Alert Driven Communications Management for Children Music Learning Based on Suzuki Method

Cheuk-Ting Chan, Department of Music, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

Kiko Tsz Lan Cheng, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong

Dickson K.W. Chiu, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

It is widely believed that parents’ involvement in students’ music learning is vital to their success. Shinichi Suzuki not only provided teachers with useful and logical teaching skills, but also stressed on the importance of the parents as a “home teacher”. To enhance the interactions among parents, students, and teachers as well as encourage parental participation, this paper proposes a Web 2.0 learning platform (WASSAP) with an Alert Management System (AMS) as a solution to tackle problems of busy parents who do not have adequate time to involve in students’ music learning. The system can facilitate busy parents to pay more attention to students’ learning progress, with the AMS managing the underlining communication among various parties involved.

Keywords: Alert Management, Children Learning, Exceptions, Parent Support, Relationship Management, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

Shinichi Suzuki (1973), a famous music educator, had a profound impact on music education. The Suzuki method has been developed and expanded for various kinds of instruments such as viola, cello, flute, oboe, guitar, and harp. Suzuki believed that learning environment would determine the success of children’s music learning. In particular, he believed that parental support and participation have significant influence on facilitating children’s motivation and interest in learning music; merely the effort of the music teacher is inadequate. Therefore, he not only

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provided teachers with useful and logical teaching skills, but also stressed on the importance of the parents as a “home teacher”, who can actively participate in children’s learning process and build up a supportive learning environment for their children. However, the implementation of parental involvement in children’s music learning has always faced difficulties in modern metropolis like Hong Kong, as parents are often busy with their work (Ho, 2002). Many could hardly take their time to participate in the instrument learning process of their children, resulting in inadequate involvement in students’ learning.

With the rapid development of information technology, the limitation can be overcome by promoting the “Web 2.0 with Alert Support for Suzuki Approach Platform” (WASSAP), which can provide a virtual music learning environment for teachers, students, parents, and music education center administrators. An Alert Management System (AMS) is used as a mechanism to facilitate their communication, anytime and anywhere. Parents can keep track of children’s music learning performance and progress while motivating them. The AMS would alert the parents for relevant expected and unexpected events regarding to the learning process of their children. On the other hand, the WASSAP helps the management of music education centers to handle problems, requests, and enquiries from students, parents, and teachers more effectively and efficiently, cultivating a better learning environment.

BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

Suzuki advocated that parents’ participation in home teaching is decisive factor to students’ learning success. Their presence and participation constitute the primary motivation to the interests of music of their children (Cardany, 2004). Suzuki put much emphasis on building a strong partnership of parent, teacher and child, which is known as “Suzuki triangle”, in which he enlisted the aid of parents as home teachers and emphasized the strong influence of parents in motivating and helping children’s learning in music.

Further, Hidi and Harakiewicz (2000) emphasized that learning environment affects students’ interest in learning music. Marjoribanks and Mboya (2004) suggested that teachers need to understand the relationship between family background and students’ interest in order to motivate students in learning music. Likewise, Ceci et al. (1997) emphasized that family background is the key factor in influencing children’s outcomes, which is also dependent on how well an understanding of family background is incorporated into children’s learning experiences. Coleman (1997) refined the definition of family background generally as parents’ opportunity of creating supportive learning environments and the relationships between adults and children.

However, Cardany (2004) believes that most parents underestimate their importance to their children’s music learning. Exhausting working hours bounded the involvement of parents in their children’s learning. Their limited spare time hardly enabled them to fully understand what their children had learnt in the lessons. Also, parents could possibly be laymen of music. They might have inadequate music knowledge and supplementary materials. All these were not in favor of fostering an ideal music learning environment. Therefore, it is important to enhance an efficient, seamless, and ubiquitous communication between teachers and parents.

For Web 2.0, McLean et al. (2007) pointed out that the term Web 2.0 does not refer to new technical standards, but to new ways of using the Internet as a platform for interactive applications. A distinguishing characteristic of Web 2.0 is the use of online social networking technologies to create value through mass user participation, such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS) to rapidly disseminate awareness of new information, Blogs to describe new trends, Wikis to share knowledge, and podcasts to make information available “on the move”.

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