

Full Length Research Paper

Piano education in adults

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Piano education is one of the fundamental aspects of instrument training. As a polyphonic instrument, the piano, unlike other instruments, is popular with all age groups. This study examines factors of success in adult piano education and piano methods utilized in training in all aspects, including historical development. Data was generated by literature review, specialist lecturers were consulted for their opinions, and descriptive research method was implemented according to the objective. Results of the study show that adult piano education requires an extensive training process, and students might face physical problems due to their age as they play the piano as well as psychological issues when they are concerned about being unable to study, failing or being criticized. Also, based on the evaluation of piano methods, the study proposes that training through all of the series of a method alone does not have sufficient benefits, and utilization of other resources that facilitate technical development after the methods for beginners will have positive effects on overcoming deficiencies in method.

Key words: Music, piano education, piano method book, interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the entirety of efforts to facilitate learning new behaviors and information for specific purposes using the physical, emotional, social and mental skills of individuals to express themselves. The Great Turkish Dictionary defines education as "Direct or indirect facilitation of children and young people to obtain the information and gain the skills and insights necessary to participate in social life and develop their character in or outside the school" (URL-1, 2016). Based on this definition, there are two types of education: formal education and informal education. Formal education is the type of education where students are prepared for the next level in a systematic order of different levels of education (Sarıkaya, 2018). Today, it is known that

information in various fields loses its currency soon due to the rapid development in science and technology. In this respect, it is an increasingly important fact that education must be a lifelong process, independent of age or space. In informal education, which we will examine in this scope, people are within the context of education anytime, anywhere, and education can involve everything the society may or may not want because it is not programmed or supervised. The individual is educated by personal observations and experiences in the light of various remarks from the social circle or modern mass media (Güneş, 2014). This is closely related to the competence of accessing and structuring information in the creation of strong individuals and societies.

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Structuring a society of individuals of lifelong learning could undoubtedly be possible through the regulation of education systems.

Art education helps people of all ages become social, creative, productive and confident. The information and behavior people gain help them succeed in their professional lives and make the right decisions in social life, and establish creative and healthy relationships that are open to improvement.

Music training is one of the primary areas that support lifelong learning because music is one of the chief elements of common culture everyone needs to gain. As a basic expression of human emotion, music is one of the most important and powerful educational tools. According to famous Greek philosopher Plato, music is not only aimed at entertainment and its main function is to instill good ethics and build a good character (Demirgen and Esin, 2016). Undoubtedly, societies consisting of individuals trained in music also develop their cultural structure.

Many students opt for piano in instrument training as it requires less effort as a beginner compared to string and wind instruments, sounds are ready to use on the keyboard, and it is possible to get different colors by pressing the keys in different techniques. The fundamental skills instructors must teach their students at the start of piano education should be correct hand position, a solid sense of rhythm and the ultimate goal of overcoming technical problems and achieving a musical interpretation. It is important to choose the right approach and method to reach this goal and get the best outcome that will satisfy instructors and students. Method is important to teach these behaviors at the desired level. Method books are books of effective and constant learning, prepared to gradually teach how to play an instrument in stages. In his study on "Choosing a beginner's method book in piano education," Eroğlu (2018) mentions the gradual development and change in education and teaching methods, and notes that traditional teaching methods give way to contemporary methods. Therefore, according to Eroğlu, piano methods based on contemporary teaching methodologies replace older methods. Also, studies show that students with intrinsic motivation, which can be described as the joy of playing the piano, are more successful (Özmenteş, 2013). Certain studies on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors that influence achievement in piano education note that it is necessary to eliminate the tension stemming from concerns and preserve a healthy physical structure by warming up before studying a musical work in order to achieve good performance on the piano.

Problem

There is change and development in art and music in parallel with the changing and developing world. Adaptation to these developments is a measure of

modernization in our time. In this context, instrument training can be regarded as a requisite for modernization (Orhan and Ercan, 2012). As there are few studies on adult piano education, the necessity of evaluating the subject and methods used to train adults constitutes the problem of this study.

Objective of the study

The study aims at analyzing adult piano education. Answers are sought to the following questions:

- 1) What are the historical aspects of adult piano education?
- 2) Which methods are used in adult piano education?
- 3) What are the factors of success in adult piano education?

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in the identification of problems encountered by piano students and the guidance provided for instructors in the form of suggestions. Also, the study stresses that families facilitate social and cultural development by directing their children to play an instrument.

METHODOLOGY

This study discusses the factors of success in adult piano education, historical aspects of adult piano education, and the piano methods used in training according to the objective of the study. This qualitative study employs data collection methods of observation, professional experience, opinions of lecturers, and literature review.

FINDINGS

Findings on the historical aspects of adult piano education

The earliest method written for keyboard instruments was a 3-part method titled "Fundamentum Organisandi", written in 1452 by Conrad Paumann, an organist who lived between 1410 and 1473. This was actually a book on counterpoint.

The earliest real method that contained methodological and pedagogic approaches originated in Spain. A friar named Thomas de Santa Maria presented a method titled "Arte de Tanor Fantasia" in 1565 after 16 years of work. The first volume of the 400-page book includes basic knowledge as well as practical examples, which were rarely seen in those times. Chapter 13 of the first volume discusses eight important attributes of good work.

- (i) Playing at the correct rhythm

- (ii) Correct hand position
- (iii) Correct sitting position on the piano
- (iv) Playing a clear and precise interpretation
- (v) Comfort with faster and slower passages
- (vi) Playing with correct fingering
- (vii) Considering the enjoyment of the audience
- (viii) Achievement in ornamentation of the musical work

Later on, according to Böhnova, French composer F. Couperin (1668-1733) mentioned almost identical training approaches in his method titled "Pieces de Clavcin." It is thusly understood that the foundation of the methods used today were laid down about 200 years prior to the invention of the piano.

The attempts to program piano education date back to the piano methods of composers like D.G. Turk (1789-1802), F. Kalkbrenner (1788-1849) and L. Köhler (1820-1886) since the invention of piano in 1711 (Eren, 2013). Authors of Oxford Piano Course (1928) published "The Beginner's Book of Older Pupils" for adult students in 1929. Contents of this method were designed to adapt to a more conceptual and quicker learning by mature students. Following these methods, "The Adult Explorer at the Piano," written by Ahean, Blake and Burrow and published in 1937, stressed on functional skills that will allow students to incorporate music into their daily lives and recognize it as a pleasant way of self-expression in addition to keyboard education, playing musical works and education. Later on, The Adult Preparatory Book (1943) by Thompson, "Adult Piano Course" by Aeron (1947) and "The Older Student" by Richter (1956) contained an introduction to the "middle c" system, traditional melody arrangements, folk tunes and some technical information.

A historical review of piano methods shows that methods published from the first half of the 20th century onwards started featuring basic elements of music, such as music theory, sight-reading, accompaniment and composing skills (Uszler and Mach, 1991).

Findings on the methods used in adult piano education

Instrument method books are prepared to help students learn how to play an instrument in a system of phased progress. Music training requires serious and detailed work for professionals and amateurs alike. Within the contemporary definition, the important thing is that the method is consistent and gains international approval with the outcome of its application (Say, 2002). To benefit students, a piano method should:

- (i) Be appropriate for the age group, physical and psychological state of the student
- (ii) Spark interest and encourage students to study
- (iii) Be compatible with phased progress

- (iv) Help the student gain technical skills
- (iv) Be suitable for modern education and teaching
- (v) Develop the student's musicality
- (vi) Include creative work like improvisation along with theoretical information

The most frequently used methods in adult piano education are:

- (i) "The Older Beginner Piano Course" Level 1 and 2 by James Bastien
- (ii) John Thompson's Adult Piano Method Level 1 and 2
- (iii) Hal Leonard Adult Piano Method Level 1 and 2
- (iv) Burkard Piano Method
- (vi) Nancy Randall Faber Adult Adventure All-in-one 1, 2
- (v) Alfred Basic Piano Course All-in-one Course Level 1, 2 and 3

Instructors in Turkey have written several methods for beginner piano students. In these methods, it is observed that instructors include their own compositions as well as the works of other composers. However, the same cannot be said of adult methods. Other than compilations, there is unfortunately no piano method structured for adults. Therefore, traditional Turkish folk music and exercises to solve technical problems are employed as training aids while the aforementioned methods are used for basic training.

"The older beginner piano course" level 1 and 2 by James Bastien

The Older Beginner's Piano Course consists of 2 levels. Each level is comprised of a main method and four complementary books.

- (i) The main method generally features original piano works in phased progress, meticulously picked to make training more enjoyable
- (ii) Musicianship: It includes exercises of examining the bass movements in 4-measure motifs presented in the main method, transposition of motifs to certain tones and performance in the transposed tones, and accompaniment.
- (iii) Theory: It is aimed at guiding students towards a harmonically functional approach on piano pieces and helping them interpret music more deliberately.
- (iv) Sight-reading: It covers the skills of playing a piano piece at first sight and capturing the interpretation conceived by the composer without going back to correct mistakes.

John Thompson's adult piano method series, level 1 and 2

The first book in the series predominantly features the

author's compositions. The second book includes pieces from the classical repertoire. Introductions of famous composers feature only the opening themes of their works. It was seen that most of these pieces are orchestral works rearranged for the piano or simplified accompaniments, and B themes in some of the musical works in the method were changed completely.

Hal Leonard adult piano method level 1 and 2

This method consists of solo, technical and theoretical sections:

- (i) Information on basic musical concepts, musical symbols and rhythm time signatures are given in Unit 1, and the method moves on to playing in 3 different positions.
- (ii) Only 6 tones are discussed in level 1 and 2, and other common subjects are not included. Also, ornaments are not featured in any of the units.
- (iii) The series includes improvisation and sight-reading work from start to finish. It can be said that the method progresses slower compared to the adult student (Eroğlu, 2018).

Burkard piano method

Written by Alexander Burkard in 1906, the book is based on Burkard's method, known as "Middle C," which was used in piano method books published later on. This method begins with finger 1 of both hands on the middle C. Middle C forms a bridge between F and G keys and makes it easier to learn the F key. It was republished in Turkish in 2016 by "Türkiye'de Müzik Eğitimi Yayınları." The method is based on movements of 5 fingers without the use of a key on the staff in the first 14 exercises, each with a different learning objective and 12 measures. Left hand accompaniment is livened up by replacing monotonous fourth notes with instructive eighth notes, but the method does not focus on training each hand independently with, for instance, exercises of playing legato on one hand and staccato on the other or comfortably resuming after rest notes.

Nancy Randall Faber adult adventure all-in-one 1, 2

The first book of this 196-page method series introduces music notation, chords and musical forms. Level 2 stands out with cadences accompanied by chords, and keyboard harmonics, but it cannot be said that the melody content is satisfactory. The prominent aspect of this method is that it reflects the teaching theory of the Fabers. The objectives are abbreviated as ACE: Analysis, Creativity and Expression.

A - Analysis will help the student understand the musical work

C - Creativity will lead the student to self-discovery, and

E - Expression will build the student's artistic skills.

The conclusion is that the method is adequate in terms of teaching approach and complementary content.

Alfred basic piano course all-in-one course level 1, 2 and 3

This series gathers basic training, theoretical and technical information and popular piano pieces in one book. "Introduction to the Piano Music," the opening unit of book 1, explains and illustrates hand and finger exercises to be done before playing, breathing exercises, and basic information on how to make soft and strong sounds and includes studies on these subjects.

Level 2 handles compound meters, nuance terms and pedal use.

Level 3 consists of four sections:

- (i) A review of old key signatures
- (ii) New key signatures and concepts
- (iii) Just for fun section
- (iv) Ambitious section

The most important aspect of the Alfred Basic series is that it includes suggestions and exercises to help students learn each part easily. The method aims at instilling a solid sense of music theory and accompaniment skills in addition to playing the piano by using cadences under melodies and utilizing various accompaniment patterns. Many of the methods analyzed here are used today in classical piano education across the world.

Findings on the factors of success in adult piano education

Piano education is more difficult compared to many other fields because of the complex structure of the interaction between training methods and physical, cognitive and affective aspects. The interest of adult students in the keyboard, their physical and psychological differences will surely affect their achievement level. In this respect, an evaluation of the factors of success in training will help develop the education process and achieve training goals. We can divide the factors of success in 3 groups.

Cognitive skills

Instrument training is an individualistic endeavor. It is known that personality traits are variable. According to American psychologist Gates, "learning" is the process

where an individual gains new behavior or changes old behavior as a result of his interaction with his surroundings according to his maturity level (as cited by Binbaşıoğlu, 1991). The individual must be ready in order to learn. Real learning begins when the individual becomes ready to learn (Binbaşıoğlu, 1991).

(i) Students who start piano education earlier than adult students learn inadvertently. They don't know what they learn or why. However, adults learn by questioning, thinking and reasoning (Orhan and Ercan, 2012).

(ii) Adult students concentrate on the class for longer periods compared to younger students.

(iii) According to teaching experiences, it is believed that the ability to track notes on two keys from the lower staff to the upper staff and instantly press both keys while playing a piano piece in 2 different keys with two hands depends on personal attributes in addition to the age factor.

(iv) Some adult students start playing by heart before learning the piece completely in order to avoid sight-reading. This leads to mislearning in terms of incorrect notes, rhythm, fingering and interpretation. It becomes more difficult and takes time to correct the mistakes embedded by early memorization. Instructors should guide students on how to prevent such cognitive differences.

Affective skills

We can define "motivation" as the intrinsic power that initiates student action and behavior and energizes the student. Undoubtedly, students who like their instruments will improve their performance skills by studying regularly. The piano stands out, attracts students and directs them to training because:

(i) It has a richer repertoire compared to many other instruments

(ii) It makes positive contributions to ear-training thanks to the consistency of sound created by fixed intervals

(iii) It develops polyphonic hearing

(iv) It has a broad sound range

(v) It is easy to play in accompaniment

(vi) It allows for teaching of music appreciation (Yücetoker, 2009).

We can list the other causes that steer adults towards learning how to play the piano as:

(i) The desire to utilize training as a grounds for socialization, join peers in a group environment, and enjoy self-expression by playing a few pieces

(ii) The desire to correctly sight-read a composition, and accompany songs or a choir with the appropriate chords

(iii) Parents can also start taking lessons because they

believe it would be better to play the piano and accompany their children as they play other instruments (Uszler et al., 1991).

Adults who choose to play the piano have specific ideas about why they are interested in the piano. All adults expect the experience to be a pleasant one, but they have different opinions on what constitutes that enjoyment. Some students are satisfied if they enjoy it for a brief period of time and play a few famous melodies, while others prefer a more extensive training, to sight-read musical works and know how to use their fingers and pedals. Students who place importance on music theory aim at learning about chords and the harmonic structure of the pieces they play. However, none of them intend to become a pianist. However, it is difficult for instructors to imagine piano education without ensuring technical development and building a solid repertoire. Instructors plan their training programs by assuming that young students will ultimately achieve their goals, their hands will grow, their attention span will expand, they will sight-read more fluently and they will make progress through an extended period of time. In teaching adults, instructors generally aim at expediting phased progress according to their experiences and observations (Uszler et al., 1991). First of all, the teacher-student relationship is an important motivator. The factor of teacher is as important an external motivator as family, friends, and community. The straightforward approach an instructor takes to solve problems makes considerable impact and gets a more interested student.

Psychomotor skills

Playing the piano is a mainly psychomotor skill with cognitive and affective dimensions that can only be improved through work and exercise. Independent muscle and nervous systems work together to make the motions necessary to play the piano. We can define technique as the control over these motions. All motor skills depend on the precise and correct timing of muscular movements. The factors that make piano education easier for adult students compared to younger students are:

(i) They meet the physical requirements of height and strength, and can easily reach pedals and ends of the keyboard

(ii) They can reach octaves easily and implement accompaniment styles on the piano

(iii) They have the power and control necessary to create higher tonal resonance and color diversity in interpretation compared to younger students.

However, we have observed during our teaching experiences that many adult students face problems as

they study despite their advantage in height and strength, which younger students lack.

Physically matured adults lose flexibility in their finger and arm movements, which are in place among younger students. Adults are accustomed to using their bodies in specific ways, and they can have difficulty getting used to new patterns of movement and reprogramming neural information transmitted to muscles and limbs during early stages of piano education. In this case, beginner students, especially those who quit piano education when they were young, can feel guilty if they fail to achieve the success they desire despite making an effort and think they could have avoided such problems had they not quit at an earlier age. It is much more difficult for them to accept failure compared to children. At this point, instructors can put them at ease by sympathizing with them, and minimize physical issues by choosing the repertoire carefully.

Instructors should frequently remind their students that new movement patterns can only be developed by repetitive work and exercise, and ultimately achieve a fast and correct style of performance. Students should be instructed to do warm-ups and soften their rigid arm muscles before studying, gradually extend their daily study time, avoid challenging technical passages and solve their problems.

DISCUSSION

This study includes a literature review on the historical development process of adult piano education, the methods used in training and factors of success, and most of the results in literature were in parallel with the study. Some of the studies on method found that methods have distinctive strengths and weaknesses.

This study shows that the methods, especially at final stages, feature simplified versions or only the opening themes of certain important pieces. Featuring simpler versions of the parts of musical works by famous composers so that students can overcome various difficulties will undoubtedly have positive effects in the development of students who study in phased progress.

Eroğlu (2018) in his study titled "Determining a Beginner Piano Method Book" found that methods include information on notation and note values, tone, measures, tempo and nuance signs but they do not adequately cover complementary elements like music theory, chords and accompaniment in line with modern teaching methods.

Akbulut (2010) in his doctoral thesis stresses that the F. Beyer piano method continues in the C position for 28 exercises and on the G key for 53 exercises, the melody is always played on the right hand, and the left hand is used for accompaniment. Akbulut criticizes the method on the grounds that students have to work on improving their left hand.

Another important method is the "middle C" method, which was developed by Burkard and sets a certain position to start playing the piano. While it is proposed that this method helps establish the correct hand position by playing the thumbs of both hands on the middle C and forming a bridge between G and F, and thereby facilitating symmetrical movements, which our minds are more inclined towards (Güven et al., 2012), Akbulut argues that the method is more suitable for preschoolers in his dissertation, supported by the opinions of teachers.

Coşkuner (2015), who studied amateur piano education in his dissertation, carried out a survey with instructors and found that the "Middle C" method had the highest rate with 57% and the system of starting both hands on the G key had the lowest rate with 7 percent. These results are in parallel with this study.

Based on the evaluation of methods, we can say the series titled "Faber Adult Adventures" and "Alfred Basic Adults" cover piano education in its entirety, and they are more suitable for modern piano education. According to the literature review on research question 3.

Özmenteş (2013) in his survey titled "Student performance and motivation" examined the opinions of teachers. Instructors who participated in the interviews expressed overlapping opinions on teacher-student communication, empathizing with the student, and recognizing the differences between students as external motivation factors. Another factor that affects student motivation negatively is the possibility of student failure when the repertoire is beyond their level, which emphasizes the importance of repertoire selection. This result is in parallel with this study.

Orhan and Ercan (2012) in his study titled "Problems and Solution Suggestions in Instrument Training of Adult Students" interviewed professional adults who take instrument lessons at private schools or community centers, and 58% of adults said they get bone and muscle pain when they play, and 24% said they partially feel pain. This can be because of the age factor but also due to incorrect practices and exercise times. Adult students stated that they play the piano without warming up and study irregularly, like not studying for three days and studying very hard for one day. 61% of adults said negative criticism by their instructors dampens their spirits. Conversation outside the class has positive psychological effects on 76% of the adults. It has been observed that this social environment encouraged students to continue with their lessons without postponement. It can be said that this result is in line with this study.

Coutts (2018) mentions the positive impact of rewarding students as they fight against difficulties to improve their piano skills. He argues that this should continue until students achieve study goals.

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

This study aims at identifying positive and negative

factors of adult piano education and proposing solutions. From the 20th century onwards, composers have been creating new musical works in different forms. The goal of education should be to introduce works of different styles as well as the classics. In this respect, phased progress will be more productive in any method when the instructor designs the best training program based on his own opinions for the student make better progress and gain information on new compositions in different rhythms and forms instead of continuing with the same method series. At this stage, the role of instructor stands out as an important external motivator. Instructors should consider the following as they plan a repertoire for a student:

- (i) Are the musical works selected at the appropriate challenge level for the student?
- (ii) How beneficial are they in reinforcing skills and knowledge of the adult student?
- (iii) Can they establish the foundation necessary to enhance their knowledge and skills?

Information on the period of a musical piece is necessary to interpret musical works correctly, and the most fitting interpretation should be sought according to the characteristics of its composer. The instructor explains the existing melodic, rhythmic and harmonic outlines to the student and helps the student comprehend the musical approach the composer wanted in order to achieve the perfect interpretation. After all, the interpreter of a musical piece can only be called responsible when the interpretation reflects the information on the period, style, aesthetics and form of the piece. An appropriate repertoire selected for this system will surely put the student at ease with the positive impact of music. Students will have an easier time fighting against difficulties in their personal lives and be happier in life as they utilize their leisure time (Türkmen, 2010).

Another proposal is that allowing students to perform easy pieces they like for an audience at concerts will boost their confidence and motivation. It should be remembered that piano education involves more than technical skill, and while technical competence is an instrument of creating beauty, the goal is to embed musical behaviors that will help students express themselves through music (Ercan, 2003).

Adult piano methods are written in foreign languages, which make them difficult to understand. The Burkard method, written in 1906, was published in Turkish by Müzik Eğitimi Yayınları in 2016. Publishing "Faber Adult Piano Adventures" and "Alfred Basic Adult All-in-one Course" in Turkish will allow these methods to be used and understood by the majority. Families should be encouraged and informed about getting their children private piano training, and the number of instrument education establishments should be increased, thereby spreading the positive behavior families observe in their children across a broader part of society.

In conclusion, it is believed that the proposals in this study, which are intended to help adult piano students develop various behaviors, will provide guidance for further research.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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