

# Traditional Music in Japanese Music Education: A Practical Research of Shakuhachi Japanese Bamboo Flute and Lesson Plans

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*The research topic deals with the development of a music education on fundamental approach of teaching shakuhachi traditional music. The shakuhachi is a Japanese bamboo flute with four finger holes in the front and one thumb hole in the back. It is a very simple instrument and is played without a reed. The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent of the interaction of traditional musical issues on Japanese music education by tracing the new music curriculum in 2019. The topic of this study is the development of a fundamental approach of teaching Japanese traditional music. The author demonstrates a basic shakuhachi training method using two to five tones in Japanese traditional children's songs, and Japanese warabeuta (traditional children's songs) and minyo (folk songs). Students study how to make sound, then they play a simple piece. Also, they will be able to study Japanese cultural background through to shakuhachi.*

## INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the modern education system in Japan began in the *Meiji* 1872. From the *Meiji* era modern Japanese music education has tended to imitate Western European or American music education. Indigenous or traditional Japanese music was excluded from the school curriculum for a long time. We notified the new teaching guidelines adopted in March 2017. This was an epoch-making event in the history of music education in Japan. Japanese traditional music is emphasized in new teaching guidance of elementary and junior high school.

In elementary school level teaching materials for appreciation should contain the following;

Traditional children's songs and play songs from Japan and abroad that will exhilarate students and prompt physical movements such as marching and dancing, and pieces that evoke scenes from everyday life.

Various musical pieces such as those of Japanese music, including music for traditional Japanese instruments, music that is closely related to cultures of foreign countries, and music that has remained popular for a long time.

The shakuhachi is a Japanese bamboo flute with four finger holes in the front and one thumb hole in the back. It is a very simple instrument and is played without a reed. The word shakuhachi literally means "54.5 cm." Although the sizes differ, they are all still called "shakuhachi." Many musical instruments in the world resemble the shakuhachi. For example, *nai* or *nei* in Egypt, *donxua* or *xiao* in China, and *tanso* in Korea. The first type of shakuhachi was brought to Japan in around 590 A.D. and was used in *gagaku* (Japanese court music). Around the thirteenth century though, the shakuhachi became a popular instrument of the Buddhist *Fuke* sect, who wanted to replace sutra chanting with blowing *zen*, or *suizen*. These monks were known as *komuso*, or "priests of nothingness" or "emptiness monks", and they wore large baskets *tengai* (basket) over their heads to symbolize their detachment from the world. The *komuso* used the shakuhachi as a spiritual tool and their songs were known as *honkyoku*, which were played according to the player's breathing and were considered meditation as much as music.

However, during the seventeenth century (the *Edo* Period), traveling around Japan was restricted by the shogunate and this caused trouble for the *Fuke* sect, who traveled around from place to place playing the shakuhachi and begging for alms. Therefore the *Fuke* sect managed to secure an agreement from the Shogun allowing them to travel freely and have exclusive rights to play the shakuhachi. In return, many *Fuke* sect members were required to spy for the shogunate, and even some Shogun's own spies were sent out in the disguise of the monks because wearing the basket made it an easy to hide their identity. This led to trouble though, and in response, tests were set up to test those who were true *Fuke* sect monks and those who were fakes.

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