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Music technology and music education: A practice-based case study on dub reggae

**Content analysis of written interviews (continued)**

The reasons for dub's educational value were widespread and comprised the entirety of education, an exceptional ambient character, tonal aspects, the influence on electronic music and an interest in its cultural background. Fifty per cent (N = 17) stated that dub reggae is sensible for music education because of its modern appeal. Other 27% (N = 6) highlighted the musical diversity of dub reggae.

Many students reported about the lesson that they had begun to listen to dub reggae more sophisticatedly, and that they would have gained extended perceptual representations, leading to a better comprehension of sound characteristics. An interesting new empirical finding is the effect of a staged virtual room designed by audio effects were also described. Sixty-six per cent (N = 12) approved of having gained an extended awareness of produced sound. Six of them ascribed to it the newly acquired knowledge about music production like the use of effects, mixing and room placement. “This helped me extend my understanding of sound. Now I know how the overall sound is composed of different parts. Whenever I listen to a song now, I listen to it more carefully” (SH, f, 27). Other students stressed the daily relevance of their acquired knowledge: “In my everyday life you get confronted with technically produced sound all the time. I know how these are created and what cultural significance they obtain” (SH, f, 20). From the twelve students five stated to pay more attention to popular music's tonal qualities in the future due to both their newly advanced perceptual skills and greater awareness of production details. These competences would have come along with the more intensive listening experiences.

Regarding the music technology, 89 per cent (N = 17) wished to work in the lessons with DAWs frequently and to improve their (remixing) skills. Dealing with mixing tasks led to recognizing that it is an effort to produce electronic music and that it demands musical skills just as playing an instrument does, only in a different manner.

**Discussion**

Listening skills and awareness of produced sound

The findings indicate that the production tasks have facilitated an increased awareness and understanding of produced sound. The initial analyses of the dub example demonstrate that the students were capable of identifying details of sound like an emphasis on bass, a flow of sounds and various effects. Yet, this is a standardised form. Introducing conventional production effects (reverb, delay, flanger, chorus) and the sound box model (Moore 2001) combined with analyses and active production tasks added to the students’ understanding of sound. The results comply with both Brown’s and Mettetal’s (2007) work that suggests that using such musical skills as listening, analysis and knowledge and Savage’s (2005: 171f) study where he concludes that new technologies facilitate and enable a clearer analysis of, and engagement with, the micro-phenomena of sound.

Propositional and procedural knowledge of music technology and the dub style

The lesson on dub reggae has been the first encounter with software for most participants. Introducing students to DAWs through dub reggae is a worthwhile approach as the findings indicate. Notwithstanding its specific aesthetics, the students are rather free to explore and to improve with effects, volume levels and panmora settings without being confined by strictly defined stylistic regulations (Savage 2005). Since the dub remix has no need for formal aspects, it supports the focus on dynamics and flow of sounds, which in turn is expedient for facilitating an extended understanding of sound as a creative mean. Another very positive aspect of teaching dub reggae is its suitability to convey an informed understanding of production techniques without needing much explanation. Knowledge about the style has been gained equally by noticing similarities between dub reggae and modern genres, by experiencing remixing practices and by slipping into the roles of Jamaican dub reggae producers. Motivation, acquaintance knowledge and heterogeneity

During all phases of the lesson, most students were remarkably motivated. Working with music production technology proved to be attractive and so the dub reggae style was highly interesting to them. Combining listening tasks, analysis and production raised their willingness to engage with the original dub reggae culture and its appropriation in Europe. Even theoretical work met their interest, which was exceptional. Another goal of the lesson design was to facilitate a participatory culture (Tobias 2013b) that included every student regardless of formal training (Galli & Breeze 2007). The outcome suggests that this aim was reached as the tasks were carried out at different levels.

**Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the high potential of music technology for the music classroom, not merely reduced to a method but as a content in itself. Music technology is suitable for imparting manifold educational opportunities, as far as it would be a convincing educational tool in the perception of the stylistic and tonal variety and quality. Yet, for the purposeful application within music lessons, it must be supported by theoretical knowledge and, above all, by combining theory, listening skills and previous personal experiences through practical education.