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Reflections on the Year of Change: Adaptive and Creative Use of Online Technologies by Australian Tertiary Music Teachers

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Abstract

Teaching music online at the tertiary level was not a common pedagogical practice across Australia prior to 2020. For many Australian music teachers, the 2020 COVID-19 scenario required some form of new technology use in their teaching. To identify the extent to which music teachers adapted their use of technology in teaching, we initiated a research project to: 1) explore and analyse the opportunities and challenges faced by tertiary music instructors during this period; and 2) examine the impact and changes as a result of the shift to fully-online music teaching. The research focused on Australian university music instructors (full time, part time and casual) responded to, and adapted during their shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching.

A random sample of Australian tertiary music teachers from all states and territories were invited to participate and respond to an online survey that explored 20 categories and areas of practice. Through a combination of rating scales and open-ended questions, the data collection employed a mixed methodology to gather information about participants use of specific technologies, as well as their attitudes and preferences for technologies when teaching music online. For this presentation, the discussion will draw on a range of initial findings with reference to the following five themes:
- Teacher confidence with technology
- Creative teaching approaches and pedagogy
- Blended and online modes
- Modification to assessment and curriculum
- Student engagement – communication, collaboration and community.

Initial data found that teachers were required to be adaptive in the ways that they engaged with technology as they taught during COVID-19, with many identifying different approaches to foster student engagement, while also regularly modifying teaching strategies. The adaptive and creative responses of the participants suggest that teachers gained confidence in their capacity to use technology as the year progressed, with many adopting new modes of delivery. Similarly, many participants also identified their preference for the traditional face-to-face modes, highlighting the challenge that exists for teachers to adopt new pedagogy.

These preliminary findings will also form the basis of key recommendations for future research in this important area of music teaching.