

Non-Formal Piano Education in the Colombo District: Perspectives of Piano Teachers



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Abstract

Piano education plays a significant role in Western music instruction and is widely pursued through the formal education system, private tuition, home-based teaching, and music academies. This study investigates the pedagogical practices, experiences, and challenges of piano teachers engaged in non-formal education within the Colombo District, Sri Lanka. Using a purposive sampling method, data were collected through a qualitative survey to explore teaching approaches, curriculum choices, student engagement strategies, assessment methods, and professional challenges faced by these teachers. Thematic analysis of the responses reveals a diverse range of instructional practices, including the use of method books, examination syllabi, creative activities, and personalised repertoire selection. However, challenges such as limited institutional support, inconsistent student commitment, and lack of formal recognition for non-formal music education were also identified. The findings offer practical insights and recommendations to enhance the quality and visibility of non-formal piano education in Sri Lanka. Key suggestions include promoting professional development opportunities for teachers and fostering collaboration between formal and non-formal education within national music education policy frameworks.

Keywords

Non-Formal Education, Piano Education, Teacher Perceptions and Practices

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Introduction

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island nation in South Asia, with a population of just over 21 million. Known as Ceylon from the beginning of the British Colonial period in the late eighteenth century, she gained independence in 1948 and adopted the name of Sri Lanka with a new constitution in 1972 (Aturupane & Little, 2021). Sri Lanka is a country with a written history of nearly 3,000 years and an unwritten history of more than 25,000 years of human existence, which is scientifically and archeologically proven (National Curriculum Framework, 2020). Sri Lanka was colonised by three European rulers: the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British. The arrival of the Portuguese (1506-1658), the Dutch (1658-1796), and the British (1796-1948) led to a substantial shift in the Sri Lankan educational system. With the expansion of missionary education, new subjects were introduced to the education system: Reading, Writing, Latin, Buddhism, Humanity, Arithmetic, Science, Creativity, Christianity, Manners, including Religious Singing (Sannasgala, 1965).

Religious singing was introduced as a formal subject at all levels of schooling since the Portuguese rule. Singing instruction was in Sinhala, Latin, and other relevant languages (Weerakkodi, 2015). Inclusion of religious singing in the school curriculum marked a crucial turning point in the evolution of Western music education in Sri Lanka. Western music has been gradually integrated into the national curriculum, with structured lessons and practical components since 1945. Among the various aspects of Western music instruction, “piano education” has emerged as a key element of the school curriculum since 2015 (Western Music Teachers’ Guide, Grade 6, 2015). Piano playing was included in the secondary level curriculum in the syllabus compiled in 2015-2018, and is being implemented to date.

While Western music and piano education are conducted formally in the school curriculum, teachers have been teaching piano playing and other Western instruments outside schools since British rule. Non-formal Western music education holds a significant place among Sri Lankan students and teachers, particularly in the study of instruments such as the piano, violin, and keyboard, as well as vocals. Compared to other musical instruments, the piano has become the most sought-after instrument among students and parents. Therefore, this paper focuses on non-formal piano education, whereby the researcher explores the following research questions, which were employed in the qualitative research model.

Research Questions

1. What are the pedagogical practices followed by music teachers to improve the engagement, motivation, and academic achievements of students?
2. What are the challenges associated with teaching piano by the teachers who engaged in non-formal education within the Colombo District, Sri Lanka?
3. What recommendations could be suggested to improve piano education in non-formal settings in Sri Lanka?

Literature Review

The education system can be divided according to the structure of teaching and learning, namely, formal, non-formal, and informal. Figure 1 shows that education, curriculum, and learning have considerable areas of overlap, but learning can also occur from outside of formal curriculum arrangements. They are non-formal spaces where the education is received in a systematic instruction, and informal where the acquisition of knowledge occurs through experience.

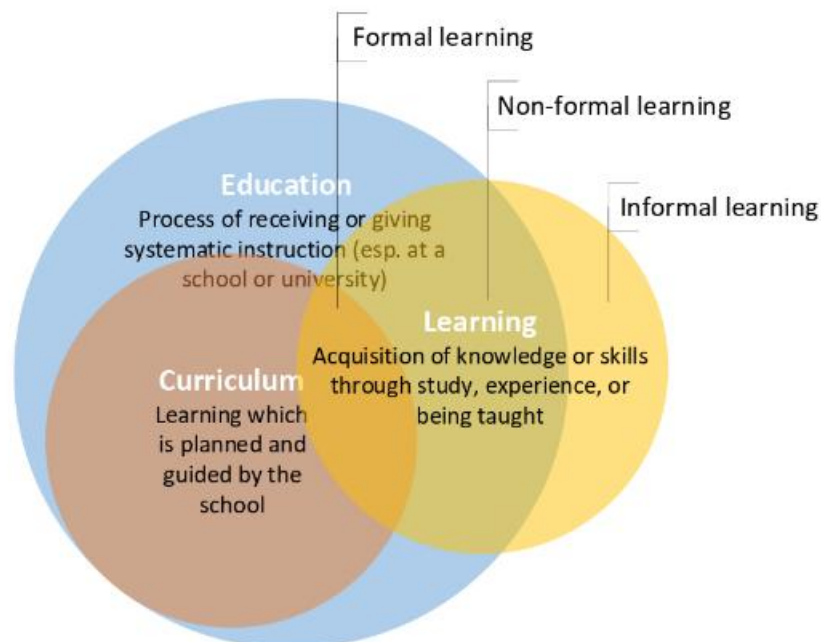


Figure 1: Definitions of Education, Learning, and Curriculum (Johnson & Majewska, 2022)

Formal education or formal learning usually takes place within the school premises, where a person may learn basic, academic, or trade skills. Learning in formal systems is generally hierarchical (i.e., based on learning objectives that are organised into linear progressions). Institutions and educators have timetabling responsibilities (Johansson, 2003) and employ direct teaching behaviours (e.g., actions explicitly intended to instruct knowledge and skills and to manage a classroom, such as demonstrating, explaining, giving feedback, making corrections, and setting goals) (Jung & Choi, 2016).

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) provide a much-cited definition of informal learning as:

“The lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Generally [it] is unorganised and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning-including that of even a highly ‘schooled’ person (p. 3).”

Coombs and Ahmed’s (1974) definition implies that informal learning does not rely on didactic approaches, and that it can be facilitated by influential ‘more expert others’ and peers (Bourke et al., 2018). Moreover, Coomb describes non-formal education as a systematic programme involving processes of education and training that lie outside formal education. He believes that formal and non-formal educational activities collectively comprise the nation's total organised educational efforts (Coomb, 1968).

The general term “Music Education or Art Education” has become a compulsory subject in formal primary and secondary education settings in the Asian-Pacific countries, which were colonised under European rule. When considering such countries, a few can be named as follows: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India, and Indonesia (Abdullah, 2007, Abdullah, 2021; Ang et al., 2024; Stead & Lum, 2014; Dumlavwalla, 2019). In these countries, many students engage in instrumental music study outside of school through private studio music teachers (Abdullah, 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2019; Dumlavwalla, 2019). These countries, including Sri Lanka, use syllabi provided by UK-based music examination boards, such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College London (TCL), and the London College of Music (LCM), for developing students’ knowledge and skills (Ang, K. et al., 2024) outside the formal education system.

There are limited studies conducted on Western music and piano education in Sri Lanka. Abeywickrama (2006), a Sri Lankan scholar, conducted research studies on how Sri Lankan

music was influenced by Western musical elements and how Western music education is formed in the formal education system in Sri Lanka (Abeywickrama, 2006). Nonetheless, investigations of non-formal piano education are scant.

Western music and piano education have been adopted into the Sri Lankan education system after British colonisation. Adaptation can be referred to as a social norm that changes behaviours, practices, and systems to align with new cultural, social, or environmental conditions (Berry, 1997). In music education, adaptation can involve revising Western music curricula and teaching methods to suit the cultural context of each country. By 1950, Western music and piano education had mainly taken place outside the school system through British Western music institutions, which had established local branches in Sri Lanka (Basnayake, 2004).

The most significant influence on academic Western musical acculturation was the establishment of music theory and practical examinations by British examination bodies. Certificates that had enough prestige were awarded and displayed in a formal setting. The examination bodies prescribed the curriculum. The pioneering bodies, in the nineteenth century, for British music examinations were The Trinity College of Music, London (TCL) and The Associate Board of the Royal School of Music, London (ABRSM), which established their local branches in 1881 and 1898, respectively. The regional branches of these two institutions conducted examinations and were popular among the more affluent English-speaking community (Basnayake, 2004).

These two examination bodies discontinued conducting the British examinations in 1971 (Abeywickrama, 2006). As a result, a few local institutes were established within several years. They are the Institute of Western Music Speech and Drama (IWMS), the International Institute of Music Speech and Drama (IIMSD), and Mystical Rose International Institute. IWMS is the first institute that was established to conduct music examinations in Sri Lanka. It was founded in 1960 when it was known as the Association of Teachers of Western Music and Dramatic Art (IWMS, 2018). The International Institute of Music, Speech & Drama (IIMSD) was established in 2002 as an independent, progressive, flexible, and friendly examining body. The Institute conducts examinations on the island, giving equal opportunity to students from diverse areas. They conduct graded and diploma examinations in Music, Speech, and Drama as well as teacher training diploma examinations (International Institute of Music Speech and Drama, 2025). The Mystical Rose International Institute was established in 1998 as a pre-school and an activity school, accommodating enthusiastic students and teachers. The curriculum of

Mystical Rose International Institute includes Speech & Drama, Music, Art, Ballet, and Teacher Training examinations (Mystical Rose International Institute, 2025). The teachers in the nonformal piano education system follow the aforementioned British and local curricula and enter students for graded and diploma examinations.

Methodology

Seeking to identify perspectives on the current state of non-formal piano education, teachers who were involved in beginner-level teaching were selected. This study employed the qualitative research approach to identify the objectives of the research. Qualitative research is intended to deeply explore, understand, and interpret social phenomena within their natural setting. By using a qualitative research methodology, the researcher seeks to collect richer information to gain a more detailed picture of issues, cases, or events (Arora & Stoner, 2009). The data were gathered from the piano teachers who are involved in the non-formal education system in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka.

A qualitative survey was distributed to 30 piano teachers in the non-formal piano education in the Colombo district. The questionnaire was designed under five main sections to identify teachers' perceptions of the current state of piano education. The first section of the questionnaire obtained demographic information about teachers, such as their gender, years of teaching experience, and where they conduct piano classes for their students. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to explore the first objective of this study, which is to investigate their pedagogical practices, followed by how teachers try to improve the academic achievements of the students and teaching methods or approaches that they incorporate, including any specific method books, as per the students' learning standard. The third section of the questionnaire was aligned to identify student engagement and assessment methods followed by the teachers. The fourth section explored the challenges associated with teaching piano by the teachers who engaged in non-formal education within the Colombo District. The last section of the questionnaire was designed to understand the teachers' perception of teacher training opportunities and professional development. The results were analysed using qualitative survey analysis methods to obtain the findings and recommendations of this study.

Survey Analysis and Results

The results of the survey were analysed using the analysis tools available in the Microsoft Excel software. The teachers in the non-formal piano education system mostly conduct their classes

at their personal studios. Figure 2 shows that 39% of teachers who conduct piano classes engage with music academies established in the Colombo district. While 9% of them visit their students' homes and 59% conduct classes at their own home studios.

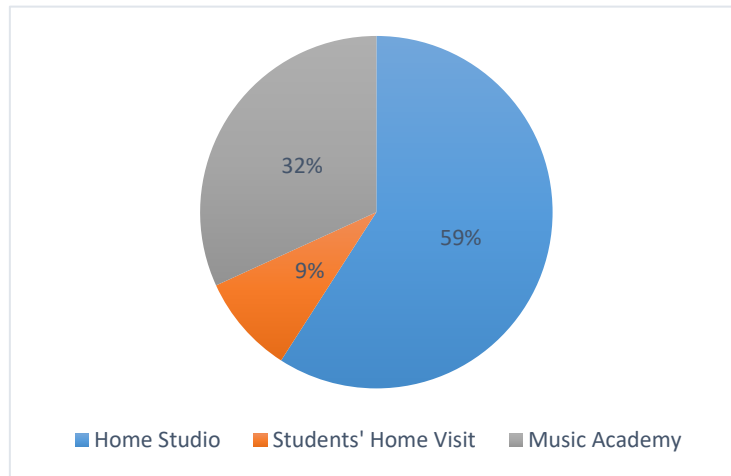


Figure 2: Venue of teaching

Figure 2 demonstrates where the teachers conduct piano lessons. That includes home studios, students' residences, and music academies.

Figure 3 indicates that the most demanding music examination board in the Colombo district is the Trinity College of Music Examination (TCL), London, when compared to other British examination boards. The Institute of Western Music and Speech (IWMS) can be considered the most popular local examination board that teachers enter their students for exams. Figure 3 shows that the piano teachers in the Colombo district conduct both group and individual classes.

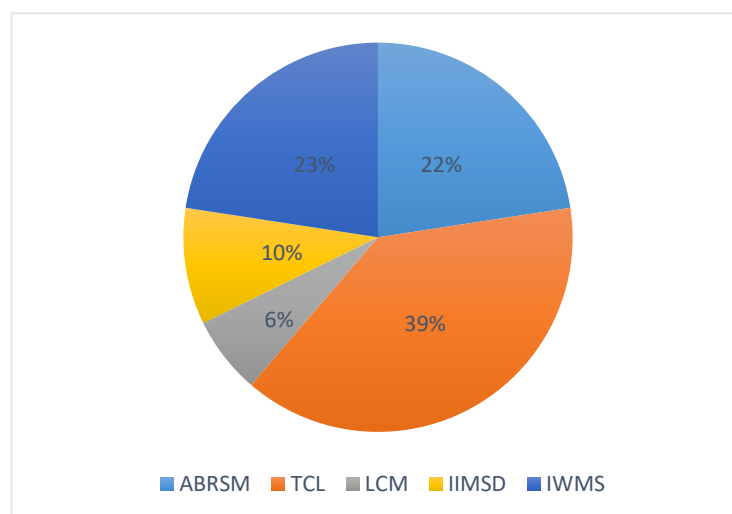


Figure 3: Examination Boards followed

In Figure 3, the examination bodies conducted by the teachers are shown. The British examination bodies are the Associate Board of the Royal College of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College of Music London (TCL), and London College of Music (LCM). The local examination bodies are the International Institute of Music, the Speech and Drama (IIMSD), and the Institute of Western Music (IWMS).

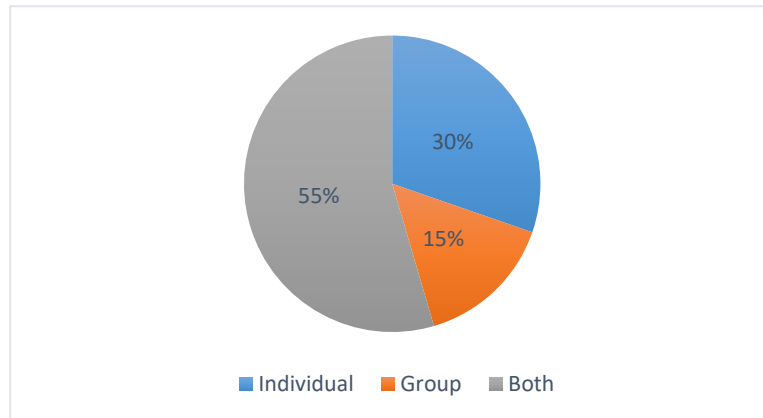


Figure 4: Method of Teaching

Figure 4 indicates the method of teaching that the teachers follow when conducting piano lessons. The two main teaching methods are the individual method and the group method. Most of the teachers in the Colombo district follow both methods when teaching piano.

Table 1

Piano Method Books

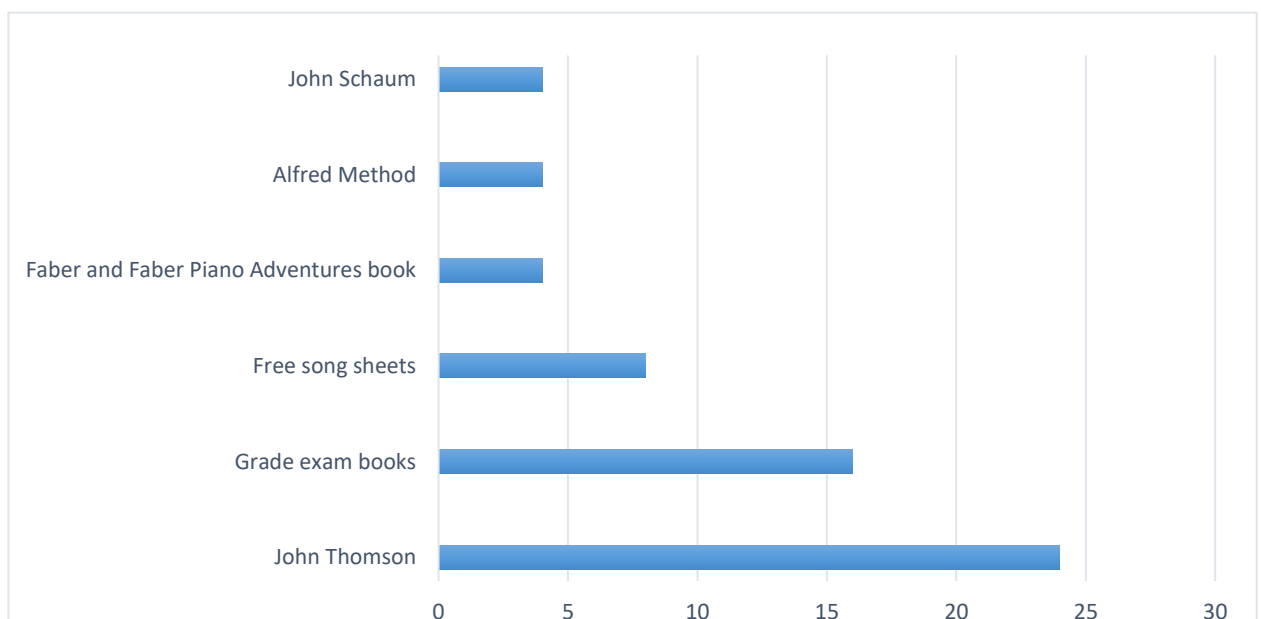


Table 1 lists the piano teaching method books used by teachers in the Colombo district. They are the John Schaum method book, the Alfred method book, the Faber and Faber Piano Adventures Book, and the John Thompson piano method book. Apart from them, teachers also use piano grade exam books and free song sheets for the students to follow. When comparing other piano teaching method books, John Thompson is the most demanding piano method book used by piano teachers.

Objectives 1 and 2 were analysed under three sub-themes. These themes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the various aspects of pedagogical practices, which help to improve students' academic achievements and address the challenges associated with piano teachers.

Theme 1 - Pedagogical practices to improve academic achievements

Sub-theme 1 - Creative Component

Sub-theme 2 – Motivation

Sub-theme 3 – Student Progress

Theme 2 - Challenges associated with piano teachers

Sub-theme 1 - Lack of Student Interest

Sub-theme 2 - Lack of Proper Curricula

Sub-theme 3 - Lack of Resources and Recognition

The tables below examine the themes and sub-themes.

Table 2

Theme 1 – Sub-theme 1 - Creative component

Theme 1 pedagogical practices to improve the academic achievements	
Sub-theme 1	Quote
Creative component	“[...] apart from any usual practical context, I make them play duets with me.”
	“[...] get the student to create their own left-hand chords and rhythms depending on the songs.”
	“[...] I let them draw pictures related to the lessons and colour them.”
	“[...] Especially for beginners. It's so boring to do just theory or just pieces. So, I do some memory card games and drawing games for kids.”
	“[...] I usually do games and quiz programs, sometimes ask them to do improvisations as assessments.”
	“[...] I integrate creative activities such as improvisation games.”

Theme 1 explained the pedagogical practices that teachers apply to improve the academic achievements of the students. Teachers explained that they follow creative strategies such as playing duets, drawing pictures related to the lessons, using memory card games, and improvisation.

Table 3

Theme 1 – Sub-theme 2 - Motivation

Theme 1 pedagogical practices to improve academic achievements	
Sub-theme 2	Quote
Motivation	“[...] I make them bring any games they would love to play with me. Especially children below 12 years. If I see them losing interest, I get to play with me or draw with me.” “[...] I always pick music depending on their liking. Exam pieces are selected by students.” “[...] Listening to music, demonstrating the piece by playing.” “[...] Making videos of pieces once they have learnt them. Encouraging them to perform in school/studio, festivals, and recitals. Also encouraging duets, etc.” “[...] Set achievable goals, use fun repertoire, celebrate progress.” “[...] Always discuss the role models in music with them and motivate them, and show some videos of playing.”

Teachers also followed motivation strategies such as playing the piano together with students, selecting pieces according to students' interests, demonstrating pieces, recording their playing, entering for festival performances, organising recitals, discussing famous pianists in the world, and discussing how they practice piano to make their performance at the best level as pianists.

Table 4

Theme 1 – Sub-theme 3 - Student Progress

Theme 1 pedagogical practices to improve academic achievements	
Sub-theme 3	Quote
Student Progress	“[...] Lesson by lesson, they get rewarded with a good comment.” “[...] I give a small test after every lesson they do.” “[...] Assess progress through regular performance reviews, technique checks, goal tracking, and personalised feedback during lessons.” “[...] Making videos of pieces once they have learnt them. Encouraging them to perform in school/studio, festivals, and recitals. Also encouraging duets” “[...] Regular performance of pieces.” “[...] Peer review, collaborative discussion.”

Another pedagogical practice to improve academic achievements is monitoring student progress. Rewarding students with good comments, assessing them after every lesson, providing personalised feedback, and discussing their performance with peers.

Table 5

Theme 2 – Sub-theme 1 - Student Progress

Theme 2 challenges associated with piano teachers	
Sub-theme 1	Quote
Lack of Students' Interest	"[...] Irregular students' attendance and lack of practice."
	"[...] Student irregular attendance, lack of interaction with parents"
	"[...] Some students and parents are not giving priority to the music subject."
	"[...] varying student commitment level."
	"[...] Inconsistent focus on the subject ."

Theme 2 was categorised as challenges associated with piano teachers. One of the major challenges is the lack of students' interest. Teachers highlighted irregular students' attendance, lack of practice, lack of interaction with parents, and inconsistent focus on the subject as major challenges when teaching piano.

Table 6

Theme 2 – Sub-theme 2 - Lack of proper curricula

Theme 2 Challenges associated with piano teachers	
Sub-theme 2	Quote
Lack of proper curricula	"[...] The structured assessment system is lacking in the curricula"
	"[...] Certification opportunities other than examination should be improved"
	"[...] There are many updated method books available in the market. But teachers are not willing to update it"
	"[...] current curriculum can be standardised more."

Lack of proper curricula is another challenge, as structured assessment criteria are lacking in the syllabuses. Also, more certification opportunities for the students and a willingness to refer to updated method books can be highlighted as challenges associated with piano teachers.

Table 7

Theme 2 – Sub-theme 3 - Lack of resources and recognition

Theme 2 Challenges associated with piano teachers	
Sub-theme 3	Quote

Lack of resources and recognition	"[...] Some students do not have proper instruments."
	"[...] Limited access to quality teaching materials and resources."
	"[...] limited funding and recognition"
	"[...] minimal recognition of non-formal teaching credentials."
	"[...] It is valued by only a limited number of people. Most people cannot afford to learn the piano."

Another challenge is the lack of resources and recognition. Unavailability of a proper piano at home, limited access to standard teaching materials and resources, limited funding, minimal recognition of non-formal piano teachers, and issues related to paying can be highlighted as challenges that teachers faced when teaching piano in the non-formal setting.

Discussion and Recommendation

The piano teachers in the non-formal setting utilise several pedagogical approaches to improve the academic achievements of the beginner-level students. They follow various teaching strategies such as the use of creative activities during piano lessons, motivating students during piano lessons, assessing student progress, and discussing their progress by giving personalised feedback. The list below can be outlined as the main areas that were incorporated by the teachers.

Table 8

Summary of Theme 1 - Pedagogical practices to improve academic achievements

Theme 1 pedagogical practices to improve academic achievements		
Sub-theme 1 Creative component	Sub-theme 2 Motivation	Sub-theme 3 Student Progress
Playing duets with teacher/peers	Play games according to their preference	rewarded with good comment/personalised feedback
Create their own left-hand chords and rhythms	Select repertoire that they like/use	Summative and formative assessment
Drawing pictures with the students	Select fun repertoire	Regular performance reviews/Regular performance of pieces
Memory chord games and drawing games	Listening to music with students	Goal tracking
Doing improvisations as part of the assessments	Demonstrating the piece	Making videos of pieces – Self-learning
	Recording videos of pieces	Peer review
	Perform in school/studio, festivals, and recitals.	Collaborative discussion

Set achievable goals
Celebrating the progress
Discuss role models.

Table 9

Summary of Theme 2 - Challenges associated with piano teachers

Theme 2 Challenges associated with piano teachers		
Sub-theme 1 Lack of Student Interest	Sub-theme 2 Lack of proper curricula	Sub-theme 3 Lack of resources and recognition
Irregular Students' Attendance	Lack of structured assessment systems	Unavailability of a piano at home
Lack of practice	Lack of formal assessment and certification opportunities	Limited access to quality teaching materials and resources
Lack of interaction with parents	Lack of awareness of updated method books	Limited funding and recognition
Not giving priority to practice.	Lack of standardised curricula	Minimal recognition of non-formal teaching credentials
Varying student commitment level	Fewer performance opportunities	
Inconsistent focus	Fewer examination opportunities	

Table 9 above shows a summary of theme 2, highlighting the challenges associated with piano teachers in three sub-themes, which were highlighted as a lack of student interest, a lack of proper curricula, and a lack of resources and recognition.

When analysing the data collected by the Western music teachers, several areas need to be improved to enhance the piano education in the non-formal setting in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. They are,

- Developing teacher training and professional development
- Updating the local piano curriculum
- Collaborating with the formal education system

Develop Teacher Training and Their Professional Development

A rich body of research and discussion exists on professional development in music education (Bush, 2007; Draves, 2012; Hourigan, 2011; Upitis & Brook, 2017). Research has suggested that professional development can be linked to the development of students' learning (Yoon et al., 2007). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that Sri Lankan Western music teachers prioritise their professional development, which will support the enhancement of students' practical learning skills. In Sri Lanka, the first teacher training college for Western music education was established in 1975, known as Giragama Teacher Training College for Aesthetic Education. Abeywickrama (2024), a Sri Lankan educator, notes that teacher training at Giragama College was primarily conducted in a distance mode, as it was located in a remote area of the Kandy District. There are two additional colleges situated in Polgolla, known as the Mahaweli College of Education and the National College of Education in Maharagama. The students are trained in theoretical and practical modules, especially on piano, at these training colleges and are recruited as teachers for the schools after their training period (Abeywickrama, 2021).

Music Education at the Tertiary Level in Sri Lanka

When it comes to higher education, students offer Bachelor's Degrees in Music, specialising in Western Music, Hindustani Music, and Carnatic Music offered by several Universities such as the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Kelaniya, the Sri Palee Campus of the University of Colombo, and the Swamy Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies, Eastern University, Sri Lanka. The students who complete their degree programme are recruited as teachers to secondary schools. From this list of institutions, the University of Visual and Performing Arts can be considered as the only University which offers a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Hons) Degree in Western Music Education, with specialisation in Piano, Western Vocal, Classical and Flamenco Guitar, Cello, Western Violin and Saxophone (University of the Visual and Performing Arts, 2025).

The Western music teaching recruitment process is done through the teacher training colleges and at the University level in a formal setting. The teachers who have mastered knowledge and skills on the piano conduct private lessons at their home studio, music academies, or by visiting students' houses. Most of the teachers have not fulfilled the training process through training colleges or university education, although they have completed diploma levels of the British (Trinity, ABRSM, LCM) curriculum and conduct private lessons. Once the potential teachers graduate from universities or complete diploma-level programmes, they are not willing to focus on higher studies, which will be helpful for their continuous professional

development. Therefore, it is important to improve teachers' awareness of continuous professional development in their teaching profession.

Updating the local piano curriculum

A curriculum is a structured series of planned learning experiences. It includes learning experiences provided through identified subjects and disciplines in the classroom, as well as the desired curriculum based on a shared vision, mission, policies, traditions, and ethos of the schools. All these should contribute to the holistic development of the child, which is considered the ultimate goal of education. The various aspects of personality, as proposed by educational philosophers, encompass the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual development of the child (National Education Commission, 2016).

When it comes to the non-formal education setting, piano teachers follow piano method books as well as grade exam books, which are relevant to each grade in both the local and British curricula. Piano curricula in the local institutions have been arranged according to each grade and diploma level. Local institutions, such as the International Institute of Music, Speech and Drama (IIMSD), the Institute of Western Music (IWMS), and the Mystical Rose International Institute, compiled different piano pieces according to the examination grade. Several teachers recommended that the piano curricula in local institutions need to be updated and standardised.

"I, as a teacher, would highly recommend that the piano syllabuses in the local curriculum need to be updated."

"The current local curriculum has been followed for many years. Therefore, the pieces need to be changed" (Teacher 3, personal communication, March 24, 2024).

According to the curriculum policy in Sri Lanka, the school syllabus in the formal education system should be updated every eight years (National curriculum framework for secondary education in Sri Lanka, 2020). Therefore, a suggestion can be made that the Western music syllabuses in the non-formal education system need to be updated systematically to meet the requirements of the students' standards.

Collaborate with the formal education system.

In the formal education system in Sri Lanka, Western music is taught from junior secondary education to the senior secondary education phase I as one of the aesthetic subjects. The table below shows the stages of education in a formal setting.

Table 10*Education Stages in Sri Lanka (Ibid, p.17)*

	School Stage	No. of years	Grades	Age of entry	Age of exit
Stage 1	Early Childhood & Primary Education	5	1-5	5+	10+
Stage 2	Junior Secondary Education	4	6-9	10+	14+
Stage 3	Senior Secondary Education Phase I	2	10-11	14+	16+
	Senior Secondary Education Phase II	2	12-13	16+	18+

Aesthetic subjects are Music (Eastern/Western/Carnatic), Art, Dancing (Local, Indian), Drama and Theater (Sinhala/Tamil/English), Literature (Sinhala, Tamil, English, Arabic) (National Education Commission, 2016). The students are required to select one aesthetic subject at the junior secondary level and continue until the senior secondary education level, phase 1. At the end of the senior secondary level, students sit for the General Certificate of Examination Ordinary Level Examination (GCE (O/L)). At this examination, students are required to face all compulsory subjects and the selected aesthetic subject. There is a practical component included in every aesthetic subject except Literature (Sinhala, Tamil, English, Arabic). In Western music, students need to showcase their practical skills in singing and the recorder, and also, they should play any other instrument according to their choice. The students who have mastered the piano show their skills in this practical examination by playing a musical piece according to their standard.

According to the survey analysis of the current study, most of the students learn to play piano with their private Western music teachers. Therefore, the piano teachers in the non-formal setting are contributing to enhancing the standards of piano education in Sri Lanka.

There are talented and skilled pianists in non-formal settings in Sri Lanka. The researcher is willing to highlight a few of the teachers who themselves are pianists. These include Ramya De Liveira, Bridget Halpe, Soundarie David Rodrigo, Harsha Makalanda, and Mahesh Denapitiya. Some pianists live abroad and visit Sri Lanka for performances, workshops, and master classes. A few of them can be highlighted as Tanya Ekanayake, Rohan De Silva, and Shani Diluka. Apart from these iconic pianists in Sri Lanka, many teachers are talented and have mastered their skills as pianists and accompanists. Therefore, formal and non-formal

systems can collaborate to share their knowledge and skills with school students by conducting workshops, master classes, and music appreciation programmes, which will benefit the students to engage with music education in a meaningful way.

Study Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be considered. The research was limited to piano teachers engaged in non-formal music education in the Colombo district. Therefore, the findings may not represent the experiences and practices of piano teachers in other districts of the country. Data were collected through a qualitative survey. Therefore, findings relied on participants' self-reported experiences and perceptions, which may not fully reflect their actual teaching practices. The study focused on the perspectives of piano teachers. The views of students, parents, music institutions, and examination bodies were not included. These additional perspectives could provide a more detailed understanding of non-formal piano education.

Conclusion

"[...] Non-formal piano education in Sri Lanka is not yet fully recognized or valued to the extent it deserves. Greater public awareness, community engagement, and recognition from cultural bodies need to be done" (Teacher 20, personal communication, April 02, 2024).

Despite its growing presence, non-formal piano education in Sri Lanka has not yet received the full recognition and value it deserves within a wider education framework. Its broader benefits, such as fostering creativity, promoting discipline, developing emotional expression, and cultivating a lifelong appreciation for music, are overlooked. Addressing this gap, greater public awareness, community engagement, and strong recognition are essential. Moreover, a collaboration and interaction with international institutions and foreign bodies could enhance standards and open new avenues for growth. Importantly, further research studies are necessary to examine effective piano strategies and the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers. The current research study was conducted with piano teachers who teach piano in the Colombo district. Further research studies can also be conducted with teachers in other districts, especially in rural areas in Sri Lanka, identifying the teaching strategies and challenges associated with them. Further recommendations can be suggested, and specific implications can be utilised according to the specific area.

The Association of Western Music Teachers has already been established by the management of Mystical Rose International Institute in Sri Lanka. Workshops, teacher gatherings, and collaborative discussions can be done to get the teachers together from all over the country. Teacher gatherings will be an effective method to discuss updated teaching methodologies and revised materials, rather than these teachers being isolated in their particular home studios and academies. These initiatives will advance the state of the non-formal piano education system in Sri Lanka and contribute to a deeper understanding of its role in shaping the teachers' and students' capacity in the teaching and learning process.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses her heartfelt gratitude to all the teachers who shared their invaluable experience throughout this research project. This research paper was presented at the International Conference of Arts and Humanities 2026, held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 5th of September 2026.

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