

The impact of formal and informal learning on students' compositional processes

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Abstract

Background to the research or performance/installation

Few studies have acknowledged the impact that out-side influences have in the classroom. One such influence is the impact of technology on students' absorption of conscious and unconscious knowledge. Many students spend hours a day listening to music. The accessibility of various music technologies have helped to increase the rate of memorised learning by students. This connection is further reinforced through formal and informal learning in different music cultural contexts such as concert band, choir or playing in a rock group. These outside influences are brought back into the classroom where students improvise in a group either on their own instrument/s or on compositional software demonstrating an implicit and explicit knowledge

Interdisciplinary issues

In the developmental music processes, students are either predominately aural learners, kinesthetic or visual learners. When students improvise, aural awareness through music memory and musical background impact on these learning abilities/skills and influence informal and formal strategies utilised, genre choices, instrumental choices/ musical expertise or experience as well as learning contexts. It is my experience as a teacher that once these developmental music processes are synthesised, students may demonstrate more than one predominant learning ability which allows students to cross transfer these learning modes into other disciplinary areas.

The issue/hypothesis under investigation

The issues under investigation are looking at how eighteen participant groups create music regardless whether they are formally or informally trained. Participants either chose to improvise on their own instruments and/ or to compose utilising "Garage-Band". The impact of technology and musical experiences on students' listening, improvising and composing was also investigated through the following means; pre-questionnaires, participant interviews, filming of the participants improvising, obtaining midi and audio files of the participants' compositions from "Garage- Band".

Findings/description

The preliminary results indicate that student listening and musical experiences are having an impact on composing. Learning is strengthened through a social context of learning towards "playing in action" as an oral practice rather than solely focussed on a knowledge base.

Conclusions/future directions

The participants who composed with "Garage-Band" an aural based compositional software also reflected the students musical background, music cultural interests, genre and instrumental choices and compositional style regardless of whether they were musically expert or musically experienced. A case study would further clarify issues raised in this abstract.