are sensitivity to learners and the habit of continuing reflection. Having these two abilities, the two teachers in group C tended to be more open-minded and to improve their effectiveness by changing the teaching style along with different teaching conditions, in contrast to teacher in group B who despite adding new strategies made no significant change in their teaching style.

10.3 Creativity in the context of private piano lessons

10.3.1 Teachers’ concepts of creativity

Before my data collection, I had a pre-conceived idea that piano teachers, because of the nature of their Western classical music education, would define creativity in relation to the impression of novelty or the artistic eminence of particular works or the artists who created them, such as Beethoven or Picasso. Surprisingly, all the definitions I collected were similar to the concepts of creativity used in their research by Boden (2009) and Craft (2003), which
indicate that creativity can be displayed at the personal level through emotional expression and imagination. Additionally, like Sawyer (2011), who states that creativity is a term which is used in our everyday language and appears to be easily understood but hard to define satisfactorily, the teachers in this study also found it somewhat difficult to explain what they meant by creativity, and most of them connected creativity to improvisation and composition. This result reflects the focus of most music education research relating to creativity, which is restricted to children’s musical creativity in improvisation or composition. However, when the participants were asked to give more detailed explanations, different dimensions of creativity emerged, such as flexibility, freedom, imagination, and personal expression. The teachers’ responses matched Sternberg and Lubart’s (1999) evaluative perspective, which is the production of work that is both novel and has meaning in terms of a particular convention. Unlike Williamon, Thompson, Lisboa and Wiffen (Williamon et al., 2006), who state that ‘creativity, especially in the arts, seems to be constructed as a mysterious, unknowable process’ (p.165), my participant piano teachers seldom described creativity from the perspective of process. Instead, it is viewed as an ability, as a personal characteristic, or a feature of the work produced. Only one teacher (AC) mentioned that creativity can be manifested in thinking or personal expression.
These conceptions of creativity were influenced by the teachers’ experience of learning music, and tended to be limited to their specific art form. These piano teachers seldom related their musical learning and teaching experiences to creativity, even musical creativity. This may be because most teachers were trained to be performance instrumentalists, an artistic formation which focuses on what Gellrich (1992) named reproduction. Participants’ learning experience in the Western classical music tradition led to their limited conceptions. It should be noted that this separation in people’s minds between Western classical music and creativity may be unaffected by the particular person’s creative experience in music, in improvisation or composition, for example. In this study, Lisa, was the only teacher who explored music in a improvisatory way. For her as a piano teacher, however, this kind of creative experience and knowledge of jazz and improvisation had no connection to her teaching. The main point here is that she believed that what she was aiming for was for is inculcating Western classical music, so that conventional transmission becomes the only possibility. This result accords with Crow’s research (2008).

10.3.2 Possibility of creativity in this teaching context

Most participants’ learning experiences occurred in advanced music training programmes (i.e., in college), in which the focus is mainly on conservatoire and conventional teaching styles (Burwell, 2013) and technical mastery. This
experience as an advanced learner may not be useful when teachers teach
beginners or young learners. Consequently, in order to close the gap between
their advanced learning experience and experience of teaching beginners,
these teachers have to develop new teaching strategies based on their own
teaching experience or other kinds of learning experience. However, it is
precisely these experiences which limit the teachers’ notion of creativity. All my
participants labelled the use of metaphor and storytelling as creative teaching.

Four teachers (Melody, Lee, Chen, Sabina) simply described teaching
approaches that are not common in the conservatoire tradition as creative
teaching, such as the use of visual aids and language to illustrate rhythm. Here,
creativity is defined by the relative originality of the individuals, not the
evaluation of the outcome.

Three different purposes for using creative teaching have been identified in my
observation of the participant teachers and what they said in interview: (1) for
enhancing students’ learning; (2) for dynamic teaching interaction; (3) for
developing teaching effectiveness. Clearly, most participants did not aim their
teaching in order to evoke learners’ own creativity, but viewed creative
teaching as a beneficial means. In my research context of beginners and early
learners, learning the piano mainly addressed performance abilities, such as
musical literacy and how to produce the corresponding notes on the keyboard,
so there appeared to be no room for students to explore their own musical
ideas. Thus, most participants believed that Western classical music style was
incompatible with developing creativity in teaching. This belief in the separation between performance and creative learning, such as acquiring the ability to improvise, limits instrumental learners’ capacity to generate their own musical ideas, as Gellrich (1993) and Odam found (1995).

Three participant teachers mentioned that, in order to enrich their teaching, they drew on creative activities from other musical education approaches such as the Orff approach. As instance of such activities, participants drew attention to their own employment of rhythmic language, their encouraging of the pupil to creating melodic variation, or to add a brief phrase at the end of a piece of music. The teachers had attended workshops held by the Orff organisation, with the specific purpose of increasing their range of teaching strategies. However, when I put together their practice and their reflection diary, it was clear that these teacher were simply picking out and adopting teaching strategies that they saw could be useful in pursuing teaching goals within their own conception or philosophy of music teaching, without engaging at a deeper level with the different concept that underpinned and informed the Orff approach. Hence, these participants’ practice still tended to be of a ‘conservatoire style’.

In contrast, teacher group C believed that creativity could be approached from the angle of an individual’s thinking process or positive learning attitude. In addition, the teachers prioritised the developing of learners’ non-musical abilities such as self-regulation or a sense of responsibility. This teaching
emphasis focused on developing students’ learning skills rather than performance skills. It appears that the teaching orientation of group C was closer to the concept of creative learning as defined by Sefton-Green (2008). Because of their more open-minded attitude and learner-centred teaching style, there appeared to be a higher possibility of discovering the encouragement of creativity in this teaching context. Teachers in group C, however, pointed out two limitations to doing so, both with various facets.

First, as many researchers have noted, the dynamic, collective, and collaborative teacher–student interaction plays a crucial role in developing creativity in an educational context (Littleton, Rojas-Drummond, & Miell, 2008; Sawyer, 2011). In other words, teaching and learning, to operate successfully, is a dialectical interaction. However, according to some participant teachers, pupils tended to be simply obedient to what adults said, and reacted mechanically to instruction. In such a situation, teachers had to teach in a monotonous way: listening to their pupil’s performance and then giving feedback. As a result, teachers in this situation appeared to lack the motivation to enrich their teaching methods. These failures in both teachers and pupils, seem to me to be a consequence of two contextual challenges which my participant teachers faced. One relates to the East Asian educational background, and the other is about the students’ low motivation to learn. Asian education still preserves, often in subtle ways, the influence of Confucian philosophy and mindset, as I noted in my Introduction chapter. Consequently,
most students in Taiwan may not be encouraged to develop and express their own thoughts. These students follow their teachers’ instruction without challenging what they have been taught. This style of learning may not be easily changed in the one-to-one learning environment. This links into the second contextual challenge. Four out of seven participant students were required to learn the piano by their parents; the students obeyed, but as a result their learning motivation tended to be low. In such a situation, it is less likely that the learners will be interested in engaging with the piano teacher.

The second limitation relating to creativity in this teaching context concerns students’ imitation and practice. As mentioned in my literature review, Eastern cultural philosophy tends to believe that artistic creativity is based on the emulation of a master and also on cultural internalisation through a great deal of practice (Matsunobu, 2011; Wang & King, 2008). Imitation is a way of learning; the significant point here is that the finer performance skills are dependent on technical mastery, which is only obtained through practice. This tension is the reason why most participant teachers stressed that, without mastering the technical part of performance, musical interpretation or personal expression could not be addressed. But faced with the low motivation of their students, all they could concentrate on was repetition of basic technical skills. The result was the one-dimensional instruction which is often criticised by academic researchers (Mcpherson & Davidson, 2002; Priest, 1989). Iris, in teacher group C, was typical of other teachers in being aware of why students
failed to practise sufficiently and at the same time, the importance of practice if the students were to gain performance skills; but she felt trapped by the lack of a clear solution to the problem.

More and more parents hope that their children can learn music happily without any stress. The parents emphasise that they view learning the piano as a hobby to balance the academic pressure on their child. Therefore, the process of learning music should be enjoyable. I totally understand the parents’ expectation. However, practice is seldom pleasant. Without putting in sufficient effort, how could students enjoy playing the piano? (IN2, Iris)

The dilemma of learning an instrument is shown clearly here. The mechanical performance skills may not be the final learning target, but they are a basic means to express personal thoughts. In order to achieve mastery of an instrument, players have to enable their cognition and muscles to cooperate together, which consumes time and energy. Most learners without strong motivation stop their learning before reaching the higher level. Whereas other approaches to music education, such as Yamaha or Kawai, can use easy-to-play instruments such as percussion or the learner’s body to develop their creativity, instrumental lessons do have limits to what can be achieved in terms of the freedom of personal expression.

The third issue is about the tension between teaching and learning. Craft et al. (2007) have identified features of what they call creative pedagogy, that is, one which aims to develop the pupil’s creativity. These include standing back in order to offer more time and space for students to explore on their own.
However, teachers in group C felt that it was a challenge to judge when was the best time to stand back, and at the same time, they were confident that they were providing enough support to their learners.

In my experience, I found that my pupils learned best when they recognised the importance of what they learned. I had tried to give the information they needed in advance, but they did not pay enough attention to it until they realised that it was important. However, my dilemma was how much should I offer to guide their learning or simply wait for the moment they needed my instruction? (IN2, Iris)

10.4 Conclusion

The structure of this discussion has three main sections. First, according to the identified characteristics of instrumental teachers and their teaching, I grouped the participants into three groups. In teacher group A, I confirmed that these teachers, like those mentioned in the literature review (3.2), aimed their teaching at musical achievement and transmitting the Western classical music tradition. They tended to put almost all their teaching effort into reading music and performing correctly. The identified features of teacher group B, enabled further discussion of the master–apprenticeship relationship in terms of teaching styles and the teacher–student relationship. In Chapter 2, the nature and history of the master–apprentice mode of learning were explored, and emulating teachers’ modelling was noted as central to this one-to-one learning environment. The teachers’ recognition of the importance of modelling was also evident in this study. Nevertheless, according to their learning and teaching experiences, it was clear that for young learners, teachers’ ability to be sensitive to their students’ learning situation is vital to determining whether the master-apprenticeship model is appropriate. Furthermore, I challenged the dichotomy between the master–apprentice and the mentor–friend approaches (Lehmann et al., 2007). I believe that teaching styles and the teacher–student
relationship should be separately discussed to avoid an inappropriate impression that a master has to adopt a teacher-led style. The features of teacher group C are seldom identified in the current literature. In this group teachers create their own material or use students’ own imagination to create the link between students’ emotions and performance. In this study, I compared my findings with the similar results reported in other studies, and also attempted to provide different interpretations to enrich the understanding of the reality of instrumental lessons.

The second part of this chapter was mainly based on the literature on the different roles of teaching, but further extended it by providing more detailed description of teachers’ practice. I have not begun with the role of the instructor, but with the monitor. The reason for this is that for some participants, their teaching was dominated by checking performing errors and seldom involving educating, so I labelled it as the monitor style. As for the instructor role, it was found that these teachers’ strategies were mainly affected by their own learning experience. My findings indicated that those teachers who had not successfully coped with their own learning difficulties, were unlikely to be able to provide effective teaching strategies when their learners encountered the same learning issues. The category of mentor is applied to teachers who view learners as whole persons. These teachers are more interested in thinking about the meaning of piano lessons from a broader and longer-term perspective, such as cultivating learners’ personal values and positive attitude through learning the piano. Participant teachers who could be categorised as mentors were more willing to collect nonverbal information from students’ behaviour and emotions, and also were more flexible in adjusting their teaching according to their observation. These teachers also tended to develop their own habit of reflecting on their teaching. Most importantly, in my view, they were not simply trying to improve their practice in narrow
pedagogical terms, but also attempted to incorporate their life experiences in their practice.

The final section aimed to explore the potential for creativity in this learning setting. I discussed this concept from two aspects, teachers’ perceptions of teaching and their attitudes towards teaching challenges. Most of these teachers tended to describe as creative teaching strategies which were simply not often used in the conservatoire style, while a few teachers had more flexible notions of creativity. For example, one's own personal expression could be accounted as a kind of creativity, not simply relating it to improvisation and composition. Odam (1995) states that the separation between creativity and instrumental teaching limits students in developing their musical ideas. This separation was observed also in my participant, and I noted that it was because these teachers were expected to teach how to play the piano, not to explore music in different ways.

Three teachers in this study believed that adopting some ideas from the Orff approach was equivalent to teaching creatively. However, having compared all the teachers’ teaching style, I noted that teachers were more creative if they were really interested in the learners’ progress, not simply focused on performance achievement. In such cases, the potential for creativity is more likely to be realised in the context of one-to-one private lessons, whether teachers’ own creativity or students’. However, the participants in the creative teacher group did not find it easy to be a creative teacher. They found that it was difficult to decide when was the best time to impart knowledge or to stand back. They also struggled with how much support they needed to give their learners without too much intervention.
CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

11.1 General conclusions

Having explored the participant teachers’ past experience, beliefs, practice, and reflections on their teaching, four general considerations enable me to coordinate my own thoughts about the relation between these features and their contribution to a teacher’s teaching career, and about the potential for creativity in music teaching in the Taiwanese context.
First, with regard to the impact of the teachers’ own past learning experience, it emerged in this study that no matter whether positive or negative, the learning experiences benefited teachers and shaped their teaching beliefs. That is, I could see that even negative experiences helped the participants to develop a concept of what makes piano lessons good. However, not all these positive beliefs about piano lessons were seen to be realised in the participants’ practice. In other words, positive learning experiences or effective learning strategies in the participants’ own past might not be evident in their practice.

Second, the teachers’ perceptions of good piano lessons demonstrated an unexpected variety of different attitudes. I had expected that most participants would place a great emphasis on developing learners’ basic technique. However, three of the seven piano teachers adopted a more open-minded attitude towards piano learning and presented a non-conservatoire teaching style, which presented me with a field in which to explore the potential for creativity in this teaching context.

Third, according to the participants’ opinions, the conventions of Western classical music and the nature of piano lessons themselves limited the development of creativity in piano lessons. Among the points mentioned were the following. Working in the Western convention means that teachers have to teach to maintain a cultural tradition; as for the piano as an instrument, it is not
portable and lessons normally only involve two people, limiting personal interaction. Sitting in front of the instrument, it is not easy for teachers to integrate body movement or an interesting musical activity into their teaching. Therefore, developing the students’ positive attitude and active engagement becomes the only possible way of encouraging learners’ creativity in this teaching context.

Fourth, the potential for creativity in piano lessons can be approached from two perspectives. The first is to look at the teachers themselves, and how they develop their teaching competence; the second is to look at how the teachers’ own broader philosophy of the function of education affects, in often subtle ways, what goes into their lessons and how they react to situations they meet there. The first of these two levels could be labelled the how and the what; the second, and deeper level, could be labelled the why. These levels obviously overlap, but can and should be separated for the purposes of my analysis. Figure 11.1 shows the analytical categories that emerged from my study and that shaped how I approached the concept of creativity. Associated with and corresponding to teachers’ teaching attitude and their way of improving their professional practice, I identified three teaching types distinguished by their emphasis and style: teaching towards technique–mastery, educational teaching, and creative teaching. In figure 11.1, I have not depicted the three categories as being entirely separate from each other, but as being in a flexible relationship along an increasingly expansive and open-minded trend. It
appeared to be impossible for teachers to be creative all the time. For example, teachers in group C, the ‘creative’ group (top right), also employed an educational teaching style and focused on technique. However, there was more potential for teachers to develop their creativity in teaching if they were less rigid in their initial beliefs, and also if they took time to reflect on their teaching.

Table 11.1: The potential for creativity in piano lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption behind attitude towards pupil's problems</th>
<th>Practice can solve problems</th>
<th>Teachers can help pupils to address the problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of teacher's assumption on their teaching</td>
<td>Offer different practising strategies</td>
<td>Develop teaching strategies to enhance diverse musical abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The potential for creativity in piano lessons</td>
<td>Less possible</td>
<td>More possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second perspective from which I considered the potential for creativity in piano lessons was related to teachers’ own educational assumptions and their interpretation of their teaching roles. Having examined the teachers’ reflections, two educational assumptions were uncovered. On the one hand, teachers might believe that practising can solve most learning difficulties. Consequently, modifications or improvements in their teaching range would be introduced to encourage the pupils to practice effectively, such as offering external awards.
or seeking parental support. On the other hand, teachers who had a broader concept of teaching goals and believed that their own personal musical expertise and teaching competence could help their learners to address their learning issues tended to develop their practice differently, as seen in the teachers in group C. These teachers tended to take into consideration and investigate possible reasons that caused their pupils to make a mistake. Most importantly, the proportion of teaching music by using music was higher than in the case of the other two teacher groups. These various reasons are why I believe that this latter teaching tendency, which has more of the role of mentor than is found in the other groups, brings more possibilities for pupils to reach their higher potential in their piano lessons.

11.2 Contribution to the understanding of creativity in piano lessons

I want to highlight five contributions my research has made to the study of instrumental teaching. First, having reviewed the literature, I found (a) that most research studies took place in higher education, and (b) involved professional instrumental teachers or student teachers. Although the research findings in the literature enriched our understanding of one-to-one instrumental teaching, the background of the participants was mostly limited to Western classical music. Inevitably, the research results noted the predominance of training towards technical mastery, which some researchers described simply as the conservatoire convention. In my study, in order to explore whether or
not this classical convention existed at the amateur level, I deliberately chose teachers who taught at the level of beginners or young children. As for my participants’ preparation for teaching, their backgrounds were found to be quite diverse, including those who had and those who had not had professional musical training, and only some of whom had a teacher-training background.

Second, most existing research had a simple focus, such as investigating teachers’ beliefs or observing teachers’ lessons. I attempted to consider my participants as whole persons, seeking to explore the relationship between four factors affecting instrumental teaching, namely, past critical events in the areas of both learning and teaching, teachers’ beliefs about piano teaching, their professional practice, and their reflection on teaching.

Third, marginalisation of creativity in the Western classical music tradition has been identified for a long time. According to my personal learning experience and reading, I believed that it was difficult to explore creativity in a one-to-one instrumental lesson. However, after reading research papers relating to personal creativity, I decided that it would be interesting to analyse instrumental teaching from the perspective of personal creativity, thereby exploring the potential for creativity in this teaching context.

Fourth, asking participants to complete a reflective diary is not a new research method, but in most cases was used with student teachers or school teachers, not instrumental teachers. Also, rather than working only with the written words
of the diary, I combined three research tools, namely, reflective diary, video-stimulated recall, and discussion with myself. The variety of activities which the participants engaged in gave them opportunity to examine and evaluate their own practice more objectively and with greater consideration. In particular, watching themselves on video was a new experience for the teachers, almost allowing them to be an outside observer. I should also like to stress the value of engaging in discussion with the participants, because I could bring my own observation of what was good and bad in the lessons of the different teachers and use my own observations to challenge them to deeper and more novel reflection.

This leads to my final point. It would appear that educational research can bring benefit not only by collecting the data for academic study, but also by provoking participant teachers to give more meaningful consideration to their professional practice (Pring, 2004). Most of my participants mentioned this in their reflective diary. Some also described this experience as creative, in that it opened a new perspective on themselves as teachers.

11.3 Reflection on my methodology

After collecting the data of the pilot study, I reflected on my methodology, mainly my theoretical framework and some of my data collection tools. As for the theoretical framework, initially I intended to draw on and give further support to the concept of creativity advanced (Craft et al., 2008). These
authors proposed that creativity is driven by ‘possibility thinking’, which mainly involves people asking ‘what if’ and ‘as if’ questions to guide them to solve problems. Although I noticed that their research sample was confined to children, I made the assumption that there was a similarity between people’s thinking whatever their age and whoever they were. Thus, I believed that I could analyse teachers’ reflections on teaching by relating what they said to in response questions of the ‘what if’ and ‘as if’ types. I did not realise that everyone has their own thinking and reflecting habits until I carried out the pilot study. Possibility thinking proved not to be a way of approaching personal creativity in the case of my participants. Therefore, in the later stages, I became more flexible in my approach to the concept of creativity, looking at it from the point of view of how the participants coped with teaching challenges in their professional teaching career.

With regard to the research methods I employed, the use of a reflective diary had to be adjusted slightly during my data collection. In my pilot study, I did not offer a specific table of questions. I told participants that they could freely write down every thought they had. However, they felt that without guidance they did not know how to make a start. Therefore, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, I designed a form of a reflective dairy with added instructions based on the theory of possibility thinking that which teachers were told to treat as stimulation for their reflections, not a limitation. The reflective diary enabled me to collect some ideas from the teachers in my pilot study. However,
participants in my main study still expressed difficulties when reflecting and asked me to include some examples of how they could express their thoughts. Having tried to provide more details about how to reflect, I still found that these teachers appeared to seldom reflect on their teaching unless prompted, so they had no idea how to do it. This discovery meant that I decided to plan my second interview more carefully, because discussing with the teachers in person appeared to be my last chance to explore their thinking about teaching.

In the second interview, I mainly encouraged the teachers to consider their own students' learning problems and then to think about what might be the cause and how they might help learners to solve their problems. After I had conducted all the second interviews, I analysed the questions I had asked each participant, because I intended that the content of my second interview should be individually personalised according to what I had observed in each participant’s teaching. I recognised that there was a danger that I might have missed some significant points in some cases, because my focus in the second interview was influenced by the participants’ answers. Consequently, and following my analysis of the questions I had asked in the second interview, I asked each participant to return to their reflective diary. They were invited to write down (a) the reflections prompted during the second interview, (b) any reflection that occurred to them subsequent to the interview, and (c) to answer supplementary questions I provided. There were two reasons why they were still asked to complete the reflective diary even after the second interview. First,
I believe that reflection is a never-ending process; the participants might have had new thoughts when they reflected on the same issue with different perspectives, influenced perhaps by my questions and responses. Second, in order to present the complexity of the reality, I wanted to explore the reflections as fully as possible so that I could compare their opinions about a particular issue selected by me. Strictly speaking, such an intervention by the researcher is intrusive in a qualitative research study, but it is difficult to pursue such a study in every detail and maintain a ‘precise and scientific’ approach.

With regard to the video-stimulated recall, I had planned to watch the video with my participants. In the end, however, all my participants watched the video at home on their own, because of ethical issues and time-restrictions. First, as one-to-one instrumental lessons were seldom observed by a third person, my participants were very kind to allow me to be present when they were teaching. Watching the video together, however, to discuss their teaching could have caused embarrassment. Therefore, they watched the video alone, and then they chose what they wanted to discuss with me. This change of plan saved a lot of time. If I had watched the video with each participant and then interviewed them, I would have had to watch all the videos no fewer than three times (first, on my own, then with the participants prior the second interview, and finally, when I made my analysis of each case).

Lastly, I videoed two lessons of each participant. The original reason to do that was to empower my participants by themselves selecting what they wanted to
discuss. Additionally, I supposed that my participant teachers and observed students would behave more normally in the second lesson, as in fact, this happen: the performance of the second week was closer to the normal situation. Interestingly, almost all participants agreed that they and their pupils performed better in the first week than in the second week in terms of teaching pace and students’ concentration. This indicated that my research did have a temporary positive effect. Due to the camera and my presence, the student appeared to pay more attention to their learning in the first week, and then found that there were no consequences and so naturally returned to a normal learning stance in the second week.

11.4 The limitations of this study

As mentioned in the methodology chapters, one limitation of the qualitative research model is that it only concentrates on a small number of participants in order to enable a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. Therefore, the findings of this study are inappropriate for generalisation in other educational contexts. Particularly, I did my research in Taiwan, where educational culture is different to that of the Western world. Another limitation relates to language translation. In order for me, as a Taiwanese Mandarin speaker, to properly explore participants’ opinions and provide an adequate explanation, my research took place in Taiwan. However, because of the different character of the two languages, Mandarin and English,
it is inevitable that some of the participants’ original words are lost in translation. I involved a professional translator in order to retain as much of the intended meaning as possible, and this has helped to reduce the impact of the missing vocabulary.

Further, the study was confined to piano lessons. As mentioned in my literature review, piano and vocal lessons have fewer people present than other instrumental disciplines, and there is little engagement in joint music making. Therefore, my findings may not be identified in other research that takes other instrumental lessons as the sample. Most importantly, although I aimed to understand the phenomenon of piano lessons, and I am aware that teaching and learning are interactive, I simply explored the teachers’ perspective. There were two considerations that led to this decision. One concerned my research purpose of investigating beliefs and features influencing practice, which required me to view teachers not simply as teachers, but as whole persons. The other relates to the ethical issues. I believe that my experience as a researcher is not sufficient for me to deal with contradictory opinions between different people in a close relationship such as that between students and their parents. I had informally talked to two students and two parents. I felt fine if they gave me some positive opinion about the piano lessons. However, if they gave only negative feedback about participant teachers, it left me in a difficult position: what was the reality? In fact, this challenge arose when I invited one teacher who participated in my pilot study.
to be my critical friend. The teacher knew some of the teachers in my main study, and then some teachers in my main study knew each other. Even among these teachers, certain ones held differing opinions about other teachers’ practice, and the ideas of individual teachers sometimes contradicted what I obtained in their interviews and teaching. In the face of those difficulties, I decided to concentrate on what I personally observed. The only contradictions I dealt with were those between what a participant said in their interview and their teaching behaviour in the observed lessons.

11.5 What I learned through this study

My own learning and teaching experiences in Western classical music have led me to develop a harshly critical attitude towards the teaching focus on technique-mastery in one-to-one instrumental lessons. Certain research studies also provided negative opinions about this ‘tradition’. However, I came to realise more clearly how each concept can be explored from diverse perspectives, and I learned how better to uncover those significances. Most importantly, appreciating the full contextual situation of a person’s actions and beliefs plays a crucial role in understanding specific issues and reaching meaningful interpretations that are not simply judgemental.

For example, the master–apprentice teaching style is viewed as the normal convention in the professional music world. Although this convention has been maintained for over two hundred years, its fundamental ethos has changed

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from the creative learning approach to performance training. However, this
does not mean that the master–apprentice style is an old-fashioned
teacher-led teaching style. The current educational atmosphere tends to
encourage developing learners’ creativity, which the master–apprentice
relationship is ideally suited to promote. The criticism of the master–apprentice
mode of teaching on the grounds that it emphasises only learners’ emulation of
their teachers, is only partially true. In the course of my study I have learned
the master–apprentice teaching style may encourage teachers to bring their
own personality to the teaching role, and this can have a very positive value, in
that the teachers are more reflective and the pupils are more inspired by their
teachers. In other words, teachers in the master–apprentice relationship are
not merely translators of the printed teaching materials; they more actively
interact with their learners and are more open to change in their own beliefs
and attitude.

Another significant lesson I learned from this study was that being a qualitative
researcher means I have to learn to accept different opinions, and then to
acknowledge the diversity of reality, rather than to impose my own judgement
on the study results. I struggled when presenting the case of the teacher Chen
in my dissertation, because I felt sorry for her student, who was forced to learn
the piano and had tried in vain to stop. While I could not agree with Chen’s
teaching style, I appreciated her kindness in allowing me to observe her
lessons. As I became better informed about the qualitative methodology, I
gradually realised that my responsibility, as an interpretivist researcher, is to present the whole story, not just a good story. The most important point is what it can reveal.

Finally, although the analytical framework of the qualitative research should emerge from the process of carrying out the research, that is, the categories and approaches appropriate to the specific area of study should be suggested by the nature of the materials themselves, I could have been clearer about the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology before starting my analysis. This would have given more direction and structure to what I was doing, and confidence in how to go about it. Repeating the analysis four times was not a happy learning experience. In addition, too much detailed analysis prevented me from seeing the whole picture, and also made it difficult to find the wider significance of this factual information and what I could learn from it. However, this research journey enabled me to carefully examine things from different perspectives. Most importantly, I became more aware of how the range of types of information I encounter, including academic books and articles considered in my literature review and interviews with participants, affects my knowledge. I use the term ‘knowledge’ to include not just my stock of information or data, but my whole way of thinking, my ability to integrate and to reflect. I also became more sensitive to the potential contextual influence and determinants, such as historical, cultural, personal factors, rather than simply
judging perceived behaviour as right or wrong or assessing information simply from my own perspective.
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS OF THE FIRST INTERVIEW

Part I: Personal information

Please tick the box of the statement that describes you.

1. 1. What is the latest qualification that you hold?
   - □ Bachelor degree of music date
   - □ Bachelor degree of music education
   - □ Bachelor degree of non-music major (please indicate subject…………..)
   - □ Postgraduate degree of music
   - □ Postgraduate degree of music education
   - □ Postgraduate degree of non-music major (please indicate subject…………..)

1. 2. In which institution did you study for your most recent degree?

……………………………………

1. 3. What teaching qualifications do you hold?
   - □ Primary teaching qualification
   - □ Secondary teaching
   - □ Pre-school qualification
   - □ Piano teaching qualification (please give the title………………..)
   - □ None

1. 4. How long have you been a piano teacher?
   2. _____ year, from □ college stage □ postgraduate stage □ other

3. 

1. 5. For your students, which level are they in?

Please indicate the number of students you teach and at what level of ability they are:

   - □ Elementary, ___ students
• □ Intermediate, ___ students
• □ Advanced, ___ students

1. 6. Please describe up to three events or a person who has had an influence in learning or teaching experience.

Part II: Personal belief and attitude towards effectiveness and creativity in the teaching practice.

1. 1. The motivation of being a piano teacher
   • ● How did you become a piano teacher?
   • ● What is it more important things you want your pupils to learn from you?

1. 2. The teaching practice
   • ● Tell me about your work pattern in a typical week
   • ● Tell me about what happens in a typical lesson (or is this about what they aim for ?) ‘describe an ideal or successful lesson (what would a visitor observe?)’
   • ● Challenges?

1. 3. The belief in effective teaching/ creative teaching
   • ● When you are teaching how do you know that what you are doing is successful?

1. 4. Others
   • ● Tell me more about………….(some points from the questionnaire)
   • ● Describe the student you choose and explain the reasons
APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS OF THE SECOND INTERVIEW

The reflection on the teaching practice

• Describe a specific moment and explain the reasons
• Explain what might be the implication for the next teaching practice

The reflection in the teaching practice (the challenges or interaction)

• What did you think about in terms of a specific moment?
• Why did you think about the pupil’s learning difficulties?

• 3. What is the most successful part of teaching practice (strategy or interaction) in terms of this lesson?
**APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF MY FIELD NOTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil’s actions</th>
<th>Teaching activity</th>
<th>Teacher’s actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S: I think it happened after school. Some children are chatting and walking happily. But he feels a little boring, so he kicks pebbles [imagination]</td>
<td>Song: corn cookies</td>
<td>T: and then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher model and create a story with the pupil at the same time</td>
<td>T: which part makes you feel that he kicks pebbles? [question: to clarify ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This phrase ends in disharmony tone. When teacher plays this chord, both they shut out 'kick!!' [practice: teacher-pupil interaction; involvement: both ]</td>
<td>T: so surprised!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(left hand’s staccato)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLE OF REFLECTIVE DIARY**

The teaching aim of the critical event: change musical style by tonality (Major-minor)

Your explanation: I tended to enable my pupil to differentiate the change in tone so that she could play with music by making small changes. Moreover, I would like to evoke her responses to music [teaching aim: hearing awareness] and then to guild her to realize her preference. [teaching aim: understand themselves]

| What if/what thoughts were in your head | 1. I am interested in harmony and know how to make different sounds by changing the tonality. [experience; musical professional]  
2. My pupil love music so much, and her parents provide a good environment for her to experience music, such as go to concert, or listen music at home together. Therefore, she is expected to be more sensitive to music. [the analysis of pupil’s background; the understanding of her pupil; creative pedagogy: place high value on children’s agency]  
3. If I change the tonality, she should notice that, and then I could guild her to recognize it and let her have a try. [teaching strategy]  
4. My pupil enjoys the melody so that I don’t want to stop her performance. [the understanding of her pupil; creative pedagogy: give pupils time and space] |
| --- | --- |
| As if | 1. Because my pupil said: it sounds ‘tired’, it is probably that she knows how to ‘feel’ the music. [judgment: pupil’s verbal response]  
2. She might feel that she should play it more dynamically if based on the composer’s interpretation. Her second performance is closer to the composer’s interpretation. |
| [judgment: pupil’s performance ] |
APPENDIX 5: THE ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR TEACHERS

Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter
St Lukes Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU, UK

Informed Consent

Dear participant,

My name is Yi-Lien Yeh and I am currently studying for the PhD programme in Educational Research at the University of Exeter. The title of my study is a phenomenological investigation of teachers’ experience, beliefs and practice in piano teaching: exploring scope for creativity. This qualitative research aims to explore the one-to-one piano lesson by adopting a phenomenological approach which involves the interviews, video-recorded observation and video-stimulated review.

Procedure

In phase one, the research design will involve an open-structured questionnaire for collecting your personal information such as your education and work background and experience and a semi-structured interview to exploring your beliefs and attitudes towards your teaching practice and also a question about up to three events or people that have influenced your musical and educational professional development. The questionnaire and the questions of interview will be sent to you in advance. Moreover, you can decide where and when we have the interview.
In phase two, I will seek to video-record one lesson for two weeks; therefore, I hope that you can select which lesson and which pupil you would to be recorded. Please ask the pupil’s and his/her parents (if the pupils is under 18) verbal permission in advance. When I come back to Taiwan, I will give pupils and parents the outline of this study and the informed consent by hard copy in person. When record, if I get your and the pupil’s permission to be there, I will be there as a observer to take my field note. The films will be provide to you immediately to watch it at home and then you can think about which practice you would like to explain further. After selecting one of two weeks video, the second interview will be hold with video-stimulated review.

Two interviews will be record and transcribed. This research data will be sent to you to correct or expand it freely.

My responsibilities as a researcher

2. I will seek to be aware of any possible predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research. Any unexpected detriment to you or your pupil, which arises during the research, must be brought immediately to your attention.

3. You will not be judged or inspected as the research aim is to uncover the meaning and personal interpretation further. Moreover, the footage will not be shown to anyone other than the teacher, the researcher and the two university supervisors without consent being given subsequently.

4. Records of the data collected (including transcripts and any audio and video recordings) will be stored in a secure and safe place. Electronic information will only be accessed by the researcher with their username and password. This information will be stored on a secure system with recognised virus protection. Information will also be coded to ensure anonymity. This will remain anonymous in the write up of the research.
Your right as a researched participant

- You have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time for any and no reason and that in such an instance, data related to you will be destroyed and will not be used within the research.

You may ask more questions about the study at any time. Please contact me by email sasa0426@gmail.com or skype(sasa0426) before May 2012 and call me 0919100776 when I come back to Taiwan.

Short-Form Written Consent

I confirm that the researcher has explained the elements of informed consent to the participant. The subject knows that her participation is voluntary. The purpose of the research as well as the risks has been explained. The procedures as well as her responsibility and my right to withdraw have been claimed. The participant understands issues of confidentiality. I have agreed to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE: __________________________ Date:

______________________________

The participant agrees to be audio-taped YES NO __________

The participant agrees to be photographed YES NO __________

The participant agrees to be videotaped YES NO __________

The participant would like the name to be used is __________
APPENDIX 6: THE ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR STUDENTS

Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

St Lukes Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU, UK

Informed Consent

Dear,

My name is Yi-Lien Yeh and I am currently studying for the PhD programme in Educational Research at the University of Exeter. The title of my study is a phenomenological investigation of teachers’ experience, beliefs and practice in piano teaching: exploring scope for creativity. This qualitative research aims to explore the one-to-one piano lesson by adopting a phenomenological approach which involves the interviews, video-recorded observation and video-stimulated review.

In my study, I need to ask your piano teacher to select one pupil to be engaged in the observation of their teaching practice. Therefore, your piano lessons will be recorded two weeks. When record, if I get you and your piano teacher’s permission to be there, I will be there as a observer to take my field note.

My responsibilities as a researcher
5. The file will be provided to your piano teachers only and be used in the interview with your piano teacher in terms of the teaching practice. The focus of the discussion will be on piano teacher rather than your performance.

6. I will seek to be aware of any possible predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research. Any unexpected detriment to you, which arises during the research, must be brought immediately to your parents’ attention.

7. The footage will not be shown to anyone other than your piano teacher, the researcher and the two university supervisors without consent being given subsequently.

8. Records of the data collected (including transcripts and any audio and video recordings about these films) will be stored in a secure and safe place. Electronic information will only be accessed by the researcher with their username and password. This information will be stored on a secure system with recognised virus protection. Information will also be coded to ensure anonymity. This will remain anonymous in the write up of the research.

Your right as a participant in the observation

- You have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time for any and no reason and that in such an instance, data related to your child will be destroyed and will not be used within the research.

You may ask more questions about the study at any time. Please contact me by email sasa0426@gmail.com or skype(sasa0426) before May 2012 and call me 0919100776 when I come back to Taiwan.

Short-Form Written Consent

I confirm that the researcher has explained the elements of informed consent to the participant. The subject knows that her participation is voluntary. The purpose of the research as well as the risks has been explained. The procedures as well as her responsibility and my child’s right to withdraw have been claimed. The participant understands issues of confidentiality. I have agreed that I participate in this study.
The participant agrees to be photographed YES NO __________

The participant agrees to be videotaped YES NO __________
### APPENDIX 7: EXAMPLE OF ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data</th>
<th>Preliminary codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous learning experience</strong></td>
<td>life event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I was a student, as I played the piano in an inappropriate way, my right arm and hand got serious hurt which caused lots inconveniences in my daily life. After one-year rest, totally gave up playing the piano, I gradually recovered. At that moment, I thought I cannot play the piano anymore.</td>
<td>side effect of inappropriate playing way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, due to my indomitably, I still had tried to play the piano,</td>
<td>Personality: persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>although I cannot play some advanced pieces.</td>
<td>side effect of inappropriate teaching focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This experience enabled me to think about the way I play. Also, this is the reason why I pay careful attention to how pupils play and their physical positions.</td>
<td>personal interpretation of a specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a blessing in disguise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although I cost much. I still believe that as long as I persist. I can do what I would like to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Previous teaching experience

I was afraid of getting along with little children, as I did not know how to communicate with them; I thought I do not have a talent for teaching very young pupils.

So I have attempted to read a lot books about how to educate young children and to ask for experienced teachers’ advice.

And then my old sister had her baby, I lived with them, which offered lots opportunities for me to understand young children.

I am learning how to teach when I teach.

Currently, I don’t worry about getting along with young children; even I think that I am much patient than I was.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life event</th>
<th>attitude towards life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative emotion/Young learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life-event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meta cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-evaluation/ reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The worst thing in my life is my father’s unexpected death.

I have changed my degree of persistence, which has a huge impact on my attitude towards teaching.

Without dogged persistence, I can see things in a flexible way, which led me to reflect what I had done to accept my weakness.

Equally, I had more Empathy with my pupils.

Although I have tried this hard, I believe I can do it better.
(2) A part of example of my coding system to show how I grouped codes into a theme by using Nvivo10.
(3) A part of example of how I organised the emerged theme and codes to structure my thinking and writing.
APPENDIX 8: EXAMPLE OF CHECKING TABLE (FOURTH ANALYSIS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem-solving skills</th>
<th>Iris</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Lee</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Sabina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study further</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a private music lesson</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend workshops</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read more</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with others</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ reflection in critical moments of observed lesson</th>
<th>Iris</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Lee</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Sabina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher impact</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ emotion</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ feeling</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ reflection on current practices</th>
<th>Iris</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>Lee</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Sabina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Teaching strategies</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The language of feedback</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling more</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion with me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils' behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of pupils' errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils' motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomprehensibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching flexibility</td>
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</table>


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