

Implementation of the Suzuki Method in the Cognitive Development of Classical Piano Students at Purwacaraka Music Studio in Surabaya

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Article Details	ABSTRACT
Article History Received July 28, 2025 Revised July 7, 2026 Accepted July 15, 2026	This study aims to analyze the application and impact of the Suzuki method on children's cognitive development in classical piano courses at Purwacaraka <i>Music Studio</i> in Surabaya, specifically at the Rungkut branch. This study employs a qualitative approach that emphasizes in-depth observation to understand a phenomenon, supplemented by observation, interviews, and documentation, focusing on the formal aspects of cognitive development and the learning materials used by children enrolled in classical piano courses. The five main aspectsⁱ applied in the Suzuki method for music education include teaching music reading, creating a pleasant practice environment for children, fostering the habit of listening to recordings, providing guidance through private lessons, and an educational system focused on talent development. These findings were obtained after the data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. These findings were obtained after the data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the research results, data validity was assessed using source and method triangulation. The application of the pedagogical system is influenced by several key factors, including student factors, musical instruments, playing techniques, and the concept of individuality derived from Dr. Pono Banoe's "Music Class Method" theory. Cognitive development was examined based on Jean Piaget's theory, covering conservation, <i>decentring</i>, classification, animism, series and transitivity, and reversibility. This study found that applying the Suzuki method enhances children's cognitive development.
Keywords Suzuki Method Classical Piano Cognitive Development Pedagogy	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Music is an art form that produces pleasant sounds and rhythms .Music is an art form that produces pleasant sounds and rhythms. Music is a form of scientific study and artistic expression that focuses on the processing of sounds or tones through their temporal relationships and combinations, thereby creating a structured, balanced, and integrated composition. Such compositions reflect the presence of rhythm, melody, and harmony (Izam, 2016). One musical instrument capable of producing these sounds is the piano.

The piano is a musical instrument that produces a wide variety of notes by pressing its keys. The piano is a highly complex instrument because it can stand alone. That is, it does not require accompanying instruments (Agustint & Sukmayadi, 2022). There are various genres of piano music, including pop, classical, jazz, and more. However, this study focuses specifically on classical piano. Classical piano emphasizes

fingering techniques and the ability to read sheet music, featuring works by Ludwig van Beethoven, Chopin, Mozart, and others. Classical music has several characteristics, including dynamic changes such as crescendos and decrescendos. Additionally, there are tempo variations that can be accelerated (*accelerando*) or slowed down (*ritardando*), as well as the use of triad chords (three notes) (Kurniawan, 2018).

The piano is also a popular musical instrument among people of all ages, from young to old. Furthermore, the piano is an easy instrument to learn and one of the most sought-after for study. Therefore, various institutions around the world—particularly in Indonesia—have established piano lessons. One such institution offering piano instruction is Purwacaraka Music Studio.

Purwacaraka Music Studio is an organization dedicated to music education. The studio employs a team of qualified, trained instructors who guide students through their musical education, with a focus on piano. The selection of Purwacaraka Music Studio—specifically its location in the Rungkut subdistrict of Surabaya—as the research site was based on the pedagogical system it employs. One such pedagogical system is the classical piano curriculum. From the very beginning of instruction, this classical piano curriculum requires students to master foundational material, including fingering, musical notation, and staff notation. Additionally, the pace of learning is tailored to the students' needs. In addition to the curriculum, the classical piano classes also employ the Suzuki Method in their instruction. The Suzuki Method is a music education approach created by Shinichi Suzuki, a Japanese violin dealer in the mid-20th century. The goal of this method is to develop children's musical sensitivity and talent from an early age.

Furthermore, the choice of Purwacaraka Music Studio as the research site was based on the quality of its instructors. Upon hiring, instructors are required to undergo an audition conducted by Mr. Ir. Purwa Tjaraka, the founder of Purwacaraka Music Studio. Mr. Ir. Purwa Tjaraka observes and evaluates the instructors' abilities based on their performance and in-depth understanding of music theory. Mr. Ir. Purwa Tjaraka also assessed the instructors' communication skills, ensuring they could be trusted to build strong relationships with students. Consequently, this audition process aims to recruit instructors who meet high-quality standards, enabling them to produce outstanding students. Furthermore, the instructors are actively implementing music instruction aligned with the curriculum to foster student progress.

Purwacaraka Music Studio also implements an inclusive system that accepts a wide variety of students, regardless of age, as age is not a barrier to learning music. For this study, the researcher focused on students in the early childhood category. Early childhood refers to children aged 0 to 8 years. The nature of early childhood indicates that every child is a unique individual, with specific patterns of growth and development in physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, creative, language, and communication aspects, which evolve according to their respective stages (Adica, 2022). Early childhood is commonly referred to as the "golden age." This period is often known as "the golden age," a phase that occurs only once and cannot be repeated, and plays a crucial role in shaping and developing human qualities (Lintang Trenggonowati, 2018). One key aspect of this developmental period is cognitive development.

Cognition itself refers to an individual's mental ability to think, understand, remember, evaluate, and adapt. It involves the storage, retrieval, and use of information. The information an individual receives is essentially obtained through sensory mechanisms. Through the senses, individuals acquire information needed to interpret ongoing events and anticipate future occurrences (Dania & Novziransyah, 2021).

Cognitive function in the context of music can be defined as the brain's processing of complex, structured musical relationships, making musical predictions, and detecting deviations from those predictions (Djohan, 2009). The development of intelligence in young children is fundamentally rooted in cognitive development, which is often interpreted as a reflection of their intelligence. During a child's "golden age," these thinking abilities will develop significantly. This occurs because the child's brain is highly receptive to external environmental stimuli, including information and educational processes (Vina Farhatunnisa Haryono, 2022).

This study examines the dynamics of cognitive development in early childhood as both the object and subject of inquiry, based on an analysis of how young children's cognitive processes operate, with external information and stimuli having a major impact on their future. It also reinforces the idea that playing the piano is not merely a hobby or a source of entertainment but is highly beneficial for stimulating children's cognitive development as early as possible. Growth during these early years involves not only skills but also cognitive development.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth observation to understand the phenomenon. The formal object of the study is cognitive development, while the material object is young children enrolled in classical piano courses. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, and documentation.

Theories in research constitute a set of concepts, definitions, and propositions that explain and predict phenomena. In practice, a theory must be able to provide explanations, make predictions, and help control the phenomenon (problem) and the research subjects (Surahman et al., 2020). This study employs three theories.

The first is the Music Pedagogy/Music Classroom Method by Dr. Pono Banoe (2013), which states that the ability to use musical instruments in daily activities can be fundamentally enhanced through music education that provides musical experiences. As explained in the book *"Music Classroom Methods"*, this educational process can provide added value, positively impacting students' practical skills. (Yunisa Fitriani, 2023.) Several factors must be considered in the implementation of individual (private) music lessons, including student factors, musical instrument factors, technical playing factors, and the factor of solitude. (Banoe, 2013)

The second theory is the Suzuki Method by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (1995), as outlined in the book *"Suzuki Piano School Volume 1 Revised Edition"*. The Suzuki Method is a music education approach specifically designed to guide young children in learning to play musical instruments. This method expects active parental participation in music learning, including observing the child's development, understanding optimal practice strategies, paying attention to key aspects of daily practice, and maintaining effective communication with the teacher in class (Novia Bernadetta, 2018). Music learning in children can take place effectively and naturally, much like the process of acquiring a native language, if the approach used in music education aligns with that applied in children's language development (Christinus & Pasaribu, 2022). According to Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (1995) in the book *"Suzuki Piano School Volume 1 Revised Edition,"* there are five key points to consider in music education to ensure optimal learning: Getting Children to Enjoy Practicing, Having the Child Listen to Recordings, Instruction in Reading Music, The Educational Method to Develop Ability, and Private Lessons

The third theory is Piaget's Cognitive Development. This theory explains that Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory focuses on how children's thinking abilities increase as they grow older. Within Jean Piaget's framework, cognitive development is understood through the approaches of structuralism and constructivism. The structuralist approach highlights the gradual development of intelligence through changes in cognitive structures, while constructivism emphasizes that cognitive abilities are formed through interactions with the surrounding environment (Marinda, 2020).

According to Jean Piaget's theory, cognitive development is divided into four stages: the sensorimotor stage (0–1.5 years), the preoperational stage (1.5–6 years), the concrete operational stage (6–12 years), and the formal operational stage (over 12 years). Every child goes through each of these stages, though at different paces (Fahma & Purwaningrum, 2021). The use of real objects remains a crucial tool in facilitating children's reasoning processes during the concrete operational stage. During this developmental period, children are indeed capable of being introduced to logical thinking, but its application must involve physical objects as representations (Rizqiyati & Wardani, 2023). The components and skills that children acquire and develop during the concrete operational stage include Conservation, Decentering, Classification, Animism, Series and Transitivity, Reversibility s

Information collected through observation, interviews, and documentation first undergoes a reduction process that includes selection, focusing, simplification, abstraction, and transformation. Following this, the analytical process continues with data presentation and concludes with the formulation of research conclusions. Data presentation is conducted after reduction to present organized information, enabling conclusions to be drawn. Conclusions result from interpreting the data in alignment with the research focus and objectives.

Data validity is tested through triangulation, including source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation compares information from various sources (interviews, documents, observations) to enhance data reliability. To test the validity of information from the same informant or source, the researcher employs different data collection methods through methodological triangulation. These validation steps were implemented by combining documentation techniques, participatory observation, and semi-structured interviews.

3. RESULT

Purwacaraka *Music Studio* Surabaya—specifically its Rungkut branch—is a music school located on Rungkut Mutiara Street. It was founded on July 10, 2010, and is headed by Gita Fibriati. The Rungkut branch of *Purwacaraka Music Studio* offers courses in classical piano, pop piano, keyboard, guitar, vocals, drums, bass, and violin. The Rungkut branch of *Purwacaraka Music Studio* also has its own curriculum, developed by a curriculum team; for example, the classical piano class follows a specialized curriculum.

A. The Application of Pedagogical Systems in Classical Piano Instruction at Purwacaraka Music Studio, Surabaya

According to Dr. Pono Banoe (2013) in the book *"Music Class Methods,"* several factors need to be considered in the implementation of individual (private) music lessons, including student factors, musical instrument factors, technical playing factors, and factors related to the nature of one-on-one instruction.

a) Student Factors

A student's success in learning classical piano at Purwacaraka Music Studio in Surabaya depends on a series of intrinsic and extrinsic factors inherent to the student themselves. These student factors include:

- **Age**

Young children aged 6–12 years are the primary subjects in classical piano instruction. For children aged 6–8, the presentation of material is tailored to their imaginative world. Conversely, children aged 8–12 have moved beyond the imaginative stage, so instructors tend to use a more logical, structured approach that focuses on technical details and theory in their teaching.



Figure 1. Documentation of a Classical Piano Class
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

- **Motivation to Learn**

Between the ages of 6 and 8, motivation is largely maintained by external factors, such as physical or material rewards and verbal praise. Conversely, between the ages of 8 and 12, motivation is more internal, taking the form of self-pride and personal satisfaction from mastering the material or succeeding in a performance. Given that every child has unique psychological characteristics and moods, these emotional factors must be taken into account when building their motivation to learn. This diversity in affective states significantly influences students' readiness to engage in learning. Parents also play a crucial role in fostering their children's motivation. Children's interest in learning to play a musical instrument must be optimally supported through parental involvement in encouraging and developing their potential interests and talents (Pasaribu, 2022)

- **Ownership of Musical Instruments at Home**

The acoustic piano is a musical instrument required for mastering technique and musical expression, particularly optimal dynamics, in classical piano instruction. The duration of practice sessions conducted by students at home can range from 20 to 30 minutes. One of the challenges students face when learning piano at home is their level of interest in practicing and the limited availability of guidance.

- **Family Environment**

In classical piano instruction, parents accompany their children in their learning. If a child struggles with a particular piece of material, parents will support the child to keep them motivated. Another role parents play in supporting their children is helping them review the material taught by the classical piano instructor during practice at home. A child's enthusiasm for learning is fundamentally influenced by external factors, including the intensity of parental supervision and attention to the child's academic activities at home. A child's awareness of parental support and expectations fosters increased motivation, which in turn leads to better academic achievement (Yunestia et al., 2023)

b) Musical Instrument Factors

The acoustic piano used in classical piano classes is the Yamaha Upright Piano, U series. The Yamaha Upright Piano, U series, is an 88-key vertical acoustic piano manufactured by Yamaha, a Japanese company renowned for its quality and reliability. This piano features vertically mounted strings, making it more compact and suitable for a range of spaces

c). Technical Factors of Performance). Technical Factors of Performance

Music notation is a crucial subject to learn and understand in the context of music (Mahendra et al., 2025). The materials used at Purwacaraka Music Studio include several textbooks depending on the students' grade levels. For students aged 6–12, the curriculum consists of Prep A and Prep B. Prep A includes four books for classical piano instruction: “Piano Adventure Lesson Book”, “Performance Book”, “Teaching Little Fingers”, and “Nursery Rhymes”. Prep B includes four books for classical piano instruction: “Piano Adventure Lesson Book Level 1”, “Performance Book”, “Beyer Op. 101”, and “Nursery Rhymes Level 1”.



Figure 2. *Piano Adventure Lesson Book*

Source: (Randall & Nancy Faber, 1996)



Figure 3. The song “Trumpet Song” from *the Performance*

Source: (Randall & Nancy Faber, 1996)

Figure 4. *Teaching Little Fingers*

Source: (John Thompson, 2005)



Figure 5. Nursery Rhymes

Source: (James Bastien, 1997)

The time it takes each student to complete a book varies. The following table shows the differences among students in completing a book.

Student's Name	Age	Book	Time to complete
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Fahri	9 years	Prep A Piano Adventure Lesson Book Primer Level	3–4 Months
Razky	8 Years	Prep A Piano Adventure Lesson Book Primer Level	7 Months
Clarine	9 Years	Prep B Piano Adventure Lesson Book Level 1	3 Months
Joshua	8 Years	Prep B Performance Book	4 Months
Geofrey	6 Years	Teaching Little Fingers	3 Months
Kenzo	7 Years	Teaching Little Fingers	4 Months

Table 2. Time taken for students to complete the program
Source: (Interview with an instructor from Purwacaraka Music Studio, 2025)

The diversity in the time it takes to complete a book is a key factor in a personalized learning approach. Each student has a unique learning pace, influenced by factors such as level of understanding, the frequency and quality of independent practice at home, support from the environment, and internal motivation.

d) The Factor of a Supportive Environment

The Suzuki Method emphasizes creating a positive, comfortable, and supportive learning environment to facilitate students' learning. A positive environment helps children develop self-confidence and motivation toward learning classical piano. One way instructors can create a comfortable learning atmosphere is by first getting to know the students, sharing stories, and engaging in light-hearted banter. In terms of communication, the instructor's language will be adapted to suit the students.

Education aims to foster social awareness in every individual (Ghozali et al., 2026). Beyond musicality, children's comprehension and learning capacity also develop, particularly between the ages of 8 and 12. This phase is often associated with the concrete operational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which generally occurs between the ages of 6 and 12. At this age, children begin to develop the ability to think logically about concrete objects or events. Self-confidence also develops over time. Self-confidence is a fundamental aspect of personality that influences an individual's ability to develop themselves. A lack of self-confidence can create various obstacles, whereas strong self-confidence enables individuals to fully realize their potential (Ashar & Pamungkas, 2023).

B. The Application of the Suzuki Method in Classical Piano Instruction by Purwacaraka Music Studio Surabaya

The Suzuki Method is a unique approach to music education inspired by the way children learn their native language (Suzuki, 1995). Its principle is that every child has the potential to learn music naturally and enjoyably, just as they learn to speak. The Suzuki Method emphasizes the principles of integrity and mutual respect as the foundation of communication. This music education process involves the active participation of three main pillars—the teacher, the family, and the student—each of whom plays a significant role in the learning progress (O. T. P. Nainggolan et al., 2021). To achieve this goal, the Suzuki Method outlines five key points that form its teaching philosophy.

a). Making Music Practice Fun for Children

Finding ways to make students enjoy learning music and practice consistently is a major challenge for teachers and parents. Teachers and parents need to work together to understand the child's needs and feelings, both in class and at home. As discussed in the section on the application of pedagogical systems—specifically in the subsection on learning motivation—internal and external appreciation are ways for teachers and parents to help students enjoy learning music and practice consistently.



Figure 6. Stickers as a form of external appreciation from a classical piano teacher
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

A positive learning environment not only boosts students' educational enthusiasm and curiosity but also optimizes classroom interaction. This is essential for bridging the gap between abstract theory and more concrete reality in the learning process (Sarnoto & Romli, 2019)

b) Have Students Listen to Recordings

In addition to attending lessons and practicing daily at home, students listen to recordings of the repertoire they are currently learning as often as possible to make rapid progress. At Purwacaraka Music Studio, students can listen to recordings after studying their material. Students can listen to two types of recordings: first, recordings by the classical piano instructor themselves, which serve as demonstrations where students watch the instructor play their material; and second, recordings from YouTube. Listening to the instructor's interpretations—who is already familiar with each student—provides highly helpful, personalized guidance for students' development. The YouTube channel commonly used by instructors in classical piano classes is Karen Rock Music The YouTube channel commonly used by instructors in classical piano classes is Karen Rock Music



Figure 7. Performance demonstration:

Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

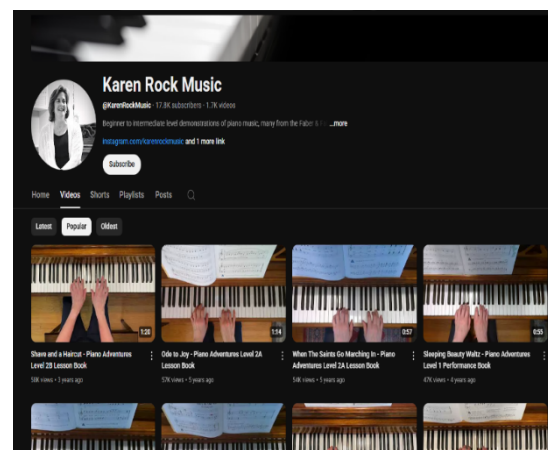


Figure 8. Karen Rock Music YouTube channel

Source: (<https://www.youtube.com/c/karenrockmusic>)

c) Music Reading Instruction

Instructions for reading music must be tailored to students' ages and abilities. Students are required to follow the Purwacaraka Music Studio curriculum, which introduces them to the "Piano Adventure" lesson book. This book covers material that is effective in developing students' musicality because it encompasses all aspects of piano playing, such as understanding musical notation, dynamics, articulation, fingering, and so on

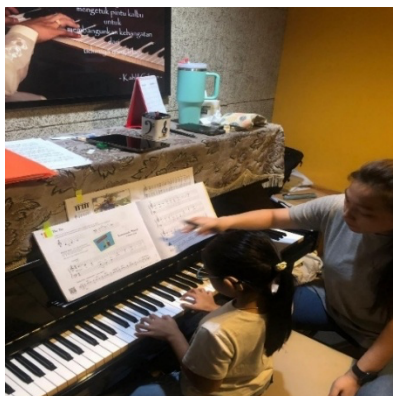


Figure 9. Documentation of a Classical Piano Class
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

d) Educational Methods for Developing Skills

When a student reaches the stage where they can play a piece without any mistakes in pitch or fingering, it is time to develop their musical skills. Before students reach the stage where they can play a piece without mistakes, they must first understand the material and its theory, so they have a strong foundation for a deeper understanding of music, rather than simply following the sheet music. For example, once a student has completed the “Piano Adventure Lesson Book: Primer Level”, they move on to the “Piano Adventure Lesson Book: Level 1”.



Figure 10. *Piano Adventure Lesson Book Primer Level*
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

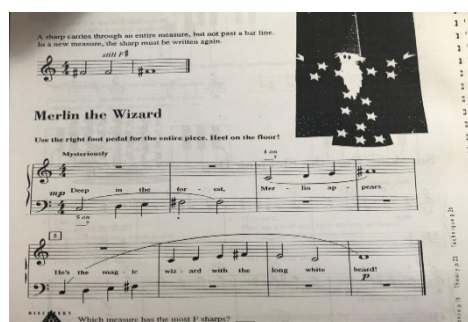


Figure 11. *Piano Adventure Lesson Book Level I*
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

e) Private Lessons

The duration of lessons should vary according to the child's needs. The child's attention span must be considered. Learning outcomes will be better if achieved with adequate concentration (Cecep et al., 2022). If a young child can only concentrate for a short time, the lesson duration should be shortened. At one time, a lesson might last only five minutes; at another, thirty minutes.

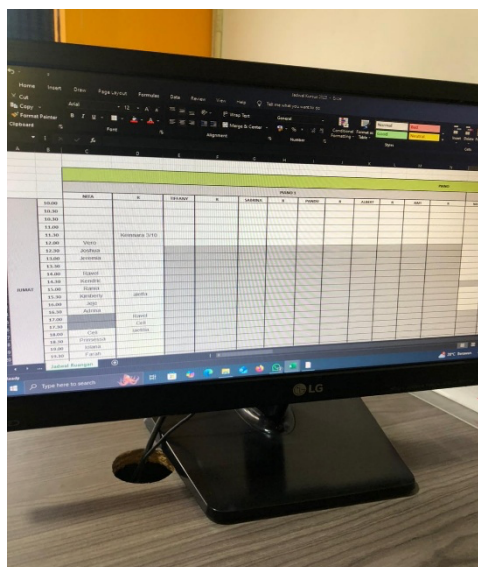


Figure 12. Class schedule at Purwacaraka *Music Studio*
Source: (Personal Documentation by Alsadan, 2025)

The duration of lessons in the classical piano course at Purwacaraka Music Studio is 30 minutes, which is sufficient given students' abilities in the 6–8 and 8–12 age ranges. The duration of practice sessions students do at home can range from 20 to 30 minutes. If it exceeds 30 minutes, students will become bored, or their moods will change.

C. What is the impact of the pedagogical system on the cognitive development of classical piano students at Purwacaraka Music Studio in Surabaya?

This study specifically focuses on the concrete operational stage (ages 6–12), a critical period when children begin to develop logical, structured thinking. During this phase, various key cognitive aspects begin to emerge and develop, significantly influencing how children learn and interact with their environment. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development also provides insight into the limits of intelligence, knowledge, and children's relationships with their surroundings (A. M. Nainggolan & Daeli, 2021). These components include

a). Conservation

Conservation is the ability to think logically about the quantity, area, volume, and orientation of objects, even when their appearance changes. Children between the ages of 6 and 12 are quick to grasp the concept of musical notes and their notations. a

b). Decentering

Decentering is a child's ability to consider various aspects of a problem or object—rather than just a single aspect—so that they can solve problems or understand objects more comprehensively. On average, students (children aged 6–12) still face challenges balancing all the components of piano playing. One way for teachers to address this gap and help students is by strengthening their intuitive sense.

c) Classification

Classification is the ability to organize and categorize items and ideas based on their shared characteristics. In terms of dynamics, students demonstrate a quick understanding of distinguishing between soft and loud dynamics. Similarly, with articulation, children do not experience any difficulty in classifying various types of articulation

d). Animism

Animism is the belief that everything and every living being has a soul. Classical piano teachers adapt their teaching methods by interspersing each new lesson with a story. This approach aims to stimulate children's emotions and imagination, given that their world is still deeply rooted in stories and fantasy. Children's imagination can develop, and this is what broadens their horizons (Afina, 2021)

e). Seriation and Transitivity

Serialization is the process of arranging items or objects in a logical sequence. The process of transitivity, on the other hand, involves the ability to reason and logically combine the two. For children still adjusting, the challenge lies in their confusion about the sequence of musical scales.

f). Reversibility

This component demonstrates that actions can be reversed. This allows them to think backward to solve a problem. The obstacle children face in learning classical piano is that they are accustomed to memorizing their material, as they follow a system that requires memorization before reading.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research titled “Implementation of the Suzuki Method in the Cognitive Development of Classical Piano Students at Purwacaraka Music Studio in Surabaya,” the author concludes that the Suzuki method has a strong correlation with students’ cognitive development. This is evident from the five philosophical points of the Suzuki method outlined in the book “Suzuki Piano School Volume 1 Revised Edition” that were implemented: making children enjoy practicing by providing appreciation to students and paying attention to teacher-student communication; asking children to listen to recordings after they have mastered a piece so they can gain different interpretations; instructing students to read music using the Purwacaraka Music Studio curriculum; an educational approach designed to develop skills as students progress to more complex material; and, finally, private lessons where the duration of classical piano instruction—both at Purwacaraka Music Studio and at home—is adjusted according to the student’s mood.

The implementation of the pedagogical system is influenced by several key factors that impact students’ cognitive development: student factors, musical instrument factors, technical playing factors, and individuality, as outlined in Dr. Pono Banoe’s book “Music Class Method”. Student factors include adapting the material by age group (the younger class for ages 6–8 and the older class for ages 8–12) to accommodate differing cognitive abilities. Learning motivation—both internal (such as a sense of pride and mood) and external (such as appreciation from parents and teachers)—is crucial for sustaining motivation. In addition, having a high-quality acoustic piano at home and parents’ active role in reminding their children to practice and supervising their practice are also important for students’ progress. Factors such as the musical instrument, playing technique, and the sense of solitude also play a role in shaping progress in classical piano learning.

Research findings on the impact of implementing a pedagogical system based on Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development indicate that classical piano instruction positively influences students’ cognitive development during Piaget’s concrete operational stage, particularly in conservation, classification, and imagination. However, components such as decentration, serialization, transitivity, and reversibility require further attention and tailored teaching approaches to address potential obstacles that may arise as students adapt to varying cognitive abilities. Learning motivation—both internal (e.g., a sense of pride and mood) and external (appreciation from parents and teachers)—is crucial for sustaining motivation. In addition, owning a high-quality acoustic piano at home and parents’ active role in reminding and supervising practice are also important for students’ progress. Factors such as the musical instrument, playing technique, and the nature of solitary practice also shape progress in classical piano learning.

Research findings indicate that implementing a pedagogical system grounded in Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development positively influences students’ cognitive development during Piaget’s concrete operational stage, particularly in conservation, classification, and imagination. However, components such as decentration, serialization, transitivity, and reversibility require further attention and tailored teaching approaches to address potential obstacles students may face.

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