

A REVIEW ON ONLINE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT LEARNING PROCESS¹

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Dr. Erkan DEMİRTAŞ*MSB Culture and Art Department, Ankara, Turkey**ORCID NO: 0000-0002-4357-6697***Abstract**

Musical instrument training is one of the areas where the face-to-face model is used extensively. Teacher-student communication has an important place in the successful completion of the educational process. For this reason, although the online learning model is widely used in many disciplines, it is generally used as a complementary element for musical instrument learning. There is no music department in Turkey where the online learning model is used at the university level. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic measures, classes were conducted with this model for approximately one and a half semesters. In this study, the experiences of students who took online instrument learning were examined. The research was conducted using a qualitative model. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The interview form was created to determine the experiences of students who have received online musical instrument learning in this process. The study group consisted of 7 conservatory students. The interviews were conducted online. The data obtained from the participants were organized by coding. In the research, the following results were obtained: the musical instrument study times of the students became more intense than normal, they started to use different software during the process, their learning activities increased, they could not convey their real situation due to sound quality and environment restrictions, their evaluation was done through the process.

Keywords: Music education, musical instrument training, online learning**Özet**

Enstrüman eğitimi yüz yüze eğitimin yoğun olarak kullanıldığı alanlardandır. Öğretmen ve öğrenci iletişimi eğitim sürecinin başarıyla tamamlanmasında önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu sebeple çevrimiçi öğrenme modeli birçok disiplinde yaygın kullanım alanı bulmasına rağmen enstrüman eğitimi için genellikle tamamlayıcı bir unsur olarak kullanılmıştır. Türkiye’de çevrimiçi öğrenme modelinin kullanıldığı bir müzik bölümü bulunmamaktadır. Covid-19 pandemi tedbirleri sebebiyle ise yaklaşık bir buçuk dönem bu model ile dersler yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmada çevrimiçi enstrüman öğrenimi ile ilgili bir değerlendirilme yapılmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırma nitel model kullanılarak yürütülmüştür. Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Görüşme formu çevrimiçi enstrüman eğitimi almış olan öğrencilerin bu süreçteki deneyimlerini belirlemek üzere oluşturulmuştur. Çalışma grubunu 7 konservatuvar öğrencisi oluşturmuştur. Görüşmeler çevrimiçi olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılardan elde edilen veriler kodlanarak düzenlenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda öğrencilerin enstrüman çalışma sürelerinin normal döneme göre arttığı,

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süreç boyunca farklı yazılımlar kullanmaya başladıkları, öğrenme aktivitelerinin arttığı, ses kalitesi ve ortam kısıtlamaları sebebiyle gerçek seviyelerini karşıya aktaramadıkları, değerlendirmelerin süreç üzerinden gerçekleştiği belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzik eğitimi, çalgı eğitimi, çevrimiçi öğrenme

1. INTRODUCTION

Music education is an educational field surrounded by many teaching fields. These areas can be listed as music history, music theory, musical instrumental proficiency, singing, and general music skills.

Musical instrument education is one of the most basic dimensions of music education. Yalçınkaya, Eldemir, and Sönmezöz (2014) defined instrument education as an instrument teaching process that is carried out programmatically, based on face-to-face education approach and organized by individual-specific qualifications, in line with specified objectives. In addition to basic instrument knowledge, this course; is carried out in a multidimensional way, including music history, music culture, technical and aesthetic elements (Demirbatır, 1995).

Musical instrument learning includes both physical and mental development. For this reason, the role of the instructor who gives the right directions is very important.

Online learning, which emerged with the combination of distance education and information technologies, has been used for educational purposes for many years. Many departments at the university level continue their activities only through online learning. When we look at the field of music, it seems that online learning is not preferred as the main teaching tool.

As in many areas such as rhythm (Burton & Pearsall, 2016), singing (Chen, 2015), music theory (Chong, 2019), and ear training (Miller, 2012), online learning tools have been used successfully in musical instrument learning (Kruse & Veblen, 2012; Palazón & Giráldez, 2018). The important point here is that online learning is not used as the main teaching tool but usually as a complementary element.

When we look at the institutions that provide musical instrument training in Turkey, it is seen that the online learning system is not used. Online learning is generally used to support face-to-face education. Some studies on online music education in Turkey are given below.

Sarıkaya (2021) examined the views of the students of the music education department towards distance education. As a result of the research, it was determined that the students reported negative opinions on the use of distance education for applied courses, and they had problems with communication and access to devices in this process.

Ayaz Töral and Albu (2021) examined the distance education process of teachers giving instrument training to the 4-13 age group. As a result of the research, it was determined that the teachers did not have sufficient preparation for the distance learning model, half of the younger students did not continue their instrument education, and had communication problems.

Okan and Arapgirlioğlu (2020) examined the effect of the distance education model on intermediate violin education. The experimental model was used in the research. As a result of the study, no difference was found between face-to-face and distance education models in intermediate violin education.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in China in 2019 and spread to the world, has caused significant changes in daily life. To prevent the pandemic, drastic measures such as curfews were taken and many workplaces were closed. Educational institutions have also been significantly affected by this situation.

In Turkey, in March 2020, face-to-face education was banned in universities within the scope of pandemic measures and they were enabled to switch to online education. This process took about one and a half semesters, including the 2020-2021 academic year. In this period, as in other fields, full-time online learning was used in music education.

The subject of this study is how musical instrument lessons with high teacher-student interaction are conducted and how students evaluate this process.

1.1. Purpose

In this study, the musical instrument learning process carried out with online learning was tried to be examined. Depending on the purpose of the research, answers to the following questions were sought:

- How were instrument lessons conducted with e-learning?
- How do students evaluate the conduct of instrument lessons with e-learning?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

A qualitative model was used in the conduct of this research. The interview technique was used to find solutions to the research questions. Cohen and Manion (1994) describe this technique as a controlled and purposeful form of verbal communication between the researcher and the participant.

The researcher aims to systematically reveal the thoughts and feelings of the target person by asking purposeful questions under the guidance of the questions he has prepared beforehand or at the moment about the subject he is researching. The research aims to systematically learn, understand and define the subjective thoughts and feelings of the person by asking questions about the research topic to the target person (Türnüklü, 2000).

The purpose of the interview technique is not to test hypotheses, but to try to understand the participant's experiences and how they make sense of their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

2.2. Study Group

The study group consisted of seven undergraduate students continuing their education in the instrument education departments of state conservatories. Information about the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Group

Group	f	%
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University	Hacettepe	5	71.5
	Hacı Bayram Veli	2	28.5
Gender	Female	2	28.5
	Male	5	71.5
Musical Instrument	Saxophone	1	14.2
	Oboe	1	14.2
	Contrabass	1	14.2
	Flute	1	14.2
	Piano	1	14.2
	Tanbur	1	14.2
	Oud	1	14.2
Total		7	100

While forming the study group, it was tried to reach students from different learning areas. For this reason, the jazz department, Turkish music instrument department, and western music instrument department students were selected by purposeful sampling method.

Table 2 shows the data related to the musical instrument learning duration of the participants.

Table 2. Musical Instrument Learning Duration

Year	f	%
9	1	14.2
7	3	42.8
6	2	28.6
3	1	14.2
Total	7	100

All of the participants received instrument training before university. All but 1 participant received instrument training at the university level in the pre-pandemic period.

2.3. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool in the study. In order to ensure the content validity of the interview form, the opinions of two experts working in the music education department of Gazi University were taken.

Interviews were held online via the Zoom program in June 2021. All interviews were recorded and the participants were informed.

The interviews with seven participants were transcribed by the researcher. The obtained interview texts were coded according to the areas determined as the research question. The questions in the interview form were prepared to understand how the online education process is carried out and how students evaluate the process.

2. FINDING

The first sub-problem of the research is as follows: How were instrument lessons conducted with e-learning? Information about the course tool used is given below.

Table 3. Used Lesson Tool

	n	%
University Network	4	57
Video Conferencing	2	29
Video Record	1	14
Total	7	100

The majority of the students took the instrument lessons with the video conference program provided by the university. Courses made with these programs are recorded on the system. Students can watch the lessons again whenever they want. Participants often used this feature to re-watch their work. Thus, they stated that they saw their mistakes and evaluated how they played.

Two students took instrument lessons with Google Meet and Zoom software. The software choice was made by the instructor. An instructor did not allow the recording of the courses. The other student especially recorded the lessons in which he played the piece and was able to watch it again.

One student did not do any live lessons. He continued his learning process through video recordings. The instructor informed the student about the studies he wanted, and the student made the necessary records and sent them.

All students stated that they were informed before the lessons. They said that they came to the classes prepared, especially since the classes were recorded.

We performed the instrument lessons using the Zoom program during the normal lesson hours. Before the lesson, the teacher sent the subjects and works to be covered. He was listening to me during the lesson and correcting the necessary parts. Sometimes he played to show the truth.

The instructor was writing to me beforehand about what to do in the lesson. I knew what to do in the lesson. We were used to each other as we had worked together before. I knew what he wanted and he was aware of my level. The teacher did not play much because there was no opportunity to play together

In this process, the duration of meeting with the instructors of the students increased. These interviews were generally carried out through the WhatsApp program. Instructors requested video and audio recordings outside of class hours. They also shared materials such as news, concert recordings, and documents about their instruments.

We became a little more sincere with my teacher. Previously, he was writing to me to give me information about the course. After that, our shares increased even more. He started sending me some sheet music. He asked me to send continuous audio recordings of my work.

In the process of conducting online instrument lessons, students started to use different musical programs. Students tended to use the recording programs because they were asked to record their performances. These uses occurred individually.

Different music programs were used only in the jazz department classes. Jazz department students stated that they use the mobile application called iReal Pro very often. With this program, they especially made improvisation studies. The instructor sent the chord sequence he had prepared to the student and asked the student to improvise on these chords.

Table 4. Evaluation

Evaluation	n	%
Process	5	72
Product	2	28
Total	7	100

In most of the online musical instrument lessons, the assessments were process-oriented. As seen in Table 4, the evaluation of two students was product-oriented.

I've already sent continuous video and audio recordings throughout the semester. Lessons are always recorded. My teacher gave me grades based on my performance throughout the semester. I think he gave a fair assessment.

My exam was done during the live lesson like the lessons. I took the exam twice. He told me about the exam piece beforehand. I was comfortable in the exam because it was at home.

The second sub-problem of the research is as follows: How do students evaluate the conduct of instrument lessons with e-learning?

Students felt a lack of equipment during the online instrument learning process. They experienced connection problems during the live lessons. Connection problems, lack of quality microphones, and headphones caused the musical works they played to not be fully transferred to their teachers. Sometimes their performance at a good level was not understood by the instructor.

Audio and video recordings requested outside of the classroom have become even more important. They did more work to be able to submit the best recording. There has been an increased interest in DAW (digital audio workstation) software to improve sound quality.

Another problem experienced was that especially instruments with high volume were played at home. Due to the presence of others at home, they could not confidently play an instrument during the live lesson.

I had a little difficulty playing the saxophone since everyone was at home. I tried to play it a little low so as not to disturb them and the neighbors. This affected my performance badly.

During the live lessons, there were problems due to the connection. Sometimes the sound was lagging. This affected communication badly. When my teacher tried to intervene immediately, we could not understand each other. We couldn't play with my teacher. This was the biggest problem for me. We often played together in face-to-face lessons.

Students think that they have had an efficient online learning process, which takes approximately one and a half semesters.

The process has been very productive for me. Apart from the curriculum at school, I created my program with online education videos and materials. I started using music software. I started making and recording accompaniments.

My instructor gave homework very often. Apart from the lesson, he also asked for videos about my work. He reviewed my work and gave directions. Since we have been working together for many years, distance education did not make any difference. Maybe I can say that I worked even harder. I feel like I've improved a lot in this process

3. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the online musical instrument learning process, which lasted about one and a half semesters, was tried to be examined. For this purpose, interviews were held with seven students who continue their education in the instrument departments of conservatories. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. Interviews were held online in June 2021.

As a result of the interviews, it was determined that the online musical instrument lessons were quite intense. Online courses were mostly held via video conference programs. In addition, it was determined that the instructors followed the progress of the students more frequently outside of the course hours. They often requested video and audio recordings. Teacher-student communication became more intense in this process. Kesendere Şenol Sakin and Acar (2020) determined that teachers use innovative materials in the online instrument learning process. In this way, it can be said that teacher-student communication increases.

The evaluations of the students were generally made through the process. Students welcomed this situation and stated that a fair evaluation was made.

Students started to use different musical programs that they had not used before. At the beginning of these programs, DAW software took place. The recordings they made outside of the classroom contributed to their personal development.

The biggest limitation that the students experienced was the connection problems they experienced during the live lesson. They also felt that they could not fully reflect their performance due to hardware deficiencies. The unsuitable working environment also affected their performance badly. Similarly, Sağer, Özkişi, & Yüceer (2020) stated that the lack of a suitable working environment affects the instrument's operation. Ozer and Ustun (2020) stated that the technical problems experienced negatively affect online music education.

The students had a very productive time during this process. They created their study program. They followed the good artists and performances of their instruments more closely. Awareness of online learning has increased. They didn't just stick to the syllabus at school. They reached online teaching materials from different universities. Against this result, Sağer, Özkişi, & Yüceer (2020) stated that music department students' time to listen to music and study instruments decreased during the pandemic process. They stated that the biggest reason for this situation may be the lack of a suitable working environment. In the same study, it was determined that the number of instrument learners increased among other students who did not study in the music department. The factors affecting students' self-discipline can be examined in-depth in different studies.

Although the online learning process was efficient for the students, it was evaluated that only online instrument training would not be sufficient. All students prefer face-to-face education for instrument learning.

Online learning is perceived as a temporary situation for students. But in this process, they will continue the habits they have acquired.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct experimental studies in which face-to-face and online learning are used together. In addition, it is suggested to investigate how online learning can be used in the development of different musical abilities.

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