

IMPROVING MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION THROUGH THE USE OF MUSIC SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS IN SCHOOLS.

Okewale Blessing

Abstract

The paper examined improving musical arts education through the use of digital technology among schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. It discussed the concept of musical arts education, highlighted the various types of music software, and their applications in the teaching of music curriculum contents in Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria. This study relied solely on written documents, personal oral interviews with the music teachers, instructors, and principals of the selected schools, and experiential knowledge in its approach/methodology. This study used published and unpublished library and archives materials as source of data. The outcome of the research revealed that roles played by teachers have changed as the traditional education methods, techniques, and applications have been replaced by students-centred methods, techniques, and applications. Teachers no longer act solely as source of information but guide students to access information and manage the process.

Keynotes: Music, Software, Application, Musical Arts, Education

Introduction

Music is often used in the pre-primary and primary school levels of education in Nigeria to arouse the interest of the pupils/learners towards the lesson. It is often employed by teachers to prolong learners' interest throughout their learning process. Recently, the role of the teacher has changed as the traditional education methods, techniques and applications have paved way to the students-centred methods, techniques and applications that has characterised the 21st century. Nart (2016:78) notes that teachers are no more source and share the information but they do guide students to access information and manage the process.

Technology is a broadly applied term that can be taken to mean any practical application of scientific knowledge or any tool used for a practical purpose. In this vein, music technology is the application of technology such as computer and software as aid in the teaching of Musical Arts education at all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning). Music Technology tends to evoke images of synthesizers and computer programs

used to perform or compose music however, teaching aids such as acoustic, electric or electronic musical instruments, engraving and printing, sound recording and playback, broadcasting and computer hardware/software among other teaching aids are all inclusive.

According to Nart (2016), it has become an inevitable requirement that a teacher who guides his student should follow technological developments in his field; master and use the technology in the classroom and integrate it into his lessons. Thus, this study corroborates Nart's (2016) opinion that there is a need for music technology to be introduced into music teachings. Prensky (2001) noted that today's students could be called 'Net Generation' because these students are all 'native speakers' of the 'digital' by spending hours per day with computers, the internet, video games, iPhones, ipads and television and brand them as Digital Natives.

In recent times, the role of computers in the process of teaching and learning has become more pronounced globally, thus the phenomenon cannot be but over-emphasized. The computer is an electronic device for storing and processing data, typically in binary form, according to instructions given to it in a variable program. Generally, the computer is useful for everybody, touching all lives, making all our activities fast in many ways such as banking, education, general documentation and data preservationist among other functions.

In developed countries like the US, the UK, Turkey and many other countries, the computer is used in all spheres of life, even for elections. In the education sector, 21st-century teaching and learning methods generally invoked all teaching and learning activities into computerised form. It is not compulsory to come inside the four walls of a classroom, before teaching and learning activities can take place, even Nigerian education has evolved to advance with the use of Zoom, whatsapp, telegram, and google meet among other social platforms to host seminars and workshops are now possible without physical appearance, there is hybrid form of paper presentation, which have accrued to the development in technology.

Nart (2016) equally notes that, modern education programs are generated according to the educational needs that are student-centered; multiple sense organs involving; creativity and productivity targeted are developed for teachers and learners who are following the technological developments and open to develop. The use of technology and technological materials increasingly come to the forefront in modern educational approach. The author also revealed how the Scientific and Technological Research Council

of Turkey drew attention on the importance of introducing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) materials into the schools as tools, and their utilization as efficient materials within the teaching process.

In Turkey, there are several music software widely used in music education for tutorials, drills and practice among many others. In the United Kingdom, there are applications like sound and video anthologies containing curated music with digital sound technology and all music applications of computers. This software is used by composers, musicians, recording studios, and a host of others. In contrast, majority of Nigerian public and private schools have not been able to incorporate music-educative software in line with the trendy 21st-century teaching/learning skills. This study examined selected software and their applications to enhance learning process in the classroom.

What is Musical Art?

The term musical art refers to the study and practice of music theory and performance. Art is synonymous with beauty, pleasure and recreation. The music is tailored to the taste of the listeners. The feeling and ideas of the creators like rhythm, harmony, melody and song arrangement. David Ewen argues that the art of music is the science and art of combinations of rhythmic and several tones, both vocal and instrument form. This human effort in the creation of beauty through sound arrangement is regular to obtain satisfaction from the human sense of hearing.

Music as art is a medium of self-expression. It is a means for musicians to express their feelings. It also serves as a source of income for artists. This income is obtained when recorded musical works in the form of CDs (compact Discs) or cassettes are sold in the market or contracted or purchased directly by film studio houses and advertising agencies as their back sound.

As a means of communication, sounds in music contain rhythmic patterns and messages which have specific aims and objectives, which are used in special ceremonies. As a means of creativity, it is a human nature that exists in every individual and affects personalities to fulfil needs. Music is used as therapy for patients especially those with mental disorders or paralysis. It is also often used as a relaxation for the exhausted brain pattern system. The use of music as a therapy has been applied after the Second World War, especially to recover the mental capabilities of the war victims.

As an educational facility music is used in the learning process. It is pertinent to note that recently many schools have included the art of music in their educational system since students are more sensitive to music through

songs. As a ceremonial activity, music art is also used for certain ceremonies such as traditional ceremonies, state ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and burial rites among others. Music and dance are two things that cannot be separated; the two arts have the same pattern and rhythm. So it can be said that a dance without the accompaniment of musical rhythms is 'empty' and difficult for the dancers to be more expressive.

Music Software

Music software is software used for music compositions, digital recording, the creation of electronic music, and other music applications. It has been in existence for nearly forty years and it has had a very great impact on education involving music and creative expression. Musical software has become an outlet for people who disband themselves from traditional musical instruments, giving people new and easier ways to compose and perform music in ways that have never been seen before.

Types of Software

There are many types of software for different purposes; creating, performing, learning, analyzing, researching, and editing among others: Choir and learn to sing, Djing, Digital audio workstation (DAW), Internet, RSS, broadcast, Lyrics and vocals, Music analysis, Music circuit, Music composition, Music conversion, Music education, Music gaming, Music mathematics, Music notation, Music player, and Orchestration software

According to Peter Webster and David (teachmusictech.com), information on computer-based music education and music software is simply classified and listed along with their addresses. Related music software widely in education are outlined under five main headings;

1. Tutorial: These are software that covers the program which includes more theoretical information and where the subject-related terms are presented as explanations, definitions and questions without establishing an interactive communication between the computer and students. Examples of these are Music making, Music Ace, smart music, music goals, Julliard Music Adventure, their lives and music Art and music, Piano Site Premier to mention few..
2. Drills and Practice: These allow students' self measurement and evaluation of their knowledge on music history and music theory. Students also engage in self measurement and evaluation on music listening, reading, writing and musical form or harmonic analysis. It helps students to be more persistent in learning because it allows for

- self drill and practice at the desired level and the desired amount. Examples of software in this category are; Ear Master, Note Lard 3.3 music lesson 1-2, Mibac Music Lessons, and Australia among others. Some such as Piano professors, Guitar method, Recorder Teachers, and Singing tutors among others are designed for instrument training.
3. Games: This set of software teaches music through games. They have a scoring system (for evaluation) with interactive computer. Some software in this category are Music Ace, Adventure in music land, and Ear Challenger among others.
 4. Notation: Software for notation (Sibelius, Finale, Encore, and Autoscore among others) allows all musical elements related to music to be written, edited, arranged, recorded, and reproduced according to the rules.
 5. Sequencing and Recording: Software such as 'Cakewalk', 'cubase', 'Logic Audio', 'Pro Tools' among others are used for recording with the aid of musical instruments' Digital Interface (MIDI) technology.

Application of Software to teaching music.

Music technology is easily used or applied with a laptop, smart TV, and projectors among other devices. Prior to the incorporation and attainment level of using technology fully in Nigerian classrooms (primary, secondary or tertiary institutions), where all classrooms are equipped, appropriate software can be installed on personal smart-phones or computer systems. Such smart-phones are connected to the smart TV using wifi vis-a-vis 'Cast' in the phone's settings. The process is not cumbersome; go to setting, click the option, a wireless display for the smart TV. With the laptop, the flash drive can be used to copy it and connect to the smart TV.

Where a film projector is available, the laptop can be connected directly to the projector for presentation, using 'Music Tutor' software. The software is arranged or prepared for 'simple sight reading' depending on the topic in the scheme or course outline and specific class, for example, primary five, six, junior, and senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions can learn sight reading. Staff, clef, lines and spaces, notes, values and rest signs, piano keyboard note identification among other topics would have been taught.

During sight reading class, students can be introduced to the software to practice, measure and evaluate themselves. The application is arranged to sound a note that is placed on a specific line or space on the staff, either

treble, bass or alto staff. The students then locate the tonic or the keynote to identify and trace the tonic solfa name of the sound produced in a timed session. It also checks or measure show accurate or fast the students are able to sight-read the given notes and score them. This will go a long way to improve the sight reading skills of the students.

Conclusion

This study aims at encouraging music educators to be accustomed to the 21st century teaching and learning process by exploring the use of computer (ICT) and Music Technology in all educational sectors from primary to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. If all teachers and instructors of music strive to be computer literate, they will develop deep interest in various music software that can be used to teach different topics vis-a-vis music technology, this will enhance better learning environment for Nigerian students and ability to compete with students globally. Importantly, teachers need to have comprehensive knowledge of software and their application use to teach the students.

Recommendation

Nigerian government both at the state and national levels should make educational technology, especially music technology a priority given that music is a strong tool that can shape the lives of Nigerian youths and adults. Therefore, all public schools from primary to tertiary levels of education should be equipped with technology equipment. Resources person should be provided to facilitate music educators on the use of ICT and music software applications in our classrooms. In addition, parents should provide computer systems to encourage their children with ICT and educational technology for the 21st-century learning skills,.

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