Name : Brian Cahill

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Supervisor : Assistant Professor Nina Bresnihan

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Abstract :

Collaborative learning is viewed as being an integral aspect of education. Shifts in perception with regards to collaborative learning in the area of music composition have led to creative collaboration becoming more prominent within music education. In spite of this, a major problem with regards to collaborative learning, especially in music composition where a single artefact is produced, is that it can be difficult to assess the level of contribution that each group member has made within a specific project. This study sought to investigate the use of collaborative technologies in music composition.

In order to achieve this, a learning experience was developed that enabled groups of students to collaborate with one another, with the end goal being create a musical composition. A music composition lecturer was assigned to each student group, who provided formative feedback to the groups at key stages throughout the learning experience. While the instruction of the learning experience provided to the student participants was to create a musical composition, and the instruction of the learning experience provided to the lecturer participants was to provide formative feedback and guidance to the student participants regarding the composition, the main interest of this research was not of the composition itself, but of the process that led to the final composition.

A mixed methods exploratory case study was adopted for this research project. Data collected included lecturer interviews, student focus groups, observations within the collaborative platform, and the final artefact, namely the composition that was created. All data gathered throughout the learning experience was compiled into a case study database, and hosted within the qualitative analysis programme Nvivo 11. A grounded theory approach was adopted when analysing the data.

The study was populated by current music composition students and lecturers within the Sound Training College, Dublin, and took place in a blended format over a two week period. The study itself produced a number of significant findings, most notable of which implied that the collaborative experience provided music composition lecturers with insights that enabled them to assess individual learner performance within a collaborative composition. It was also found to have had an overall positive impact regarding the delivery of formative feedback to learners, as well as enhancing musical collaboration capabilities for learners.