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**“PRACTICE HABITS AMONG MUSIC EDUCATION STUDENTS IN
UITM SHAH ALAM MALAYSIA**

**EDU 650
ACADEMIC PROJECT**

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the practice habits among Music Education Students in Uitm. The study was designed to examine students' musical background, time spent for practicing their instrument, the factors that influence music education students' style while practicing their instrument and the ways of encouraging students to be more effective while practicing their instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 music education students ($n=50$), in Uitm, Campus 17, Shah Alam. The research findings indicate that, most of the music education students do not have any musical background before entering music education programme. It also shows that the students know the benefit of practicing the instrument daily. It was also found that, students need a lecturer to guide them to improve their skill of playing instrument was the most influential factor to prove their style while practicing. Meanwhile attendances in major instrument class all the time was the most important factor in encouraging students to be more effective while practicing.

INTRODUCTION

Practice is the most important thing to all musicians that they should never take for granted especially for students who really want to take music as their major. The students need to improve in both academic achievement and especially their major instrument also for other practical subject that includes the instruments to be an exceptional as music education students. Once these students lack of practice their instrument, the tendencies to be a bad performance during forum class or studio examination are very high. Students need to show serious feeling in practicing to be good in performance and get a good achiever in their practical subjects.

According to (*Espie Estrella, 2003*), she stated that, "Practicing a musical instrument, in a general sense, is the act of chasing an aural image: how you want to sound. This chase leads you to the practice room where you can use all of the tools (internal and external) at your disposal: mirror, piano, metronome, tuner, CDs, breathing devices, intellect, creativity, imagination, repetition, patience, persistence, and more. Among the goals of practicing are consistency, surpassing obstacles, and developing good habits. Since habits are constantly forming, one should practice attentively and thoughtfully."

Self-discipline is the willing mechanism to make our self improve on whatever it is we are doing. It plays a vital part in our musicianship, and if we are real about wanting to be a good musician, this is the heart and soul of your way to be one. It is the process of making the habit and second nature actions to get where we want to go. (*Smith, 2005*) conducted a study that also focused on different motivations for practice, but he especially paid attention to self-motivation styles. By deciding to use self-discipline to dedicate our self to it, all of these obstacles will be eliminated and we will find our self becoming more and more developed into our practice.

"Practice makes perfect"? It's stressed so often how practice is vital in learning and improving our musical skills on any instrument. "We learn how we want to sound by imitating teachers, interpreting their instructions, listening to live performances, and listening to recordings of many instrumentalists, vocalists, and genres. It follows then, that developing musicians should take lessons, build their recording library, attend live concerts, and listen! The most successful students want to do these things. These behaviors are the natural result of loving music enough to learn an instrument", (*Espie Estrella, 2003*).

The entire point of this statement shows that practice to be better performance need some sacrifices especially our time to get all the method of practicing. Thus, by usually practicing instrument is also a good way to be more improved in skill of playing instrument.

Moreover, practice is a vital ingredient of human expertise. Practicing on its own maybe insufficient to produces the highest level of mastery at a skill, and it has long been established that mere repetition does not necessarily lead to improved performance (*Bryan & Harter, 1899*), but sustained practicing nevertheless essential in order to establish high levels of competence at most, if not all, areas of expertise.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are a lot of problem facing by music education student when practicing their instrument. It concluded their playing instrument, their breathing for vocal students, lipping for woodwind students, fingering for piano, string and also for woodwind students and big problem of anxiety while performing their major instruments. Research indicates that expert music performers utilize substantial planning and a systematic approach to practice sessions, including *problem* identification, strategy planning and evaluation (*Hallam, 2001*), all of which are components of self-regulated thinking. Students actually practice their instrument enough to pass their exam only. To them, practicing is one of the activities that wasting their time because they need to spend uncontrollably to play their instrument and study their music pieces and the time to get any activities or some entertainments will postpone. *Madsen (2004)* found, after questioning vocalists and instrumentalists alike, that adults were unable to accurately assess how much they had practiced in college and that the amount of practice time in college did not affect the highest level of musical achievement later in life.

To have their own instrument is another problem that music education students need to face even they knew that it is important to have their own instrument. Some student take advantage with the facilities provided by faculty and borrowed the instrument from the beginning semester till the end of semester. They never think to buy the instrument themselves because most of music instrument was pricey. This problem will happened to all student not just music education students but to all university students who taken music because of insufficient budget to buy their own instruments.

Music education students are rarely practice during semester break and it causes students to forget certain skills gained during the semester. In that case, the student aims to practice everyday, at least 40 minutes per day, even the best musicians strive to practice their instrument daily. In a way to be a perfect musician, there are many tips in order to maximize their time with the instrument. Students should do warm-ups first before playing or performing, always listen to our body because if we back hurt every time we sit down to practice, determine if this has something to do with posture and make sure that your practice area is comfortable and free from distractions so we can concentrate.

Otherwise, students must always keep in mind that each person learns at varying speeds, some are quick learners while others take time to progress because it is not about how quickly we learned to play a music piece; it is about playing from our heart. So, this study will look at the problem faced by music education students while practicing, and how students practice, in order to ensure they succeed in their major instrument.

As a student, it is good to practice their instrument daily so that you can have strong determination to excellent mentality and physicality while performing. Positive thinking is very crucial those days as now the world is so much challenging. So, the

question is can we implant positive thinking in individuals? Is usually practice your instrument the best medium to do so?

In order to find the answers, it is necessary to know the individuals' Habits of practicing their instrument. For this research, the music education students in Uitm perspective of practice habits are evaluated. And they are not just evaluated on the student's musical background but also the time spent for practicing their instrument, the factor that can influence their practicing, and last but not least the ways to encourage to be more effective in practicing among students. It is hope that this research help to find out all the attempted objectives of the research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The primary objective of the study is to determine practice habits among music education music. There are four research objectives:

- To determine musical background among music education students.
- To find out time spent for practicing their instrument.
- To identify factors that influence style of practicing their instrument.
- To discover the effective way to encouraging students while practicing their instrument.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were developed prior to the research objectives. Research questions that were designed for this study are as follow:

- What is the musical background of music education students?
- How frequent do music education students practice their instrument?
- What factors that influence style of practicing instrument among music education students?
- What are the effective ways to encouraging students to improve their practicing?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be the references for the students on how to practice their instrument effectively. It is also to help students to improve their practicing style. Furthermore, this study can be used as a guideline for lecturers to identify the technique and method used to train their students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are limitations in the population and sampling of the sample. Subjects in this study were students from the same department in UiTM, and only two groups are selected. Respondents are 50 music education students ($n=50$) to answer the questionnaires personally. Male and female of music education were selected and there is include junior and senior. Due to time consuming, precisely 50 respondents are evaluated using the provided questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected groups of students of Music Education because all student surveyed were from the same department, the variety of responses was probably biased. These studies are not looking at music students in the performance programme.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Alternative views of music learning have surfaced in recent years that seem to represent more completely the huge number of responsibilities that are important for improving music performances. *Bryan & Harter, (1899)* suggest that practice is a vital ingredient of human expertise. Practicing on its own maybe insufficient to produces the highest level of mastery at a skill, and it has long been established that mere repetition does not necessarily lead to improved performance, but sustained practicing nevertheless essential in order to establish high levels of competence at most, if not all, arecas of expertise.

Students' in this line (music education) are believed to be positive in terms of attitudes, performance, and playing their instrument. Therefore, this research is important to measure the students' practice habits at university level.

This is because by finding positive relation between student's performance and their daily practicing, we can see that there is the most important factor that contributes to the students that usually practice their instruments and which factors are decrease a good performance among students. Moreover, more often than not practice their instruments and frequently get a good skill in playing instrument will be a step closer towards a high-quality performance.

The recent surveys of practice habits (*Barry, 1991; Hallam, 1995; Hamman, Lucas, McAllister, & Teachout, 1998*) have concurred on the need for further research in the area of individual practice techniques.

Practice Habits

In a way to be a great musician and excellent music teacher, music education students need to stress themselves in practice their instrument with more repeatedly. Music practice has been discussed in term of deliberate or formal practice by *Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993)* and *Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, and Moore (1996)*. These researchers envision music practicing as involving wide- ranging parameters that include any and all activities that work to improve performance, with the exception of playing for fun. To be more productive, music practice is believe to require a well-defined task with an appropriate difficulty level for the musicians, informative feedback, and opportunities for repetition and corrections of errors (*Ericsson, 1997*).

Other than that, there have been several studies that have dealt with practice; however, most of them have considered instrumentalists as their main subjects. Studies of woodwind and brass players revealed that practicing with an audio model was more effective than physical practice alone with no model (*Rosenthal, 1984, 1998; Henley, 2001; Hewitt, 2001*). Similarly, (*Linklater, 1997*) found that beginning clarinetists scored higher in performance ratings when they practiced with a videotape model, and (*Rohwer and Polk, 2006*) found that eighth grade instrumentalists showed more improvement with a higher number of verbalized practice techniques.

Besides that (*Barry, 1990*) and (*Donald, 1997*) theorize that an eventual end to this research could be the establishment of generally accepted guidelines for individual practice. Music researchers have tested various methods of organizing practices routines with some success (*Barry, 1992; Barry & McArthur, 1994; Donald, 1997; Owen, 1998; Pacey, 1993; Ross, 1985*). Among the variables used in these studies were structure, use of a metronome, tempo variation and modeling. The amount of the research in the area of the individual music practice techniques is somewhat in short supply, and most of it involves single investigations with no subsequent line of research.