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"Practice makes perfect!"

A survey study of musical practice of vocal students in
upper secondary school

Sammanfattning

Sångpedagogers uppgift är att ge elever en grund att stå på för deras egen övning. När eleven lämnar klassrummet är det dennes ansvar att leda sitt eget lärande. Denna uppsats undersöker sångelevers på gymnasiet perspektiv om sin personliga sångövning, samt sin övning i relation till det stöd och hjälp de får från sina sångpedagoger. Fem skolor blev kontaktade där totalt 120 elever fick tillgång till en onlineenkät via mail varav 56 elever svarade. Enkätens variabler blev delvis analyserad och bearbetad i programvaran SPSS. I denna studie blev det tydligt att elever har en positiv inställning till deras personliga övning och har överlag goda sångövnings-vanor. Elevers motivationsnivå spelar roll för mängden av veckolig övningstid och att ha mål med sin övning, exempelvis sånglektioner, är viktigt för övningsmotivationen då lektioner är tillfällen eleverna blir bedömda. Sångpedagogen är viktig för elevers fortsatta utveckling men inte i relation till elevers veckoliga övningstimmar.

Nyckelord: Sång, musikalisk övning, själv-reglerat lärande, enkätundersökning, uppvärmning, sångpedagog, kunskapskrav.

Abstract

Vocal teachers' task is to give students a foundation for their personal practice. When the student leaves the classroom, it is their responsibility to direct their own learning. This essay examines vocal students from upper secondary school's perspective about their personal vocal practice and their practice in relation to the support and help from their vocal teachers. Five schools were contacted where a total of 120 students had access to an online survey via email, to which 56 students responded. The variables in the survey were partially analyzed and processed in the software SPSS. In this study, it was clear that students have a positive attitude towards their personal practice and generally have good practice habits. The student's level of motivation plays a role in the number of hours that are devoted to practice and having goals with one's practice, such as vocal lessons, are important for practice motivation, as lessons are occasions where students are assessed. The vocal teacher is important for the student's continued development but not in relation to the student's weekly practice hours.

Keywords: Singing, musical practice, self-regulated learning, questionnaire survey, warm-up, vocal teacher, knowledge requirements.

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1 Introduction and purpose

1.1 Introduction

Through my musical schooling and many years of taking vocal lessons, I have never been asked how my personal vocal practice¹ has been going. Never was I asked if I felt comfortable and confident in my way of practicing, nor did I dare to ask for help or guidance. To me, it seemed that my personal practice was not of importance as long as I came prepared to the following vocal lesson. The question of *how* I practiced was never disputed, just that I did. Teachers would tell me to practice a little bit every day, even if it was just for a few minutes. However, I never received concrete suggestions on *how* to structure my personal practice. The assumption was made that this is something you should just know, which then also led to deeper self-doubt and worse self-confidence.

In my first cycle of independent studies, I focused on finding new ways to practice in a more meaningful and strategized way (Campora, 2020). The practice became efficient when listening and watching recordings of myself singing while also analyzing what I was doing. Through this experiment, I gained further insights into how practice is most efficient when turning the focus towards becoming your own teacher by setting personal goals, plan and adjust one's practice accordingly. Subsequently, I then also started to wonder how other singers perceive their personal practice. Even more specifically, how vocal students in upper secondary school practice on their own.

The idea for this survey began to take shape after reading Linnea Pettersson's essay (2017). She interviewed vocal teachers about how they perceive students' abilities to be independent in their practice and how the educators teach students how to practice. The teachers themselves thought that exercise is a vague concept that is difficult to grasp, not to mention teach. The teachers described it as though the students had to become their own teachers when they were practicing on their own. This made me even more interested in this topic, but instead from the students' point of view.

As an educator, it can be difficult to get an insight into how the students' practice is coming along outside the classroom. The only concrete result if the student's practice seems to go well is if they come prepared to the following lesson. However, exactly *how* the student prepared and practiced on their own is in my opinion the more exciting question. Creating routines and good habits in practice, not just in music, at an early age is important. Therefore, through this

¹ Personal practice: I will refer this to practice that is executed privately, without the help or supervision of a teacher or a second party, unlike teacher-led vocal practice.

survey research, I will try to find out how vocal students in upper secondary school perceive and motivate their personal practice.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to explore the practice ideals of vocal students in upper secondary school – what is included in vocal students practice and how much time is consecrated to their practice, how they perceive and motivate their own practice, as well as how their practice is affected by and related to the support and help that they receive from their vocal teachers. The questions that are at issues are as following:

- How much do vocal students practice during a week on average and what does their practice include?
- How do the vocal students perceive and motivate their personal vocal practice and how does this relate to the duration of their practice sessions and their weekly combined practice hours?
- How do the vocal students' perceptions of the support they receive from their teachers relate to the duration of their practice sessions and their weekly combined practice hours?

2 Background

This chapter will first discuss knowledge requirements concerning practice in the courses Instrument and song 1, 2, and 3 in upper secondary schools. This is followed by a section explaining the necessity and construction of vocal practice, self-regulated learning as well as practice motivation. In closing, we will discuss the importance of teachers' example and support for the individual's personal practice.

2.1 Practice as a knowledge requirement

Swedish National Agency for Education² is a governmental agency that provides schools and teachers nationally with syllabus, knowledge requirements, regulations, et cetera. (Skolverket, 2020). Teachers have to follow, assess and grade students' abilities based on and according to the knowledge requirements, which are connected to the grading system, A-F, where A is the highest score, and F is the lowest. Each study program within the upper secondary school has been given specific purposes which teachers and students strive towards. The purposes of the study programs are also integrated into each course's core content which describes what has to be included in the specific courses.

For the music program, one of the purposes of the program is to have (in my translation from Swedish), "knowledge of music study, individually and in a group, as well as the ability to take responsibility for their own musical skill development"³ (Skolverket, 2011). Practice is such an important factor that it is acknowledged in both the program's purpose where it states that the student will gain knowledge and methods in how to study on their own time in order to be able to take responsibility for their own growth and development. The core content of *Instrument or song 1,2 and 3* (InSo 1, 2, 3) states that musical study and practice methods are to be included in the courses with a slight variation in the advancing courses (Skolverket, 2011). The knowledge requirement in InSo 1 focus on learning the fundamentals of practice with an emphasis on the support of one's teacher and in order to receive an A in the course the student will have to take:

...responsibility for rehearsing music, try several strategies for musical study, prepares own strategies, discovers and analyzes technical areas in one's own practice that needs special attention and works both according to the teacher's instructions in their own practice and with their own exercises (Skolverket, 2011)⁴.

² In Swedish: Skolverket

³ In Swedish: "Kunskaper om musikinstudering, enskilt och i grupp, samt förmåga att ta ansvar för sin musikaliska färdighetsutveckling."

⁴ In Swedish: "...ansvar för instudering av musik, prövar några strategier för musikalisk instudering, upptäcker speltekniska områden i sitt eget övande som behöver särskild uppmärksamhet och arbetar efter lärarens instruktioner i sitt eget övande."

The advancing courses focus more on the independent musical study of the student still with the help and guidance of the teacher. In order to receive an A in InSo 2, the student is expected to take increasingly more responsibility for their personal practice and in learning musical pieces of advanced musical pieces. The requirement continues by stating that the student works with their teacher while creating exercises that help their own progress but also tries different tactics. By analyzing their own singing, they also understand what needs further attention. In the final song course, InSo 3, there is an increase of focus on the student's autonomy and advancement further into their personal and independent practice and exercise. The student is expected to be able to learn and perform more extensive musical pieces than in the foregoing song courses now with a focus on the expression of student and one's artistry. The knowledge requirements also include:

With very good musical results, the student takes responsibility for rehearsal, prioritizes playing technical areas, develops own strategies and works according to the teacher's instructions in his own practice (Skolverket, 2011)⁵.

Nationally, schools must provide students with a solid basis for the future as the school is a preparatory stage in order to be able to apply and be accepted into a college or higher education. As we can see in the previous introduction to knowledge requirements there is an advancing urgency to increase independence when it comes to practice, as practice is an important step to grow as a musician. The courses InSo 1, 2, and 3 are meant to contribute to a foundation on how to take care of and nurture one's musical skills in various ways in order to be ready to step onto the real musical stage. Skolverket does not state or specify what number of hours are expected of the students to practice outside of the classroom and even though practice is a part of the knowledge requirement, the hours it actually takes to practice are not included in the guaranteed teaching hours.

In upper secondary school's college preparatory programs, which the music program is a part of, approximately 2180 hours during the three-year-long full-time studies are supposed to be guaranteed teaching hours (Skolverket, 2015). However, in a survey, it turned out that schools and school organisers who decide how the teaching hours will be distributed and utilize use these 2180 hours more as a guideline rather than the students' statutory right to teaching hours. In 1998 change was made where one upper secondary school credit⁶ was equal to one teaching hour. Now the upper secondary school point is based on the work efforts of the students instead of a fixed number of teaching hours. Now school organisers instead have the opportunity to divide the teaching hours between each course in certain programs. This makes it possible for schools around Sweden to form and adapt their programs as the schools see fit. However, this also creates a divergence for schools and programs nationally. For example, some schools may decide to have the course InSo 1 during one semester, while other

⁵ In Swedish: "Med mycket gott musikaliskt resultat tar eleven ansvar för instudering, prioriterar speltekniska områden, utarbetar egna strategier och arbetar efter lärarens instruktioner i sitt eget övande."

⁶ In Swedish: Gymnasiepoäng

schools spread out the course throughout a full school year. Therefore, the teaching hours in each program can vary depending on the school.

2.2 The necessity and construction of vocal practice

Babies start singing or vocalizing before they start talking, they imitate sounds in their surroundings and use these to try to make themselves understood (Chapman, 2017). Singing is a part of our primal state and heritage and has been a part of cultures all over the world and throughout history. As Chapman (2017) stated, “We are walking musical instruments and singing is part of our birthright” (pp. 2). Though some might be born with a natural talent for singing, singing is something that can be trained and developed over time and with practice.

Today’s music industry’s expectations of the singers in the contemporary commercial music (CCM) genre are high (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2014). Singers are expected to be at a professional level in order to be able to compete which also means that their vocal health and fitness are of uttermost importance. According to a study on deliberate practice, it has been found that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of practice in order to fully master an instrument or a new skill (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). The study showed that it was not the activities that were solely based on enjoyment, but instead the focused practice that was most beneficial. It is, therefore, important to practice in ways that help to develop and nurture these new skills and talents over time with repetition and frequency. Though the actual number of practice hours may be argued on an individual basis, devoted time and energy have to be spent to develop any talent.

Vocal practice without a focused and engaged mind can instead harm more than contribute to more growth (Chapman, 2017). In connection with this is that certain consequences follow with repeated practice. When practicing, even in faulty practice, once you have tried it and do it repeatedly it will be easier to do it again (Schenk, 2000). This can work in one’s favor or disadvantage. When practicing, it is of uttermost importance that one is alert and aware of one’s actions to avoid unwanted results and habits. That is why it is of value to know when to stop before going past one’s limits. Taking frequent breaks throughout longer and shorter practice sessions can be a very beneficial part of a practice for the mind and voice in order to find new energy and motivation (Campora, 2020).

In common vocal practice content, certain steps are usually included such as physical warm-up, vocal warm-up, and singing technique, studying a musical piece or a song, and vocal cooldowns. Vocal warm-up is a subject that has not been studied to the fullest, and there are no clear explanations as to why it is important for the singers, (Sundberg, 2001). But it has been proven through vocal warm-ups, singers are better prepared for vocal exercise. There is, however, not a right or wrong way to warm up or practice. Since we all are different and have different strengths, needs, and things to work on, one’s practice should be customized to the individual, just as long as the practice contributes to vocal health and growth (Sundberg, 2001).

When it comes to vocal practice, singers are at times compared with athletes. LeBorgne and Rosenberg (2014) compare how runners and singers must follow the same sets of rules. Runners must warm-up and stretch out their muscles before doing an intense race, and the same goes for singers. By doing warmups, blood starts pumping to the focused muscle groups which provide extra flexibility and strength and helps to prevent overstraining when singing. The warm-up helps the body to ease into the practice but also in the long run create practice habits that may be beneficial for one's vocal health and contribute to having a long career as a singer (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2014). Vocal warmup also focuses on the vocal technique as well, for example, exercises that focus on broadening one's vocal range, intonation, flexibility, phrasing, articulation, even out the transition between head and chest voice, et cetera (Arder, 2007).

In connection to the runner and singer, before running a long marathon the runner must work on increasing one's stamina. This process may take a while depending on the experience of the runner. Starting by running shorter distances and increasing the distance slightly after careful consideration and reflection (Castleton, 2019). Reflection is a big part of any practice (Arder, 2007). For example, trying to understand what is working and what is not, and then re-trying the new ideas. The vocal student must do the same. One cannot expect to have enough stamina to perform a two-hour-long show without prior practice. However, unlike athletes and their physical training, the singer also must think and consider the artistic side of singing. When studying and learning a song, one must first simply learn the song, understanding the lyrics, learning the melodies, understanding the harmony of the songs with accompaniment (Arder, 2007). The next step is to figure out what the song's vocal challenges are and how to find the right technique to maneuver the song also as an artist. This part of the practice is when the technical exercises previously presented are put to the test and into real practice when singing a song.

Lastly, after a long marathon, a runner does not simply just stop running but instead jogs for a while followed by walking and then by stretching the muscles one last time. The cooldown is important as well for a healthy recovery. This too translates well to singers. After a long practice session or a longer period of singing, especially when working on one's vocal range, it is important to do some exercises that help the instrument stretch and to cool down. Vocal cool down helps prevent swelling of the vocal folds which may provide a shorter recovery time. In addition, it helps to prevent swelling on the vocal folds which can be a contributing factor when having been singing with high volume and vocal mass (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2014).

2.3 Self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning is a concept that is often discussed when it comes to musical practice because of the independent nature of the matter. Self-regulated learning means that a person can monitor their own progress and development independently, as well as taking responsibility for one's learning process (Zimmerman, 2002). This includes being able to set

goals for oneself, manage to plan and structure one's practice, self-evaluate, regulate the practice after individual needs, while also being aware of one's limitations and attributes.

In relation to self-regulated learning there is also metacognition which can be condensed into Zimmerman's (2002) own words, "...the awareness of and knowledge about one's own thinking" (pp. 65), in other words, the student can recognize their own thought process. This is an important part of the learning process itself in order to progress. When processing one's thoughts and bringing great awareness to the self, contributes to further growth. Not only that but also being able to consider what needs to be adjusted in order to reach one's personal goals (Zimmerman, 2002).

Self-regulated learning is connected to the personal practice of a musician. McCormick and McPherson (1999) mention that there are two main matters, "cognitive strategies" and "self-regulatory processes" (pp. 98-99). As previously described, the first is connected to being able to monitor and regulate one's personal development and the second connects to the idea of being fully able to focus on the practice and the matter at hand without the interference of other distractions. They continue to explain that even though these matters are of importance, first and foremost, the student also needs to be motivated to learn in order to further develop these strategies and processes (McCormick & McPherson, 1999). Not only this but letting a student choose and be a part of planning song selections and what methods are going to be used can motivate and contribute to an increase of the student's engagement in their learning process (Karlsson, 2002).

2.4 Practice motivation

As previously explained, motivation is an important part of self-regulated learning. There are different types of motivators - intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation can be summarized as a personal interest to want to learn and progress which helps to motivate the person to continue to learn. Teachers have a responsibility to help students find motivation, for example, by encouraging and challenging the student to try new exercises or songs, or by simply asking what their wants and needs are. This may help to inspire and awake the students' intrinsic motivation by receiving extrinsic motivation. However, a lack of motivation to practice may not be as important as the motivation to progress. To truly achieve success, choosing to practice even at times when one is unmotivated makes the times that we do feel motivated more rewarding (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). If we were to only practice when we felt motivated, we would not make much progress since as human beings it is not natural to be motivated constantly.

In contrast to previous thought, in an example by O'Connor (1987), a guitar student became unmotivated to practice because of her feeling more of the demands to practice rather than the joy of it. O'Connor then prohibited the student to practice for a certain amount of time. The lessons were focused on playing and having fun, without focusing on the errors she made. After some time, her intrinsic motivation and desire to playing on her own time started to come back. Practice works best if there is joy and want to sing and play. Schenk (2000) sums

it up pretty well, “practice takes care of itself when making music is fun, when there is context and good role models and when there are stimulating goal in the long run” (pp. 212)⁷. However, at the core of it, the author means that the person must simply want to learn in order to be motivated to practice. When musical practice starts to feel like a chore and less enjoyable, then it might be time to take a step back until the desire to play and sing returns.

Extrinsic motivation is just as important such as receiving positive feedback from the teacher and other people. In a previous study, six vocal and instrumental students in upper secondary school were interviewed about musical practice (Arvesen & Söderström, 2011). The interview was aimed at their personal practice, what practice means, goals, and motivation. They concluded that the students needed goals, short- and long-term for their practice. Extrinsic motivation for confirmation from others is important as it is not always easy to see one's own development, grades can also be a motivating factor which can be an advantage and disadvantage.

In a study, middle school band students across the state of Ohio answered a survey concerning factors that motivate students to practice their instruments (Schatt, 2018). As it turned out, the students rated intrinsic motivators higher than extrinsic, for example, the students wanted to learn more about their instrument, completing assignments, and having a good musical experience. This study also showed that the younger students seemed to respond less to extrinsic motivation, such as rewards, as it tends to dull and take away focus from one's interest. The older students were increasingly less interested and motivated to practice than their younger counterparts. The students seemed to practice the most when rather emotional factors were at play, for example, when they want to have to learn something or when they felt as though they were expected to practice. The study also showed that the middle school band students that also took private lessons had a stronger connection to their personal practice because of the want to learn their instrument. This was not exclusively to private lessons, but it seemed as though that lessons on a personal level were more probable to contribute to students developing tools for intrinsic motivation.

2.5 The importance of an educator for the individual student

The interaction and relationship between a teacher and an individual student are important for the student's learning process (Schenk, 2000; Arder, 2007). An educator is supposed to be a role model and example for their students, and so do the teacher-led practices for the students' personal practice. During lessons, the students observe and experience what practice can be. The point of instrumental or vocal lessons is for the student to have something to take from the lesson and bring it to their own personal practice. If lessons are well prepared and structured, the student is more likely to find their practices the same way (Schenk, 2000). In a recent study, Pettersson (2017) found that vocal teachers had experienced that their students

⁷ In Swedish: "Övningen sköter sig själv när musicerandet känns roligt, när det finns sammanhang och goda förebilder och när det finns stimulerande mål i sikte."

were dependent on vocal lessons in order to practice on their own. Principles and exercises that have been given by the teacher needed to be further processed and investigated by the student in order to see progress and growth. The teachers also thought that depending on how ready and prepared students were would determine how efficient and successful the vocal lessons would turn out. In conclusion according to these teachers, one cannot be without one or another, rather, both parties are dependent upon each other (Pettersson, 2017).

In a survey study, 26 out of 37 vocal students at a music college answered questions about how much they practice and their musical upbringing (Morin, 2016). The researcher's hypothesis was that he thought the students' weekly number of practice hours would correlate with their upbringing. However, this was not the case since the results proved to be further from the previous speculation. Instead, there was a greater connection between the students' amount in years of taking vocal lessons and also their previous education with the number of hours the students devoted to vocal practice (Morin, 2016). This helps to understand the importance of education and vocal lessons in connection to practice.

Teachers have the responsibility of teaching principles and techniques based on the needs of the student. As Chapman (2017) put it, it is "...particularly vigilant and actively prioritizes vocal development, helping students build their instrument while simultaneously learning to play it" (pp. xx). Vocal teachers provide students with exercises that are specifically considered for the individual student's need and modified if there is a need. The focus should be on the overall process rather than the exercise itself (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2014). Though it is the student's responsibility to nurture their own growth and development, the exercises and principles that are being taught also have to be presented in a way that makes sense for the student, so that they can be utilized in the right way. Often at times when students do not know the reason for certain exercises, they are often not practiced, and instead forgotten (Chapman, 2017).

3 Method

As this study is based on the results from a survey, this chapter will initially discuss quantitative methods and their qualities, as well as the benefits and risks of such. Further on, an overview of the survey is presented and also how it was constructed. The selection and presentation of the schools that participated in the survey, as well as how the survey was implemented will be discussed, closely followed by the ethical considerations that were carefully utilized throughout the project. In closing of this chapter, an explanation of how the results and data were processed and analyzed is described along with a nonresponse analysis.

3.1 Quantitative methods

At the beginning of a research, the researcher must specify the purpose of their study (Patel & Tebelius, 1987). By doing so, he or she is more likely to understand and decide what method and approach are most suitable. In research, there are two method concepts that are often presented, quantitative and qualitative methods. The first example is based on questions or so-called variables, that can only be measured, processed, and described, whereas qualitative methods are used to investigate and understand phenomena (Patel & Tebelius, 1987). For example, a common form of a quantitative method is a survey, while an interview is a qualitative method. Even though the two method concepts are often presented as two separate models, it is rather common and difficult to avoid having minor qualities and elements from the second party (Davidson & Patel, 2011).

As previously suggested, surveys are common in quantitative research and are based on processing and analyzing statistics and numbers by generalizing the actual result from a sample group out of the general population (Davidson & Patel, 2011). If one has chosen words as one's symbolic form in a survey, the variables must be able to be reduced to numbers in order to process the result. However, the numbers cannot be transformed into words that can be analyzed as a text (Patel & Tebelius, 1987).

It is of common knowledge that researchers cannot go into studies without preconceptions, whether it is the formulation of purpose for their study or when processing and analyzing the results of one's study (Patel & Tebelius, 1987). That is why researchers need to be aware of this fact in order to be able to dissociate from their biases when analyzing the results as far as possible. When analyzing the results from a quantitative research it is important that the results are being analyzed objectively as the results are supposed to be able to be repeated with the same results being the outcome. That is why it is important that the researcher is able to leave his or her subjective approach aside and instead be able to neutralize the subjective elements in the research.

The design of a survey must be considered carefully when deciding the number of questions, finding a sense of cohesion throughout, et cetera (Trost, 2012). The order of questions and

sections is something that also had to be considered and reconsidered. It is common to start a survey with neutral questions as an introduction and advance to more elaborate and focused questions concerning the study is asked (Patel & Tebelius, 1987). It is also common to end with neutral questions, for example, “Do you have anything you would like to add?”. Ending with such might contribute to receiving further feedback or information that participants may have missed earlier.

The benefits of surveys are that the procedure takes less time and costs less for the researcher, especially when considering online surveys (Hultåker, 2012). Not only that but the online platforms help to compile and present the survey responses which makes the process of analyzing the results more efficient. But there are also certain risks one might encounter when utilizing such a method that may contribute to the final result, such as a high nonresponse rate (Trost, 2012). Online surveys run the risk of lower response frequency than a physical survey. For participants to answer an online survey they either need a computer or a smartphone which relies on a good internet connection (Hultåker, 2012).

3.2 The survey’s overview and construction

The survey developed for this study included four sections with three to four questions in each. Since the survey was formatted in Swedish, titles have been translated from the original language for the purpose of this essay. See the survey in its entirety in Appendix 1 (p. 30).

1. *Personal data:* Questions addressing what school the students attend, what vocal course they took this semester, and their gender.
2. *Associations with practice and motivation:* This section included questions concerning the students’ associations with practice and their thoughts on how practice can be beneficial for a musician.
3. *My personal vocal practice:* In this section, the students were asked what was included in their personal warm-up routine and vocal practice, and what their singing goals are.
4. *Practicalities of your personal practice:* The students were asked how many hours they practice a week, and how long their practice session usually lasts, and if they are able to practice at school and/or home.
5. *Personal practice in relation to teacher-led practice:* In relation to their personal practice, the students were asked if they receive the help that they need from their vocal teacher in order to practice on their own.

The survey had a high standardization degree where the questions and the format of the survey were set and could not be changed based on the participants answering the survey

(Patel & Tebelius, 1987). The survey was created in a structured way where the questions had to be answered through the given alternatives, such as multiple-choice questions and questions based on a Likert scale (e.g., totally disagree, disagree, do not know/undecided, partially agree, totally agree). At the end of each section of the survey, open-ended questions were asked for the students to explain their thoughts on different matters. Other things also had to be considered, for example, the questions had to be easily understood, the language had to be consistent, as well as being not having multiple questions in one as suggested by Trost (2012).

For this survey study, the online survey was created through a platform called Google Forms. In this program, one can create and structure the survey to one's liking. However, there are certain limitations to the software which may lead to the consequence of having to find other ways to make the survey look the way one wants it to. As an example, because of the software's limitations, I was not able to italicize words that were meant to be emphasized and instead had to capitalize these words to be able to get the same message across. Google Forms also gathers the incoming survey answers while compiling and presenting the data in charts that can be downloaded to one's computer. Together with the online survey, a Quick Response-code, or so-called QR-code⁸, was created and sent out to all teachers (see appendix 4).

Once the survey is complete, it is suggested to send out the survey to a test group, preferably similar to the actual survey participants (Hultåker, 2012). In this case, the survey was handed out as a test-run to family and friends to see how others thought of the layout, length, and language. After receiving feedback and some consideration, the format of the survey was redone along with the number of questions that were reduced in order to have a more focused survey.

3.3 Selection of schools and survey implementation

When starting the project, the ambition was to involve three to five upper secondary schools around Stockholm in various locations and the reputation of the student's performance and achievements. It would be interesting to see if students' opinions about their personal practice would differ depending on what school in which area they went to. In three of the schools, I was able to contact old schoolmates from college working there, one school I had previously had an internship at, and the fifth school was my own former upper secondary school. This way of getting in contact with informants is commonly known as a convenience sample (Trost, 2010). This convenience sample method to get in touch efficiently without having to spend too much time or effort. My first contacts at the three first schools and my old upper secondary school would then in return give me the contact information to the vocal teachers at the schools, who were then contacted through email.

⁸ A QR-code is a barcode that can be easily read and scanned by smartphones in camera apps.

The schools that were a part of the survey study will remain anonymous according to confidentiality requirements (Vetenskapsrådet, n.d.) and have therefore been given new names, School 1, School 2, and so on. *School 1* is located in the inner city of Stockholm and has a reputation for having academically high-achieving students. *School 2* and *School 3* are both situated right outside the inner city and both have many art study-programs within their schools. *School 4* is located in a suburb approximately 30 minutes outside of Stockholm, the school has many different study-programs where the music program is one of the smaller ones. *School 5* has a long history of high-achieving students in music and is situated in the inner city.

In total 56 students answered the survey out of 120 students. The majority, 35 students, are taking InSo 1 this semester and 44 students are female. Females have proven to have higher response rates in survey studies in general (Trost, 2012), but in this case, we also have to take into consideration there are fewer males that sing in the study music programs in upper secondary schools. Four out of 16 students at School 1 are male, and at School 2 one out of 16 is male. School 3 shows that five out of eight students are male and therefore also is the only school where females are not the majority, whereas at School 4 only one out of nine students are male, the rest identify as female. Because of the nonresponses at School 5, the result is not an actual representation of the division of gender amongst the school's vocal students, one out of seven identify as other, while the rest identify themselves as female.

The vocal teachers were first contacted by email and were introduced to the survey and the purpose behind it (see appendix 2). After receiving a reply with approval to let their students be a part of the research, I then sent a returning email with a template of an introduction to the survey that they could use when emailing their students (see appendix 3). In this email, a PDF with a QR-code (see appendix 4) was attached that they had the option to print out as easy access and a reminder when meeting the students during vocal lessons. Students could scan the code with their phones which then directed them to the survey. During fall 2020 there was an increase of cases in Covid-19, which was important to take into consideration because of the circumstances in which this project was created. Therefore, sending out e-mail invites to an online survey also helped to keep this process physically contact-free – protecting teachers, students, and myself.

To minimize the risk of nonresponses, I was in frequent contact with the vocal teachers. During the two-week period, the students had to answer the survey, two reminders were sent out to the teachers. In the end, the planned deadline had to be extended by an extra week in order for the remainder of students to have the chance to reply. I also had requested information on how many students had received the survey in order to count the actual nonresponse and result. This information also helped to know how many students at each school had answered the survey before the deadline arrived. A reminder was sent out where the teachers were informed of how many of their students had answered, my hope was that this could help motivate the teachers to remind their students in return. One school, fortunately, was planning to have a workshop concerning practice and the teachers let their

students answer the survey at the end of the workshop. This proved to be the most successful way to receive survey answers quickly.

3.4 Ethical consideration

When creating this survey and planning for this project, four requirements were taken into consideration *information, consent, confidentiality, and utilization requirement* (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). These requirements help to keep the study in line with the ethical demands by keeping the participants informed about the purpose of the study and the study's voluntary nature. The participant's consent to participate is of uttermost importance and also by informing the respondents that they can withdraw from the study at any time. The requirements also speak of keeping the participants' privacy protected throughout the process, and how it also is the researcher's obligation to inform how they will utilize the information they have gathered in their study.

When creating this survey, it was important for me as a researcher to utilize these important requirements every step of the way. Therefore, in the first part of the survey and the introduction, the students were informed of the intent and content of the voluntary survey and how the answers they provided would be handle with discretion in addition to their identity remaining confidential. After the introduction, the students were asked a question were have the option of answering yes and no, namely: "I agree that the information I provide may be processed and used in this survey". This question facilitated a way to know if the students were comfortable in giving consent for me to use their answers in this project since this was the only communication that was being exchanged with the students participating in this survey study. Since the survey was distributed online, I was the only one with access to the incoming and collected data, which further ensured that the students' privacy.

3.5 Data processing

When processing a survey, it is common to refer to the survey's questions as variables. Variables are changeable and can take on two or more values (Trost, 2012), and can also be measured in certain scales such as *nominal scale, ordinal scale, and interval scale* (Davidson & Patel, 2011). A nominal scale is used when the values of the variables cannot be ranked and are instead categorized, for example, when processing questions such as what school the student attends and what course they are taking, et cetera. Ordinal scales are the opposite where there is an order to the values of the variables and one can therefore rank or put the values into an order. In this survey the students had to answer short statements while choosing between the values of the variable; *totally disagree, disagree, do not know/undecided, partially agree, and totally agree*. When processing these kinds of questions, it is up to the participant to decide the variation between the values since it is a question of interpretation. Lastly, an interval scale is determined when it can be assumed that the distances between consecutive variable values are equal. The survey also includes open-ended questions which

also was compiled and analyzed into nominal scale variables as they were divided into categories depending on the answers.

The survey questions were analyzed in IBM's statistics software SPSS⁹, where variables can be processed and analyzed in various ways. In this case, the software was used to analyze correlations between two or more variables and most importantly, if the correlation between the variables was positive or negative (Trost, 2012). In this study, Spearman's correlation was used since the data that was processed was on an ordinal level, meaning there was a rank for the variables' values. Spearman's correlation helps to understand and define how strong a monotonic relationship there is between the variables (Lærd Statistics, n.d). The monotonic relationship between variables is defined by how they follow each other, for example, when one independent variable increases so do the other variable. However, if the variables do not go in the same direction but instead differ in this respect, there may be a non-monotonic relationship between the variables, or a so-called negative correlation.

3.6 Analysis of nonresponses

When there is a lack of or absence of responses from the same, in this case, school, it is called a unit nonresponse. On the other hand, if there is an absence of responses to certain questions in the survey, it is called an item nonresponse (Yan & Curtin, 2010). The commonly accepted response rate usually lies between 50 to 75 percent. Yet the response rate of this survey was 46.7 percent, n=56 in which one person equals 1,8 percent of the whole group.

Table 1. *Response rate of survey*

School	Number of students	Number of answered surveys	Response rate
School 1	29	16	55.1%
School 2	18	16	88.8 %
School 3	8	8	100%
School 4	14	9	64.2 %
School 5	51	7	13.7 %
Total:	120	56	46.6 %

Though it is not easy to fully comprehend why there was a big nonresponse rate there are certain aspects that might have contributed to the final result. With all five schools included, the average school-wise response rate was 64.3 percent. This proves that even though the response rate seemed low, it was solely based on one school with a lower response rate which dropped the average rate by 12.7 percent. However, this unit nonresponse does not affect the study as the answers that were provided from School 5 are still relevant and we can still learn from the data.

⁹ Short for: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Reasons behind the unit nonresponses can be speculated to originate from the way that the survey was distributed. The unit nonresponse of School 5 may have been caused by the way it was distributed. Even though emails were sent out to each one of the five vocal teachers, I only received answers from three. One of the responders only had two vocal students, the second said that they did not have time to accept further obligations. The third and last one to answer confirmed that she would send the survey in an email to all of the vocal students at the school. In retrospect, I now understand how important it is with the verbal reminders and the probable outcome with the lack of them. School 2 had a high response rate as the students answered the survey in connection to a workshop about practice. The teacher at School 3 only had eight students whom she reminded when meeting during their vocal lessons.

4 Results

In this following chapter, the results of the survey will be presented, see the survey in its entirety in Appendix 1. Starting off, the numbers of hours the vocal students practice per week generally and what their practice contains are presented which are then followed by a correlation analysis based on the students' perceptions of personal practice and practice hours. The results of how students perceive the support and help they receive from their teachers are then disclosed and closely followed by a correlation analysis on these topics in connection with practice hours. The chapter closes with an analysis of five under-stimulated students.

4.1 Practice hours and content

Six students (10.7 percent) claimed to practice *under an hour* weekly, 21 students (37.5 percent) practice *one to two hours per week*, 15 students (26.8 percent) practice *three to five hours*. The rest is evenly spread out between practicing *5-8 hours* and *8+ hours a week*. Subsequently, it is most common to practice between one to five hours per week. The survey responses also inform that 24 (42.9 percent) students' practice sessions last between zero to 30 minutes, 25 students (44.6 percent) practice for 30 to 60 minutes, while the rest practice 60+ minutes. There was, however, a statistically significant difference between how many hours the students practice weekly based on what school they attend (Kruskal-Wallis $H=11.893, p < .018$). The distribution of the number of weekly practice hours was distributed differently across the schools and we can therefore also infer that the number of hours is also connected to the school the students attend. School 2 ($n=16$) stood out from the rest of the school of having the highest number of weekly practice hours, where the majority practice over eight hours per week (37.5 percent). In contrast, the remaining schools ($n=40$) had a more even distribution where the majority practice one to two hours per week (47.5 percent).

The vocal students were also asked what they include into their vocal practice, both in vocal warm-up and studying a song or pieces. The results pointed towards how the students seemed to have good practice routines where they also include many various steps within their practice. 62 percent of the respondents included five to six activities in their vocal warm-up overall, the most popular being: stretching and warming up the body (87.5 percent), soft SOVT exercises¹⁰ (87.5 percent), vocal exercises that go down in one's vocal register (87.5 percent), and vocal exercises that go up (96.4 percent). The rest of the students chose fewer exercises and the majority also chose the activities that were previously described. We have to take into consideration that this question does not provide information if these exercises are consistently part of the students' practice, rather it seems as though the utilization of these activities may vary on a day-to-day basis depending on what the students need and/or want to focus on. We can draw this conclusion because we could see that, for example, the students

¹⁰ Semi occluded vocal tract exercises.

that practice for 0-30 minutes chose five to six warm-up activities, and students that practiced 60+ minutes chose four or less.

Typically, after warming-up the body and the voice, the focus usually shifts towards other activities, such as learning a song or working on vocal “homework”. During the remaining time of the students’ vocal practice, it was most common to focus on three activities. The majority answered that they practice different technical parts of a song over and over again (82.1 percent), practice things that they had received feedback on from vocal teachers (71.4 percent), and lastly, practice songs they had received as homework (66.1 percent). In this multiple-choice question, 28 students (50 percent) also added to these answers that they sang songs that were not included in the vocal homework. This variable did not seem to relate with the longevity of their practice either, but there instead seemed to be a connection to the student’s personal preferences.

4.1.1 Practice perception and motivation

At the beginning of the survey, the students were asked in a multiple-choice question what they associate with the word ‘practice’. The majority thought that practice was fun, motivating, demanding, and interesting. Though these words have a positive connotation, the word *demanding* is a word that can have different connotations. To some, the word serves as a positive matter, while others might consider it as something negative. Some students also added their own words and descriptions of the word *practice*, for example, skills, necessary, good, hard, uncomfortable, and time-consuming. Two students described that it would depend on what song they were singing and also how their attitude towards practice could vary from time to time and day-to-day. The students have overall positive associations with practice. An interesting matter is that the positive words were often combined with words that have a negative connotation, for example demanding, boring, anxiousness, uninteresting, etc. It appears, just like the two students stated, it depends on *what* the student has to practice. Sometimes practice can be fun and easy, whereas at times it is harder and less fun because of the tasks at hand.

In a multiple-choice question, 48 students (85.7 percent) indicated that what motivates their practice was to have a goal in front of them, for example, vocal lesson, concert, et cetera. The ultimate driving force was not the practice itself, but rather opportunities where they had to present something for a second party. In second and third place were the alternatives, *being able to sing whatever I want*, and *having a plan and structure for practice*. 16 students (28.6 percent) thought that grading in the course was an important element to motivate their practice, yet every single student that had chosen this alternative had also chosen to have a goal in front of them. It seems as though these students practice as a preparation for their vocal lessons as they are aware of being analyzed and graded as a consequence.

When asked the following question, *briefly describe how you think practice can help you grow as a singer*, eleven (19.6 percent) students answered that “practice makes perfect”^{11[1]} as more of a general statement and rule. In Swedish, this phrase is directly translated into “practice provides skills”. This statement was utilized as a quote rather than an explanation because the majority also proceeded to describe what they meant in further detail. The majority of the students answered in various ways something about how practice is inevitable in order to progress as a singer and performer. Six students (10.7 percent) mentioned that practice focused on vocal technique helps the singer to grow, whereas other students described or suggested certain things they focus on, such as learning breathing techniques, expanding one’s vocal range, gaining vocal flexibility and ease. These answers seemed to be connected to the student’s specific personal goals in vocal practice.

Some brought to attention how practice helps one understand and get to know their own voices better, gain better self-confidence, understand what they need to work on more in order to reach their goals, and how practice can make weak matters stronger with time and effort, et cetera. Only one person mentioned how practice is a form of activity to enjoy and expressed, “I can play around with the songs because it’s fun and in that way, I can continue to also love singing”¹². This student pointed out how their practice could be filled with fun and enjoyment, rather than just being a serious and strict matter to simply get through.

The students were asked to briefly describe their goals in singing. Since the question was open-ended their answers had to be placed into categories to be properly analyzed on a nominal scale. The majority of the students answered that they wanted to improve their vocal technique. Vocal technique is a broad concept but will in this matter include, for example, vocal range, breath support, vibrato, evening out the transition between head and chest voice, developing falsetto, etc. The second most popular category amongst the students was that they simply want to “get better at singing” and “grow as a singer”. These answers are hard to interpret as they are based on the student’s opinion of what getting better at singing means and includes, and for this reason, these answers could not be processed further. Other answers include a need for an increase of self-confidence, knowledge in vocal health, finding an increase of continuity in their practice, et cetera.

Some examples stood out and also displayed a variety of personal goals among the students. One student mentioned having various goals, but also feeling hindered because of the lack of feedback from their teacher. The student was disappointed not being told what they needed to improve on and what they needed to practice. Another student explained how they love to sing but that they did not have any goals other than having fun. A third respondent said, “Before I started upper secondary school I rarely sang and now I just want to get better and better until I can start teaching others myself”¹³. Though there was a big range of goals, the

¹¹ In Swedish: “Övning ger färdighet”

¹² In Swedish: ”Jag kan bara leka med låtarna för att det är kul och på så sätt fortsätta älska att sjunga.”

¹³ In Swedish: ”Innan jag började på gymnasiet så höll jag nästan aldrig på med sång och nu vill jag bara bli bättre och bättre, tills jag själv kan börja lära ut.

majority of the students had a clear vision of what their goal was even if it was on different levels of ambition.

4.1.2 Correlation between practice hours and practice perception

Firstly, as we can see in table 2, there is a significant correlation between the number of weekly practice hours and motivation to practice (Spearman $\rho=0.55$, $p < .001$). From this, we can learn that motivation to practice is important for the number of practice hours – students that are motivated prior to their practice, practice more than the students that are not. There is also a correlation between this variable and the duration of the vocal practice sessions ($\rho=0.26$, $p < .046$). We can therefore conclude that motivation prior the one's practice is connected to the number of practice hours overall.

Table 2. *Correlation between practice hours and practice perception*

	The combined weekly practice hours Spearman rho with p-value	The overall duration of practice sessions Spearman rho with p-value
Prior to my practice I feel overall motivated.	.553** .000	.268* .046
I know what I am going to do during my practice.	.235 .082	.101 .459
I usually have a plan for my practice.	.180 .184	.082 .546
I can plan and structure my practice on my own.	.296* .027	.206 .128
I know what I must do in order to reach my personal vocal goals.	.348** .008	.230 .089
By the end of my practice sessions, I am often happy with my efforts	-.040 .772	.008 .951
At the end of my practice, I know what I need to practice during the following practice session.	.303* .005	.134 .324
I can practice undisturbed at home.	.369** .005	.338* .011
I can practice undisturbed at school.	.156 .250	.029 .834
I have daily access to a practice room.	-.059 .668	-.082 .546

N.B.: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Though there was no significant correlation between the statement *I know what I am going to do during my practice* and the practice hours, 26 students (46.4 percent) students partially agreed, and 27 students (48.2 percent) fully agreed with the statement. However, when looking at a second ordinal scale question, *I usually have a plan for my practice*, eleven (19.6 percent) of the students did not agree, nine (16.1 percent) did not know or were undecided, and 36 students (64.3 percent) partially agreed or totally agreed to this statement. This entails

that having a well-thought-out plan or structure to one's practice is not as important as having a general idea on what to practice which then also motivates the students further.

Further, there was a correlation between the students' self-assessed ability to plan and structure their practice and the number of weekly practice hours ($\rho=0.29, p < .027$). The same variable, however, did not correlate to the duration of the practice sessions. There was also a significant correlation between students' knowledge of what they need to do in order to reach their goals and the practice hours ($\rho=0.34, p < .008$).

Lastly, there was a significant correlation between being able to practice undisturbed at home and numbers of practice weekly hours ($\rho=0.36, p < .005$) as well as the duration of the practice session ($\rho= 0.33, p < .011$). However, the statistics show that there was no significant correlation between having daily access to a practice room and either the number of weekly practice hours ($\rho= -.059, p < .668$) or the duration of practice sessions ($\rho= -.008, p < .546$). In other words, the students' practice hours are more dependent on the access to being able to practice at home, rather than having overall daily access to a practice room.

4.2 Perception of teacher support

The vocal students were asked in the survey, "Do you think vocal lessons together with your vocal teacher are helpful for carrying out your personal vocal practice?" where the majority, 87.5 percent, answered 'yes' to the question. One student answered no, two did not know and four students answered 'other' and explained their opinions further (see section 4.3.2). In response to a question concerning if the students felt that they needed more help to reach their personal goals in singing, 42.8 percent agreed to this statement and 35.7 percent disagreed. Why there were disagreeing opinions might be because of the different qualities of teachers and others, in this case, invisible circumstances.

Students were also asked to specify how their vocal teacher can be of support for the student's personal practice. The answers had a wide range of variety, some of the students being more critical and inclined to give fuller responses to this question, whereas seven students (12.5 percent) were simply happy with the help they already receive. The respondents were asking for their teachers to give more constructive criticism and to customize exercises to the students' needs, as well as to teach the students about technical terms and functions. Since the voice is not an instrument you can hold or see, it is common amongst vocal teachers to suggest metaphors of how something should feel. As a student stated, "Give me concrete things to think about with technique on how to do it instead of saying 'Imagine that you are holding a dolphin'"¹⁴. The students seemed to want their teachers to be more specific on feedback concerning vocal technique.

¹⁴ In Swedish: "Ge mig konkreta grejer att tänka på med tekniken på hur man gör det istället för att säga 'Tänk att du håller i en delfin'".

The respondents also wanted their teachers to adapt exercises according to their needs and personal goals, as well as to provide more support so that the students know what they specifically need to practice throughout their practice week. In connection to this, the students also wanted more material that they could utilize in their personal practice, such as recordings, worksheets, et cetera. Six students asked to be challenged more and expressed needing help to be motivated to practice. A few students asked for more extrinsic motivation, for example, more compliments and positive encouragements. Even though not all students stated that they were happy with the help they receive from their teachers, it does not mean that the rest of the students are not happy with their teachers but rather that there might be room for further growth.

4.2.1 Correlation between practice hours and teacher support

The first variable *I receive exercises and material for my personal practice from my vocal teacher* (see table 3) showed no significant correlation with either weekly practice hours or the overall duration of practice sessions. We can therefore assume that the length of practice sessions is not motivated by the students receiving vocal exercises.

Table 3. *Correlation between practice hours and teacher support*

	The combined weekly practice hours Spearman rho with p-value	The overall duration of practice sessions Spearman rho with p-value
I RECEIVE exercises and materials for my personal practice from my vocal teacher.	.042 .759	-.153 .261
I PRACTICE vocal exercises and material I receive from my vocal teacher.	.348** .009	.354** .007
I get enough support from my vocal teacher for my personal practice.	.059 .668	.032 .813
I wish I got more support to plan my personal practice.	.049 .719	.093 .498
I wish I got more help to reach my personal goals in vocals.	-.024 .859	-.037 .787

N.B.: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

There is, however, a moderate correlation between the variable *I PRACTICE vocal exercises and material I receive from my vocal teacher* and the weekly practice hours ($r=0.34$, $p < .009$) and also with the duration of the practice sessions ($r=0.35$, $p < .007$). In connection to these variables, an interesting point was that a majority (60.7 percent) totally agreed to receive material and exercises for their practice from their vocal teacher, 32.1 percent partially agreed. Yet, in another variable, a majority (55.4 percent) answered that they only partially agree to practice what they receive from their teachers, whereas 33.9 percent totally agreed. To clarify, overall, the students seemed to receive material from their teachers, but fewer

students practice the exercises and material they receive. Why we got this result is can only be speculated because there were no follow-up questions to these statements.

There were no significant correlations between practice hours and the support students get from their teachers as well as the want to get more help and support for their practice. Generally, it seems as though the number of practice hours or duration of practice sessions are not dependent on or motivated by the support and help that the teachers provide to their students.

4.2.2 The five under-stimulated students

Even though a vast majority stated that they receive enough support from their teachers in their practice, five students did not concur with the statement. How does this affect their motivation to practice, their independence to reach their goals in vocal performance? Interestingly enough, four out of the five students attend School 4, the fifth student attended School 2. I have not been able to verify if the four students have the same teacher or not. Two of the students take the course InSo 1, another one takes InSo 2 and the last student takes InSo3. The four students from School 4 will be presented further as a whole and the fifth student from School 2 will be presented separately since the answers of the students varied slightly depending on which school they attended.

Two of the students at School 4 insinuated that they were unhappy with their teacher and apparently, they felt as though that their teachers were “not good” and that the teacher and them did not work well together. This further suggests that the relationship between the student and teacher is important for the individual student’s growth. The other two students at School 4 expressed that they were not receiving and were instead lacking support due to having vocal lessons online because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which impeded their learning process and did not contribute to their personal growth.

The four students at School 4 associated the word *practice* with words like indifferent, demanding, boring, and easy. They were also in agreement that they did not know or were undecided if they usually are motivated prior to their practice. The students all claimed to practice between one to two hours a week, which seems to be a consequence of being understimulated and that is why they do not practice many hours a week. Three out of the four singers at School 4 disagreed with the statement that they do receive enough support from their teacher, the fourth stated that they partially agree with the statement. However, when asked if they *desired* to receive more help in planning their practice and help to reach their goals, all students agreed unanimously. In the end, when they were asked about how their teachers can support them in their personal practice, they responded by writing about wanting more feedback from their teacher, being motivated, and being given clearer instructions in vocal technique. These students seem to be demotivated by the fact that they do not receive enough help or guidance from their teachers and do not know how to independently reach their goals.

The fifth student from School 2 was harder to analyze since there seemed to be a bigger variation in the student's answers between positive and negative responses. The student associated practice with words such as interesting, simple, motivation but also added time-consuming and added that they are not motivated to practice prior to a practice session and only practice up to an hour a week. However, this student did not have access to a daily practice room which in this case may contribute to less motivation and weekly practice time. The student agreed to the statement of receiving enough help from their teacher but also not knowing how to reach their personal goals. Unlike the four other students, this student had more positive answers connected to questions around their teacher, but less positive with questions concerning personal practice. This student was wanting more "tips and tricks", and material to use in their practice.

From what we can see, what these five students have in common seems to be connected to the students being understimulated in the learning process. The students at School 4 presented data on not being challenged enough or getting the optimal amount of help that they want in their personal practice which had big consequences on their practice and motivation. The fifth student seemed to be getting help from their teacher to some extent but the overall responses from this student do not provide enough data to fully comprehend how they were affected by this matter in their personal practice.

4.3 Summary

The students participating in the present study practiced between one to five hours weekly with a general practice session lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. On average, the students did five to six vocal warm-up exercises and three main part for their vocal studies, for example, stretching the body, vocal exercises that were soft and that stretched the vocal register, and for the latter, they worked on technical parts, their given feedback and homework from teachers. From correlation analysis, we can assume that students that were motivated to practice, practiced more and students that were not practiced less. However, the amount of help students received did not affect the number of hours they were practicing, students ultimately found motivation in other matters. Being able to plan and structure once practice as well as knowing how to reach one's goals were also connected to the number of practice hours.

The majority of students thought that the support they received from their teachers was helpful for their personal practice. Students wanted more clear instructions and feedback to better know what to practice on their own. Various answers also showed that students wanted to be motivated either through being challenged more or by getting compliments. Through correlation analysis, we can learn that there was a connection between students practicing the exercises they receive and practice hours. However, we can also see that there were no correlations between variables concerning teacher-support and the students' number of practice hours and duration of practice sessions.

5 Discussion

In this last chapter, the results will be discussed further together with previous research. Firstly, a section concerning the vocal students' personal practice will be presented, where discussions on matters of practice perception and motivation are examined. Secondly, we will discuss vocal students' practice in relation to the support they receive from their vocal teacher, and finally, a section on reflections of choice of method and further researcher is disclosed.

5.1 The personal practice of vocal students

Students are guaranteed a certain number of teaching hours during their three-year schooling in upper secondary school which is distributed by their schools (Skolverket, 2015). However, the students' practice hours are not included in the guaranteed teaching hours the courses InSo 1, 2, and 3 which is surprising since teachers have to grade students based on knowledge requirements where practice plays an important part (Skolverket, 2011). However, if this had an effect on the students' number of weekly practice hours we do not know yet is important to take into consideration when discussing the results. From the survey results, we can see that some students practice up to an hour while others claimed to practice up to eight or more hours a week, with practice sessions lasting up to an hour on average. Though School 1, 3, 4, and 5 proved to have a similar distribution of weekly practice hours, with 1-2 hours as the majority, School 2 proved to have a majority that practiced over eight hours a week. Why this particular school seemed to have a higher rate of practice hours we do not know either.

Because of the limitations of the survey method, we cannot establish if the students that practice more are more successful in developing their skills than the students that practice less. However, a higher number of practice hours does not always mean that one learns more or has quicker progress, it all depends on if the student is focused on the task at hand or not (Ericsson, Krampe, Tesch-Römer, 1993). What we also did see was that the weekly practice hours and duration of practice sessions were connected to the level of motivation the student had prior to their practice and based on knowing what they will do during their practice. To clarify, students that are motivated to practice, practice more than students that are not. This information agrees with the results from previous studies where students that had more intrinsic motivation practiced more (Schatt, 2018).

In Schatt's study (2018), it was shown that students were motivated by emotional factors such as wanting to learn their instrument and having expectations of others to practice. Also, Arvesen and Söderström (2011) found that students required short- and long-term goals for their practice. In this study, we can find similar traits. A majority of students stated that having a goal in front of them motivated their practice, along with being able to sing what they want, as well as having a structure and plan. As we can see, intrinsic motivation is important for the individual's practice and progress.

The knowledge requirement in Swedish upper secondary school points to the students' practice outside the classroom, where they along with the support of their teacher take responsibility for their own development (Skolverket, 2011). Less than a fifth answered that getting grades in the course motivated them to practice, but through the survey, we can determine that the students thought that having a goal for their practice was the most effective method. The students are not graded based on how much they practice, it is rather based on the students' effort and what they accomplish throughout the course (Skolverket, 2015). The vocal lessons are therefore important occasions for them to present and show their teacher their continual progress through the efforts they are making outside the classroom.

The complexity of grading students based on their practice comes into play when, for example, students that spend many hours practicing and do well at home but get nervous to perform in front of their teacher. The hard work that has been exerted might not be recognized and the student is graded based on what the teacher sees during their lessons and performances. As previously explained, lessons are important occasions where the students are being assessed throughout the course (Skolverket, 2011). Though the students in this survey were not able to specify this dilemma, I have met vocal students during internships at upper secondary school expressing that they achieve more and feel more comfortable when singing home, but during lessons, this is not always visible.

Though it is important for a student to be able to regulate their own learning in practice, there also needs to be a real desire to learn (McCormick & McPherson, 1999). Self-regulated learning is dependent on the student's motivation and being able to take responsibility for one's development. The student also has to be able to self-assess and process what needs to be done and further developed by setting goals and forming strategies on their own (Zimmerman, 2002). There were significant correlations between the combined weekly practice hours and being able to plan and structure, knowing what to do to reach one's goals, and lastly, being able to process what needs to be done during following practice. These connections suggest that self-regulation is important for the amount of effort that is put into one's practice.

"Practice makes perfect" was a statement that the majority seemed to have in common when discussing why practice is important for the personal growth of a musician. There was a common understanding among the students that practice *is* important for one's personal development. As compared with athletes who have to train rigorously, singers also have to build stamina and refine vocal muscles through frequent practice (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2017). The students agreed with this previous statement though it was phrased in various ways. Since personal practice is something that is not visibly accessible to teachers it was a positive realization that a majority of the singers have positive associations and perceptions of their personal practice.

There were, however, a majority of students in the study who expressed that they wanted to get better at singing, though as previously explained, this cannot be fully analyzed as though "getting better at singing" would be based on personal preferences. Everyone has different

needs, strengths, and things that need to be refined. Having open-ended questions where the respondents had to write their own answers can be misleading since they might not spend enough time to process or carefully explain themselves fully (Trost, 2012). In this case, it seemed to be easier and faster to write “getting better at singing” than to specify exactly what they wanted to get better at. Perhaps the students that answered this had not been able to fully understand *how* to actually “get better” or more specifically may not understand *what* they needed to improve to get better. However, the students need to become aware of *what* they need to improve on by putting it better into words, as metacognition is an integral part of any learning situation (Zimmerman, 2002).

5.2 The vocal teacher and student

The majority of the vocal students found that they received enough help from their vocal pedagogues for their personal practice. In Pettersson’s study (2017), the vocal teachers’ perception was that teacher-led vocal practice and personal practice are both important and dependent on each other. However, in a bigger group of students there will always be students that might not agree with the teacher’s teaching style or where the relationship between the two parties just does not go together well. Though, what seems to be the problem with this dilemma is that such students fall behind in their own personal practice and then as a consequence also in their personal progress.

The support and guidance of a teacher may be a crucial necessity to a student as we could see with the five students in this study who did not receive the help they needed. We can draw this conclusion because these students’ overall perception of their own practice was less positive than with the rest of the students. Though all of the five students seemed to lack the support of their teachers, two of the students at School 4 expressed that they were not receiving enough support due to having vocal lessons online during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which impeded their learning process and did not contribute to their personal growth. These students also seemed to lack enough support and help which might be even harder to receive and maybe ask for when not having vocal lessons in person.

During teacher-led vocal lessons students are supposed to receive help and guidance, the lesson is supposed to be an example for one’s practice (Arder, 2007). It is the student’s responsibility to practice the customized material and exercises they receive to be able to nurture their skills. When analyzing the responses of the survey it became apparent that though the majority of the students received exercises from their teacher, fewer students utilized these in their practice. How exercises and practice strategies are presented are of uttermost importance for students to be able to use these on their own. Personal growth and motivation to practice can only be accomplished when understanding the meaning and reasons behind the exercise or strategy (Chapman, 2017; McCormick & McPherson, 1999). Some students also claimed to want more material for them to take home for their personal practice which indicates that there is a need for more help and guidance.

The number of weekly practice hours, as previously explained in section 5.1, did not seem to be based on the support from their teachers, but instead rather on the students' intrinsic motivation. Teachers are, however, important as they also help to motivate students through feedback, compliments, and by challenging students and therefore also help build intrinsic motivation. As a teacher, it is important to always have the students' interests in mind (Karlsson, 2002), for example by having conversations about what the students would like help with frequently. Even though the students in this study overall responded that they receive the help that they need from their teachers, it was still apparent that there is room for further growth.

Asking for feedback from students might be hard to implement because of the personal and intimate nature of individual lessons. Because of probable consequences, the students might feel exposed and not comfortable being fully honest when giving direct feedback. However, there is always room for improvement, which is why it is important to ask students along the way what they need in their learning process since there will always be students that might not dare to ask for help.

5.3 Criticism and reflection of method

The decision to make an online survey was made early on. In my naive opinion, there were more positive outcomes than negative consequences. However, in retrospect and now with more experience, there might be easier ways to reach a similar result. Since not having first-hand contact with the students, I had to leave the responsibility in the hands of the teachers. They were now in charge of having their students answer the survey, while I eagerly waited for responses to come in. Though emails with reminders were sent out to teachers, who then also had to remind their students, the teachers already have many things on their plates, and this was another added thing that they had to remember to do. It was apparent that the teachers had an interest in finding out what their students had to say about their personal practice which also was important for their motivation to continue to remind their students.

A positive consequence when using a survey as a method is that the researcher is able to reach more respondents, especially with online surveys where the responses are easily gathered into one file and can be analyzed faster (Hultåker, 2012). However, the biggest downside, in my opinion, is the restrictive design of a survey. It is impossible to format a survey to the individual respondent and ask follow-up questions, this became clearer once starting to receive answers to the survey when wanting to know more about certain aspects in their answers. After sending the survey, I also realized that certain questions should have been rephrased as the wording caused slight variance in the responses, for example, "Briefly describe how you think practice can help you grow as a singer"¹⁵. The responses to this

¹⁵ In Swedish: Beskriv kort på vilket vis du anser att övning kan hjälpa dig växa som sångare.

question were mixed as some students were referring to themselves while others described the benefits of practice in general.

When deciding on the design of the survey, it is important to be consistent in the language usage (such as you, me/I, etc.), question format, and so on (Trost, 2012). I ended up using different formats of the questions when the recommended method is to use as few question formats as possible in a survey. This method would have been much easier to analyze the results but choosing to have various question formats helped to get deeper and further insight into the students' thought process that would have been harder to extract in a more restrictive format.

5.4 Further research

This study has presented a smaller range of vocal students' thoughts about their personal practice, and their practice in relation to their vocal teachers' support and guidance. In further research, it would be interesting to follow singers through upper secondary school to college to see how their relationship to these questions evolves and develops. It would also be of interest to see how students view their personal practice in accordance with the knowledge requirements to see how attentive and aware students are of their performance in relation to the grading system.

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Appendix 1: Survey

The survey was sent out to vocal students at five schools that were involved in the survey study.

Min personliga sångövning

Hej!

Du som har fått denna enkät går på ett gymnasium i Stockholm med SÅNG som huvudinstrument. Syftet med denna enkätstudie är att ta reda på hur sångelever på gymnasiet upplever sin personliga sångövning. Personlig sångövning syftar på din egen övning som du utför på egen hand utanför klassrummet. Enkäten innehåller fem avsnitt där kommer du få svara på frågor som inkluderar t.ex.: övning och motivation, vad din övning brukar innehålla, om/hur mycket du brukar öva, samt om din sångpedagog ger stöd och råd för ditt fortsatta arbete och övning utanför lektionstid.

Enkäten är frivillig och din identitet kommer att förbli konfidentiell. De svar som du lämnar ut kommer hanteras varsamt och diskret och är endast till forskarens sammanställning av resultaten för denna undersökning. Enkäten tar ca 5–10 minuter att svara på och slutföra. Svara gärna så uppriktigt och ärligt som möjligt.

Ett stort tack för din medverkan!

PS. Skicka gärna ett mail till "miranda.jonsson@student.kmh.se" vid vidare frågor eller funderingar.

***Obligatorisk**

Jag godkänner att den information jag lämnar får bearbetas och användas i denna undersökning. *

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nej

Personuppgifter

Vilken skola går du på? *

- ☐ School 1
- ☐ School 2
- ☐ School 3
- ☐ School 4

Vilken sångkurs tar du denna termin? *

- ☐ Instrument eller sång 1, 100 poäng
- ☐ Instrument eller sång 2, 100 poäng
- ☐ Instrument eller sång 3, 100 poäng

Kön? *

- ☐ Kvinna
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Annat

Associationer med övning och motivation

Vilka ord associerar du med ordet ÖVNING? *

OBS! Flervalssvar - välj så många alternativ du känner passar in på detta ord!

- ☐ Intressant
- ☐ Ointressant
- ☐ Kravfyllt
- ☐ Enkelt

- ☐ Roligt
- ☐ Tråkig
- ☐ Likgiltig
- ☐ Ångestladdat
- ☐ Motiverande
- ☐ Inspirerande
- ☐ Onödigt
- ☐ Annatt: _____

Vad hjälper dig att bli motiverad till att öva? *

OBS! Flervalssvar - välj så många alternativ du känner passar in på denna fråga!

- ☐ Sångläxor
- ☐ Att få öva på vad jag vill
- ☐ Att inte ha några krav på mig
- ☐ Att ha en plan och struktur för min övning
- ☐ Att ha ett mål framför mig (t.ex. sånglektion, konsert, gig...)
- ☐ Betygsättning i kursen
- ☐ Att ha mycket tid att förbruka
- ☐ Annat: _____

Beskriv kort på vilket vis du anser att övning kan hjälpa dig växa som sångare. *

Min personliga sångövning

Vilka av följande alternativ brukar ingå i din uppsjungning/uppvärmning? *

OBS - Flervalssvar - välj bland alternativen vad som brukar ingå i din övning. Lägg gärna till förslag om du anser att något saknas i listan.

- ☐ Stretching och uppvärmning av kropp
- ☐ Stödövningar utan sång
- ☐ Mjuka SOVT övningar (t.ex. läppdrill, rullande R, tonande konsonanter; M, N, NG, V, etc.)
- ☐ Sångövningar som går NER i registret
- ☐ Sångövningar som går UPP i registret
- ☐ Teknik specifika sångövningar (belt, cry, runs, mix)
- ☐ Inget av dessa alternativ
- ☐ Annat: _____

Vilka av dessa alternativ brukar ingå i resterande tid av din övning? *

OBS - Flervalssvar - välj bland alternativen vad som brukar ingå i din övning. Lägg gärna till förslag om du anser att något saknas i listan.

- ☐ Instudering av sångläxa
- ☐ Övar på olika tekniska delar av en låt om och om igen
- ☐ Övar på moment jag fått feedback på från min sångpedagog under föregående lektion
- ☐ Sjunger låtar som inte är inkluderade i sångläxan
- ☐ Tar frekventa pauser för att låta min röst vila
- ☐ Nedvärmning i slutet av övningspasset (mjuka övningar som hjälper mot svällningar i stämband)
- ☐ Inget av dessa alternativ
- ☐ Annat: _____

Korta påståenden *

Här nedan kommer sju korta påståenden som du kommer få svara på en rangordning: Instämmer inte alls, instämmer inte, vet inte/obestämd, instämmer delvis, instämmer helt.

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte	Vet inte/ obestämd	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer helt
Innan min övning känner jag mig motiverad.					
Jag vet vad jag ska öva under min övning					
Jag brukar ha en plan för min övning					
Jag kan planera och strukturera min övning på egen hand.					
Jag vet vad jag bör göra för att nå mina personliga mål i sång					
I slutet av mina övningspass är jag ofta nöjd med min insats					
I slutet av mina övningspass vet jag vad jag behöver öva på under kommande övningspass.					

Förklara kortfattat i egna ord vad du har för mål med din sångövning. *

I praktiken - Min personlig sångövning

Hur många timmar brukar du öva sång per vecka? *

- ☐ 0-1 timmar i veckan
- ☐ 1-2 timmar i veckan
- ☐ 3-5 timmar i veckan
- ☐ 5-8 timmar i veckan
- ☐ 8+ timmar i veckan
- ☐ Jag övar inte på sång

Hur länge brukar du öva överlag under ett övningspass? *

- ☐ 0-30 minuters
- ☐ 30-60 minuter
- ☐ 1-2 timmar
- ☐ 2+ timmar
- ☐ Jag övar inte så sång

Korta påståenden *

Här nedan kommer tre korta påståenden som du kommer få svara på en rangordning: Instämmer inte alls, instämmer in vet inte/obestämd, instämmer delvis, instämmer helt.

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte	Vet inte/ obestämd	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer helt
Jag kan öva ostört hemma.					
Jag kan öva ostört på skolan.					
Jag har tillgång till övningsrum dagligen.					

Personlig sångövning och lärarledda sånglektioner

Anser du att sånglektioner tillsammans med din sångpedagog är till hjälp för att kunna utföra din personliga sångövning? *

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nej
- ☐ Vet inte
- ☐ Annat: _____

Korta påståenden *

Här nedan kommer fem korta påståenden som du kommer få svara på en rangordning: Instämmer inte alls, instämmer inte, vet inte/obestämd, instämmer delvis, instämmer helt.

	Instämmer inte alls	Instämmer inte	Vet inte/ obestämd	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer helt
Jag FÅR övningar och material för min personliga övning av min sångpedagog.					
Jag ÖVAR på sångövningar och material jag får av min sångpedagog.					
Jag får tillräckligt stöd från min sånglärare för min personliga övning.					
Jag önskar att jag fick mer stöd att planera min personliga övning.					
Jag önskar att jag fick mer hjälp att nå mina personliga mål i sång.					

Hur kan din sångpedagog stötta dig i din personliga sångövning? *

Avslutande fråga

Finns det något du vill tillägga angående vad enkäten berört?

Appendix 2: Mail template to vocal teachers

This email template was sent out to vocal teachers at the five different upper secondary school. First, a short introduction of the researcher and then the reason for reaching out to the teachers.

Hej!

Mitt namn är Miranda Campora och jag studerar på Kungl. Musikhögskolan. Denna termin går jag kursen självständigt arbete (avancerad nivå) och kontaktar sångpedagoger på gymnasier runt omkring i Stockholmsregionen och därför kontaktar jag just dig!

Syftet med min studie är att ta reda på hur sångelever känner för sin personliga övning, vad de anser vara viktigt för deras musikaliska utveckling, hur de strukturerar sin övning och hur sångpedagogen ger stöd och råd för elevens fortsatta arbete och övning utanför lektionstid. Min förhoppning är att denna studie kan bidra till en ökad öppen diskussion mellan pedagog och elev om viktiga faktorer för att kunna utföra och motivera sin egen övning.

För att möjliggöra denna undersökning har jag konstruerat en enkät till elever som går kurserna *Instrument eller sång 1,2,3*, med sång som huvudinstrument. Under vecka 43 kommer enkäten skickas ut till dig som du sedan kan vidarebefordra till dina elever. Uppmuntra och påminn gärna eleverna i samband med individuella sånglektioner att fylla i enkäten. Deadline är fredagen den 6 november (vecka 45) för att hinna sammanställa resultaten.

Enkäten är framställd enligt Vetenskapsrådets fyra huvudkrav, *informationskravet*, *samtyckeskravet*, *konfidentialitetskravet* och *nyttjandekravet* (läs gärna mer: <http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf>). Enkäten kommer ta ca 10 till 15 minuter att svara på.

Om du är intresserad av att låta dina elever medverka i denna undersökning låt mig gärna veta hur många elever du undervisar i dessa kurser. Detta kommer underlätta sammanställning av resultaten.

För vidare information eller frågor, maila mig gärna miranda.jonsson@student.kmh.se eller kontakta mig på 0728896322.

Med vänliga hälsningar,
Miranda Campora

Appendix 3: Mail template to students

This email template was sent out to the teachers as an optional introduction to the online survey that the teachers could use when contacting their students. First, there is a short introduction of myself, purpose behind the online survey, and lastly, an explanation how long it takes to answer the survey as well as how the information will be treated.

Hej!

Mitt namn är Miranda Campora och jag studera på Kungl. Musikhögskolan. På grund av mitt självständiga arbete (avancerad nivå) har jag kontaktat sångpedagoger i Stockholmsregionen som har blivit tillfrågade att skicka ut en enkät till sina sångelever - därför får även du nu denna förfrågan.

Enkäten undersöker frågan hur sångelever på gymnasiet upplever sin personliga sångövning. Undersökningen innehåller fem avsnitt där kommer du få svara på frågor som inkluderar t.ex.: övning och motivation, vad din övning brukar innehålla, om/hur mycket du brukar öva, samt hur din sångpedagog ger stöd och råd för ditt fortsatta arbete och övning utanför lektionstid.

Enkäten tar ca 5–10 minuter att svara på och slutföra och är frivillig. Din identitet kommer att förbli anonym alltså de svar som du lämnar ut kommer hanteras varsamt och diskret och är endast till forskarens sammanställning av resultaten för denna undersökning.

Klicka på länken för att komma till enkäten:

<https://forms.gle/Rx66RCZFxZs6Nq9Z8>

Tack för din hjälp och medverkan!

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Miranda Campora

Mail: miranda.jonsson@student.kmh.se

Tel. nr: 0728896322

Appendix 4: QR-Code

A QR-code was sent out to the teachers which they could print out and have their students scan in connection to vocal lessons. The QR-code then directs them straight to the online survey.

Enkätundersökning:

Min personliga sångövning



**Skanna in QR-koden för att lätt hitta till enkäten eller sök på:
<https://forms.gle/Rx66RCZFxZs6Nq9Z8>**