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Prospects of e-learning in new fields of study in college correspondence course

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Introduction

Correspondence courses in art and music education and e-learning have been technically difficult so far. However, in late years a correspondence course came to be established in university of fine arts and college of music because the development of IT apparatus and the Internet allowed it. This report discusses the advantage and disadvantage about the present conditions and the future about correspondence course in this new field and e-learning.

1. The institutional change of the correspondence course in the universities

The institutional changes of the correspondence course in the universities have been very big. First of all it is the universities carrying out a correspondence course that suddenly increased. 17 years since 1977, Japanese universities did not open a correspondence course. However, newly 20 universities in distance learning courses were established from 1994 to 2004. There were 32 universities in distance education courses in 2004. After 10 years, the number of universities increased about 2.2 times.

Second, correspondence courses in many universities have opened graduate programs. It started at four university correspondence courses in graduate school by 1999. The graduate schools were established in 17 universities in 2004. In addition, several universities also established doctoral courses.

Thirdly, the correspondence course for this new specialty was not opened until now at any Japanese universities. It is based in fine arts, welfare system, and including the field of psychology. Graduate schools have also established the field of natural sciences.

Finally, many universities can use the increase in IT. By information exchange between students...
on the bulletin board and electronic submission of reports by e-mail, distance education has developed. Thus, distance learning courses at the universities in Japan has been changed dramatically.\(^1\)

2. The opening of university correspondence course in art and music

As one example, I’ll introduce distance learning courses in an art college in Osaka. The distance learning part of this university opened the following majors. They are fine arts, design, architecture, literature, music, broadcasting, photography, crafts, video, and environmental planning. The profile of students at this university is slightly different depending on department. Students in the department of broadcast and video are relatively young. Fine arts, design, music department students are highly matured. Here, for students of music department, I’ll take a look at what students do.

Generally, in Japan, in college, many students do not usually major in music, although many students in early age learned the piano and they liked music very much. The fact that they do not study music in college has several reasons. One of the reasons is that students are worried if they can qualify.\(^2\) In fact graduating from the college of music is very hard. The same is true for graduates of Tokyo University of the Arts and Music. This university is the best music college in Japan. In addition, the university’s entrance examination is very difficult.\(^3\)

Vocal majors have to play Mozart sonatas; furthermore, students majoring in piano must sing a song of Italy. This is a very large burden on students.

In this situation, to the Japanese music college, students must have a special musical training from a child. The students who just like music cannot be enrolled in the college of music. Another factor may be very expensive tuition of the music college. Compared to the general university, the tuition is two to three times (from \$20,000 to \$30,000/year).\(^4\)

For these reasons, the entrance to a music college, for many students, has been very difficult. For many students, there is a reason same as college of music for the difficulty to enter the university of the art. Specifically speaking, there is the difficulty of the practical test, the high cast of the tuition, etc. For the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music surprisingly high rate of competition of entrance examination is at least twenty to one. Such a system from the current state of the art college, it is difficult to gather the students for some art colleges. In particular, for some music colleges, it is difficult for new students to be gathered. Decrease in new students, one factor was the opening of correspondence course in art universities.

3. Factors considered in opening correspondence course in art and music universities

Decrease in number of regular students is one factor in opening of correspondence course in art and music universities. In the previous section, some universities of the arts showed a large number of students enrolled in distance learning process. This is very surprising. Why do many students want to attend? There are reasons behind this.\(^5\)

First, students want to study art and music. They are mostly adult students. Many of them wanted to study at some art colleges when they were young: however, they studied at general university for a job.

Second, there is no entrance examination. If there is an entrance examination, difficulty is great for students.
Third, the tuition is very reasonable. In the distance learning course, the tuition is much lower compared to the school curriculum.

Fourth, adult students are engaged in work, but they continued to study art and music for many years. This helps to boost their interest.

Fifth, even students who don’t draw a picture, cannot play instruments, they may be able to study art and music in this program. This is because they use computers. As described above, this program has many advantages. Here, we introduce some examples of student learning.

Case1: a 41-year-old man, he is an electrical engineer working for the company. He graduated at National University graduate school. He had learned the piano from an early age. When he was in junior high school, he was singing in the choir. He wanted to study music before. His dream finally comes true. He had been studying music at the cultural center, he was not happy. He has six computers, the computers are fully active. Of course, one of the computers is connected to a digital piano. He is majoring in composition. He then entered into a computer music composer, has submitted an e-mail them to college. So, almost without playing an instrument, he is able to study music. He is very satisfied with this kind of learning-style. He composes his music steadily. It is great joy for him to compose his own music. In addition, he likes that he can study composition at his own pace. He is good at handling the computer. So, he is better able to study the composition. It has become an important study for his life.

According to him, good thing about this program is that students are able to study music composition without playing an instrument. Until now, students should be able to play an instrument, composition study was impossible, however, this program, because it allowed to compose on the computer, students can study composition not even playing an instrument. Generally speaking, for people to be able to play an instrument is difficult. For example, even if playing the piano, we have to practice a long time from our childhood, we shall be able to play. In other words, playing the instrument is too difficult for many people. The computer solved the problem.

Case2: a 45-year-old woman, she is a housewife. She was interested in computer graphics. She can operate computer very well. She could not be enrolled in the college of art. So she enrolled in the program to study painting. She is very happy after enrolling this program. She wanted a college degree, because her education is nothing but high school graduation. Her major is computer graphics. Therefore, she has not drawn a picture with a pen and paper. However, in the computer, since a lot of work remains, she is very happy. Her husband has been very pleased to learn of her.

Case3: a 40-year-old man, he is a company man. One day in 2000, in the train, he saw an advertisement. He knew that an art college in Osaka in April 2001 wanted to get distance learning undergraduate students. The program, Department of Architecture, is what he wanted to study. He asked immediately to college recruiting brochure. According to the pamphlet, the university tuition was 2,000 dollars in one year. He made up his mind to assume it the university. Because there was not any entrance examination, as for the program, he easily decided entrance to school. In the correspondence course of the Japanese university, only this university had the Architecture part. This university founded a department of Architecture first by a correspondence course. He thought he would be easy to study somewhat. However, to find the time to learn, it was difficult for him frankly. He has several times happened lazy mind. But, the level of learning contents
itself for him, and he did not think particularly high. Generally speaking, it is better if one’s goal is normally attended graduation. Distance learning is easy to start with. But the majority of students have quit in the middle, unfortunately. Whether students should keep the motivation to learn for a long time, is the key to the graduate. If they can continue to learn, of course, is worth a lot to learn, he said. In order to create a report using a computer was essential for him. Without the computer, when he was reporting, he would have to be struggled. Therefore, he was good to study this program very much.8)

Case4: a 42-year-old school teacher, he has been teaching children in public schools. He likes music. He especially loves to sing. He really wanted to become an opera singer. But since he could not play piano, he gave up going to music college. Recently, he knows that there is a correspondence course in vocal music department of this university, he applied for immediately. He sends to the college his songs which recorded by computer. This is his main study for this program. He is very satisfied with the way of study. His study is not simply hobby. His study has also helped his work because he is also teaching music in the elementary school. Children in his class are excited at his singing.9)

4. Correspondence courses and e-learning in the college of art and music--------advantages and disadvantages

① advantage

The learner

・Same time, free time students can learn where there is no need to gather in the same place
・Learning can proceed according to your pace and achievement

The teacher

・Measure such as the automation of performance management
・Teachers are not always necessary
・Also, rather than group training, that are low in cost

② disadvantage

The learner

・Persistent desire to learn is difficult
・Difficult to solve such problems on the spot questions
・Difficult to take the interaction with other learners and teachers

The teacher

・Just cannot grasp the situation of learning from data
・Effort of creating large teaching learning materials
・Moreover, at present, the content of e-learning training materials is considered not suitable for practical subjects such as art and music

5. Conclusion

Correspondence courses in art and music education and e-learning have been technically difficult so far. However, in late years a correspondence course came to be established in some art system and college of music because the development of an IT apparatus and the Internet allowed it. This report discussed the advantage and problems about the present conditions and the future about correspondence course in this new field and e-learning.

We introduced some concrete examples. We analyzed them as clearly as possible. In the contents here, we suggest the future of correspondence course at the university and e-learning. Correspondence course for fine arts and music will be possible in the future. We understood that there was far from being impossible effect very
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much. This depends on the development of the IT technique, innovation including computers. There is still the problem with an advantage, but it may be said that the argument in this report is really interesting.

Footnotes
1) Yoshida, Aya (2005)
E-learning will be sought - the Examples and the Future
Tousindo, p278
2) Ibid., p279
3) Ibid., p281
4) Ibid., p282
5) Ibid., p278
6) Interview for student A by Sato, T. Teikyo Univ.
7) Interview for student B by Sato, T. Teikyo Univ.
8) Interview for student C by Sato, T. Teikyo Univ.
9) Interview for student D by Sato, T. Teikyo Univ.

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