

Learning the Piano:

Teachers' attitudes to parental involvement

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Abstract

Numerous studies in general education have concluded that parental involvement improves student achievement. Within music education, related research indicates that parental involvement is beneficial to progress on a musical instrument. In the face of extensive evidence of the importance of parental involvement, my thesis is that positive instrumental teachers' attitudes to parental involvement leads to increased pupil enjoyment and achievement in music-making. However, in my experience, few music teachers encourage parental involvement.

So I decided to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are instrumental teachers' attitudes to parental involvement in children's music lessons and practices?
2. What do those teachers who promote parental involvement actually encourage parents to do?
3. How do parents support their children musically?
4. Does increased parental involvement raise pupil enjoyment and achievement?

In order to gather evidence to answer these questions, I conducted 50 interviews. I interviewed 10 private piano teachers, 20 of their pupils (two pupils of each teacher), and 20 parents (one parent of each pupil). The responses from these interviews enabled me to explore whether the selected sample of teachers welcomed parental involvement, what effect their attitude had on parental involvement, the nature of parental involvement, and the effect on children's enjoyment and achievement. These issues were explored both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Clearly noticeable from the replies was the enthusiasm of the teachers, who love teaching and building a relationship with their pupils; of the pupils, who enjoy the challenge of learning and often spontaneously play music of their own choice; and of the parents, who show tremendous pride in their children and want to be engaged in their development. However, when I investigated the responses quantitatively, I found no link between teacher encouragement of pupil involvement, and pupil enjoyment and achievement. Some teachers encourage parental involvement, and some do not, and they all gave understandable reasons for their views. But I did discover that teachers in my sample are

much more likely to encourage parental involvement if they have pedagogical qualifications, have followed specialist courses, and are experienced teachers.

In my view the most interesting finding is that those children whose parents are involved in their instrumental learning welcome it. It is evident from my research that parents are more able to act as an intermediary between teachers and children than many teachers realise. Some parents are successfully helping their children to learn without the teacher being aware of it. My evidence also shows that it is not necessary for a parent to have musical training to be able to support a child in learning an instrument. So, for all these reasons - and despite my quantitative results overall being inconclusive - there are good grounds for believing parental involvement is beneficial and should be encouraged.

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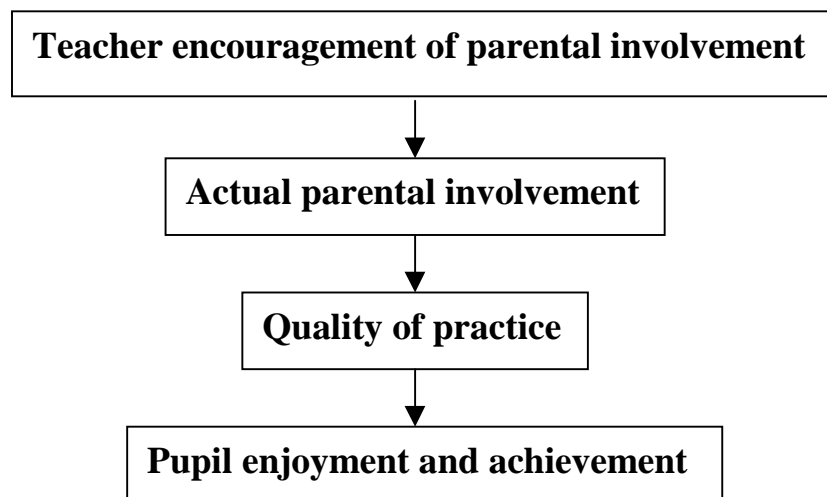
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1 Introduction

This research project is about learning the piano and, specifically, about teachers' attitudes to parents being involved in children's music lessons and practices, and the effect of this involvement on pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

I have a personal interest in parental involvement because of the way I teach the piano, using the Suzuki approach. One of the main tenets of this approach is that parents are actively involved in the learning process. However, I am aware that many instrumental teachers prefer not to involve parents. On reading the literature about parental involvement in both general education and instrumental learning, I found extensive evidence of the importance of parental involvement (see section 2 *Literature Review*). So my thesis is that positive instrumental teachers' attitudes to parental involvement leads to more parental involvement, which leads to more focused practice, which in turn leads to increased pupil enjoyment and achievement in music-making (see figure below).



I drew up three structured but open-ended interview schedules - one for teachers, one for pupils and one for parents (see *Appendix*). I interviewed 10 private piano teachers, 20 of their pupils (two pupils of each teacher), and 20 parents (one parent of each pupil), to explore whether the selected sample of teachers welcomes parental involvement, what effect their attitude has on parental involvement, the nature of parental involvement, and the effect on children's enjoyment and achievement. The responses were analysed both

qualitatively and quantitatively. Some level of bias may have crept into my analysis and interpretation of the data, but I hope this has been kept to a minimum.

The results regarding parental involvement and pupil achievement did not support my thesis. However, I was able to explore qualitatively and at length many fascinating issues about the teacher-pupil-parent relationship as it applies to music-making. I also found an unexpected but interesting link between teachers' training and their encouragement of parental involvement.

2 Literature review

Parental involvement in general education

Parental influence on children's learning

Reviews of numerous studies of the links between parental involvement and children's achievement have concluded that the evidence that parental involvement improves student achievement is beyond dispute (eg Henderson & Berla, 1994; and Ballantine, 1999; all cited in Hornby, 2000). According to the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (1997: 111):

“Parental involvement in the education of their children cannot in today's world be viewed as an optional extra for professional teachers and effective schools. It is clear that parents want to be positively and productively involved in the life and work of their children in school and that positive parental attitudes to education are an important influence on children's educational development and subsequent life chances. Teachers therefore have a professional obligation to create and nurture structures that will support and develop positive parental involvement and participation in the life and work of schools.”

Studies involving children at all levels, from infancy through high school, show that parental involvement makes a difference (Berger, 1987). For example, Berger explains:

“Reading specialists stressed the importance of parents reading to and with their children, encouraging, eliciting questions, and setting realistic goals for their child's learning” (p20).

Further studies of reading skills (eg Wragg, Wragg, Haynes & Chamberlin, 1998) have argued that parental involvement - reading to their children, having books in the home, and hearing their children read - is vital for reading attainment (National Literacy Trust, 2001).

Ballantine (1999; cited in Hornby, 2000: 170) states that “parents are critical to children's successes during the school years”. According to Sussel (1996), the benefits of increased parental involvement include:

- more positive parental attitudes towards teachers and schools;

- more positive student attitudes and behaviours;
- improved student performance;
- improved teacher morale;
- improved school climate.

Work by Cairney & Munsie (1992) has shown that virtually all parents are interested in their child's education and that parents know far more about language and learning than most teachers realise. However, "it seems that the ability of parents to support their children is often impeded by the 'schooling' of literacy" (ibid: 8): parents feel teaching is a specialised subject in which there is no part for them. Many parents are unaware of the real improvement that even a relatively small effort on their part may bring about. They are conscious of their own limitations as teachers, and feel they do not know what to do, or how, in order to give effective help and encouragement. The most important qualities required are "sensitivity, patience, enthusiasm, common sense and perseverance, rather than particular instructional skills or teaching techniques" (Howe, 1999: 169). Bandura (1997: 246) found that "parents who doubt their efficacy to help their children learn, turn over their children's education entirely to teachers", while parents with a strong sense of self-efficacy "will guide their children's learning and participate actively in the life of the school".

According to Topping & Wolfendale (1985), government reports such as the Plowden, Bullock, Court and Taylor have all indicated that parental involvement in educational and community-based programmes is an entirely positive influence upon the child. Bedi & Castleberry (1980; cited in Long, 1986) suggest that the Plowden Report may be seen as a starting point in the process of involving parents:

"It has been proved that parental involvement improves children's school performance, and anything that does so must merit close attention.... The success of any parental involvement venture depends very largely on the attitudes of the teachers putting it into operation" (ibid: 2-3).

The conclusions from the literature are clear that more parental involvement increases student performance, and that parents want to be involved in their children's education. However, to achieve optimal success, parents must have confidence in their own efficacy.

So teachers need to value parental input, learn how to work with parents, and show them how they can best assist. They need to motivate parents and convince them their help will make a difference. Therefore, teachers' attitudes to parental involvement are critical.

Teachers' attitudes to parental involvement

A Gallup Poll (1993) concluded that "teachers intuitively know that children are far more likely to do well in classes if parents play an active role in their children's education".

When asked "How important do you think it is to encourage parents to take a more active part in educating their children?" 96% of the public responded "Very important".

Ramirez (1999) conducted a survey on *Teachers' attitudes regarding parents and parental involvement*. His questionnaire replies from 203 teachers in two American high schools elicited contradictory responses. Almost all teachers in the survey (99%) report that parental involvement is important for a good high school, a similar proportion (98%) think parental involvement can increase student effectiveness, and most teachers (94%) agree that parental involvement increases student achievement. At the same time, over half of the surveyed teachers (54%) believe it is not their responsibility to involve families, and only a few (14%) had conferences in the previous year with 50% or more of parents. Interestingly, although very many teachers (81%) feel that parents do not know how to speak to their children about schoolwork, most teachers (92%) feel that parents could learn how to assist their children with schoolwork.

The study does not discuss why the teachers act and feel as they do, except that just over half the teachers (53%) report they do not have time to involve parents. However, 44% say they do have the time. It seems that the teachers in Ramirez's study know in theory that parental involvement is beneficial to pupil progress, but are unwilling to put these ideas into practice, perhaps themselves being, or feeling, untrained in how to involve parents successfully.

It seems incredible that these results are being found, given that more than a generation ago, the Plowden Report (1967: 9) stated:

"What matters most are the attitudes of teachers to parents and parents to teachers - whether there is genuine mutual respect, whether parents understand what the

schools are doing for their individual children and teachers realise how dependent they are on parental support”.

Parental involvement in instrumental learning

Provision of musical environment

Many research studies (Brokaw, 1983; Sosniak, 1985; Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987; Manturzevska, 1990; Sloboda & Howe, 1991; Zdzinski, 1992; Davidson, Howe, Moore & Sloboda, 1996; Hallam, 1998) provide compelling evidence that musical achievement is linked to high levels of parental involvement: “Overall, the most musically able children had the highest levels of parental support” (Davidson *et al*, 1996). Studies also show that “parent involvement, in the form of encouragement, support, supervision and participation in lessons, in the early stages of instrumental learning, is a better predictor of student achievement than other factors such as musical aptitude test results or parent’s musical literacy” (Creech, 2001: 72).

It is the quality of the nurturing environment that is critical, and the onus for this is placed firmly on parents and teachers who need to provide not only a musically stimulating environment but also one in which “the child’s enthusiasms are noticed, listened to, and responded to with sensitivity and imagination” (Kemp & Mills, 2002: 14).

Sloboda (1993) identifies high levels of appropriate family support as one of five factors which contribute to high levels of musical achievement. But support must be of a particular kind - non-threatening to the child’s self-esteem. All children in his sample reported periods of low motivation for practice, and claimed that had their parents not pushed them to practice during these periods, they probably would have done none at all. Most parents provided high levels of material and time resource (Davidson, Howe & Sloboda, 2000).

Davidson, Sloboda & Howe (1995/1996) found that the highest achieving children received the most support from their parents, up to the age of 11. Thereafter parental support diminished while the children were increasingly driven by intrinsic motives to practice regularly by themselves. Indeed, Zdzinski (1996) found that at elementary level children’s ‘musical performance outcomes’ were significantly related to parental

involvement, whereas at junior high and senior high levels parental involvement had more effect on pupils' motivation and attitude.

Once children start learning an instrument, Sloboda & Davidson (1996) believe parental involvement is critical as to whether the child persists or gives up. Davidson *et al* (1995/1996) believe that high levels of musical achievement are most likely unattainable without such supportive parental involvement. Likewise, research by Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer (1993) concludes that elite performers have received continued parental and environmental support. As pointed out by Radford (1991; cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002), children in highly enriching environments will progress faster through the traditionally understood stages of cognitive development like those proposed by Piaget.

Biographies of outstanding musicians studied by Manturzevska (1990) show that family environment and intrinsic motivation for musical activity are the factors which most influence musical development. Among the characteristics of the outstanding musician's home environment, Manturzevska (1995; cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002) mentions the deliberate organization and channelling of the child's interests, time, and activities; a positive emotional atmosphere for musical activity; and a willingness to invest considerable time and effort in musical activities. As Gembris & Davidson's review (2002) shows, similar findings have emerged from studies by authors such as Sloane, Sosniak and Bastian.

Talent development involves many people working for the achievement of just one. Unusually successful learning seems to be a group effort involving the child, parents, teachers, other family or family friends (Sosniak, 1987).

Attendance at lessons and supervision of practice

For the young or beginner musician, supervised practice can be more effective than practice carried out without supervision. Research indicates a strong relationship between children's musical development and the direct involvement of parents and nurturing, supportive teachers (Sosniak, 1985; O'Neill, 1997; cited in Barry & Hallam, 2002). Studies by Brokaw (1983) and Davidson *et al* (1996) have also revealed a significant relationship between the achievement of young instrumentalists and the amount of parental

supervision of home practice. A study of adolescent instrumentalists (Barry, 1992; cited in Barry & Hallam, 2002) compared the improvement in musical performance of students who followed a structured practice programme under adult supervision with that of students who practised with no supervision. The supervised group achieved greater gains for melodic accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and musicality. Barry found that while supervised practice can be helpful for some individuals, it can be detrimental as students become more mature and seek greater independence.

Doan (1973; cited in Sloboda & Howe, 1991) and Brokaw (1983) both found that the amount of time spent by parents in supervising music practice was a better predictor of student achievement in the early stages of development than the total amount of time spent practising. Other research has helped to elucidate Doan and Brokaw's findings. Studying American concert pianists, Sosniak (1985) found that although many of the parents of her cohort had little involvement in music, they were highly supportive of their children's efforts. Their role, which included stimulating and supporting practice, had been vital.

The teacher-parent interaction was found to be of critical importance in all the studies undertaken by Davidson, Sloboda, Howe and Moore throughout the 1990s. The parent should be prepared to sit with his or her child in the early stages of practice and attend lessons to find out what needs to be done at home. As the child's skills begin to develop, a more autonomous practising strategy can be promoted, but regular encouragement of and listening to practice activities can help enormously. Davidson *et al* (2000) found that all children selected for entry to a specialist music school had parents who took an active participatory role in music lessons and daily practice. The most successful children had parents who were involved in lessons, speaking to the teacher at the end of the lesson, taking notes and supervising practice, often for up to 12 to 15 years.

Gembris & Davidson (2002: 26) suggest that

“The Suzuki approach and the Pace Method are excellent ways to promote very early engagement and to encourage practice and creativity.... These programs provide the children with the key adult support necessary to engage and sustain their interest in music. In both cases, teachers take on roles of a parental nature, gently coaxing the child, but within a structured framework”.

In these programmes parents are encouraged to learn themselves, to attend their child's lessons, and to take note of what should be done in home practice. However, no research has been carried out to investigate whether children learning by these methods either enjoy or achieve more highly than other children.

Practising is a skill in itself. "Clearly, the highest levels of performance in a domain require optimal training conditions and learning environments" (Lehmann & Ericsson, 1997: 40). Whereas in sports training "the coach is often present during practice, music students typically retreat to the practice room and work by themselves" (ibid: 51). Although learning conditions may often be less favourable than learning environments in which experts develop,

"the quality of training can be increased at all levels of performance by incorporating features commonly found in the training of experts (individualised practice assignments, improved monitoring of feedback)" (ibid: 40).

Indeed, music students often have individual instrumental lessons, reflecting the fact that practising and performing are very often solo rather than group or team activities.

Supervised practice, preferably by a live-in teacher, can create optimal conditions for deliberate practice and resulting skill acquisition. Home instruction and supervised practice may lead to faster optimisation of time spent practising (Lehmann, 1997). Gruson (1988) found that beginners are more likely to repeat individual notes, which teachers consider an inefficient method of practising, while experienced players are more likely to repeat musically coherent sections of a piece. Again, here it is invaluable if parents help by reminding their child of the teacher's instructions.

Barry & Hallam (2002: 158-159) suggest that "achievement is related not only to the length of time spent practicing but also to the quality of that practice". Parents can help by providing space in the house, choosing a good time of day to practise, and preventing disturbances during the practice. But they can also help by supervising the practice. In this way they may help improve the quality of practice, as well as the quantity.

Parents' musical background

Typically, parents of highly musically successful children have broad interests in music rather than performance expertise - and parental involvement in music increases over the child's learning period, that is, parents follow rather than lead their child's growing sense of musicianship (Davidson *et al*, 1996). The parent may view musical ability as something admirable, yet difficult to achieve, and that therefore requires special attention. Treating the child as a 'special' person and providing musical support, may provide the child with the essential external motivation for a high investment in musical activity (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996).

Many of the highest rated children in Sloboda's sample (1993) had developed a very strong sense of themselves as 'musical'.

“This seemed to come about through the way in which their early musical achievements were praised and ‘made a fuss of’ by the immediate family. Such praise came most naturally from parents who were not highly proficient musicians themselves, and who were, therefore, genuinely impressed by their child's modest accomplishments. Even though the notion of ‘talent’ may have little scientific foundation, belief in one's own talent can be a powerful motivator for the continuing, sometimes gruelling, long-term engagement with practice.

Unfortunately, belief that one is not ‘talented’ can have an opposite negative effect on motivation and effort” (p4).

Sloane (1985; cited in Lehmann, 1997) stated that parents of talented children were active, hard-working individuals with a work-ethic who prevented waste of time and excessive leisure. Bastian (1989; cited in Lehmann, 1997) found the parents of musically successful interviewees to be strict and demanding. An unspoken theme runs through all observations by Howe & Sloboda (1991), that of the quiet, dogged perseverance of parents to help their child get the work done.

Parents' attitudes to parental involvement

Research (Brokaw, 1983; Sosniak, 1985; Davidson *et al*, 1996) shows that the more crucial determinant of the musical achievement of children is not the musical literacy of the

parents, but rather the level of support and time commitment which the parents are willing and able to make. The development of musical excellence cannot be seen as something relating solely to teacher and student behaviours and interactions (Davidson *et al*, 1995/96): “Without the positive involvement of the parent in the process, the highest levels of achievement are likely to remain unattainable” (p44).

Therefore, it is necessary for instrumental teachers to assure parents of their ability to help their children, and to build parents’ confidence in their ability to make a difference to their child’s development.

“It is parents’ own values and sense of efficacy with respect to their children’s musical pursuits which influence their level of participation.... In order to achieve optimal success, it is crucial for parents to have confidence in their own efficacy” (Creech, 2001: 73).

But teachers themselves need to feel that even those parents without musical expertise can help if shown how to give appropriate support and how to create the right nurturing environment.

The question may be asked, what motivates parents to become involved in their children’s instrumental studies? Addison (1990; cited in Creech, 2001: 1) suggests that “many parents see instrumental tuition for their children as desirable”. Georgiou (1999; cited in Creech, 2001) suggests that where parents have high expectations and attribute possible success to effort rather than to ability, parents are motivated to become highly involved in the learning process, and, conversely, where parents attribute success to ability, they may be discouraged from participating in learning. Alternatively, if parents feel their child has ‘talent’ they may be more willing to do everything possible to nurture this talent than parents of a child who displays less talent (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002: 135): “Parental perceptions of children can become prophecies to fulfil, an expectation becoming a fact”.

This idea that high expectations motivate parents to become involved is supported by Power (1990; cited in Creech, 2001: 9) who, in a study of maternal attitudes to their children’s piano learning, concluded that:

“Mothers’ and teachers’ expectation levels play a significant role in children’s achievement. Mothers’ high achievement expectations influence their interactions with their children, which in turn influences the children’s achievement”.

Children's motivation

Children's motivation and enjoyment

Children's motivation and enjoyment are affected by many factors, including the repertoire they study, their view of ability and effort, their teachers, and their parents.

Important motivational differences appear when children practice repertoire assigned by their teacher rather than pieces they have chosen themselves. Sloboda & Davidson (1996) found that high-achieving musicians tend to do significantly greater amounts of formal practice, such as scales, pieces, and technical exercises, than their less successful peers. They are also likely to report more informal practice, such as playing their favorite pieces by ear, or improvising. Sloboda and Davidson conclude that these informal ways of practising contribute to musical success because the highest achieving students are able to find the right balance between freedom and discipline in their practice.

In a detailed case study of a young beginner clarinettist, Renwick & McPherson (2000; cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2002) discovered an elevenfold increase in the time spent practising a piece that she chose to learn herself, as compared to repertoire assigned by the teacher. In addition to this remarkable difference there were also major differences in the quality of the girl's practice.

It is important for the child to be always sufficiently challenged and stretched without being overwhelmed or threatened (Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Intrinsic motivation is maximised when students study repertoire that requires a reasonable amount of effort to be learned. Repertoire that is completed with little effort or that causes confusion or frustration can result in low engagement during practice (O'Neill & McPherson, 2002). In other words, "activities are seen as pleasurable when the challenge is matched to the person's skill levels" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2002: 35). Also children are more likely to engage in musical activities when they feel capable in music and value it (Yoon, 1997; cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2002).

There is an important distinction between how children view ability and how they view effort. Ability is viewed as something internal, stable, and beyond a student's control ("I

can't do this because I'm not a good musician"), whereas effort is seen as internal, unstable, and controllable ("If I do more practice I'll be able to play this piece"). In addition, students who see their success as being due to internal reasons such as effort are more likely to have a higher sense of self-esteem than students who believe their success is due to external reasons, such as luck (Weiner, 1986, 1992; cited in O'Neill & McPherson, 2002).

Kemp (2000a) asks whether people become musicians because they have the appropriate temperament, or whether the process of developing the requisite skills also stimulates personality development. Personality appears to be a complex outcome of both genetic and environmental influences. The young musician requires

“a facilitating environment comprising sensitive tuition and encouragement but, at the same time, personal space and freedom in which creativity and autonomy might blossom” (Kemp, 2000b: 41).

Teachers are perhaps the most important early influence besides the parents, not only because teachers transmit musical abilities but also because they more or less influence musical tastes and values, and are role models and hold a key position with regard to motivation - for good or for bad (Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Results of a study by Davidson *et al* (1995/1996; cited in Gembris & Davidson, 2002: 23) suggest that

“the students with the highest achievements found their teachers to be entertaining, friendly, and proficient musicians, whereas the lowest-achieving students remembered their teachers as unfriendly and incompetent.... Children who develop outstanding instrumental achievements tend to have learned in a positive emotional atmosphere that was enjoyable and free of anxiety”.

At the same time, teachers need to give each student the feeling of being exceptional in order to create the motivation for sustained practice (Krampe & Ericsson, 1995).

Several virtuoso musicians had parents who provided huge external motivation in their early years. These include Yo Yo Ma and Evgeny Kissin (Lehmann & Ericsson, 1997) and Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern (Creech, 2001). Initially parental support is very important for motivation. Later, comparisons with peers through public performances and competitions may be important, although for less proficient students, this may result in drop-out (Lehmann, 1997).

Creech's study (2001: 73) demonstrates that

“a major challenge for parents of violin students is to provide high levels of support in the initial stages of learning, and then to be able to maintain a supportive yet challenging environment within which the child may discover intrinsic motivation, and to replace imposed routine with allowing the child to take responsibility for the decision to continue playing the violin”.

Children's attitudes to parental involvement

High levels of support and challenge have a positive effect on teenagers in all talent areas, and parents of these accomplished children typically:

- devote great amounts of time and energy to meeting the needs of their children;
- set high standards;
- encourage productive use of time;
- provide challenging opportunities;
- make sure lessons and materials are available;
- set aside areas of the home where the child can work privately (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; cited in Creech & Hallam, 2003).

Crozier (1999) found that children in all age groups, including secondary school students, welcomed the parenting practices proposed by Csikszentmihalyi as being effective.

“Overall, the majority of the students in all year groups seemed to value their parents' help, interest and support” (Crozier, 1999: 124). She found that 62% of Year 7 students (aged 11-12) and 50% of Year 10 students (aged 14-15) always or usually received help from parents with homework. Year 7 students expressed appreciation about parents' help although a minority felt guilty at having help or did not agree with the advice given. Year 10 students said they were glad their parents helped: it increased their confidence and helped them get a better mark. Some said the help improved their understanding although others said that sometimes they got confused. However, it seems to be important that parental involvement is based on negotiation and is optional rather than obligatory.

It helps young people if they believe their parents are supportive of their involvement in musical activities. “Children who stay involved in learning to play an instrument believe that their parents are supportive of this activity far more than children who give up” (O’Neill, 2001). So it is important for the child to know their parent is supportive.

Effect on children of teachers’ attitudes to parental involvement

From the literature, it seems clear that parental involvement is important for children’s achievement both in general education and, additionally, in instrumental learning, and that children generally welcome support from parents. Research also suggests that, while trained teachers in general education are usually aware of the importance of parental involvement, they are often unwilling to utilise parental assistance. The question could be asked whether pupils whose teachers encourage parental involvement enjoy and achieve more than pupils whose teachers discourage parental involvement. There seems to be no research on instrumental teachers’ attitudes to parental involvement, and this study attempts to fill the gap.

3 Research questions and research method

Research questions

Arising from my literature search, I identified four research questions for investigation:

1. What are instrumental teachers' attitudes to parental involvement in children's music lessons and practices?
2. What do those teachers who promote parental involvement actually encourage parents to do?
3. How do parents support their children musically?
4. Does increased parental involvement raise pupil enjoyment and achievement?

Research method

I conducted fifty semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 10 piano teachers, two pupils of each teacher (20 pupils), and one parent of each pupil (20 parents). Teachers were asked about their teaching background, their pupils, the involvement of parents in lessons, their encouragement of parents in practices, and their pupils' motivation for and enjoyment of playing the piano. Parents were asked about their child's musical environment, parental communication with teacher and attendance at piano lessons, parental assistance at practice, and their assessment of their child's motivation for playing the piano. Pupils were asked about their musical environment, parental attendance at their piano lessons, parental assistance at practice, and their enjoyment of playing the piano. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as providing more qualitative data than a questionnaire, and offering a 100% reliable reply rate. Robson (2002) was consulted for guidance on devising the interview schedules, which are given in the *Appendix*.

Research in the 1990s by Davidson, Howe, Moore and Sloboda (eg 1996) focused on achievement. I asked questions about achievement, but in this small sample quantitative comparisons within the sample are likely to be influenced by the variable of innate ability. Caution has been exercised in interpreting such quantitative comparisons. More indicative of the child's attitude and motivation, although more subjective, is the child's enjoyment of music-making. Possibly, a child who enjoys music will achieve more, in the long term,

than a child pushed to achieve graded examinations. It could be argued that the purpose of teaching is to ensure that children gain pleasure from listening to and making music at a level appropriate to their own competence. The study, therefore, measures children's enjoyment of music in terms of indicators such as whether they play other instruments, play in musical groups, play the piano for pleasure, and listen to music.

Respondents

Teachers

The 10 teachers interviewed for this study are all members of the European Piano Teachers' Association UK (EPTA UK) living in or very near Cambridge. Of the 16 Cambridge members, only 10 teachers had pupils of appropriate ages (see section on *Pupils* on page 22), so it was not necessary to undertake any selection process. Eight female teachers and two male teachers were interviewed. I decided to interview teachers who were members of EPTA for two reasons. First, EPTA UK publishes a list of members, so identification and contact was straightforward. Second, I felt that if I interviewed only those teachers whom I knew or who were recommended to me, there might be a bias in favour of those who shared my own beliefs.

In order to become a member of EPTA UK, teachers must have had a certain amount of training and/or experience. They must either hold an appropriate music degree or diploma or be recommended for membership by another professional musician. Some teachers, although with the necessary training or experience, may feel too insecure to join; others may be too isolated to know about EPTA; others may feel membership of EPTA is too expensive (£35 a year), or that it would offer them no benefits; others may have further reasons for not joining. Some teachers at the higher level may feel too superior, and again may feel EPTA has nothing to offer them. Current membership of EPTA UK is just below 1,000 members.

The 10 teachers in the sample all have some experience, having been teaching piano for between six and 40 years. They teach between 12 and 40 pupils each. Further details of the teachers are given in the table on page 54 of section 3 *Results and discussion*.

Coding

Respondents are labelled as follows. The 10 teachers are coded T1 to T10. The pupils of T1 are coded C1.1 and C1.2 and their parents are P1.1 and P1.2 respectively. For T1 to T5, both pupils of each teacher are aged 10. For T6 to T10, their first pupil (eg C6.1) is aged 10, and their second pupil (eg C6.2) is aged 14.

Pupils

In order to control for the variable of age, and to narrow the selection process required of teachers, I decided initially to concentrate on pupils aged 10, and who were taught privately. Each teacher was asked to offer two pupils to participate in the research. The first five teachers were asked to provide two pupils aged 10 or, if the teacher did not have two pupils aged 10, as near as possible to age 10, but still at primary school. Each of the second batch of five teachers was asked to provide one pupil as near as possible to age 10, together with one pupil as near as possible to age 14. There were two reasons for this change. First, the two 10 year old pupils and parents of any one teacher gave similar responses regarding parental involvement. Second, many 10 year olds are still very enthusiastic about learning an instrument. The Young People and Music Participation Project (O'Neill, 2001) indicates that fewer than 35% of those children who play instruments in year 6 (age 10-11) remain playing by the end of year 7 (age 11-12). I, therefore, thought it would be interesting to study some older pupils who had persevered beyond this critical point, in order to increase the qualitative responses. These particular ages were chosen as being representative of Zdzinsky's (1996) study in which musical performance outcomes were significantly related to parental involvement only at the elementary level, while affective outcomes were related most strongly at senior high level.

The teachers were informed at this early stage, when selecting pupils, that the research would focus on pupil enjoyment, but were not told about the additional emphasis on parental involvement. Many teachers had only one pupil of the requisite age. If they had a choice of several pupils, they tended to suggest offering willing and articulate pupils and parents. I anticipated that teachers would generally select their more enthusiastic and advanced students. Although some teachers had little choice (eg T1 and T3 were asked to provide two pupils aged ten, and each had just two pupils of that age), some had more

choice. However, teachers from the sample who entered pupils for this year's prestigious EPTA UK Piano Competition selected competitors, where possible, for interview for this research. T7 said she had four or five pupils aged 10. The one she offered for interview was the one she entered for the EPTA UK competition. T9 had no pupils aged 10 but two aged 11, and four aged 14. She entered one 11 year old and one 14 year old into the competition - these were the two offered for interview. The only other teacher from the sample who entered a pupil in the competition was T6. This pupil, likewise, was interviewed. It seems reasonable to conclude that other teachers also selected their most capable students for interview. 12 girls and eight boys were interviewed.

Parents

One parent of each of the 20 pupils was also interviewed. This was invariably the parent who was most involved in the child's music-making. In all cases but one this was the mother.

Procedure

I interviewed each of the 10 teachers alone in the teacher's house, with the exception of one teacher who preferred to come to my house. Because of the sensitivity some teachers may feel over parental involvement, I had told teachers when initially contacting them that the study was about pupils' enjoyment of music. The exact focus of the investigation - teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement - was clarified during the interview. I hope this discouraged interviewees from giving pre-meditated responses which they believed I wanted to hear, in an attempt to be 'helpful' to the research.

Each of the 20 parents and 20 pupils was interviewed by the researcher at the pupil's house. Usually the parent was interviewed first alone, followed by the pupil alone, but occasionally the parent preferred to attend the child's interview and, likewise, occasionally the child wished to be present during the parent's interview. This was permitted, although gently discouraged in later interviews, for I found that interesting discrepancies arose between the parent's and pupil's responses when each was interviewed alone. Also I felt more comfortable interviewing the teacher before interviewing that teacher's pupils and parents. If the pupils and parents had been interviewed first, the interview questions with

the teacher seemed a little invasive. This was because parents respond to the teachers who actively set out their teaching methods (eg encourage or discourage parental involvement). The teachers respond far less to the parents, although they obviously respond, at a different level, to the pupils' requirements. Only two teachers were interviewed after their pupils and parents.

For ease of transcription, all the interviews were tape recorded. Immediately after each interview the responses were transcribed into tables in Word. On completion of all interviews, quantitative data were coded and analysed using Excel.

4 Results and discussion

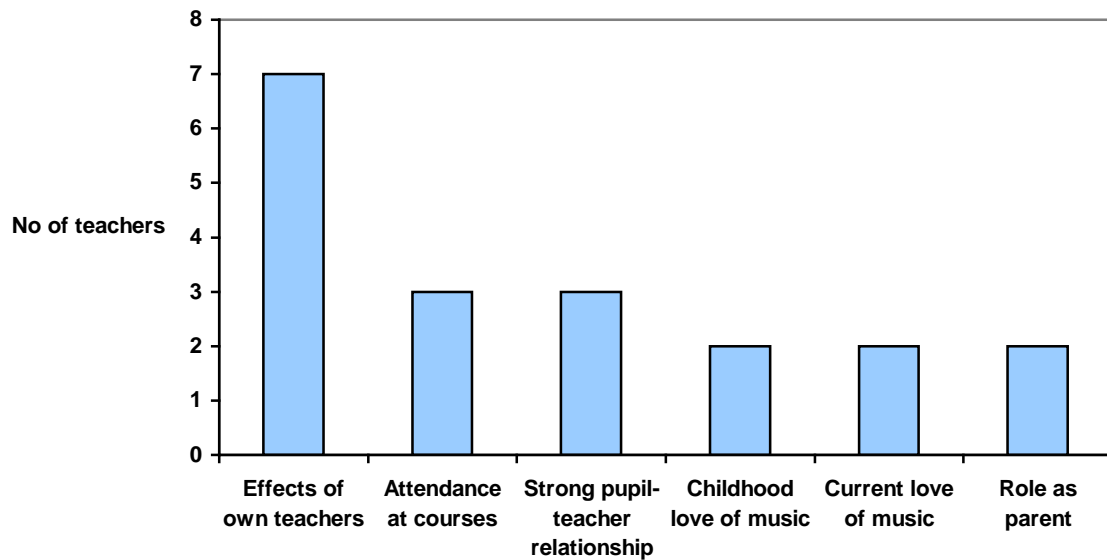
Teachers' attitudes

This part of the analysis covers influences on teachers and their views on enjoyment and progress.

Influences on teaching

The level of initial training of piano teachers was low: of the 10 respondents, half had received no pedagogical training prior to commencing teaching (see last five teachers in table on page 54). Of the three respondents who have attended specialist training courses, all say their teaching has been enhanced and that they use these skills “all the time” (T7). T7 and T10 feel their training in Kodaly, Dalcroze and Orff has helped their pupils enjoy developing musically through singing and active participation. Suzuki, Kodaly and pedagogical training benefit pupils of T9 by their emphasis on “listening and being acutely aware of using their whole being - physique as well as psyche - when playing”. On the other hand, T4 claims his academic music studies are of very little value when teaching children. So specialist, practical courses are considered more valuable to teachers than academic courses, which is not surprising as music is essentially a practical subject.

Influences on teaching



Respondents mention a variety of influences on their teaching. The majority of teachers say their teaching is influenced by their own teachers. Attendance at courses and a strong pupil-teacher relationship are also considered important. Other influences are a childhood love of music, a current love of music, and the teacher’s role as a parent (see chart above).

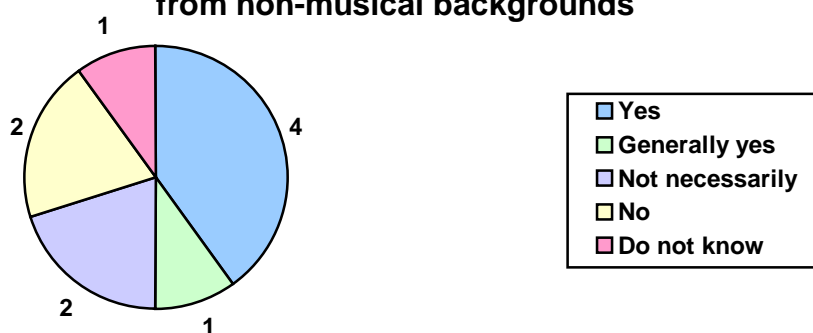
Respondents have been influenced in different ways by their own teachers, according to the style of teaching they themselves received. T4, highly qualified as an academic up to doctoral level but with no pedagogical qualifications, says “at first I emulated my own piano lessons, teaching in a very conventional way”. T9 was very positive about her own “wonderful teachers who encouraged, gave performing experiences, and demanded a lot”. The way T5 was taught “has been a huge influence in terms of what I do not want to do”. She was pushed through examinations, learning little repertoire, and this has persuaded her to be “much more broad with my own pupils, trying to develop all-round musicians”. T6 learned from “very bad teaching received as a child, and from very good teaching received as an adult”, suggesting that sometimes poor teaching can have a positive effect on a teacher’s own skills with pupils. Attendance at pedagogical and specialist training courses are considered invaluable by all who have attended them, helping them deal with children (T2) and improve existing skills (T7). These are similar responses to those given by instrumental teachers in research by Mills & Smith (2003) in which nearly all teachers think their teaching is influenced by the teaching they received. Some of Mills & Smith’s

teachers say they teach like their own teachers, and others say they deliberately teach differently from them. Other influences they give are attending courses, reading books, and the work of other teachers.

The strongest impression of T9 is that of “music at home - listening to mother play and learning from mother”. She enthuses that “nothing taught later on replaces that amazing sense of music being so wonderful”. It is interesting to note that the only two male respondents both consider the pupil-teacher relationship as being of paramount importance: the “strong one-to-one relationship of the pupil to a single adult” (T4) and the development of a “two-way communication” (T3). T4 is also influenced by “being a father”, coming to “the role of teacher as a substitute parent”. As only one female teacher out of eight mentioned the pupil-teacher relationship, one wonders whether men more than women take on a parental role with their pupils; or whether the mothering role is so natural to women that they simply failed to mention it in the interviews. However, the sample is too small to draw any general conclusions.

Teachers’ views on enjoyment and progress

Teachers' views on whether pupils from musical backgrounds enjoy music-making more than those from non-musical backgrounds



Five teachers feel a musical background does usually lead to more enjoyment, while five disagree or do not know (see chart above). T9 reports “quite often the successful, happy, well-progressing pupil has a very musical home. The parents are not necessarily musicians, but there is a lot of enjoyment and encouragement and appreciation of classical music”. However, T7 points out that “there could be a situation where there is resistance

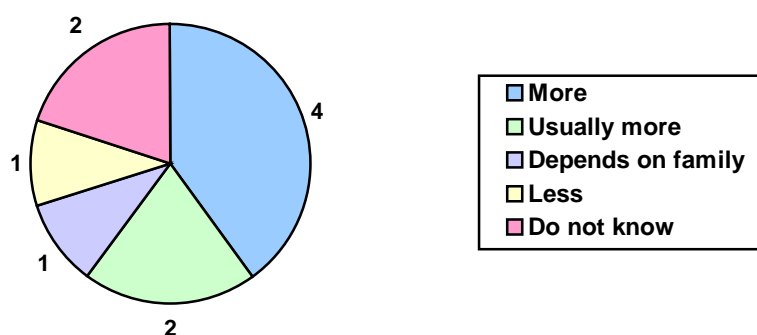
to the musical background and children want to try something else; but generally in families in which music is experienced and enjoyed together they will want to go on experiencing and enjoying music as a life-enhancing thing”.

T8 and T10 say there is not necessarily a connection: “Where the child is the only member of the family playing music, the child gets a complete thrill out of being able to do something the parents cannot. It is something very exciting for them, very special. But there is also the enjoyment of doing what everyone else does when older siblings play” (T8). Sloboda & Davidson (1996) agree that treating the child as a ‘special’ person may provide the child with the essential external motivation for a high investment in musical activity. T5’s reponse, “No idea; I would have thought that anyone involved in music would enjoy it” seems somewhat naive. After all, learning to play an instrument involves hard work, and the musical satisfaction may not be developed in the very early stages (nor even, sometimes, later).

T1 and T6 emphatically do not think a musical background leads to more enjoyment. However, they do feel it leads to more pupil progress because “the language is familiar” (T6). T1 says it is “easier to teach pupils from musical backgrounds. They have a certain concept on which to base the teaching, something which almost cannot be taught, a certain musicianship which can be brought out in them because they have listened to music and so have a concept they can strive for”.

All respondents feel a musical background leads to more progress. They point to the importance of a musical environment in which parents and siblings are enjoying playing and progressing, where music is considered a high status activity, and where the language of music is familiar. Progress is enhanced “especially when parents are involved in practising” (T10). There is “more progress because they have that help. Otherwise it can take twice as long to get a concept or a line of music learned if the child is on his own at home working it out, and has done some things right but a lot of it is wrong, so then the lesson is spent repairing things and explaining them, and maybe it will come back a bit better, but with families who can help, even someone just giving half an ear, some of those things do get better more quickly” (T8).

Teachers' views on whether pupils make more or less progress when a parent is involved in practice



Teachers were asked if they find pupils make more or less progress when a parent is involved in the practice. As the chart above shows, six out of ten teachers feel that, on the whole, the pupils who have done best have been encouraged and helped at home. Of the other four, one feels it depends on the nature of the family, one does not let the parent get involved, and two had no opinion.

The teacher who does not let the parent get involved says she gets her “best results with children taken from scratch where there is no music in the family and no support at home. For the first time, something is their very own. I think it is harder for children from homes with lots of musicians to make music their own special thing” (T6). However, later in the interview, this teacher contradicts herself by saying that “to a degree”, pupils from musical backgrounds make more progress than those from non-musical backgrounds.

Thinking of her own children, T5 feels “they get on better without me interfering, as long as the teacher remains in communication”. Other teachers say “it depends on the relationship between parent and child” (T1) for “sometimes they do not work well together” (T7). T3 approves of some involvement, but that “there are limits to what that involvement should be”. He feels that “too supervisory, too intrusive a presence is obviously not good. There must be some awareness that children must do things on their own”. All these comments indicate that there is a need to define parental involvement, in a flexible way, and for teachers to discuss the possibilities with parents, both before lessons start, and as the child progresses.

Several respondents feel it is invaluable if parents are involved: “if parent and child have the right relationship, parents can help in the early stages of learning a piece with getting rhythms and notes correct” (T8); “what is said in lesson is reinforced at home and children do not practise their mistakes” (T2); “children are not stuck on their own during the week with problems they cannot deal with” (T10); and “the chance of having a good practice is increased” (T4). T4 is “planning to invite each parent to write three things each week about their child’s practice, both to help me to target lessons more effectively, and also to get the parents more involved, along the lines of school reading programmes”.

Most respondents feel parental involvement is more useful in the early years, and becomes less necessary as children get older and become more disciplined in their practice, although it may still be “useful for older children to discuss matters with a parent” (T7). T10 thinks parental help is “very important” at all ages, while T6 feels it is “especially important to train pupils to be independent from the very beginning”, thus representing a wide range of opinion.

There was general agreement amongst teachers in my sample that enjoyment is, at least to some extent, dependent on making progress. Four teachers say “yes”, enjoyment is dependent on making progress, and the remaining six say “to some extent” (T1) or “usually” (T7). Teachers consider progress means achieving realistic and worthwhile goals, whatever they are and however small. This may involve learning to play more difficult pieces, or learning to play more pieces at the same level, or developing breadth and depth in learning to play pieces more musically and with greater meaning. There is also the enjoyment of participating in music-making, and producing beautiful sounds, and the deep sense of musical satisfaction. T6 turned the question upside down and indicated that practice and progress are dependent on enjoyment.

The question on what motivates pupils was very broad, and there was a general consensus that pupils are motivated by a mixture of the musical aspect, the social aspect, and wanting to please adults. T1 feels it is important to give plenty of praise during lessons for a positive relationship between teacher and pupil to develop. She feels it is important that pupils like the pieces they are playing for “pupils learn pieces they like very quickly, but plod along with pieces they do not like”. T4 agrees. This supports the findings of Renwick & McPherson (2000; cited in O’Neill & McPherson, 2002).

All the teachers said they were generally pleased with the progress of at least most of their pupils. T3 is more pleased with them now than when he first started teaching, suggesting he has learned from experience, having had no pedagogical training. T4 advises “parents of pupils who are not motivated that their child should stop lessons”.

Achievement and enjoyment were the two most often quoted factors for giving the teacher pleasure in their pupils’ progress. Teachers are happy when pupils have achieved what they have been asked to do; when the teacher can see them progressing; when pupils sense that they are making progress and are fulfilled and satisfied by what they have done; when pupils understand how to practise; when success has been achieved in a particular area, especially if the child has real problems but works hard to overcome them; and when pupils achieve a very good standard of performance. Teachers are pleased when it is evident that pupils enjoy playing; when they show enthusiasm for a piece of music; when the partnership creates pleasure on both sides; and when, as T9 explains, “we seem to be discovering more of their potential, we discover more about music, they manifest their persona in what they do”.

All the teachers in the sample enjoy teaching, responses varying from “most of the time” (T2) to “I LOVE my teaching” (T9). Teachers report they love the music. They love their pupils as people. They love teaching, working with children, facilitating pupils’ growth, and conveying the enjoyment of music. They love seeing pupils’ eagerness and progress, and the pupils’ sense of pleasure and fulfillment when they have achieved something. They love seeing a pupil “fired with enthusiasm for a particular piece of music” (T2). And they love the variety of every pupil being different.

Most teachers say they enjoy teaching all their pupils equally. They enjoy the variety of ages, stages and speeds of progress. Not surprisingly, teachers particularly enjoy those pupils who are disciplined and motivated to practise well, those who progress and achieve, and those who are enthusiastic and love music. There is also a tremendous sense of achievement from seeing the progress made by pupils who find learning difficult. The full range is perhaps expressed most eloquently by T9 who has taught pupils with all sorts of problems who could hardly progress but she felt they achieved something, through to her

greatest thrill when she can “share a real musical moment with a pupil ... when you feel you get nearer to some basic truths about life and spirituality”.

Teachers were asked if they had anything to add about pupils’ enjoyment and their attitude towards parental involvement. Responses here depended on each teacher’s interpretation of the term ‘parental involvement’. T6 does not believe in a “hands-on involvement”, but wishes parents to “bring the child to the lessons, listen to them when they have done something well, and share their love of the instrument.... The relationship is between teacher and pupil. Children have to take responsibility for their own practice in the same way as adult pupils do”. She likes “to use humour - to make every child laugh in every lesson”. T7 encourages parental involvement in practice, and thinks “it gives pupils an extra dimension if they know that their parent is involved and keen to hear what they are doing”. Perhaps the difference is between a passive or an active parental involvement. T6 does not want parents actively to take part either in the lesson or during practices, but still likes parents to show an interest in their child’s music-making, and to listen to the child’s playing when requested.

Teachers and parents have to be aware of different situations. T3 appreciates that “every pupil is different. Some need huge amounts of careful coaxing and community work; others are happy to work in much more isolation, making their own goals. I have to work out what suits the child. I do think that some parental involvement is always good, but that has to be judged against who the child is”. T1 notes that “parents have to be very wise in how they handle their children when learning a musical instrument”.

One teacher emailed afterwards to say “I very much enjoyed my interview. What professional would not enjoy having his views earnestly sought by a fellow professional! It made the rest of my day especially interesting, reflecting on what it is exactly that I am trying to do” (T4).

Piano lessons and practice

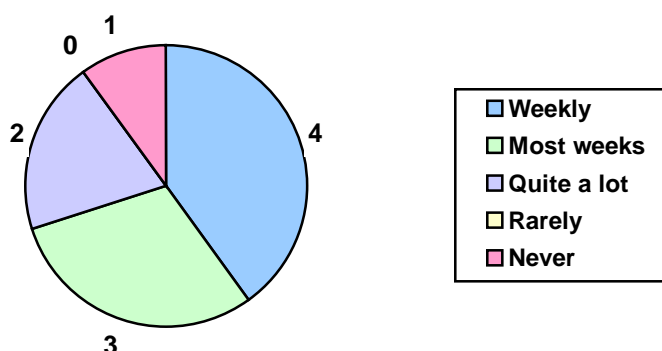
This part of the analysis covers communication between teacher and parent, parental attendance at lessons and teachers’ attitudes to parental attendance, parental assistance at

practice and teachers' attitudes to parental assistance. It is based on interview replies from teachers, pupils and parents.

Communication

Without exception, every teacher in the sample reported making notes for their pupils. Some teachers discuss with pupils what to write. Some of the older pupils prefer to make their own notes. T1 makes notes in the notebook and on the score, but also expects her pupils to remember, but T2 joked that “pupils don't remember!”.

Teachers' reports of communication with parents

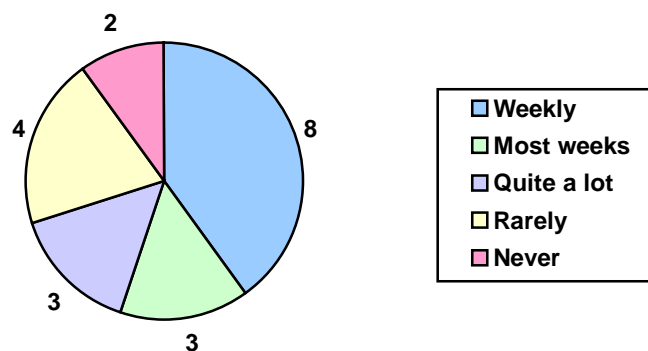


Teachers report frequent communication with pupils' parents: all but one teacher (90%) say they make contact weekly, most weeks or quite a lot (see chart above). But one teacher reports she communicates “never, unless there is a real problem” (T6). Very often teachers speak briefly to parents at the beginning or end of lessons (8 teachers), some parents stay during lessons (4 teachers'), teachers write reports (4), write letters or communicate through the child's notebook (3), mention chatting to parents at their pupils' concerts (3), or ring the parents of their pupils (2). One mentions sending information at the beginning of each term, and another proposes to reinstate an open week when parents are invited to attend a lesson and discuss any problems. It is likely that not every teacher mentioned every aspect of parental communication in their interview. Although pertinent comments can probably be conveyed at the beginning or end of a child's lesson, one wonders how much useful information can be reported to parents at a pupils' concert.

Most teachers appreciate regular communication with parents about practising, progress, goals, problems and arrangements. T8 teaches both in schools and at home, and an aspect of teaching at home that she particularly likes is that she is able to develop “a much better relationship with pupils’ parents”. T3 feels “the more interest and commitment in the shared endeavour, the better”. But two teachers believe children must take responsibility for their own practice and that interaction with parents is not necessary. T6 feels it is best if she “can get a child very motivated in the lesson because then the child can go home and play”. T5 will answer parents’ questions about what is to be practised but wants “pupils to develop their own motivation to practise”.

T4 teaches in pupils’ homes, and talks to parents every week after every lesson. He gives 30 minute lessons, and then allows “ten minutes to chat to the parent and get to the next pupil’s house in the village”. He finds the most effective way is “not to nag the pupil about practice during lessons. I try to keep the relationship good and the lessons pleasant, but then nag the parents”. He feels the parents have an important role. “The more the parents are interested, the more the child wants to play. If parents take no interest, playing the piano doesn’t have a high status. I would like as much parental involvement as possible.... Parents are in the home when the practice should be done; parents are involved in discipline. It is too much to expect some children to be very self-disciplined.” But very interestingly, this teacher prefers it if parents do not attend lessons.

Parents' reports of communication with teachers



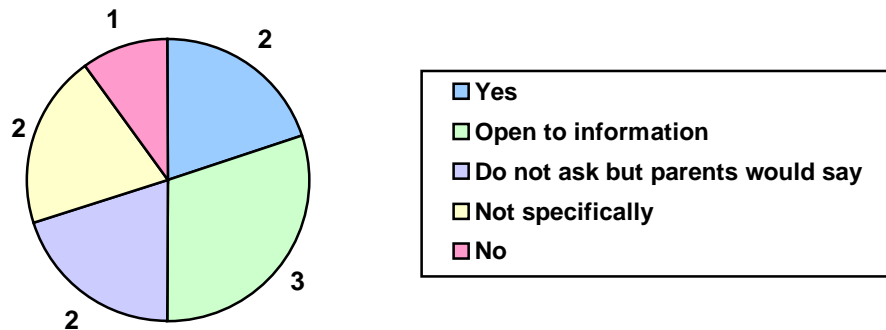
As shown in the chart above, 14 parents (70%) report that teachers communicate with them weekly, most weeks or quite a lot, and six parents (30%) report rare or no communication.

Comparing the replies from teachers and from parents, it is evident that teachers view themselves as being more communicative than parents view them. There is a correlation of only 0.3 between teachers' and parents' views on how much the teacher communicates.

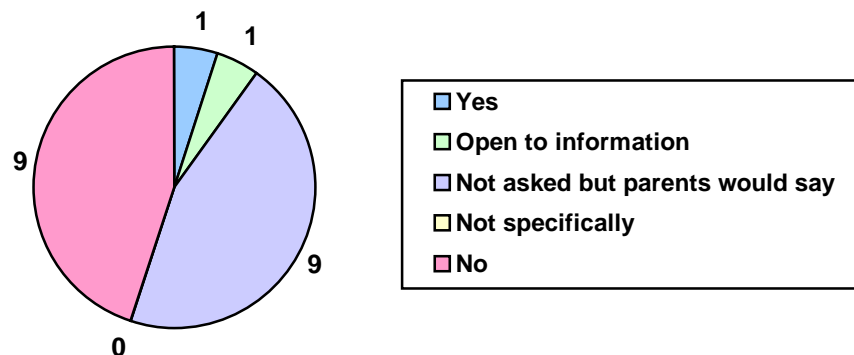
Parents' reports of communication with teachers vary between "the teacher is a very good communicator - I always sit in lessons" (P9.1) and "the teacher talks to me every week after the lesson, and also writes everything to be practised in a little book" (P5.2) to "not often, unless I ask" (P6.1) and "not at all, unless I ring the teacher" (P8.1). P3.2 reports "my husband often stays during lessons, but the teacher and my husband say nothing to one another - he just watches; the teacher doesn't really give any reports on progress". Parents say communication is usually about the child's progress and musical development (9), practice (8), arrangements for lesson times, examinations, performances and sheet music (5) and encouragement (2).

Some teachers say they invite parents to tell them about problems their child is facing at home or at school (T1, T2) and most teachers, while not specifically inviting such confidences, feel the information will be offered anyway because they know each other well enough. T3 "often may sense there are issues going on, but I am hesitant to probe too much - it seems a little intrusive", and T6 categorically does not enquire "because I have a good one-to-one relationship with my pupils".

Teachers invite parents to discuss child's problems



Parents invited by teacher to discuss child's problems

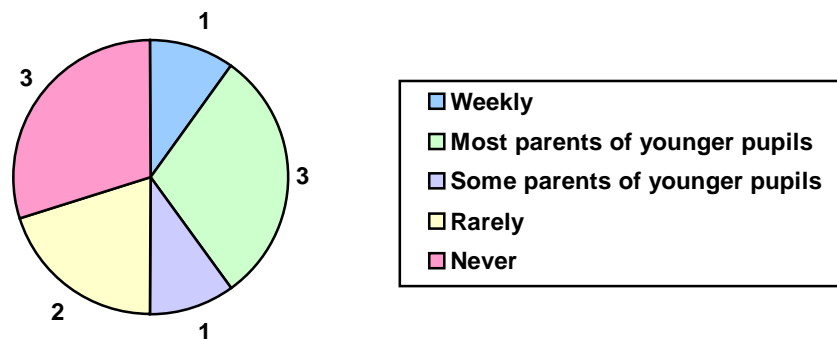


The two charts above compare teachers' and parents' views on openness to discussion about any problems children may be facing. There is a negative correlation of -0.3 between their views. The responses show that teachers believe they are more open than parents think. For instance, only one teacher (10%) says she does not invite parents to discuss problems, while nine parents (45%) feel the teacher does not invite them to talk about problems. Parents make comments such as “no, not particularly; the teacher prefers to communicate directly with the child” (P1.2), while the teacher of that child says “yes, I think parents feel very free to let me know of problems” (T1).

In view of the importance of parental involvement and communication examined in section 2 *Literature Review*, it seems strange that some teachers should be hesitant, or even very negative, about making enquiries of parents.

Parental attendance at lessons

Teachers' reports of parental attendance at lessons



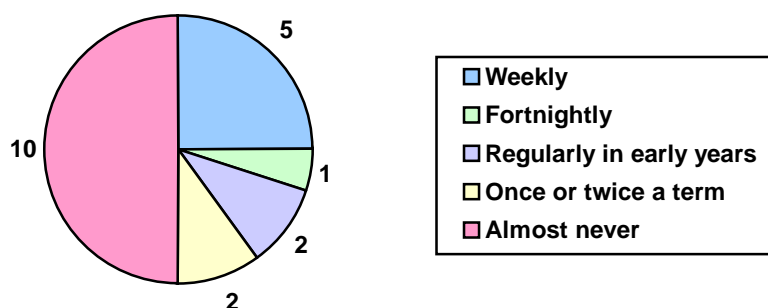
Five teachers (50%) report that most or some parents (generally of younger pupils) attend lessons weekly, while five teachers report that parents rarely or never attend lessons (see chart above). It is important to note that the parents of the two teachers who say that over 50% of parents attend lessons, are involved in very different ways. The parents of one teacher (T1) sit at the other end of the room and read, while the parents of the other (T2) are expected to listen to the lesson and are given specific tasks to practise at home with their children. These are two very different types of involvement with the child's music-making.

Teachers report that parents attend lessons because they want to (4), especially in the early stages (3), and because there is nowhere else for them to wait (2). Two teachers invite parents into part of the lesson to listen to something specific. There seems to be a culture divide in so much as all of T1's Chinese parents attend all lessons (75% of pupils), while none of her British parents attends. Admittedly, all her Chinese pupils are only children, so the parents have no need to juggle the demands on their time of a large family.

T3 has noticed that "over the years, more parents want to sit in". The majority of parents of his young pupils attend and he says "this normally works well with pupils aged 10 and under". Parents of T4's pupils sometimes attend lessons in the early stages, but never for more than a year. T9's two youngest pupils at the moment are aged 11. The parent of one attends every lesson; the father of the other chooses to work in the next room during the lesson, but the teacher will "call him in and draw his attention to anything specific I want him to do". Now and then T10 asks parents if they would like to attend and sometimes,

especially in the early stages, parents ask. Sometimes she invites them in at the end of the lesson “to see something nice that has been achieved”.

Parents' reports of parental attendance at lessons



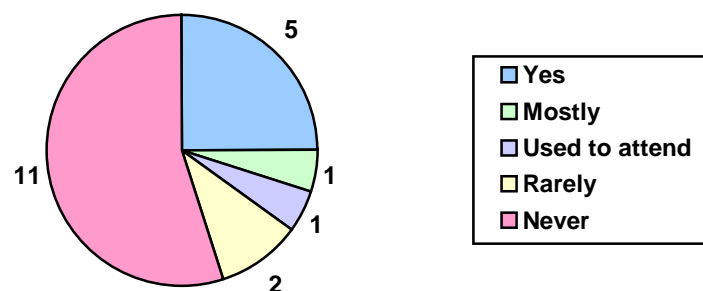
As the chart shows, six parents (30%) say they attend lessons weekly or fortnightly, while 10 parents (50%) say they almost never attend. Six parents do not attend lessons because they do not want to intrude on what they consider to be a “private activity” (P9.2) between teacher and pupil. A further three feel they have “no legitimate reason to attend lessons” (P8.2). Others say it would be impractical to attend (5), or that their child would prefer them not to be there (2): “I think it would make my daughter nervous if I were there” (P2.1) and “I assume she gets on better without me being present - she can be more relaxed” (P6.1).

The most common reason given for attending lessons is convenience (6). Three parents attend for their own interest and enjoyment: “At first it was not worth going home after dropping her for her lesson; then I discovered I quite enjoyed attending lessons; I am not sure whether the teacher would rather I didn’t stay” (P3.2). Another three want to be involved in order to help their children: “I used to listen to lessons so I could help my son during practices - remind him to do certain things set by the teacher, help with sight-reading or learning a new piece; but I don’t have to do that now because he is that far on. I go to the lesson now rather than wait in the car, and really enjoy listening to the teacher teach - I learn a lot by osmosis, learning indirectly” (P9.1). Here the parents’ interest seems to have developed through their initial involvement with their children’s practices. Davidson *et al* (1996) found that parental interest in music follows that of their child’s growing sense of musicianship.

Some parents cannot see the point in attending lessons, feeling the only reason for attending would be a “discipline problem” (P4.2) which is not an issue with her daughter, or a lack of trust in the child (P1.1) which, again, is not an issue for her son, but with no conception that the parent could help the child. On the other hand P7.1, who has had only a year of piano lessons herself, attends her son’s piano lessons because she is interested, and learned the guitar prior to her son starting so that she could help him. Despite only basic musical training herself, this parent is confident she can assist her son. The teacher encourages parental involvement. P2.2, whose daughter’s teacher also encourages parental involvement, thinks her daughter might feel inhibited to have her mother sitting in lessons. Thus, her daughter is developing a one-to-one relationship with her teacher, but not making the most of developing an ability to share music with other people - an ability to perform.

The 14 parents who never or rarely attend their children’s lessons were asked if they would like to attend. Eight say they do not wish to attend: “I see no need” (P4.2), or “the lesson is between the teacher and the pupil” (P7.2). Two are “happy to hear occasional lessons” (P6.2); one feels it is up to her daughter: “If she wanted me to be there, I would attend - it is her time” (P6.1). For two parents who are interested, it would not be convenient to attend - one does not drive, and the other has to supervise a younger child.

Children's reports of parental attendance at lessons

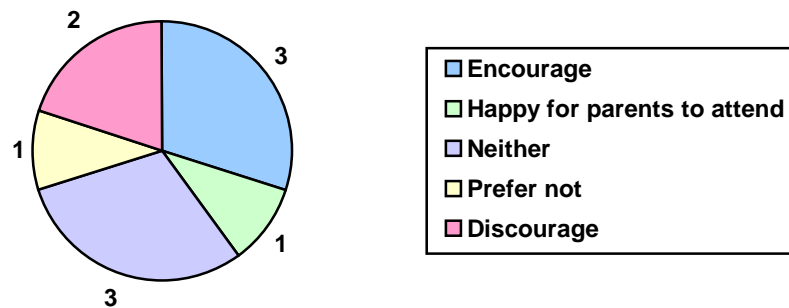


As shown in the chart, six of the interviewed children (30%) say their parents attend lessons. 11 (55%) say their parents never attend: many of these children say they would not like a parent to attend lessons, because “I would get a little nervous” (C2.1) (her mother said: “I think it would make my daughter nervous if I were there”), “I don’t like

other people to hear mistakes” (C6.1) (her mother said: “I assume she gets on better without me being present - she can be more relaxed”), “I would get a bit embarrassed in front of them” (C2.2), and “I would be under more pressure to play properly” (C7.2). Parents seem to be sensitive to their children’s feelings, but also these children are very conscious of themselves and the situation. However, of the six children who say that their parents attend all or most of the time, none of them minds and two feel very positive about attendance: “I don’t feel so lonely, and she knows what I am doing” (C3.1) and “It is quite nice if I play a piece particularly well to show my dad that I CAN play it and that I HAVE been practising” (C3.2). C7.1, whose mother rarely attends lessons, would like her to be there “because she can tell me things afterwards that I have missed in the lesson”. The one-to-one relationship between a teacher and pupil can become quite intense, and it could be argued that there are benefits in having another person in the room, not least from the point of view of learning to perform in front of other people without becoming self-conscious.

Teacher encouragement of parental attendance at lessons

Teachers' attitudes to parental attendance at lessons



Four teachers (40%) encourage or are happy for parents to attend lessons, three (30%) do not mention attendance, and three (30%) discourage parents or would prefer them not to attend lessons (see chart above). Teachers vary between those who positively encourage attendance of all parents, through those who encourage attendance of parents of younger pupils but feel it is inappropriate for those of older pupils, to those who positively discourage attendance apart from the very first lesson.

Some teachers feel that “parents cannot help interfering; the child will talk to the teacher much more if there is no parent present; sometimes parents are a bit pushy but I want to have a relaxed and informal lesson so the child can enjoy it” (T5). She feels that “having the parent there does not help get the best out of the child” and it is not helpful to her as a teacher “feeling I am always being observed as if on a training course”. The crucial point here may be the difference between teachers aiming for enjoyment and hoping that will lead to achievement, or aiming for achievement and hoping that will lead to enjoyment. A high-achieving musician needs a pushy teacher and/or parent in order to reach those heights. It is all very well to have a “relaxed and informal lesson so the child can enjoy it”, but that may not bring out the full musical potential of the child. And the fact that the teacher does not like “being observed as if on a training course” suggests a lack of confidence in her teaching skills. Confident teachers have nothing to hide, would be proud of their teaching ability, and able to engage with the child whether or not the parent were present.

However, much depends on each teacher’s individual teaching style. One teacher “had an 8 year old whose mother insisted on attending lessons and the child would constantly refer to the parent to check the parent’s response before talking to the teacher” (T6). The teacher had to refuse to continue to teach the child unless the parent were not present. Apparently the child “is now making excellent progress because she has undisturbed concentration in her lesson”. It is noteworthy that the teacher of such a young child should forcefully discourage parental attendance. This teacher’s method is to develop a strong pupil-teacher relationship right from the outset, in which the parent has no part. It would be interesting to know how much the parent of this 8 year old helps the child, unbeknownst to the teacher, in home practices - possibly much more than the teacher realises. Another respondent teaches in pupils’ homes, and says parents are “free to come in any time they like” (T4). However, he prefers it “if parents do not attend lessons” because “the presence of another adult tends to inhibit the intimacy between child and teacher. I would be aware of the parent instead of focusing on the child”. Teachers seem to prefer a situation with which they are familiar (a one-to-one situation of teacher and pupil), rather than an unfamiliar one involving also the parent.

There is no evidence from the interviews of teachers seeking to show 'interfering' parents how they can usefully assist; they find it easier to exclude parents entirely. Most teachers were themselves probably taught in a one-to-one situation and, especially those who have had no pedagogical training, are unwilling to see the value of parental involvement and to learn how to make use of parents.

Some teachers relate parental attendance at lessons to parental assistance with practice. One teacher who lets parents choose whether they attend says "I do not wish to create a situation where it seems the teacher is expecting the parent to do lots of work at home" (T3). T1 is "happy for parents to sit in on lessons" but encourages pupils "to be independent when they practise. I prefer to be the one to monitor whether or not pupils are practising". T7 allows parents to choose, and says "it can be very helpful if the parent will just sit there actively listening and can help the child carry on at home; but sometimes the parent can do that just by reading the notebook and helping the child carry out the instructions at home". Meanwhile T8 feels "young pupils cannot communicate to parents what is required, so it is helpful to show parents at the end of the lesson what has been covered and what I want to happen during the week". Likewise T9 says "so much work has to happen between lessons" and she does not think "the child can adequately remember. The mother can give the right sort of guidance", especially "in this country where children have only one lesson a week".

Attendance at lessons ensures parents "can see what the child is achieving, but can also see what the problems are. Even if parents are not musical, they can see that it is a challenge and a lot to cope with" (T10). T2 agrees: "When parents do attend, it is much easier for them to understand what and how the child is to practise. It saves a lot of time when practising". However, two teachers feel it does not work well when "parents of older children, who are becoming independent, attend" (T9).

Many teachers are not specific about what parents should do during lessons, and the parents either read or listen to the lesson. Other parents are invited to follow the lesson with a view to helping with practice (3), some even taking notes meanwhile (2). T8 invites parents, especially those of younger pupils and those preparing for an examination, into the end of a lesson to explain what she has written in the notebook. Two teachers engage parents in approval: "Attention is drawn to good achievements" (T9).

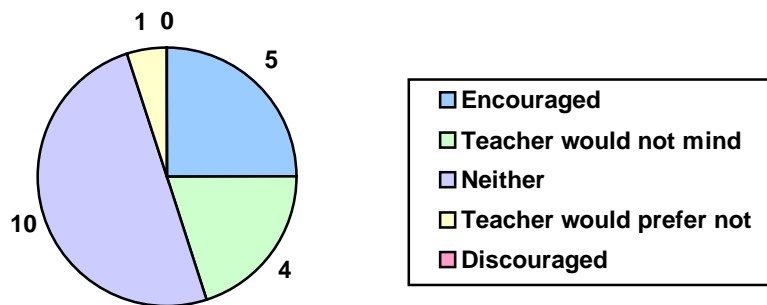
Teachers in my sample who discourage parental involvement put forward many convincing arguments for not involving the parent in lessons:

- Parents tend to interfere during lessons (2).
- Parental attendance inhibits the development of an independent pupil-teacher relationship (4).
- Parental attendance makes it difficult for children to take responsibility for their own practice (2).

Respondents encourage parental attendance at lessons for the following reasons:

- It saves time if the parent can guide the practice (1).
- Young pupils cannot adequately communicate to the parent what is to be practised - the teacher can explain it to the parent (2).
- Parents can see for themselves the child’s achievements, challenges, problems and goals (4).

Parents' reports of teacher encouragement of parental attendance at lessons



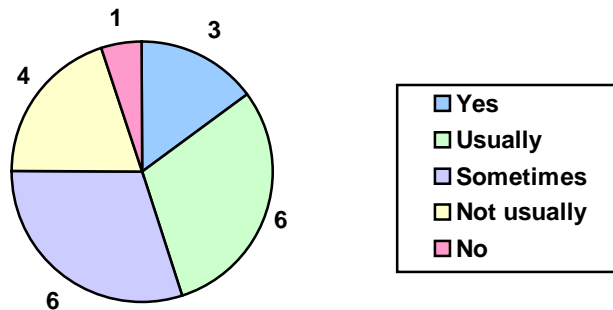
10 parents (50%) in my sample say they are neither encouraged nor discouraged from attending lessons (see chart above). Often the subject has never been mentioned. Five parents (25%) feel they are encouraged to attend, although “the teacher’s attention is on the child” (P9.1) and “I am encouraged to stay and listen so long as it doesn’t disturb my son; I wouldn’t be asked to leave the lesson” (P7.1). Both interviewed parents of T10 feel they are encouraged to attend: “The teacher is very welcoming and says ‘Please come in any time’” (P10.1), and yet P10.2 feels “I might be interfering by attending”. This may be because the parent of a 14 year old feels less comfortable sitting in on lessons than the

parent of a 10 year old, or it may be the teacher is not giving her a clear role. A parent of another 14 year old says “I feel I might be intruding if I attended often - I would be expected to sit quietly and not interfere - I think the teacher would probably sack a parent who interrupted a lesson!” (P6.2). P4.1 (parent of a 10 year old), likewise, feels the teacher “wants to teach without a parent interfering; he would be happy for a parent to sit and listen or read a book during a lesson”.

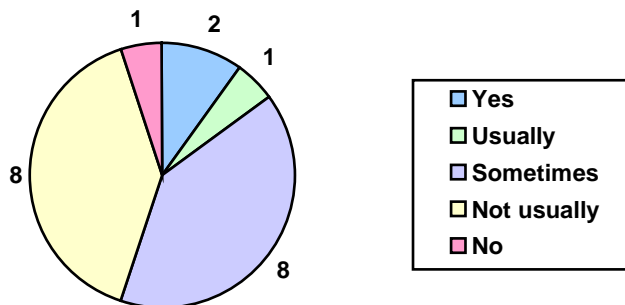
All parents report that they are not encouraged to do anything in particular during the lesson. They sit quietly, and read, or listen to the lesson. It is worth remembering that even 10 year olds, often, are no longer ‘beginners’, so the parents in this sample are not necessarily typical parents of piano pupils in the very early stages.

Parental assistance at practice

Parents' reports of parental attendance at practice



Children's reports of parental attendance at practice



Looking at the two charts above, nine parents (45%) say they do or they usually attend practice, while only three children (15%) report their parents do or usually attend practice. Five parents (25%) say they never or usually do not attend practice, while nine children (45%) report their parents never or usually do not attend practice. Children perceive parents are present while they practice less than their parents think. There is a negative correlation of -0.25 between parents' and children's views on how much parents are present. For instance, P10.1 says she is present at practice time "to ensure everything gets practised, especially just before a piano lesson or coming up to an exam", while her son says "she is not present, but nearby" (C10.1).

It seems probable that parents like to feel involved, they wish to show an interest, they like to listen to their child practising, and yet they do not wish to intrude on the child's private world and space, so they keep a discrete distance. They may have wished to give the impression in the interview that they show much interest, while their children may have wished to give the impression that they are very independent.

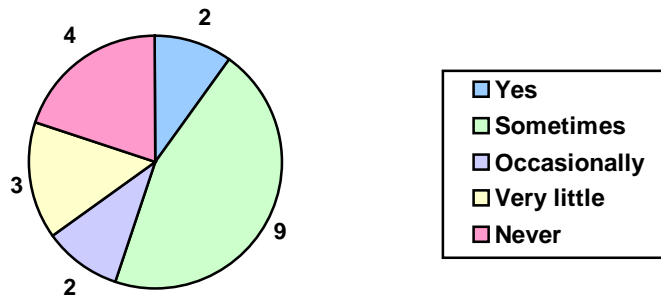
The most common reason given for attending practice is "to encourage him" (P1.1) (6 parents), followed by "to assist" (P3.1) (5 parents). Other reasons are that parents enjoy listening (2), wish to ensure that practice takes place (2), or "will occasionally be called in to listen to something in particular" (P4.1). P3.2 plays duets with his daughter which have been written for them by her teacher.

Teachers in the sample are not sure how many parents assist at home. Some think help is given by none of their parents, ranging to one teacher who thinks half her parents can help. Mostly it seems to be parents of younger children and beginners who are involved. It does not necessarily depend on parental expertise at the piano - one teacher reports that parents will help beginners "whether or not they themselves can play" (T10), while another reports that "involvement may depend on how musical the parents themselves are" (T4). There is, in fact, almost no correlation (0.2) between parents' reports of their involvement and the parents' own musical abilities.

Teachers often do not seem to know in what way parents assist. Only one teacher says she explains to the parent how to work together with the child at home (T9), while another tells parents "this is what we are trying to do" and lets parents "work out for themselves" how

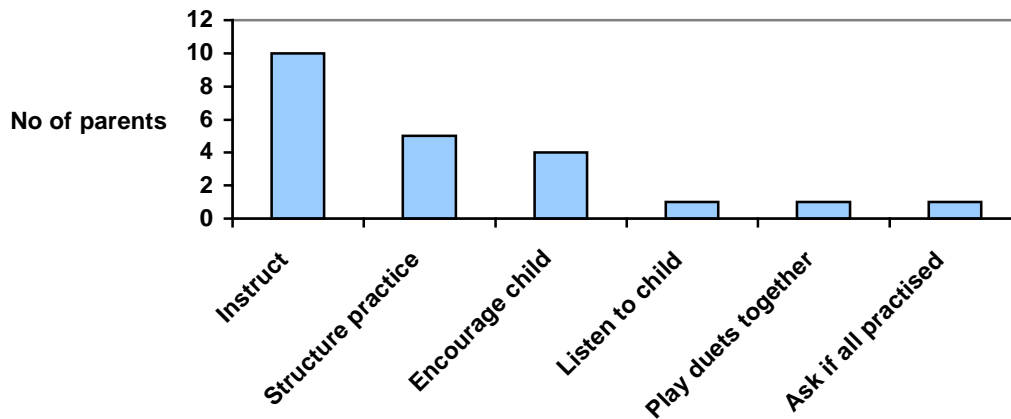
to practise at home (T2). The other teachers think that parents encourage practice to take place, help if the child asks, read the notebook, listen to the child, and act as an appreciative audience. A few engage in ensemble playing with their children.

Parents' reports of parental assistance with practice



The question on supervision of practice drew some interesting responses from parents. Two parents (10%) report that they do help their child with practice, and four (20%) say they never help; the remaining 14 (70%) offer a little help (see chart above).

Parents' reports of how they assist their children with practice



Ten parents (50%) say that when they do help, they instruct their child in some way (see chart above). For instance, P4.2, who is a primary school teacher but does not play the piano and only learned the guitar for a term when she herself was at primary school, “will structure the practice by saying ‘Play this bar, now play this bar, now join them together’ - things I would do in school for my children, trying to break it all down. Or I will just sit in

the same room so my daughter is not in isolation, and encourage her by saying how nice it sounds”. P7.1 learned the piano for a year in her teens. She sits with her son once or twice a week while he practises: “If something is not very comfortable, I will tell him ‘maybe that bar should be improved’. I rely on my senses to help. For instance, ‘it sounds too choppy - can you make it smoother?’”. P6.2 feels she “can’t help musically but will try and help by calming her down if she is having trouble with a piece”. So here are three parents with very little musical training themselves, relying on their senses, their natural skills, or on other training, to help their children with their music.

Several parents supervise very discretely when required. P2.1, whose daughter’s teacher does encourage parental assistance with practice, says she does not supervise, but “I can remind my daughter of the teacher’s comments; I can listen if something doesn’t sound right - the teacher shows me how it should sound”. P5.1, likewise, says she does not supervise, but that her daughter “will ask for help with a specific problem”. P2.2 reports that she supervises “informally - I ask my daughter to give me a concert, or she will ask me to play this bit with her, or we play duets together”. P8.2’s husband “will sit with our daughter once a week and give her advice if she is having problems with a trill or fingering”. P9.1 “used to help, especially when learning a new piece or with sight reading”. Several parents help structure the practice: “I ensure that all the pieces and scales are practised, especially coming up to an exam, or just before the next lesson” (P10.1), or read the teacher’s notes: “I translate the rather sophisticated notes so they make sense to my daughter” (P3.2).

P9.2, with no musical training, feels “very strongly that music belongs to my children” and that there should be “minimal involvement from the parents”. However, she did help her daughter when younger: “Up to about grade 4 or 5 I would read through the notebook, and help with note bashing of a new piece, but mostly with scales and arpeggios ... and ensure a certain amount of work got done”.

There is plenty of evidence here to show that musically untrained parents are willing and able to assist their children with their practice. As stated earlier, there is almost no correlation (0.2) between parents’ musical ability and their reports on supervision of practice.

Some parents can see no value in attending practices. They have no conception that help could be given (eg P1.2). Many parents seem to underestimate their ability to help with music practice. If teachers were to guide them and build their confidence, they might discover that parents are able to comprehend more about their child's practice than they give themselves credit for. P8.1 enjoyed music-making as a child, and would like to participate in her son's music-making now, but feels it is inappropriate - she has been led to believe there is no place for her to contribute, a feeling also identified by Howe (1999). P8.2, likewise, feels she has very little to contribute to her daughter's piano lessons and practices, because she herself does not play the piano. Although T8 says she encourages parental involvement, she does not seem to be conveying this to these two parents, nor explaining how they can assist.

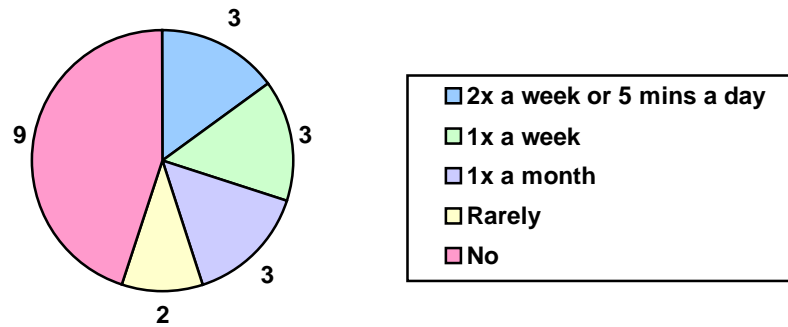
P3.2 gives the impression of really enjoying attending his daughter's piano lessons and practices. He enjoys playing music with her. His interest in music is following hers, which matches findings by Davidson *et al* (1996). P7.2 feels very confident that her supervision of her son's practice is the difference between him having stuck with it and giving up, agreeing with Sloboda & Davidson (1996). This is interesting as she herself was sent away to practice on her own as a child, achieved grade 8, and now very much enjoys playing the piano. Perhaps she is aware that different people need to be treated in different ways. What suited her might not suit her son.

Both of T9's pupils' parents take a huge interest in their children's music-making, but feel it is important to stand back and allow the child to develop their own relationship with the teacher and take responsibility for their own practice, giving them space to develop on their own. This was found to be important by Barry (1992; cited in Barry & Hallam, 2002) and also Kemp (2000b). Both pupils are high achievers who enjoy their music-making greatly.

The overall level of parental involvement in my sample is less than that of Howe & Sloboda (1991) with their sample of high achieving students at a specialist music school. One might add that the overall achievement of the pupils in my sample is somewhat lower than that of students at a specialist music school. According to Howe & Sloboda, before admission to the music school only three out of 42 students' parents were not involved in practice sessions. A quarter of the parents "regularly commented on the child's playing"

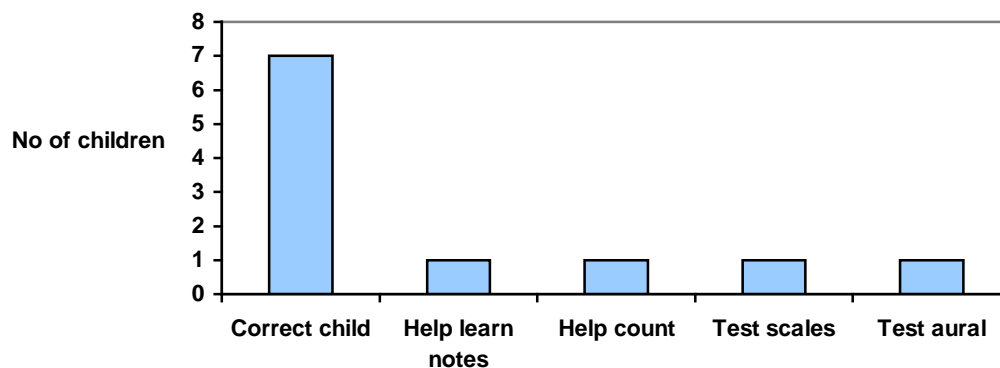
during practice, and a further third of parents “provided active moment-by-moment supervision when the child was practising” (p57). It is possible that parents who feel their children are enjoying their instrument and are progressing well are more willing and more likely to attend lessons and to offer help with practice than parents of children who are not enjoying playing and not progressing (Davidson & Borthwick, 2003).

Children's reports of parental assistance with practice



The chart above shows that six children (30%) report getting help with practice at least once a week, while nine children (45%) say they get none. Those children who receive help report a range of involvement from “the last five minutes of each practice” (C2.1), or “about two practices a week” (C3.2), to the more constant “mother is in the room most of the time” (C3.1). Four children who say they now receive no assistance, say they received some help in the past.

Children's reports of how parents help with practice

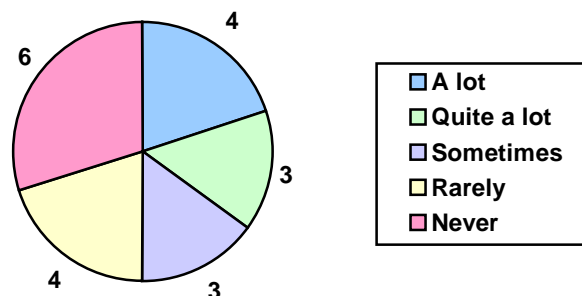


11 children (55% of the sample) say their parent can usefully help by instructing: correcting mistakes, helping learn notes or with counting, testing scales or aural (see chart

above). Children appreciate the assistance: “Mum helps me work out the notes” (C6.1); “She helps me realise when something is wrong, then I can correct it” (C4.2); “Father can show me my mistakes and how to repeat the passage over and over again; he knows some of the tricks of the trade” (C3.2). C10.2 feels “Mum can help even though she doesn’t play the piano”. Parental ability at the piano seems not to be an issue with the children, and there is no correlation (0.1) between parental musical ability and the amount of supervision children report receiving.

As with parental attendance at lessons, no-one who receives help with practice dislikes it. All who get help like it, for instance “because she can help me improve my pieces” (C7.1). Those who do not receive help say they “would rather she didn’t” (C8.1) or “prefer to be more independent in order to concentrate more” (C10.1). So again, children are happy in the situation that is familiar to them.

Parents playing alongside children



About a third of parents (7) play alongside their children a lot or quite a lot, a third (7) sometimes or rarely, and a third (6) never play with them (see chart above). When parents do play alongside their child, they play one hand each of the same piece (8), the parent sings or plays along on another instrument (8), they play piano duets together (4), or the child tries to teach the parent (1).

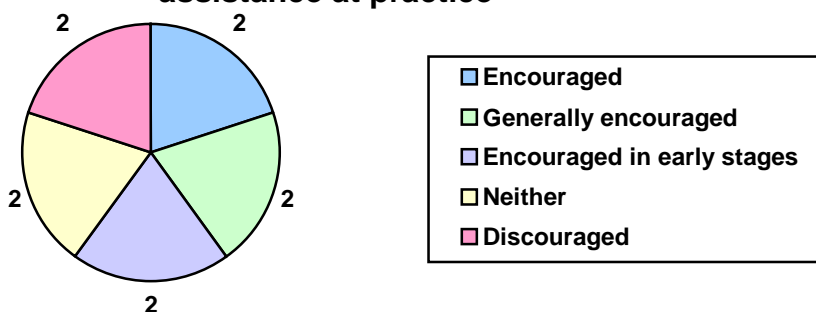
Several parents say they would like to make music with their child but consider they are not good enough: “I would like to take up the piano again so I can play more with my daughter” (P2.2); “I would love to be able to play along with her; I sometimes sing along” (P10.2). P8.1 says “I don’t really play the piano, but I did try at the beginning to play one

hand while my son played the other. I was thrilled at first that I could do it. The teacher didn't know that we were playing along together”.

Those who play with their child do it mostly for enjoyment: “We enjoy it!” (P3.1), “It’s nice; my daughter likes it” (P2.1), “A great joy, a stupendous joy!” (P9.2). Two parents mention the support it offers to the child. P8.2 feels “it helps the child to know that the parent is also practising, that the child is not the only one”, and P7.2 believes that “in order to maintain these things everybody must be involved because otherwise it becomes isolated and not much fun”, thus suggesting that family participation and enjoyment are important for continuing musical development.

Teacher encouragement of parental assistance at practice

Teachers' reports of their encouragement of parental assistance at practice



Two teachers (20%) encourage parental assistance at practice, two generally encourage it, two encourage it in the early stages, two neither encourage nor discourage it, and two positively discourage it (see chart above). Teachers present good reasons for their views.

Some teachers mention that they wish pupils to be independent in their practice. T6 does not even want parents to encourage practice to take place. She feels that “if parents tell their child to practise, it becomes like every other area of life instead of something the child sees as very much their own thing. I have had instances where it has become a battle for practice, so I tell parents to forget it and to leave it to me to deal with the problems of not practising”. T9, like many teachers, does ask for parents’ help in encouraging practice to take place, even asking parents to “supervise a young child’s practice on a moment-to-

moment basis”. However, she also notes that “the idea that the parent sits there and makes sure practice gets done in a way takes responsibility away from the child. Children should be responsible for their own practice quite early on”. So it is important to be flexible and adjust to the particular needs of the child at that particular time.

Several teachers have had experience of parents who became over-involved, or interfered, in practising. Their reaction has been to discourage parents from assisting, rather than to intervene, discuss the issue with the parent and work out ways in which the parent could constructively be involved. For instance, one respondent taught a father and son, and “both took the same exam at the same time. The father gained a higher mark than his son. Clearly this over-involvement had a discouraging effect on the boy” (T3). If teachers were trained in how to involve parents, advice on avoiding this result could have been given. For example, the father could have taken a different examination, or a different board, or at a different time, from his son. Another teacher feels “occasionally there has been too much help, which has held up the child’s music reading, for example writing letters over notes” (T10). Or “sometimes a child feels discouraged because the parent plays so well” (T10). Again, the parent’s musical skill can be used to advantage if the teacher discusses it with both parent and pupil.

Three teachers reported confusion “because in a very few cases the parent said different things” (T8) from the teacher or “made demands that I do not make” (T4). With tact and careful handling, a teacher should be able to deal with such a situation with little damage to the child’s progress and enjoyment. More puzzling to comprehend is the teacher who is “happy for the child not to understand, because then I can explain it again at the next lesson. It is better that the child should understand what I have said directly than rely on the parent to interpret what I have said” (T5). This seems a perfect example of how parents can increase the effectiveness of practice, by helping children practise correctly rather than incorrectly, remembering that it is very difficult to change notes, rhythms or fingerings once they have been learned incorrectly.

Parental assistance at practice is considered particularly helpful in the early stages, with younger pupils and when preparing for examinations. In the early stages, “a young child cannot be expected to remember” (T9) what and how to practise and “needs a lot of encouragement for something so solitary. Family warmth is important” (T9). T2 also

encourages assistance in the early stages, saying “it helps the pupil, and it can be more fun”. T7 agrees that parental assistance is “helpful to the child” and that “parents will cooperate quite well under certain circumstances, for example in preparation for examinations”.

T4 says “I do not know that particular parents will be involved”. However, T8 says “I need to be aware of which parents can help and which cannot because it makes a great deal of difference to the child. Parents who can help in a positive way are a huge advantage”. This seems to be the crux of the matter - training parents to help in a positive way.

Just what the parents are expected to do is often left rather vague. Apart from one respondent (T6), teachers like parents to encourage regular practice. T9 says “I occasionally telephone parents who do not attend to suggest ways of getting more practice done”. Several teachers (4) suggest the child should ask the parent to come in and listen to them playing “to make performing a positive experience” (T6). Of course, this is relying on the parent to make positive remarks rather than criticisms. T2 encourages parental assistance in the early stages and adds “you cannot expect a 15 year old to want parental help, although they sometimes, perhaps, need it! It is nice, even at that stage, if the pupil can say to the parent ‘Come and listen to this’”.

One teacher (T3) asks parents to provide “encouragement, support, a sense of community and shared endeavour”, which are beautiful sentiments, but not very specific. Often teachers give “no specific instructions ” (T1) as to how parents are to assist at practices, if at all. Teachers think parents may “help the child do what the notebook asks them to do” (T7), but they “do not really have a clear idea” (T4). T8 suggests specific activities like “clapping the rhythm, counting together, singing the tune together”, while T2 suggests “if the parent does not know very much, the child can say ‘I will teach YOU!’”.

Despite the research of Sloboda, Davidson, Howe and Moore in the 1990s, which indicates that high-achieving young musicians have benefitted from high levels of parental support, teachers present good arguments for discouraging parental assistance at practice:

- Teachers wish children to be independent (3).
- Parental interference or over-involvement may be discouraging (5).
- Confusion can arise (3).

Repondents give the following reasons for encouraging parental assistance at practice:

- Increased discipline increases the quality which increases the effectiveness of practice (5).
- Playing music together is more fun (2).

Parental assistance is considered particularly helpful:

- in the early stages,
- with younger pupils, and
- for examination preparation.

The following table summarises the teaching experience and qualifications of the 10 interviewed teachers, and gives their attitudes towards parental involvement.

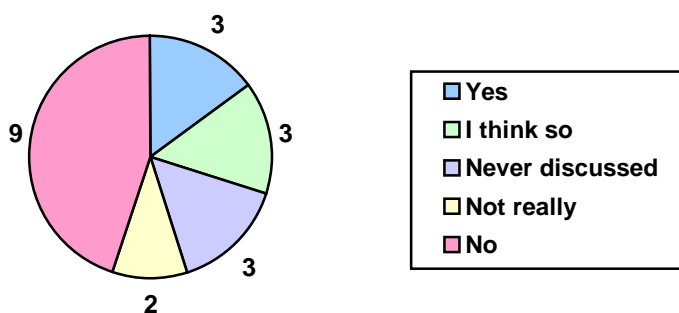
Teacher	No of years teaching	No of pupils	Music qualifications	Teaching qualifications and specialist courses	Attitude to parental attendance at lessons	Attitude to parental supervision of practice
T2	20	26	ALCM(P)	CertEdMus	Positive	Positive
T9	25	30-40	ARMCM(T), Dip(Perf) (Sibelius Academy, Finland)	Training in piano pedagogy, also courses in Kodaly and Suzuki	Positive	Positive
T10	40	20	ARCM(T)	Courses in Kodaly	Positive	Positive
T8	30	37	LRAM(T)		Positive	Positive
T7	21	30	BA, LGSM(T)	Courses in Kodaly, Dalcroze and Orff	Neutral	Positive
T4	16	38	BA, MMus, PhD		Negative	Positive
T3	18	18-20	BA, ARCM(P), LTCL(P)		Neutral	Neutral
T5	15	15	ALCM(T) (taken recently)		Negative	Neutral
T1	6	12	LRSM(P) (taken recently)		Neutral	Negative
T6	10	30	BA(Hons) (taken recently)		Negative	Negative

T = Teacher's diploma

P = Performer's diploma

My initial impression was that teachers with pedagogical training tended to be those who were more supportive of parental assistance at practice (see table on previous page). However, when I looked in detail at the qualifications of teachers, that simple picture was shown to be less straightforward. Those teachers who took pedagogical qualifications before starting teaching, and who have followed further specialist courses, encourage parental involvement more than those who have only recently taken teaching qualifications, and have not followed specialist training courses. It is worth bearing in mind that the teaching element in music diplomas is fairly rudimentary. It also seems to be the case that teachers in my sample with the greatest number of years' teaching experience, and with the largest number of pupils, are the most supportive of parental involvement. While I had felt that encouragement of parental involvement was a recent phenomenon, the data run counter to my expectations.

Parents' reports of teacher encouragement of assistance with practice



Six parents (30%) think they are encouraged to assist with practice, three (15%) have never discussed the matter with the teacher, two (10%) think they are not really encouraged to help, while nine (45%) are sure they are not encouraged to help (see chart above). When asked what they are encouraged to do, five parents replied “to ensure that practice gets done” (P6.2) and three parents “to help” (P2.1). All other parents suggest “the teacher is not specific” (P7.1).

However, P6.2 is unaware that the teacher does not wish the parent to attend lessons, nor have anything to do with practice - not even urge the child to do it. The mother likes to overhear the lesson so she knows what to remind her daughter to practise, especially before a performance. But T6 says “if parents tell the child to practise, it becomes like every

other area of life instead of something the child sees as very much their own thing” and she strongly discourages parents from getting involved in practices.

There is further conflict between teachers’ and parents’ perception of the parents’ role in practice. P1.1, whose teacher discourages parental involvement at practice, says “I listen to the CD of his exam pieces so I know how they should sound, and listen to his performance, and try to help him make it sound the same ... Oh, no, my son doesn’t listen to the CD ... No, the teacher doesn’t know about this, but I find it useful”. So here is a parent who does not herself play the piano, wishing to help her son, given no guidance from the teacher, surreptitiously doing what she can to help. Similarly, P8.1 “was thrilled” to play alongside her son in the early stages “but the teacher didn’t know we were playing along together”. Likewise, P3.1 herself started piano lessons (with another teacher) when her son started, and learns his pieces so she can help him. She likes to sit in on lessons and do what she can at practices. The teacher does not seem to be aware of this arrangement.

Children’s musical experiences

This part of the analysis covers children’s musical environment, their musical upbringing, piano practice, and their musical enjoyment.

Parents were asked whether their children had taken any examinations, and which, and children were asked what pieces they were currently learning. From these replies, a level of achievement for each child was allocated based on the musical grade (0 to 8) they had reached (see table on page 58).

Piano pupils were asked 15 questions, the replies to five of which were taken as indicators of musical enjoyment:

- whether they enjoy practising;
- whether they play music not set by their teacher (their own music);
- whether they play for pleasure;
- whether they get a sense of satisfaction from playing the piano;
- whether they enjoy listening to music.

Replies to each of these five indicators of enjoyment were ascribed a score on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 highest). The total of the five scores gave an overall level of enjoyment for each pupil. Individual indicators of enjoyment were then compared with these composite levels of enjoyment and with pupils' achievement (see tables on pages 58 and 59).

One parent of each child was asked 28 questions, the answers to six of which were taken as indicators of the musical environment of the child:

- whether the parents had a musical upbringing;
- whether the mother sang to the child as a baby;
- whether the parents now play instruments or sing, and whether this is overheard by their child;
- whether other children in the family play musical instruments;
- whether the parents listen to music at home or in the car, and whether this is overheard by their child;
- whether they take their child to live performances.

Responses to each of these six indicators of musical environment were ascribed a score on a scale of 1 to 5. The total of the six scores gave an overall level of musical environment for each child. Individual indicators of musical environment were then compared with these composite levels of musical environment, with pupils' enjoyment and with pupils' achievement (see tables on pages 58 and 59).

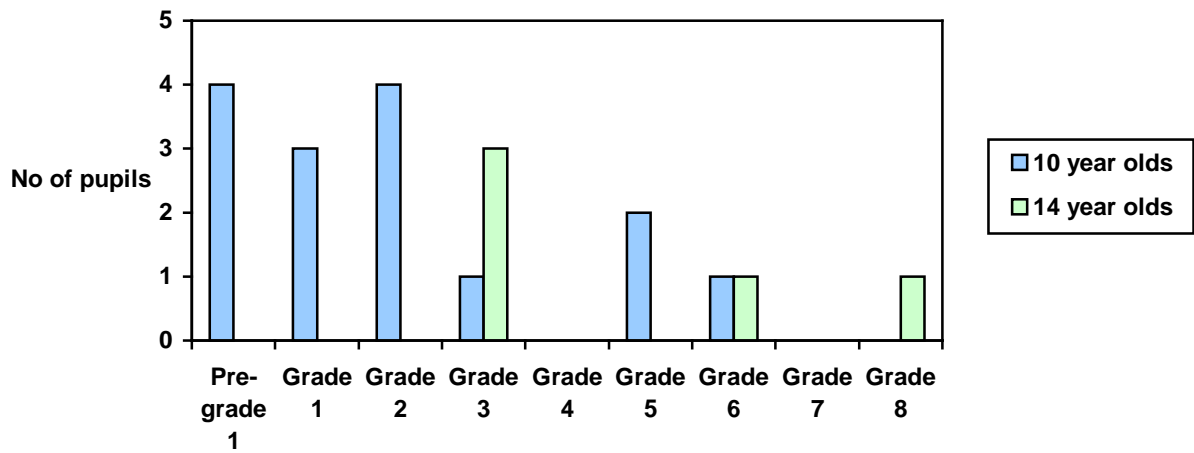
Table of replies to questions on achievement (coded on scale of 0 to 8), enjoyment and environment (coded on scale of 1 to 5)

	ACHIEVEMENT	5 indicators of enjoyment							6 indicators of musical environment							Additional enjoyment factors						
		Enjoy practising	Play own music	Play for pleasure	Satisfaction	Enjoy listening to music	ENJOYMENT (composite)	Parents' upbringing	Mother sang to baby	Parents play or sing	Siblings play	Family listens to music	Attend live performances	MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT (composite)	Years of learning piano	Self-motivation to start lessons	Play other instruments	Play in musical groups	Length of practice	Specific practice time	Own choice of practice time	Enjoy listening to classical music
	Child Question 11+ Parent Questions10+11	Child Question 6b	Child Question 9	Child Question 10	Child Question 12	Child Question 13a	TOTAL	Parent Question 1	Parent Question 4	Parent Question 2	Parent Question 3	Parent Question 5	Parent Question 6	TOTAL	Parent Question 9	Parent Question 25	Child Question 2	Child Question 3	Child Question6a/ Parent QuestionQ18	Parent Question 17a	Parent Question 17b	Child Question 13b
C1.1	6	3	1	1	1	3	9	3	2	1	1	1	2	10	3	1	3	1	5	2	5	3
C1.2	2	3	1	1	3	3	11	3	2	2	1	4	2	14	1	1	2	3	4	2	5	3
C2.1	1	3	2	2	5	5	17	3	2	1	3	4	1	14	3	1	2	1	2	5	2	4
C2.2	0	5	5	3	5	5	23	4	3	1	1	2	3	14	1	4	2	4	2	2	5	1
C3.1	2	5	5	5	5	3	23	1	3	3	1	4	2	14	2	1	1	1	3	2	5	3
C3.2	0	5	5	4	5	5	24	5	3	5	2	4	3	22	1	2	3	4	1.5	5	5	5
C4.1	1	5	5	4	5	5	24	2	4	1	2	4	2	15	2	5	3	4	4	3	3	5
C4.2	0	3	3	4	4	2	16	4	4	1	1	4	3	17	2	3	2	3	2	5	1	2
C5.1	0	5	2	2	5	5	19	4	4	1	3	4	4	20	2	4	3	1	2	5	3	5
C5.2	1	5	2	4	3	5	19	2	1	3	2	4	3	15	5	1	3	3	1.5	2	5	3
C6.1	2	5	4	2	5	5	21	3	1	1	1	4	3	13	5	5	3	2	2	5	3	4
C7.1	2	5	5	5	2	5	22	4	5	5	1	5	2	22	3	3	3	4	3	5	1	4
C8.1	3	4	5	3	5	3	20	5	1	1	4	3	1	15	4	5	1	2	2	3	1	2
C9.1	5	5	3	4	5	5	22	5	5	5	4	5	4	28	6	2	3	4	3.5	5	4	5
C10.1	5	2	5	4	5	2	18	5	5	5	1	4	3	23	5	5	5	3	1	5	3	5
C6.2	6	3	5	4	5	5	22	3	5	1	3	2	3	17	7	5	2	1	3.5	1	5	2
C7.2	3	5	1	3	5	5	19	5	5	5	1	4	4	24	5	1	3	4	2	2	5	2
C8.2	3	3	1	1	5	5	15	5	5	5	3	4	3	25	5	2	4	2	2	4	4	4
C9.2	8	5	5	5	5	5	25	2	5	4	5	4	5	25	7	5	5	5	4	1	5	5
C10.2	3	5	5	4	5	5	24	3	5	1	1	4	2	16	4	2	2	1	1.5	1	5	2

Table of correlation coefficients between a) achievement and enjoyment; b) achievement and environment; and c) enjoyment and environment

		5 indicators of enjoyment						6 indicators of musical environment						Additional enjoyment factors								
ACHIEVEMENT		Enjoy practising	Play own music	Play for pleasure	Satisfaction	Enjoy listening to music	ENJOYMENT (composite)	Parents' upbringing	Mother sang to baby	Parents play or sing	Siblings play	Family listens to music	Attend live performances	MMUSICAL ENVIRONMENT (composite)	Years of learning piano	Self-motivation to start lessons	Play other instruments	Play in musical groups	Length of practice	Specific practice time	Own choice of practice time	Enjoy listening to classical music
	Child Question 11+ Parent Questions 10+11	Child Question 6b	Child Question 9	Child Question 10	Child Question 12	Child Question 13a	TOTAL	Parent Question 1	Parent Question 4	Parent Question 2	Parent Question 3	Parent Question 5	Parent Question 6	TOTAL	Parent Question 9	Parent Question 25	Child Question 2	Child Question 3	Child Question 6a/ Parent Question 18	Parent Question 17a	Parent Question 17b	Child Question 13b
Achievement of 10 year olds		-0.40	-0.14	-0.14	-0.33	-0.39	-0.39	0.18	0.10	0.29	0.06	-0.21	-0.08	0.14	0.60	-0.06	0.33	-0.15	0.42	-0.08	0.09	0.17
Achievement of 14 year olds		0.04	0.63	0.70	0	0	0.61	-0.79	0	-0.14	0.86	-0.34	0.65	0.12	0.91	0.93	0.45	0.43	0.97	-0.53	0.39	0.54
Achievement of all children		-0.25	0.07	0.12	-0.08	-0.08	-0.04	-0.06	0.35	0.24	0.40	-0.24	0.30	0.30	0.75	0.19	0.43	0.03	0.48	-0.40	0.29	0.12
Enjoyment of 10 year olds		0.74	0.80	0.70	0.63	0.53		0.07	0.28	0.32	0.22	0.43	0.22	0.40	0.04	0.40	-0.03	0.44	-0.39	0.24	-0.08	0.24
Enjoyment of 14 year olds		0.56	0.90	0.97	0	0		-0.92	0	-0.60	0.22	-0.14	0.16	-0.45	0.32	0.56	-0.09	0.14	0.45	-0.94	0.83	0.00
Enjoyment of all children		0.69	0.79	0.76	0.59	0.50		-0.14	0.31	0.14	0.25	0.31	0.25	0.29	0.18	0.43	0.00	0.34	-0.22	-0.08	0.06	0.14
Environment of 10 year olds								0.64	0.74	0.78	0.36	0.65	0.55									
Environment of 14 year olds								0.36	0	0.96	0.42	0.55	0.74									
Environment of all children								0.55	0.72	0.82	0.43	0.55	0.65									

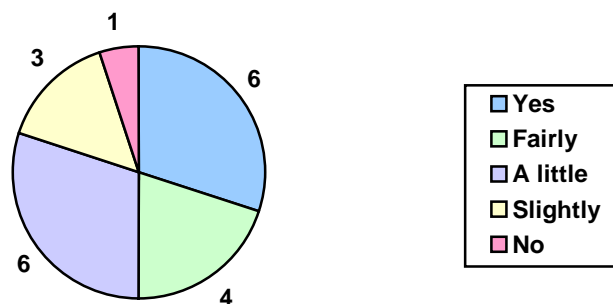
Pupils' achievement



Most 10 year olds are at the pre-grade 1, grade 1 or grade 2 level, although one child is grade 6. The 14 year olds vary between grade 3 and grade 8 (see chart above).

Musical environment

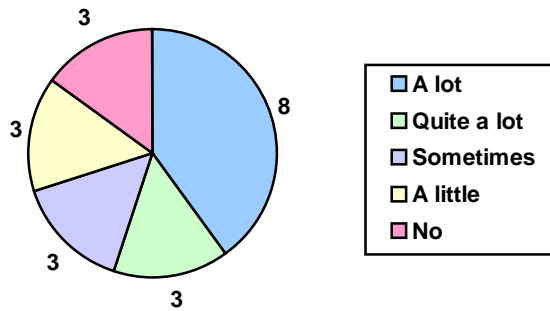
Parents' musical upbringing



As the chart above shows, 10 parents (50%) report receiving a musical or fairly musical upbringing, the most musical being P7.2: “I played piano (grade 8), clarinet, flute and recorder, and all my five brothers and sisters played at least two instruments; my husband

doesn't play at all". Nine parents (45%) had little music in the home, while one reported "no music at all" (P3.1).

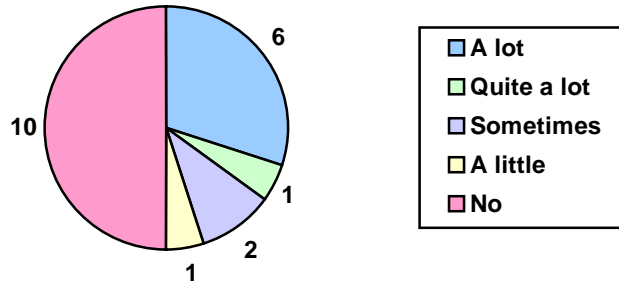
Mother sang to baby



Eight mothers (40%) say they sang a lot to their child as a baby and three (15%) not at all (see chart above). P9.2 reports that her daughter "was born to music ... music seemed an important part of her very early years ... clearly a need when they were little [three children] to be related to at a higher level than emotional". This 14 year old daughter is a very high-achieving musician whose older sister has been awarded a music scholarship at Oxford, but whose parents report that they themselves did not have a musical upbringing.

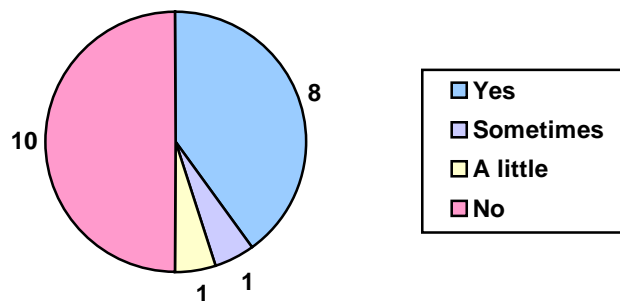
There is a correlation of 0.72 (see table on page 59) between mothers' singing to their babies and the general musical environment provided by parents, but no link, in this small sample, with children's enjoyment and achievement.

Parents now play or sing



Six families in the sample (30%) report there is a lot of live music-making by the parents. The parents in 10 families (50%) do not play or sing (see chart above).

Parents' music-making overheard by child



In eight families (40% of the sample) children do overhear their parents making music. Ten children (50% of the sample) do not overhear parents' music-making (see chart above).

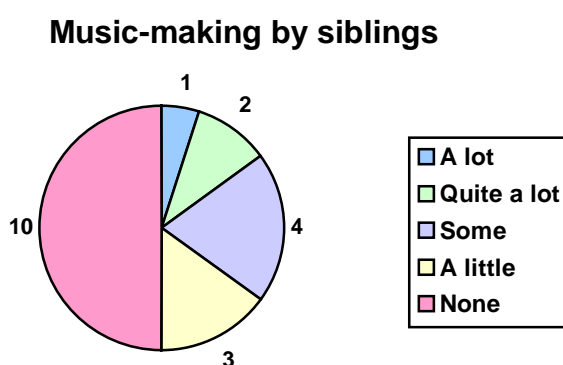
Three parents related their present music-making to that of their child: "I started piano lessons when my son started" (P3.1); "I sometimes play the piano - mostly related to my daughter's piano playing" (P3.2); "I started learning the guitar a few months before my son started, so that when he started I could help him. I have now stopped guitar lessons, but feel I have learned enough to be able to continue to help him" (P7.1). This links in with

findings by Davidson *et al* (1996) that parents' own interest in music-making often follows that of their children.

The following table correlates the amount of parents' music-making with children's musical environment, their enjoyment and their achievement:

Correlation: Parents' music-making	10 year olds	14 year olds
Children's musical environment	0.78	0.96
Enjoyment	0.32	-0.60
Achievement	0.29	-0.14

The amount parents now play instruments or sing correlates with the general musical background they provide for their children. The correlation for 10 year olds is 0.78, and for 14 year olds is 0.96, suggesting that children are more likely to continue playing the piano if their parents also engage in musical activities. However, the amount parents play has little effect on their children's enjoyment or achievement in music-making, although in my small sample it has a slight negative effect on 14 year olds' enjoyment.



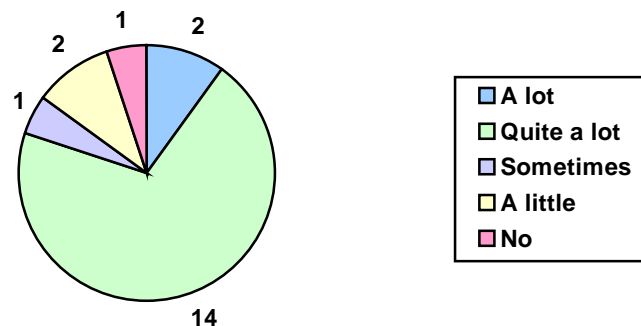
Surprisingly, in 10 families (50%), no siblings play or have played musical instruments (see chart above). However, in half of these families (5), there are no siblings. In one family (P9.2), a 17 year old sister plays the piano, clarinet and organ at a high level (she has a place at Oxford to study music); and in two families there is "quite a lot" of music-making: "three older siblings play instruments" (P9.1) and "his older sister plays the flute

(grade 5) and used to play the piano” (P8.1). Otherwise, sibling music-making is sporadic and at a low level. Of the three children mentioned above whose older siblings play instruments, C9.2 and C9.1 are very high achieving musicians, and C8.1 is achieving well. This supports findings by Davidson, Howe & Sloboda (2000) that many high achieving young instrumentalists are inspired by, or imitate, an older sibling, especially an older sister.

Correlation: Siblings playing an instrument	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.22	0.22
Achievement	0.06	0.86

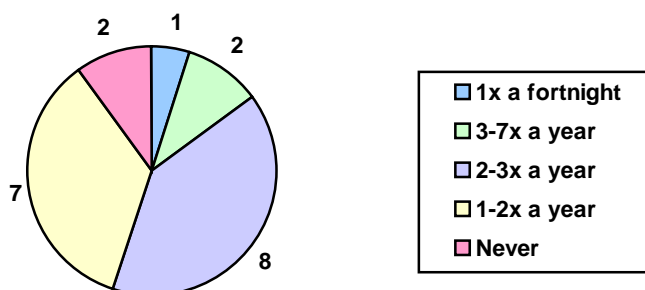
For the 14 year olds there is a high correlation of 0.86 between siblings playing an instrument and the interviewees’ achievement at music-making.

Music parents listen to overheard by child



As the chart above shows, 16 children (80%) overhear their parents’ choice of music a lot or quite a lot. Parents listen to a wide variety of music ranging from “all sorts - blues, rock, pop, classical, jazz” (P6.1) to “a very precise selection of early mediaeval, renaissance, classical, stopping about late romantic; and Janis Joplin, Sixties Woodstock” (P9.2) and encompassing Chinese, Indian, country, contemporary Christian and Irish traditional music. Parents report that, apart from one child (C1.1), all children overhear their parents’ choice of music. C2.2 hears it only “in the car”, and C6.2 “tries not to!”.

Frequency of attending live performances



While three children (15%) are taken to live performances between once a fortnight and three times a year, and two (10%) are never taken, the vast majority, 15 children (75%), attend live performances between one and three times a year (see chart above). These include school concerts, recitals by their own piano teacher, children’s concerts, musicals, ballet, pop concerts, opera, and choral and orchestral concerts.

Correlation: Frequency of attending live performances	10 year olds	14 year olds
Children’s musical environment	0.55	0.74
Enjoyment	0.22	0.16
Achievement	-0.08	0.65

For the teenagers, frequency of attending live performances is slightly indicative of their general musical environment (0.74). It also correlates slightly with their musical achievement (0.65). Either, parents of high achievers choose to take their children to live performances more than do parents of low achievers, or attending live performances motivates children to achieve more highly.

Most teachers in the sample say they have a varied group of pupils’ families in which some parents play instruments, some attend concerts, and some have little music in the home. Half the teachers say most of their pupil’s families have an interest in music. However, T1 claims that none of her pupil’s families is interested in music, their interest in piano lessons being “limited to allowing their children to do something they think would be good for

them”. T1 herself is Chinese. 75% of her pupils are Chinese, and so may not have been brought up in a tradition of Western music. However, 25% of her pupils are British and still, T1 says, “they have no interest in music”. In contrast, T9 says that “music is appreciated in all my pupils’ families”.

These widely differing replies suggest that some teachers encourage parents to develop an interest in music alongside their children’s growing skills in music (see Davidson *et al*, 1996). Alternatively, teachers may select pupils on the strength of their musical background, they may not really know about music in the home, or perhaps each teacher has a different interpretation of an ‘interest in music’.

My research identifies the following key factors in the musical environment provided by parents:

- whether they sang to their child as a baby;
- whether the parents now play or sing instruments;
- the frequency with which they take their child to live performances.

The achievement of 14 year olds corresponds with:

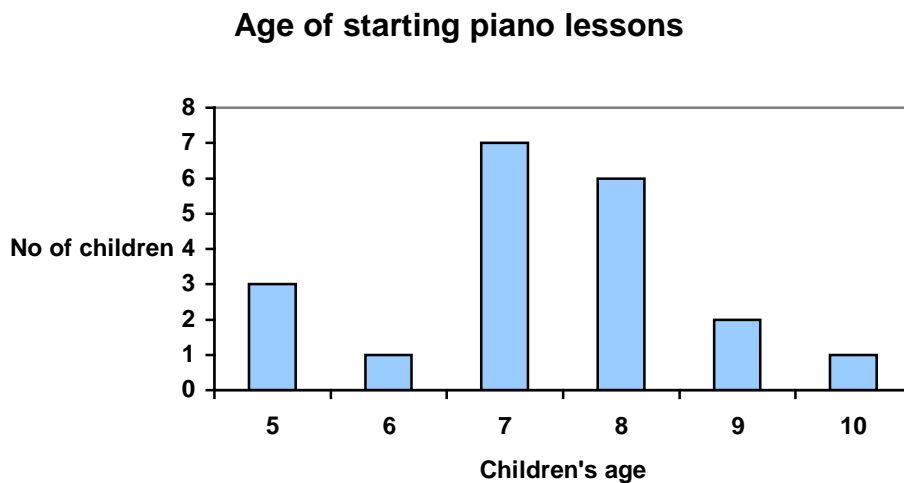
- the amount siblings (especially older sisters) play instruments;
- the frequency with which they attend live performances.

Generally, my research shows much stronger correlations for 14 year olds than for 10 year olds, which justifies my decision to include 14 year olds as well as 10 year olds in my sample. The younger children usually have not been learning the piano for long, their achievement levels are low, and they tend to enjoy everything indiscriminately. 14 year olds have been learning for longer, there is more variety in their achievement, and they have formed their own definite views on what they enjoy. It is difficult to assess pupil achievement, particularly at the age of 10. First, some 10 year old children in my sample have been learning for five years and some for only one year. Second, there is a big difference between the musical development of a child who plays grade 1 pieces to distinction standard (especially after a short period of learning) and a child who is pre-grade 1 (especially after a long period of learning). However, my information on pupil’s achievements was not fine-grained enough to discriminate between these levels. Even for

the 14 year olds, there is a great musical difference between being of pass or distinction standard at any grade, as is indicated by UCAS points awarded for higher grades: eg grade 7 practical distinction = 60 points and grade 8 practical pass = 55 points (UCAS, 2002).

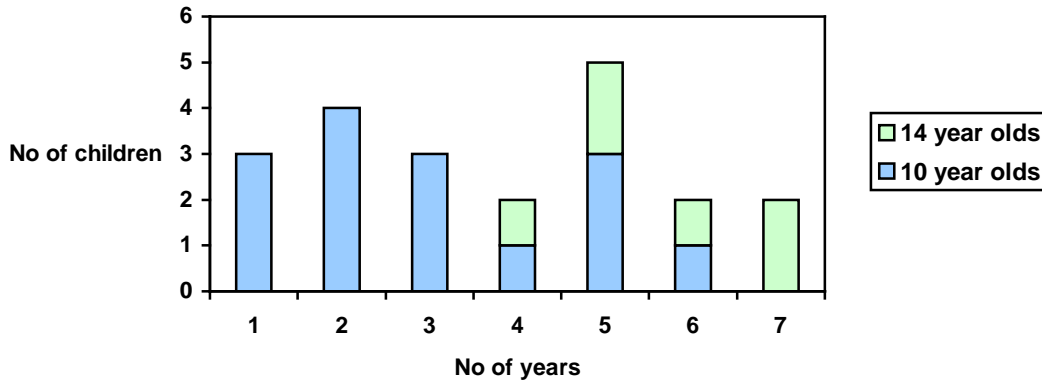
Musical upbringing

There was a very slight discrepancy between parents' reports and children's reports of the age at which the child started piano lessons. Data from the parents have been used for calculations.



As the chart above shows, the age of starting piano lessons ranged from five to 10. The most common starting ages were seven and eight.

Length of learning

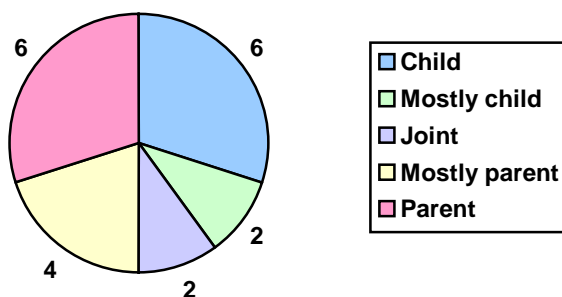


The 10 year olds have been learning the piano for between one and six years, and the 14 year olds between four and seven years (see chart above). One 14 year old pupil (C7.2) stopped lessons for a year at age 10 to 11 for family reasons.

Correlation: Length of learning piano	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.04	0.32
Achievement	0.60	0.91

There is no correlation between length of learning and enjoyment, but an unsurprising correlation of 0.6 between length of learning and achievement for the 10 year olds and of 0.91 for the 14 year olds: the longer they have been learning at any given age, the higher their achievement. Hallam (1998) found that length of time learning is a better predictor of achievement even than length of time spent practising.

Motivation to start piano lessons

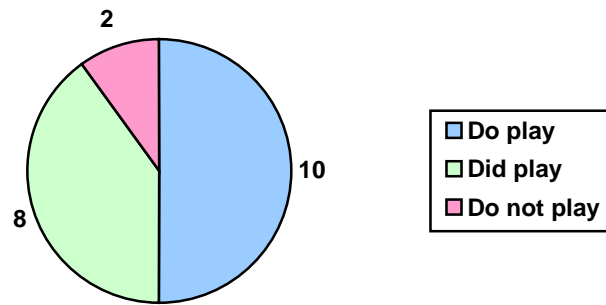


As shown in the chart above, there is a fairly even spread of whom the motivation came from to start learning the piano, as reported by the parents. In eight cases (40%), the motivation came mostly from the child; in ten cases (50%) from the parent. Where the motivation comes from the child, it is usually because an older sibling or parent is learning the piano: “She demanded lessons; her older sister was playing the piano” (P9.2). Where the motivation comes from the mother, “I wanted my son to have the opportunity that I never had to learn the piano” (P1.2), or it was “something I wanted my son to do, like brushing his teeth” (P9.1). Other reasons given were that there was a piano in the house (4), or that there was a local piano teacher (2).

Correlation: Motivation to start piano lessons	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.40	0.56
Achievement	0.06	0.93

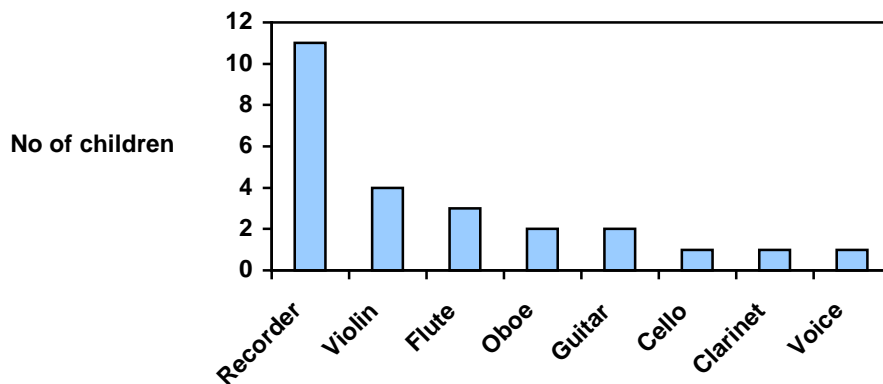
On the evidence of this small sample, children who themselves wish to start learning the piano are slightly more likely at the age of 14 to enjoy playing, and much more likely to be progressing well.

Children playing other instruments



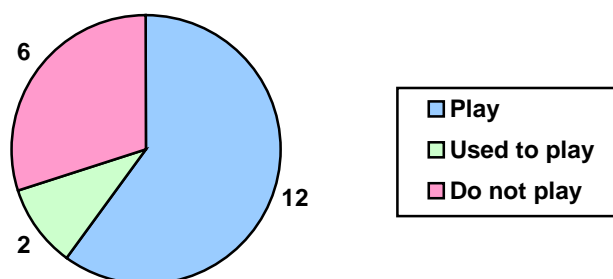
10 children in the sample (50%) report they do play other instruments besides the piano, eight (40%) did play, and two (10%) do not play other instruments (see chart above). In my sample, playing other instruments has very little effect on pupils' enjoyment and achievement at the piano.

Choice of other instruments



As shown in the chart above, the most popular instruments amongst my sample are recorder (11), violin (4) and flute (3), which corresponds with research by O'Neill (2001) who found, for example, that for girls in Year 6 (aged 10-11) the most common instruments are recorder (32%), flute (13%) and violin (12%).

Playing/singing in musical groups

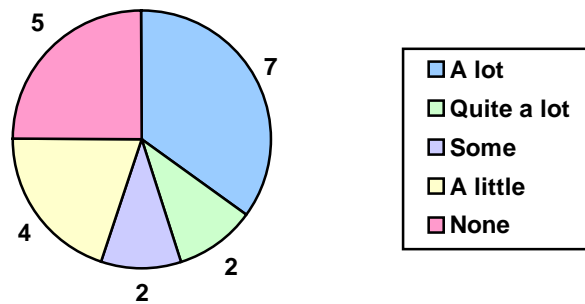


14 children in the sample (70%) say they play or sing, or have played or sung, in musical groups (see chart above). These are mostly organised by the school or local authority, or occasionally church, and include school choir, school orchestra, recorder group, church choir, string quartet, recorder trio, through to local and national youth choir and orchestra.

Parents and their children were each questioned individually about instruments the child plays or played and attendance at musical groups. Reports from both categories were very similar.

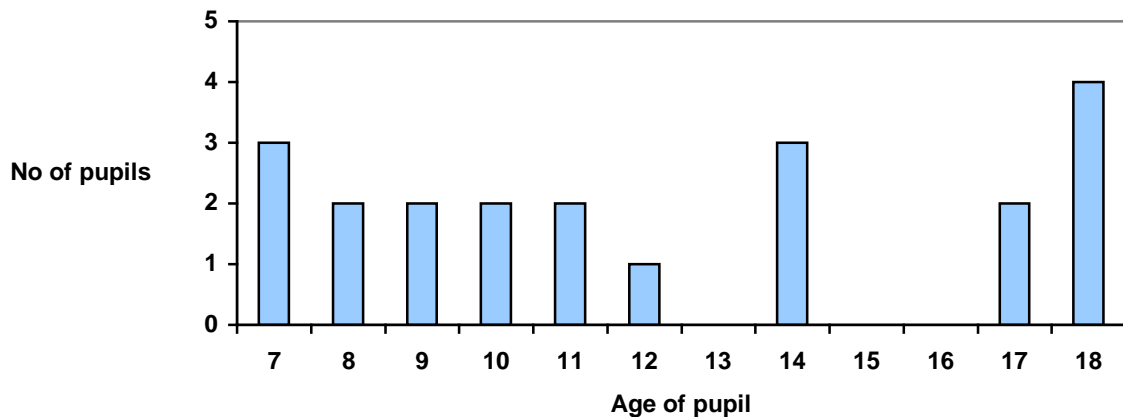
Those who play or sing in groups mention their enjoyment of music-making and of the social aspect: “I enjoy playing; I like the music” (C4.1); “I like hearing how the pieces fit together” (C3.2); and “it feels nice singing, being with other people and singing” (C7.1); “it can be fun - there’s lots of noisy chatter between the music-making” (C10.1). For these pianists, the experience of making music with others is highly valued and offers something they do not get through practice and solo instrumental performance. In fact, C10.1 practises very little but is a very high achiever who plays a great deal in groups - he joins his father in traditional Irish music-making. This informal music-making with adults may well raise both his enjoyment and playing levels despite relatively little formal practice. In my sample, playing in groups had very little effect on pupils’ enjoyment and achievement at the piano, although O’Neill (2001) found that children who continue playing musical instruments between the ages of 10 and 12 are slightly more likely to play in groups.

Performing experience



As shown in the table above, seven children (35%) have a lot of concert experience, playing at “teachers’ termly pupils’ concerts” (P7.2) or “informal termly pupils’ concerts at school” (P5.1), while five children (25%) have never played at a concert of any sort. Parents report that 12 children (60%) have taken examinations, five (25%) have not, and three (15%) are working towards their first examination. 75% of the children in the sample are making use of the UK music examination system.

Ages of pupils who left teacher in last year

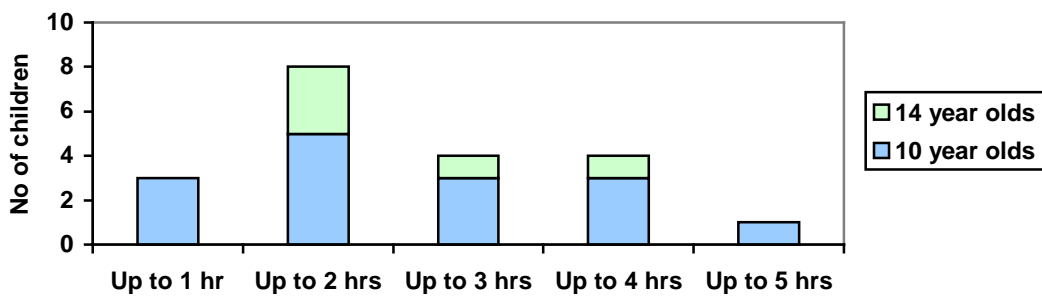


There was a fairly even spread of ages of pupils who left their piano teacher, for whatever reason, during the last year (see chart above). These are interesting results when compared with research by O’Neill (2001) which indicates that fewer than 35% of children who play instruments in year 6 (age 10-11) remain playing by the end of year 7 (age 11-12). There is no evidence in my sample of a big dropout rate between the ages of 10 and 12. The

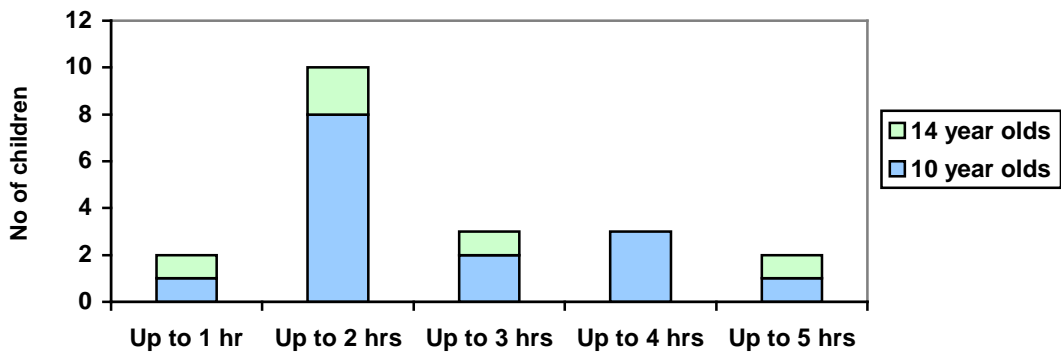
difference may be that my research investigates only piano and not orchestral instruments, or that teachers in my sample taught mostly out of school and that pupils in year 7 are more likely to drop instruments learned in school. Piano is offered less frequently at school. It is also easy for teachers to ‘forget’ how many pupils have actually left.

Piano practice

Total length of weekly practice according to children



Total length of weekly practice according to parents



The most common amount of piano practice for any child is between one and two hours a week (see charts above). Children report they practise between 15 minutes a week (C10.1) and 4½ hours (C1.1), while parents report between an hour a week (P10.1, P10.2) and 3 to 6 hours (P9.2). Frequency of practice varies between “every day” (C1.2, C4.2) and “often only once a week” (C10.1); and length of practice between “5 to 10 minutes” (C3.2) and “she will play for an hour or two, during the course of which she will fit in some practice”

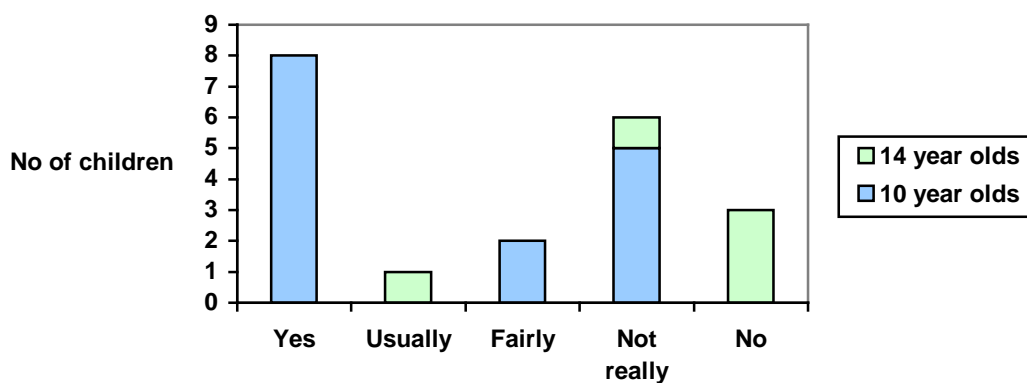
(P9.2). It is difficult for children and parents to differentiate between practising and playing. C10.1 says he practises for 15 minutes once a week, and his mother reports that he practises twice a week for up to 30 minutes each time, but then later adds “he is very reluctant to practise what he should be practising, but he plays the piano a lot”.

An average was taken of parents’ and children’s reports of total amount of weekly practice time, and correlated with enjoyment and achievement:

Correlation: Length of practice	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	-0.39	0.45
Achievement	0.42	0.97

There is a very high correlation of 0.97 between practice time and achievement for the 14 year olds. It certainly seems to be the case that those who practise more, progress more. This was also found by Sloboda *et al* (1996): the relationship between objective musical achievements and amount of practice undertaken is very strong.

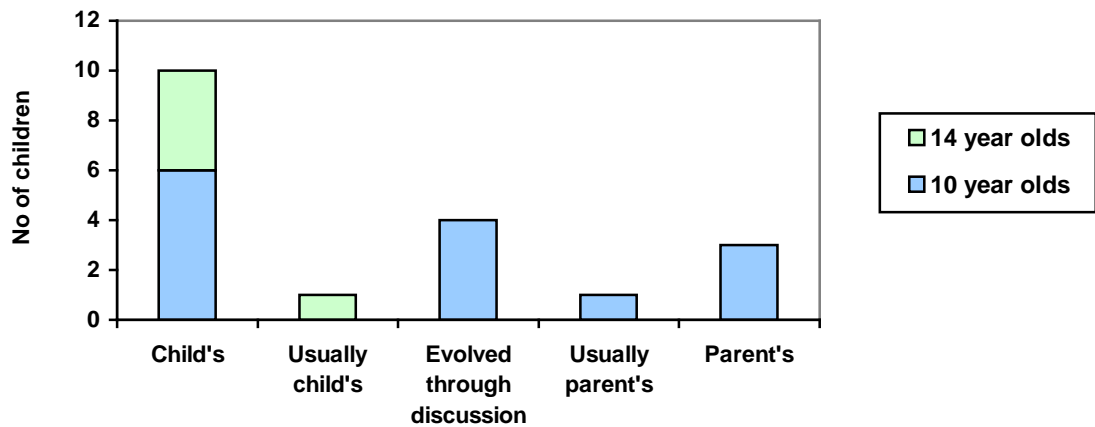
Specific time for practising



Specific practice times are more likely to be set for 10 year olds than for 14 year olds (see chart above). Parents’ reports on whether specific times are set for practice vary from “no, variable” (P6.2), through “I try to encourage practice before teatime, otherwise she is so tired” (P4.1), to “she does homework from 5.00 to 5.40 pm, piano practice from 5.40 to 6.00 pm, and then watches the Simpsons at 6.00 pm - I feel the routine is important,

otherwise things don't get done" (P2.1) and "yes, after the evening meal, between 7.00 and 8.00 pm - I go upstairs to work and ask my daughter to practise meanwhile so I can hear it is done" (P4.2).

Choice of practice time



It is noticeable from the chart above that the older children have become more independent regarding practising. It is their choice as to when they practise, and they generally prefer not to have a specific time. Meanwhile the younger children are more bound by the constraints of the whole family, and their parents are more likely to set specific times for practice.

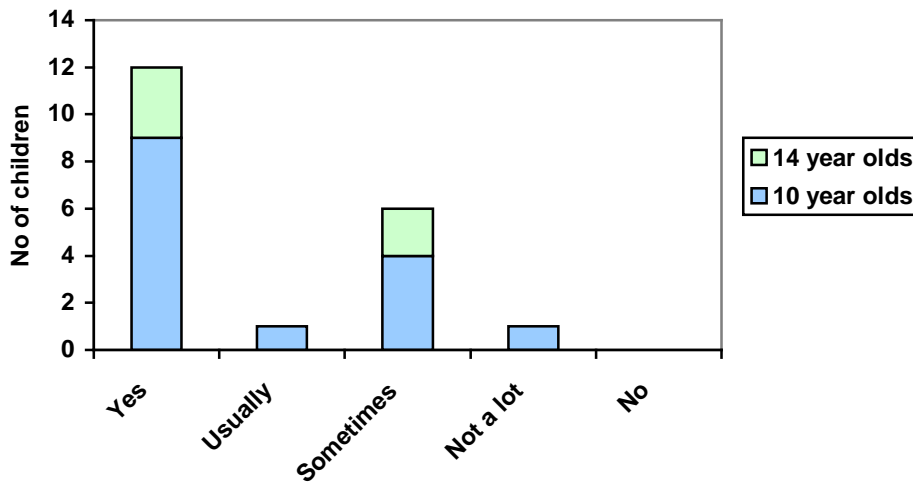
Correlation: Specific practice time	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.24	-0.94
Achievement	-0.08	-0.53

Correlation: Choice of practice time	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	-0.08	0.83
Achievement	0.09	0.39

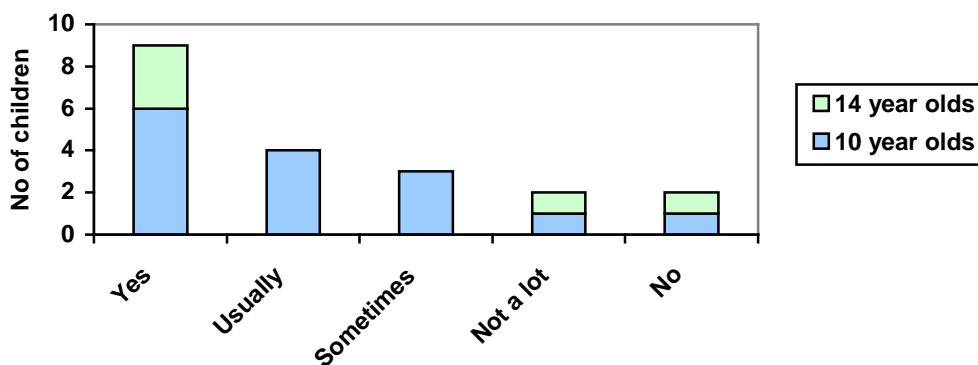
There is a strong negative correlation of -0.94 for the 14 year olds between having a specific time to practice and their enjoyment, and a positive correlation of 0.83 between whether they choose their own practice time and their enjoyment. It seems that parents need to allow older children to take responsibility for practising in their own time, although

those children who are unable to organise their own practice may already have given up by the age of 14.

Enjoyment of practising according to children



Enjoyment of practising according to parents



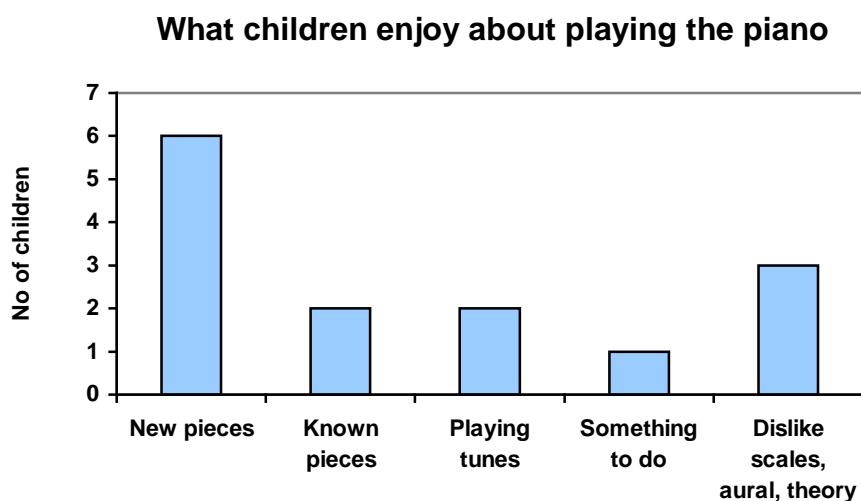
Generally, children declare they enjoy practising more than their parents estimate (see charts above). But many parents are well aware of their children’s attitudes towards practising. For instance, P4.2 says “I don’t think she dislikes doing it, but I don’t think the enjoyment is there - I don’t think she has enough skill yet”, while his daughter says “it depends - I don’t enjoy it if I can’t play the tune; I do enjoy it if I like the tune”, both implying that enjoyment is based on skill development. P8.1 reports her son “doesn’t like working at new pieces”, and he corroborates: “I don’t really like learning new pieces”.

While no children say they do not enjoy practising, C10.1 (age 10) who often practises only once a week (he is a very bright, articulate boy, and a rather high-achieving musician) says “it can be a bit irritating to have to fit piano practice into a busy schedule”. If a 10 year old says this, one wonders what hope there is for teenagers to fit music practice in with their academic and social commitments.

Correlation: Enjoyment of practising	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.74	0.56
Achievement	-0.40	0.04

Using the children’s reports of their enjoyment of practising, the only link here seems to be with general enjoyment for the 10 year olds (0.74 correlation). 10 year olds are generally enthusiastic about much of what they do, while that keen enthusiasm has often waned as they enter their teens (O’Neill, 2001).

Enjoyment: playing the piano

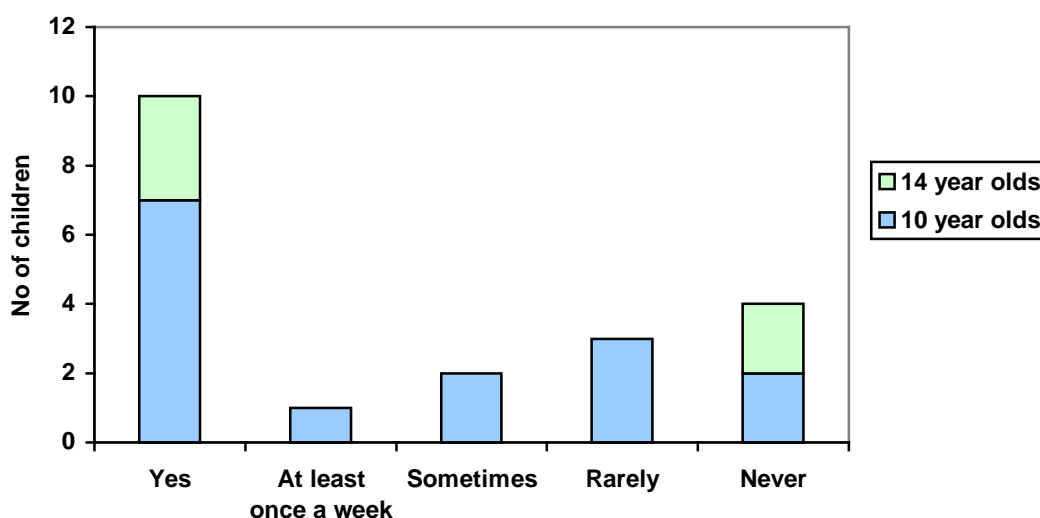


The children interviewed say they like learning new pieces, playing known pieces, and playing tunes, but dislike scales, aural and theory (see chart above). They like the challenge of learning a new piece: “I enjoy building up a piece” (C7.2), “I like the satisfaction of improving a piece if I practise hard” (C3.2), but not when a piece is too

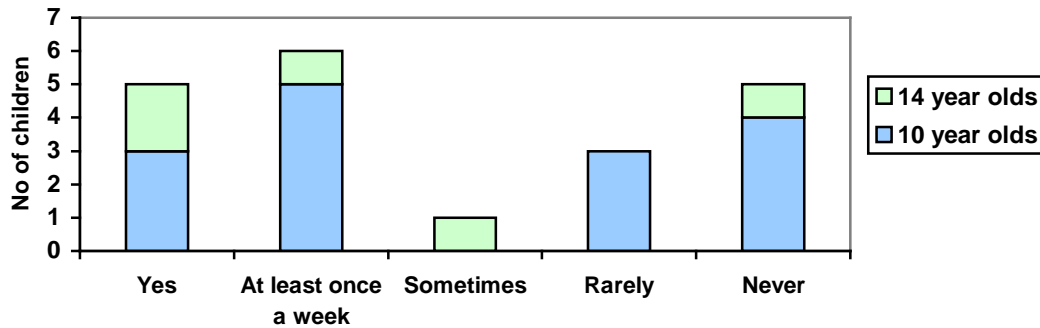
difficult: “It’s a bit boring when you can’t do it - frustrating” (C7.2). This highlights the importance of the teacher choosing pieces of the right level for each pupil - pieces which challenge but do not frustrate the child. It is also important that the teacher finds pieces that pupils like: “I do enjoy it if I like the tune” (C4.2); “I enjoy practising when I like the pieces” (C6.1). C10.2 says “I don’t enjoy playing pieces I don’t like, and then I don’t learn them quickly”. The results from the Keele project (O’Neill, 2001) also indicate that children play instruments because they enjoy the challenge and opportunity to learn something new. As Gembris & Davidson (2002) say, it is important that children are sufficiently challenged and stretched without being overwhelmed or threatened. Repertoire that is either too easy or too difficult can result in low engagement during practice (O’Neill & McPherson, 2002).

It is interesting that a dedicated, high-achieving 14 year old says “I now enjoy practising but I didn’t used to. I enjoyed it from the age of 13 - partly because I am older and more advanced, and partly because my present teacher is much more involving” (C9.2). This girl has been with her present teacher for 18 months. So there can be a long period when even high-achieving children do not really enjoy practising; and, not surprisingly, their level of enjoyment may be affected by their teacher.

Children's reports of frequency of playing music not set by the teacher



Parent's reports of frequency of playing music not set by the teacher

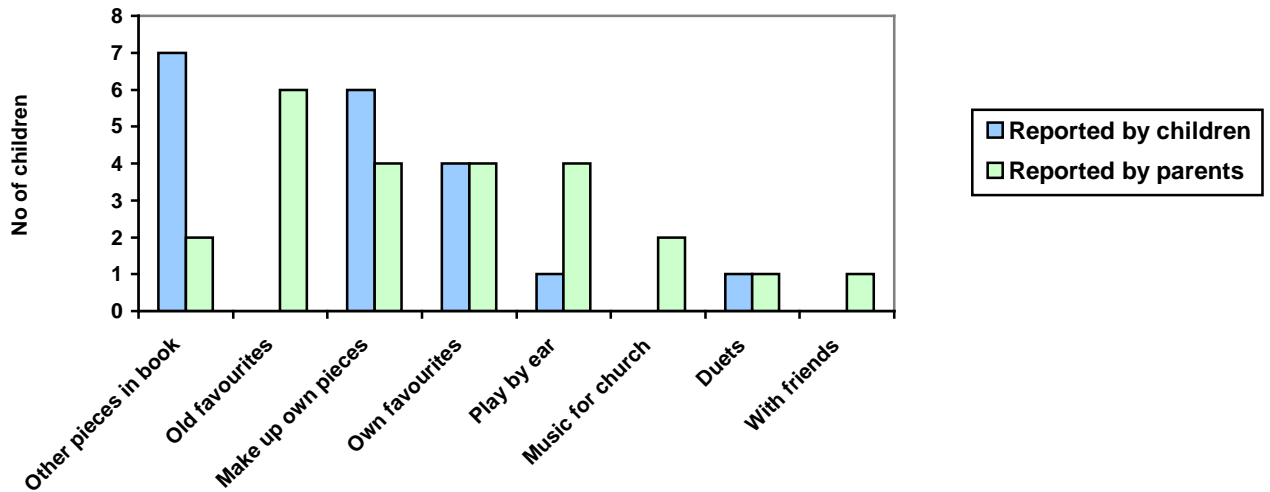


There is a correlation of only 0.5 between children's and parents reports of how frequently children play music not set by the teacher (see charts above). Using the data from the interviews with the children:

Correlation: Frequency of playing music not set by the teacher	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.80	0.90
Achievement	-0.14	0.63

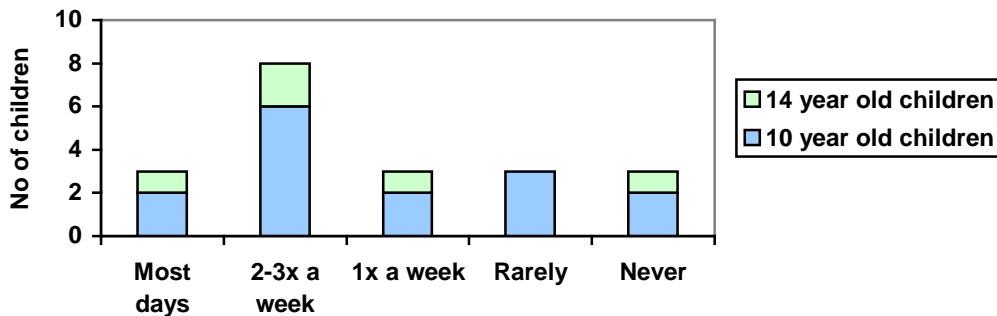
There is a high correlation (0.8 for 10 year olds and 0.9 for 14 year olds) between playing music not set by the teacher and pupil enjoyment. Playing their own choice of music may be a product of increased pupil enjoyment, in so much as someone who is more motivated may seek out additional music to play. But if playing their own pieces in itself leads to more pupil enjoyment, then young children should be encouraged to play their own choice of music as this may help their enjoyment and achievement as they get older.

Music children play that is not set by the teacher



As shown in the chart above, typically children play “other pieces in the book” (C2.2), “old favourites” (C8.1) or “I make up my own pieces” (C7.1). Own favourites includes jazzy pieces, Christmas carols, music from song books and from the internet, and chopsticks.

Playing piano for pleasure



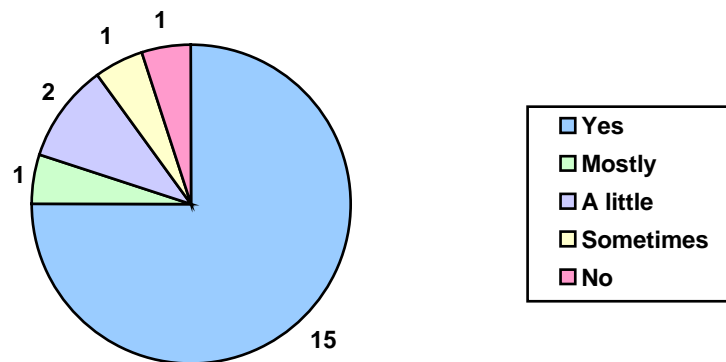
14 children (70%) report playing the piano for pleasure at least once a week (see chart above). Two 10 year old children report playing the piano for pleasure as a time-filler “when there is nothing to do” (C6.2) or “when bored of doing something else” (C7.1), while another says “I enjoy it but don’t have the time” (C5.1). A 14 year old (C8.2) says she never goes to the piano specifically to play for pleasure, but that “practice sometimes turns into pleasure” while her mother agrees “she doesn’t separate piano practice from playing for pleasure; she will practise twice on many days”.

Parents' reports on the frequency of playing for pleasure are similar but not identical to children's reports. Basing the statistics on the children's views, similar correlations were gained for playing the piano for pleasure as for playing music not set by the teacher:

Correlation: Play piano for pleasure	10 year olds	14 year olds
Enjoyment	0.70	0.97
Achievement	-0.14	0.70

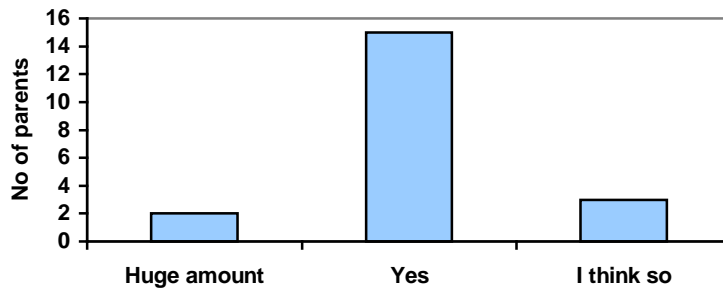
In my sample, playing the piano for pleasure is correlated to 14 year olds' achievement in music (0.7) and highly correlated to their enjoyment of music (0.97). It is also linked to 10 year olds' enjoyment (0.7). This supports research by Davidson *et al* (2000) who found that high achieving young instrumentalists did far more informal, self-motivated practice than low achievers. They suggest that the free exploration of music is important for skill acquisition.

Sense of satisfaction to child from playing piano



15 children (75%) claim that playing the piano gives them a sense of satisfaction (see chart above). They mention the challenge and subsequent sense of achievement when they have mastered a piece (8 children), the pleasure of listening to the sounds when playing music (6), and the delight of impressing someone (2) - a father or boyfriend.

Child's playing a sense of satisfaction to parent



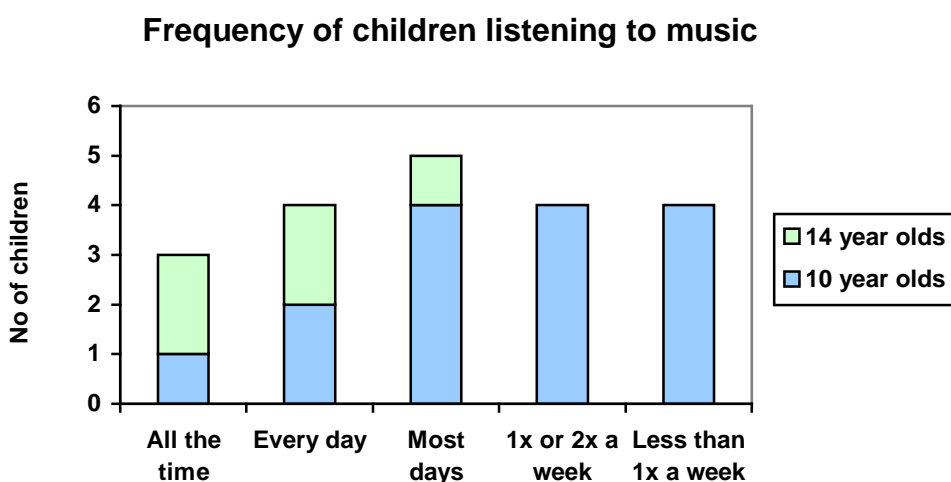
Children's achievements at the piano are always a source of satisfaction to parents, regardless of the child's level (see chart above). The two children whose parents responded "yes, a huge amount" (P3.2) and "yes, huge" (P9.2) are at either end of the achievement spectrum: very low achieving (C3.2) and very high achieving (C9.2). Most parents express pleasure and pride in their children's musical achievements: "it's lovely to hear her progressing and enjoying it" (P2.2), "it can bring tears to my eyes to hear my daughter playing" (P6.2), and "it's lovely to hear live music" (P8.1). They also mention developing skills and fulfilling their potential: "she's learning a transferable skill if she can read music - opening up new avenues" (P4.2), "one of those life skills she will never lose" (P6.1), and "I want my daughter to fulfil her potential" (P5.1). P8.2 believes music helps to develop a child's personality: "a way of expressing oneself". Playing the piano has its uses: "it may be useful to play the piano in church" (P1.1). And three parents regret that they themselves cannot play the piano: "I wish I could do it" (P2.1), and "it gives me huge pleasure and a certain indignant, outraged envy!" (P9.2).

Enjoyment: listening to music

14 children (70% of the sample) say they enjoy listening to music while the remaining six (30%) say "not really" (C4.2) or "it depends what sort" (C3.1, C8.1). Many 10 year olds are not familiar enough with different types of music to be specific, while the 14 year olds have their favourite rock or pop groups. There are some mature answers, even from the 10 year olds, that what they wish to listen to depends on their mood or on what they are doing: "I will listen to classical music to relax - I find it calming; rock and pop are not so good for calming down" (C3.2), or "it depends what I am doing - I listen to classical when doing homework, pop when in a dancing mood" (C5.1). Half the children actually mention that

they enjoy listening to classical music; two (10%) specifically say they choose not to listen to classical music. There was some correlation (0.54) amongst the 14 year olds between listening to classical music and their levels of achievement at the piano.

13 children (65%) have their own CD/cassette player or radio. This breaks down into 8 out of 15 (53%) of 10 year olds and 100% of 14 year olds.



Not surprisingly, the teenagers listen to music more than the primary school children, as can be seen from the chart above. The teenagers listen “pretty much all the time” (C9.2), “every day” (C7.2), or “most days” (C5.2) while many primary school children listen infrequently.

Enjoyment: additional points

When children were asked if they had anything to add about their musical enjoyment, they mentioned that they like their teacher (6), they enjoy playing duets (2), and enjoy performing (2). C8.2 says “it helps when my parents help when I get stuck; their support keeps me going; it’s good that my father and sister also play the piano”, while C9.2 says “I accompany my sister on the clarinet, and she accompanies me on the oboe, which is nice ... I accompany mother singing. It is nice there is a lot of music in the family”.

Parents came up with a wide range of additional information about their children's musical enjoyment. Several mentioned that "the teacher is very important" (P1.1), and that the teacher should be encouraging: "encouragement is the most important thing for enjoyment" (P1.1). One parent is impressed that "the teacher focuses on his pupil and takes them seriously, as if they were another adult" (P3.2). Choice of music was thought important: "the teacher seems able to select pieces that suit the personality of the child" (P5.2); "he likes the pieces the teacher sets; he likes doing jazzy music" (P3.1).

Ballet (or moving to music in general) is thought to help develop a good sense of rhythm. Two girls have ballet lessons: "her teacher says she has a good tone and good rhythm" (P4.2) and "she likes dancing and moving to music - she has a good sense of rhythm" (P2.2). P1.1 has just bought another CD player so they can "play more music for our son, to encourage him to enjoy listening".

Playing with other people, which is less easy on the piano, seems to be important to one boy: "he really gets a buzz from playing the oboe in an orchestra - sharing in the production of a big thing" (P7.2). Others enjoy the performing aspect: "she does enjoy performing" (P6.1); "he enjoys other people enjoying his music" (P9.1); "she is a performer" (P9.2). And others enjoy composing (P7.1, P10.1).

Correlations:	10 year olds	14 year olds	All children
Teacher encouragement of parental involvement/actual parental involvement	0.59	0.94	0.64
Parental involvement/pupil enjoyment	0.33	0.11	0.33
Pupil enjoyment/achievement	-0.39	0.61	-0.04
Parental involvement/pupil achievement	0	0.06	0.16

The table above shows some link in my research between teacher encouragement of parental involvement and actual parental involvement (0.64 for all children in sample, 0.94 for 14 year olds), but no link between parental involvement and pupil enjoyment. There is a slight negative correlation (-0.39) between pupil enjoyment and achievement at the age of 10, though a positive correlation (0.61) by the age of 14. Teenagers enjoy achieving, or

those who achieve well also enjoy their piano playing. Achievement is of little importance to 10 year olds, who can enjoy playing the piano whether or not they are achieving highly, or who may achieve highly but not gain pleasure from their music-making. There is zero correlation between parental involvement and pupil achievement in my sample.

Certain indicators of enjoyment suggest that, while they may have less immediate effect on the enjoyment and achievement of children at primary school, they may be important to encourage at an early age so pupils enjoy and achieve highly as teenagers. These indicators include:

- developing a good practice routine;
- playing music not set by the teacher;
- playing for pleasure;
- listening to music, especially classical.

Conversely, it is possible that those who are enjoying and achieving well at the piano, will be motivated to do these things. Those children who themselves chose to start learning the piano, and who began lessons at an early age, also tend to enjoy and achieve well.

Three pupil profiles

The following profiles of three pupils illustrate the variety of levels of enjoyment and achievement in my sample and go some way to explaining why my research does not show the predicted correlations. C1.1, with his very high achievement and low enjoyment, together with C3.2, with her low achievement and high enjoyment, represent the range of 10 year olds, for whom there is no correlation between enjoyment and achievement (see table on page 59). For this age group there is a 0.4 correlation in my sample between musical environment and enjoyment. For both 10 and 14 year olds there is no correlation between musical environment and achievement. Enjoyment and achievement levels of 14 year olds are related (0.61). Of the 14 year olds in my sample, two come from musical environments and report low levels of enjoyment, two have little music in their environments and report high enjoyment levels, while C9.2 (third profile below) is a very high achiever reporting high enjoyment, coming from a very musical environment.

	C1.1	C3.2	C9.2
Age	10	10	14
Age of starting piano lessons	7	9	7
Number of years of learning piano	3	1	7
Source of motivation to learn piano	Mother	Difficult to say - bound up with music at school	Child
Mother sang to baby	Not much	Yes, but not obsessively	Yes, a lot
Plays in musical groups	No	Yes - likes it	Yes - so much fun
Satisfaction from playing piano	No	Yes	Yes - magic
Parent attends lessons	Yes – reads meanwhile, does not listen to lesson	Yes - interested	Yes for 1 st 3 years of lessons, but not now
Length of practice	45 mins a day, 6 days a week	5-10 mins a day, 6 days a week	2-3 hours a week, plus an equal amount of playing not in preparation for lesson
Parent supervises practise	No – father sits in room and just listens	Yes - 2-3x a week	Not much now, but mother used to a lot up to grade 4-5
Teacher encouragement of parental assistance at practice	Discouraged	Teacher says he neither encourages nor discourages, parent feels discouraged	Encouraged, especially in early stages
Musical environment (6 indicators, scale 6-30 - see table on page 58)	10	22	25
Enjoyment (5 indicators, scale 5-25) (see table on page 58)	9	24	25
Achievement	Working for grade 6	Pre grade 1	Working for grade 8
Conclusion	High achievement from high levels of practice over 3 years; low enjoyment from unmusical environment and no parental involvement?	Low achievement from little practice over only 1 year; high enjoyment from musical environment and highish levels of parental involvement?	High achievement from high levels of practice over 7 years; high enjoyment from musical enjoyment and high levels of parental involvement? Motivation to learn came from child, mother sang to child as baby, child plays in musical groups

Table of teacher encouragement of parental involvement, actual parental involvement, pupil enjoyment and achievement

This table gives an overall view of the range of levels of teacher encouragement of parental involvement, actual parental involvement, pupil enjoyment and pupil achievement in my research sample.

	Teacher encouragement of parental assistance at practice; why	Actual parental involvement at practice; how	Pupil enjoyment of playing piano; what	Playing standard (Age)
T1, P1.1, C1.1	Discourages, but parents of 5-6 year olds tolerated; likes pupils to be independent	No; listens to CD before exam and listens to son's performance and tries to help him make them sound the same	No; nothing much	Grade 6 (10)
T1, P1.2, C1.2		No; sits in same room but does not supervise	Sort of; like it when play well	Grade 2 (10)
T2, P2.1, C2.1	Encourages in early stages; helps pupil and can be more fun	No; reminds daughter of teacher's comments, listens if something does not sound right	Yes; wanted to play because brother played violin and saw piano on TV programmes	Grade 1 (10)
T2, P2.2, C2.2		Informally; asks daughter to give her a concert, daughter asks mother to play bits with her, play duets together	Yes	Pre-grade 1 (9)
T3, P3.1, C3.1	Neither encourages nor discourages; the more communication, openness, encouragement, support, the better	Yes; listens, corrects and encourages son	Yes; like the piano	Grade 2 (10)
T3, P3.2, C3.2		2-3x a week; checks each piece has been practised, checks details in notebook, plays along with daughter	Yes; something to communicate about with father, something he can be proud of	Pre-grade 1 (10)
T4, P4.1, C4.1	Encourages; likely to increase discipline, increase quality of practice and, therefore, effectiveness of practice	No; reminds daughter to practise and may ask if she has practised everything set by teacher	Yes; do not find it hard, like the sounds, can sing along with the tunes	Grade 1 (10)
T4, P4.2, C4.2		Yes; structures practise by breaking down difficulties, encourages daughter	Mostly; even though best friend is more advanced and has been playing less long	Pre-grade 1 (9)
T5, P5.1, C5.1	Neither - not mentioned; prefers pupil to understand direct from teacher rather than rely on parent to interpret	No; daughter asks for help with specific problems	Yes; happy to play pieces, know I have progressed, like it that class music teacher takes an interest in my playing	Pre-grade 1 (10)
T5, P5.2, C5.2		No	Sort of; like the rhythm	Grade 1 (11)
T6, P6.1, C6.1	Discourages; does not want parents to put pressure on child to practice so it becomes like every other area of life - wants music to be something special to child	No	Yes; enjoy challenge of mastering a piece, developing different techniques and styles	Grade 2 (10)
T6, P6.2, C6.2		No; may help by calming daughter down if having trouble, but cannot help musically	Yes; like playing tunes and performing	Grade 6 (14)

T7, P7.1, C7.1	Thinks she encourages; helpful to child	1-2x a week; suggests bars to be improved	Sometimes; like listening to nice sounds	Grade 2 (10)
T7, P7.2, C7.2		Used to sit by son; helped him repeat difficult passages, demonstrated them, played one hand while he played other hand; now just listens when asked	Yes; like the style of piano pieces	Grade 3 (14)
T8, P8.1, C8.2	Generally encourages; parents who can help in a positive way are a huge advantage	No	Yes; like sense of achievement	Grade 3 (11)
T8, P8.2, C8.2		Once a week; husband gives advice with problems with trill or fingering	Yes; like mastering piece especially if difficult, enjoy playing pieces but not sight-reading	Grade 3 (13)
T9, P9.1, C9.1	Encourages parents of younger children to supervise practice; discusses ways of doing more practice with parents of older children	Used to help; especially when learning new piece or with sight-reading, reminded son to do all set by teacher	Yes	Grade 5 (11)
T9, P9.2, C9.2		Used to help; read notebook, especially if exam approaching, checked technique, ensured practice got done, up to grade 4-5 would help learning new piece, but mostly scales and arpeggios	Yes; enjoy improving things; piano is so complete - feeling of magic	Grade 8 (14)
T10, P10.1, C10.2	Encourages; to help child	Yes; structures practice, ensures all pieces and scales are practised, especially coming up to exam or next lesson	Yes; enjoy playing music	Grade 5 (10)
T10, P10.2, C10.2		Used to help; read teacher's notes, tried to structure practice and encourage daughter	Yes; like being able to read music and play pieces (but do not like sight-reading), like impressing brother's friend	Grade 3 (14)

T1 discourages parental involvement. Neither of her interviewed pupils receives much supervision at practice, and both pupils report lowish enjoyment levels of playing the piano. One is achieving well, while the other is a very high achiever. T6 also discourages parental involvement, neither pupil is supervised at practice, both report high enjoyment and both are achieving well.

T3 neither encourages nor discourages parental involvement. Both his pupils report some help with practice, both enjoy playing the piano, and one pupil's achievement is low while the other is good. T5 does not mention parental involvement to parents. Neither pupil receives much help, they enjoy or "sort of" enjoy playing the piano, and are both low achievers.

T2 encourages parental involvement in the early stages. Each of her two interviewed pupils receives only a small amount of parental supervision at practice, each reports high enjoyment, but lowish achievement. T9 also encourages parental involvement in the early stages. Both of her two pupils used to receive help, both enjoy playing the piano, and both are very high achievers.

So there is a wide range of teacher encouragement of parental involvement, of actual parental involvement at practice, of pupil enjoyment and pupil achievement, with no obvious pattern to ascertain which pupils enjoy their music-making and which are achieving well. This agrees with Howe & Sloboda (1991) who found examples of a wide variety of influential life events in the early lives of young musicians. "There does not exist 'the' route to musical excellence" but "for every successful child there is a route towards competence" (pp50-51).

5 Summary and conclusions

Research questions

My research has posed questions about learning the piano. In particular, the responses from 10 interviewed teachers, 20 pupils and 20 parents have enabled me to explore whether the selected sample of teachers welcomes parental involvement, what effect this attitude has on actual parental involvement, the nature of parental involvement, and its effect on children's enjoyment and achievement.

What are instrumental teachers' attitudes to parental involvement in children's music lessons and practices?

There was an even balance in my sample of teachers' views on parental involvement. Four teachers encourage parents to attend lessons, three do not discuss attendance with parents, and three discourage parents from attending. Regarding parental assistance at practice, six teachers generally encourage it, at least in the early stages, two neither encourage nor discourage it, while two positively discourage assistance (see table on page 54).

Teachers who discourage parental involvement put forward many convincing arguments for not involving the parent in lessons. They report that parents tend to interfere during lessons, that parental attendance inhibits the development of an independent pupil-teacher relationship, and that parental attendance makes it difficult for children to take responsibility for their own practice. Conversely, other teachers give good reasons for encouraging parental attendance at lessons. They report practice is more efficient when supervised but that young pupils cannot adequately communicate to the parent what is to be practised, so they like to explain it to the parent. They believe it is beneficial for parents to see in lesson their children's achievements, challenges, problems and goals.

Some teachers discourage parental involvement with practice and give good reasons. They wish children to be independent in their practice, they consider parental interference or over-involvement may be discouraging, and they feel confusion can arise if parents are involved. But other teachers recognise that the discipline of parental involvement can

improve the effectiveness of the practice, and emphasise the enjoyment of making music together. Parental assistance is considered particularly helpful by these teachers in the early stages, with younger pupils, and for examination preparation.

Although evidence from many researchers, including Sloboda, Davidson, Howe and Moore in the 1990s, indicates that parental involvement is beneficial, even crucial, for high achievement on a musical instrument, some teachers in my sample prefer to work on a one-to-one basis with the pupil, with minimum contact with the parent. Even when the parent wishes to be involved, these teachers do their best to exclude the parent. None attempts to show the parent how to assist positively, even though parental involvement is welcomed by those children who have experienced it.

It is evident from my research that parents are more able to act as an intermediary between the teacher and the child than teachers realise. Some parents assist without the teacher knowing about it, and it is not necessary for parents to be musically trained to help their children. For all these reasons, even though I was not able to show that parental involvement led to greater achievement, there are good grounds for believing it is of benefit to pupils and should be encouraged.

The crux of the matter seems to be training parents to help in a positive, non-critical way. To be successfully involved, it is essential that parents have confidence in their own efficacy. Therefore, it is necessary for instrumental teachers to build parents' confidence in their ability to make a difference to their children's development. However, there is often some tension over the parents' role, arising from a lack of communication between teacher and parent. Teachers themselves need to feel that parents - even those without musical expertise - can help by creating the right nurturing environment and by giving appropriate support.

Willingness to involve parents seems to be affected by teachers' training and experience. Teachers in my sample who have initially received training in teaching skills, have followed specialist courses, have been teaching for the longest and have the most pupils, are the most likely to encourage parental involvement. In contrast, those who have received no initial teacher training and have less teaching experience, discourage or do not discuss parental involvement. Teachers' attitudes to parental involvement may be moulded

by what they learn on teaching courses. Therefore, if children do better with more parental involvement, for children to receive the best possible instrumental tuition, they need to be taught by experienced people trained in pedagogy as well as in music. However, just as my findings regarding parental involvement and pupil achievement do not support other research in this area, my findings regarding teacher training and parental encouragement may be equally limited. They may be the result of chance in my small sample.

It is evident that teachers in my sample love teaching and seeing the enjoyment and achievement of their pupils. However, many of them are not involving parents, which is widely accepted in general education as good practice for bringing out the best in children.

What do those teachers who promote parental involvement actually encourage parents to do?

There is no single definition of parental involvement amongst my interviewees, and the teachers' promotion of parental involvement is very varied. At the end of lessons, when children are collected, whether or not parents have attended, some teachers discuss the lesson, especially with parents of younger children and of those preparing for examinations. Some teachers invite parents to follow the lesson with a view to helping with practice, or they draw the parent's attention to good achievements. Other teachers are not specific about what parents should do, and the parents sit at the other end of the room, and either read or listen to the lesson.

Only one of the teachers in my sample instructs the parents of her younger pupils how to supervise their children's practice on a moment-by-moment basis. Teachers ask parents to encourage practice to take place, help if the child asks, read the notebook, act as an appreciative audience, and engage in ensemble playing with the child. Again, often teachers are not specific about what they wish parents to do.

How do parents support their children musically?

Parental support varies from family to family. Sometimes teachers know what home support their pupils receive, but some parental involvement occurs without the teacher being aware of it. Where there is very little communication between teacher and parent,

there can be conflict between the teacher's and the parent's perception of the parent's role in practice.

Involvement at lessons amongst my respondents varies between never attending, reading a book during the lesson and not talking to the teacher at all, not attending but discussing the lesson with the teacher when collecting the child, and listening to the lesson and discussing it with the teacher at the end. All 20 interviewed parents report that they are not encouraged to do anything in particular during the lesson.

Although teachers often speak to parents at the end of the lesson, no parents report taking notes to help with practice at home. Parents say they may encourage practice to take place; ensure everything gets practised, especially before a lesson or examination; instruct their child - read the notebook, point out and correct mistakes; engage in ensemble playing - play alongside their child, or play duets; listen when asked; or encourage their child. The most common reason given by parents for attending practice is to provide encouragement, followed by giving assistance. Other reasons are that parents enjoy listening, or wish to ensure that practice takes place.

Several parents say they would like to make music with their child but consider they are not good enough. However, there is much evidence to show that many musically untrained parents are willing and able to assist their children with practice. There is almost no correlation between parents' musical ability and their reports on supervision of practice.

Some parents see no value in attending practices. They have no conception that help could be given. They seem to underestimate their ability to help with music practice. If teachers were to guide parents and build their confidence, both teachers and parents might discover that parents are able to contribute a great deal.

Does increased parental involvement raise pupil enjoyment and achievement?

Results from my sample do not support evidence from Sloboda and his colleagues that more parental involvement increases pupil achievement. There is some link in my sample between teacher encouragement of parental involvement and actual parental involvement,

but no link between parental involvement and pupil enjoyment. There is a slight negative correlation between pupil enjoyment and achievement at the age of 10, though a positive correlation by the age of 14 (see table on page 84).

A reason for the lack of correlation between parental involvement and pupil achievement may be the widely varied nature of the pupils in such a small sample, as shown in the three pupil profiles (see page 86). Another problem is that of accurately assessing a child's achievement at the piano. A child who has been learning for a year and achieved distinction at grade 1 is obviously achieving far more highly than another who has been playing for several years and has just passed grade 1. My information on pupils' achievements was not fine-grained enough to discriminate between these levels. There was evidence that teachers offered their most capable pupils for interview. Capable, intrinsically motivated pupils will often do well whatever the teaching. It is the average and less good pupils who need careful nurturing. Also, potentially, a highly skilled teacher who does not encourage parental involvement could get better pupil results than a less skilled teacher who encourages parental involvement. My sample is very small, and cannot take account of individual teacher's or pupil's innate abilities. Also, I investigated only piano teachers. There are many variables which contribute to a child's progress on a musical instrument.

Key factors to children's enjoyment and achievement

My research highlights that children enjoy their music more if parents have sung to them as babies, if the parents now sing or play instruments, and if they are frequently taken to live performances. The enjoyment and achievement of the 14 year olds in my sample relate to the amount siblings (especially older sisters) play instruments, and the frequency with which they attend live performances.

Certain indicators of enjoyment suggest that, while of less immediate effect on the enjoyment and achievement of children at primary school, they may be important to encourage at an early age so pupils enjoy and achieve highly as teenagers. These include developing a good practice routine, playing music not set by the teacher, playing for pleasure, and listening to music, especially classical. Conversely, it is possible that children who are already enjoying and achieving well, will be motivated to do these things.

Those children who themselves chose to start learning the piano, and who began lessons at an early age, also tend to enjoy and achieve well.

Other points may affect pupil enjoyment and achievement. Factors noted by the teachers in my sample include the teacher's relationship with the pupil, the benefit of pupils' concerts, and the fact that enjoyment may be dependent on making progress and progress dependent on enjoyment. Factors noted by the children include the parent attending lessons, playing duets with their teacher or parent, hearing the improvement in pieces after practising them and being able to master each piece, messing around at the piano, and liking their teacher. Factors noted by the parents include the teacher's encouragement, parental interest in their child's music-making, the parent assisting at practice, and the parent playing alongside the child or playing duets with the child.

Further research

It would be interesting to examine further the relationship between teachers' pedagogical training and their level of encouragement of parental involvement, both in music and in other subjects. Have those teachers who encourage parental involvement always encouraged it, as a result of either their own early experiences or their training, or is it something they have encouraged more as they have gained experience in the teaching profession? Encouragement of parental involvement could be compared in teachers of different instruments and of different ages.

Also useful would be to interview pupils in their first year of lessons (real beginners) together with their parents and teachers, to discover more about parental involvement in the very early stages. And another possibility would be an intervention study in which parents who have not previously attended piano lessons start to do so.

Assuming that parental involvement is beneficial for developing musicians, as reported by Davidson *et al* (1996), an investigation could be made into whether children taught by the Suzuki approach (in which parental involvement is an integral part of the method) enjoy and achieve more highly than other children. If this were the case, it would be necessary to discover whether it is parental involvement or some other aspect of the approach that is the critical factor.

Recommendations

Piano teachers, even more than teachers of orchestral instruments, often lead very solitary professional working lives. It may be difficult to convince them of alternative teaching methods, and they may be reluctant to consider change. As professionals, they feel they know best. Parents, on the other hand, are inexperienced. They have no training in parenthood, yet want to do their best for their children. Increasingly, they are being encouraged by schools to participate in their children's education, and could be willing to help musically if instrumental teachers convinced them that their assistance would make a difference and directed their involvement. Children who receive parental assistance almost always seem to welcome it.

My recommendations are that:

1. Parents should select music teachers who have studied education as well as music.
2. Training courses for instrumental teachers should always include a pedagogical element.
3. Researchers and teachers should publish widely in teachers' journals with examples of evidence of successful parental involvement to demonstrate how it can be done, and to inspire and encourage other teachers to do likewise.

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Appendix

Interview schedules

Interview schedule for teachers

I am going to ask you a series of questions which start off with some factual background information and then finish with questions about the enjoyment of music. I'll end by asking if there is anything you wish to add about pupil enjoyment.

Teacher

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Have you attended any specialist training courses, for instance Kodaly, Dalcroze, Orff, Associated Board CT course, EPTA Pedagogy course, and so on?
3. [If yes] Do you use any of the knowledge gained from these courses in your teaching? Is there anything in particular you use? Does this knowledge enhance pupil enjoyment?
4. What is the biggest influence on your teaching?
5. How many pupils do you teach, privately and at school? What is their age range?
6. How many of your pupils are aged 10? [If fewer than two] How many are aged 9 to 11 (or 8 to 11)? Give details. [How many are aged 14?]

Lessons

I'd like to ask you a few questions about lessons.

7. Do you make notes for your pupil to take home, or does the pupil make notes, or does the pupil remember?
8. Are you pleased with the progress of your pupils? In what way?
9. How many pupils have left, for whatever reason, in the last year? Can you give me details, for instance, some may have left school, moved away from the area, transferred to another teacher, to another instrument. Can you give me the ages of those who have given up?

One of the things I am particularly interested in is teachers' attitudes to parental involvement.

10. Do you communicate regularly with pupils' parents? [If yes] On average, how often each term do you communicate with a parent of each pupil - either in person, by phone, or in writing? What do you communicate about?
11. Do you invite parents to tell you about problems their child is facing at home or at school, for instance social, health, educational? Can you tell me more?
12. Does a parent ever attend lessons? Approximately what percentage of your parents attend? How regularly?
13. Do you encourage them to attend or discourage them? Is there any particular reason why you encourage/discourage them? [If encourage] What do you encourage parents to do?

Practice

Now I am going to talk about practising.

14. Does the parent ever assist with practice? [If yes] Approximately what percentage of parents assist? How does the parent assist?
15. Do you encourage parents to assist at practices, or discourage them? Is there any particular reason why you encourage/discourage them? What do you encourage them to do?
16. [If appropriate] Do you find pupils make more or less progress when a parent is involved in the practice? Why do you think this is? Does it vary with age?

Enjoyment

And now some questions about enjoyment.

17. Can you tell me how much musical activity goes on in the homes of most of your pupils? For example, do the parents listen to classical or other music; do they take the children to concerts; do they play instruments themselves; are there siblings who play?
18. Approximately what percentage of your families would you describe as having an interest in music?
19. Do you think pupils from musical backgrounds enjoy music-making more than those from non-musical backgrounds? Do they tend to make more progress? Why do you think this is?
20. Is enjoyment dependent on making progress?
21. What do you think it is that motivates your pupils, eg social aspect, musical aspect, because they want to please adults?
22. Do you enjoy your teaching? What do you most enjoy/dislike about it? Why?
23. Which pupils do you most enjoy teaching - for instance the older/younger ones, more advanced/less advanced ones, the quick ones/those who find learning difficult, those who practice well, those who come from musical homes, those who get more parental support [specify what kinds of support]?
24. And my final question is: have you anything to add about pupil enjoyment, and your attitude towards parental involvement, which I haven't asked about?

Interview schedule for parents

I am going to ask you a series of questions which start off with some factual background information and then finish with questions about the enjoyment of music. I'll end by asking if there is anything you wish to add about [your child]'s musical enjoyment.

Please answer the questions with reference to [the one child being interviewed].

Musical environment

1. Were you or [your partner] brought up to have an interest in music? Please give me details.
2. Do you or [your partner] now play or sing? What instrument? At what sort of level? Does [your child] hear you playing or singing? How much?
3. Does [your child] hear siblings playing an instrument? How much?
4. Did you sing to [your child] when s/he was a baby? How much?
5. What music (eg radio/CDs) do you listen to at home? Does [your child] overhear this? What music does s/he put on?

6. Do you take [your child] to live performances? How often? Of what type of music?
7. Does [your child] listen to recordings of the pieces s/he is learning? How much?
8. Does s/he play other instruments or sing? Does s/he participate in group music-making such as choirs, orchestras, bands, and so on?

Lessons

I'd like to ask you some questions about piano lessons.

9. At what age did [your child] start learning the piano? How old is s/he now?
 10. Has s/he played in any festivals or concerts, or taken any exams? Can you give me details?
 11. What are [your child]'s current pieces? What level are they?
- I am particularly interested in parental involvement in their child's music-making.
12. How often does [your child]'s piano teacher communicate with you, either in person, by phone, or in writing? What does s/he communicate about?
 13. Has the teacher invited you to tell him/her about problems your child is facing at home or at school (eg social, health, educational)?
 14. Do you attend or, in the past, have you attended [your child]'s lessons? [If yes] How often do you attend? Is there any particular reason why you [don't] attend lessons?
 15. Does [your child]'s teacher encourage you to attend lessons or discourage you? What are you encouraged to do?
 16. [If discourage] Would you like to attend lessons? Why?

Practice

Now I am going to talk about practising.

17. Is a specific time set aside each day for practice? Is this your choice or [your child]'s choice?
18. How often does [your child] practice, and for how long?
19. Do you think s/he enjoys practising? Why does s/he [not] enjoy practising?
20. Are you, or have you in the past been, present at [your child]'s practice? Is there any particular reason why [not]? [If present] How often are you present?
21. Do you, or did you, supervise the practice? In what way?
22. Does [your child]'s teacher encourage you to assist at practices? [If yes] What are you encouraged to do?
23. Do you play alongside [your child], playing either the same pieces or duets, or do you play together on other instruments? Why [not]? What do you do?
24. Does [your child] play music not set by the teacher? How often? What does s/he play?

Enjoyment

And now some questions about enjoyment.

25. Did the motivation to learn an instrument come from you or [your child]?
26. In the last week, how many times has [your child] gone to the piano unbidden to play for pleasure? [Or month]
27. Does [your child]'s achievement give you a sense of satisfaction? In what way?
28. And my final question is: have you anything to add about [your child]'s musical enjoyment which I haven't asked about?

Interview schedule for pupils

Musical environment

1. How old are you? How old were you when you started to play the piano?
2. Do you, or did you, play any other instruments, or are you about to start another? Which? For how long have you been playing?
3. Do you play in any musical groups? Can you tell me about them?
4. [If child does] Why do you play/sing in orchestras/bands/choirs? [eg Do your parents insist? Did your teacher suggest it?] Is there anything you enjoy about it?

Lessons

Now I am going to ask you a question about piano lessons.

5. Does one of your parents [or guardians] attend your piano lessons? [If yes] Mother or Father? Do you/would you like one of your parents [or guardians] to attend? Why [not]?

Practice

Now some questions about practice.

6. How often do you practice, and for how long? Do you enjoy practising? Why [not]? What do you particularly enjoy/dislike about practising?
7. Is one of your parents [or guardians] in the room during your piano practice? Mother or Father?
8. [If yes] Does s/he help with your practice? How much? In what way? Do you like it that your [parent] is present during your practice? Has s/he ever been around in the past?
9. Do you play music that your teacher doesn't know about? What?

Enjoyment

Finally questions on enjoyment.

10. Do you go to the piano and play for pleasure? How often? Do you go to any other instrument?
11. What pieces are you learning at the moment? Did your teacher choose these, or did you? Do you like these pieces? What do you like/dislike about them?
12. Do you get a sense of satisfaction from playing the piano? Or from playing any other instrument? What is it you enjoy about it?
13. Do you enjoy listening to music? What sort?
14. Do you have your own CD player or radio? How many piano/other classical/other music CDs do you have? How often do you listen to piano/classical/other music?
15. And my final question is: have you anything to add about your musical enjoyment which I haven't asked about?