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Guidance and Support Mechanisms for Music Teachers Using ICT Software in Composition Classes

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Abstract

In 21st century society, where the digitalization process is advancing at an ever-greater pace, a new educational aim is for students to develop the ability to express ideas by utilizing Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Currently, an effort is underway in some music departments to design creative activities using ICT technologies.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the important elements in music lessons that teachers must be able to convey to students composing their own music, utilizing this software. Also, it hopes to provide guidance and support for music teachers utilizing ICT in their classrooms.

The authors were in charge of a total of 14 hours of “Sound and Composition” classes at O. High School during the 2019 and 2020 school years that utilized music notation software. In these classes, “Sibelius” was used in 2019 and “Finale” in 2020. A third software package, “VOCALOID3”. was employed during both school years.

According to the results of a questionnaire given to pupils after a practice in 2019, about 90% found it fun to compose music with VOCALOID. However, the authors’ response to equipment trouble and knowledgeable support for specific composition procedures was insufficient. Therefore, despite spending about 4 to 5 hours on composing, only one song was completed. In order to have better classroom results, better support mechanisms and teacher training were found to be necessary.

Also, these software programs were used in multiple classes that included students with varying degrees of musical abilities. Furthermore, various students had different proficiencies in various musical instruments, for instance, some students had proficiency in playing the piano while others were skilled in playing the guitar.

As a result of the lessons, teachers were able to bridge these varying skills between pupils by utilizing the specialized ICT tools. However, while music notation software could assist the students with their compositions to some extent, it became clear that there was a need for specialized support from the teachers. In particular, teachers needed to be able to explain how chords function. Further, teachers needed to assist students in the critical analysis of their compositions.

Finally, the authors discovered that asking students to join melody with lyrics required advanced skills that could not be enhanced by ICT software. The authors believe that assistance from Japanese language teachers with an understanding of various kinds of poetry, meaning and intonation may be needed.