

BELIEFS AND IDEAS OF THE PRESERVICE TEACHERS OF MUSIC ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COLLABORATIVE VIOLA EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study aims at discussing beliefs and ideas of the preservice teachers of music whose major instrument is the viola about the contributions and the significance of the collaborative viola education. The interview method has been used in the study with the qualitative research paradigm. The sample group of this study identified by the purposive sampling method consists of 10 preservice viola students at Faculty of Education at Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey. In order to find out the preservice viola students' beliefs and ideas about the collaborative viola education, a structured interview has been conducted within the framework of expert opinions. Descriptive analysis technique has been used in the research to analyse the data. It has been found that when the preservice viola students play group music among themselves, not only their communication becomes strengthened but also they are able to collaborate effectively with their peers, which increases their motivation and concentration, improves their techniques, listening skills, repertoires, confidence and individuality.

Keywords: Instrument education, collaborative viola education, preservice viola teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Instrumental teaching, which is an important dimension of music education, is effectively and widely used to meet the cognitive, affective, physical, artistic and philosophical needs of individuals and societies within the framework of general, amateur and professional music education in Turkey. In accordance with meeting their needs, they are effectively and comprehensively treated and put to use. Özmenteş (2013a:320) states that instrumental education in Turkey is a common branch of music education given to students at different levels and with different readiness in different institutions in accordance with different purposes and goals. According to Varış (2012), instrumental education is one of the main focuses of music education and a process that contributes to the individual's self-realization, gaining self-confidence, and building healthy communication in social interaction.

Activities for making music together during instrumental lessons not only contribute to the development of individuals' psychomotor, affective, and mental skills, but also provide unique opportunities in terms of musical and social skills. There are many research findings in the literature that support this view (Coffman, 1990; Gholson, 1998; Hallam, 2015; Hewitt, 2001; Muslu, 2018; Ordo 2018; Uslu, 2013; Varış, 2012; Varış, 2016; Yöndem, 2016).

During instrumental lessons, students practice their instruments to develop technical competence and vocabulary, acquire interpretive skills, and prepare for concerts or exams (Özmenteş, 2013b:440). While Uslu (1999) emphasized that in spreading and developing instrument education in Turkey, it is important that individuals in the same age group who like to be together, emulate each other, are influenced by each other, achieve with feelings such as competition and want to prove themselves, make music together. Yöndem (2016) defines instrumental education as the process of teaching the individual the interpretation, technical and auditory qualities of the instrument in accordance with the planned and desired goals and to show the achievements and states that many qualities such as socialization, being a member of a group, and collaboration skills can be gained through instrumental education in an ensemble.

Musical working environments with the same age groups can be characterized as social formation and social development because individuals acquire and share some knowledge, behaviours and skills with their own group, and ensemble music education, which is the main element of development, is very effective in forming and developing personality (Uslu, 2008.) 2013:197).

According to Özmenteş (2013a), it is necessary to use different methods according to the age group and changing learning styles in order to increase students' motivation and performance towards the lessons. One of these methods is making music in a group. According to Akyürek (2018), the gains achieved in individual instrument training are developed and practiced more and more in ensemble instrument training.

According to Ordo (2018), ensemble instrument training is a complex and dynamic process that involves numerous important goals. In this process, whether the student is in a homogeneous or heterogeneous group, skills such as listening, general listening, sight-reading, harmonic listening, intonation, rhythm, musical development, cooperation, teamwork, mutual support, evaluation, patience, tolerance, and respect for differences are developed.

Viola education, which is a branch of string instrument education, takes an active role in the programs of professional music education institutions in Turkey and represents an effective and indispensable dimension of the instrument education process. It is possible to say that in the viola training process in the institutions where professional music education is given in Turkey, activities for ensemble playing are not common. Considering the importance of ensemble viola teaching in relation to students, teachers, institutions and society, there is a need to expand and develop it. It can

be said that evaluating this need from the students' eyes will contribute to the field of viola in terms of objective handling and phenomenological framework.

In this context, the research sought an answer to the question "What are the opinions of music teacher candidates who receive viola training about the benefits of ensemble viola training?".

The purpose of the study is to find out the opinions of music teacher candidates whose individual instrument is viola about the benefits of ensemble viola education and to show the place and importance of ensemble music in viola education. In this context, the research is important to show the place and importance of ensemble music in viola education and contribute to the field of viola education.

2. METHOD

The interview method was used in the research, which was conducted in accordance with the paradigm of qualitative research. The reason for choosing this method is to reflect the perspectives and meanings of the participants with words and actions, to make detailed descriptions for a deep understanding of the facts in the context of the topic, and to make convincing generalizations under the guidance of synthesized information (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013).

2.1. The Study Group

The study group of this research consists of 10 viola students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Education in Turkey determined by criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods. The criterion for determining the students included in the sample is duet, trio, quartet, etc. in viola education process. It was determined as their participation in ensemble music making activities in different ways.

2.2 Data Collection

In the study, data were collected through a structured interview questionnaire prepared by the researcher based on expert opinions. After checking the content and language validity of the interview questionnaire, a pre-administration was conducted on 3 participants irrespective of the study group. After the checks and evaluations, the form was found to be functional and ready for the actual application. The participants whose opinions were sought were asked to provide their opinions in writing after obtaining their consent. The data collected were then analysed by two independent researchers.

2.3. The Analysis of the Data

The collected data were analysed using the descriptive analysis technique and the opinion statements were classified into main themes and sub-themes. Expert opinions were used to ensure the internal reliability of the research. The ratings of 3 independent researchers were compared for the main themes and sub-themes that emerged. As a result of the procedures, it was understood that the consensus among coders was 94% (Reliability=Consensus + Disagreement) according to the coding control, which yields internal consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This result was considered to be suitable in terms of research reliability.

3. FINDINGS

In this section, there are findings and comments obtained from the data gathered through the collection of participants' opinions. In reproducing the participants' expressions, symbols such as S1, S2, S3 were used to hide the names. Participants' opinions were collected under three main themes and ten subthemes, and some of the opinions were directly included in the headings.

Effects of Playing Together on the Musical Development

Participants indicated that playing together as a group during the ensemble viola training process improved their musical skills and provided positive development in a context that encompassed all musical elements. Under the main theme of the impact of playing together on musical development, three sub-themes were achieved. These have emerged as an effect on the development of technical skills in viola, an effect on the development of listening skills and an effect on the improvement of vocabulary in viola.

“Effect on the development of technical skills in the viola”

S1: In my ensemble viola training, in addition to solo playing, playing with large groups has made a great contribution to my musical development. This contribution is to create a product together by listening to other voices, as opposed to playing solo. S10: When you play with the group, you have to follow and listen to each other. Usually you should start and stop at the same time. Like in an orchestra, you have to listen to your surroundings. This person is developing a lot. S3: In general, I think listening activities or lessons are quite limited in our whole music education process. However, listening education is very important to me. It's the nature of music. I had the opportunity to put this into practice in my ensemble viola lessons. Listening to the person next to you gives you a chance to observe both your own mistakes and the mistakes and truths of others. This improves both your technique and your musicality. With group psychology, you have the opportunity to overcome your deficiencies in individual lessons. S9: Honestly, I feel more comfortable in private lessons. Personally, I don't think you can improve much in ensemble music making if your technique is not mature yet. I'm not against ensemble music making though. It can be good for creating synergy.

“Effect on the improvement of vocabulary in viola”

S5: Thanks to viola lessons together, my musical vocabulary has improved. I had the opportunity to learn new works and different genres of music. You get to know all kinds of music. It's a very nice thing. S8: Playing in the viola choir has been very beneficial to me. Many works from different periods of music history that I enjoyed playing have entered my repertoire. Thanks to these works, I have seen my basic performance on my instrument improve. After all, when a person plays what he loves, it is easier to make progress.

The effect of playing together on Developing Social Skills

Participants indicated that playing activities with their friends who play the viola improved their social skills. Under the main theme of the effect of playing together on the development of social skills, three sub-themes were reached. These were determined as the effect on developing communication skills, the effect on cooperative learning, and the effect on strengthening the bonds of friendship.

“Effect on developing communication skills”

S2: *I think that perhaps one of the greatest contributions of ensemble viola instruction is that students in different classes get to know each other closely. They feel the need to interact, not only while playing, but also outside of the classroom. The communication and interaction you build while making music takes you beyond the classroom. I think it's a great way to make viola music together in a time when polarization and selfishness are increasing and communication is decreasing.* S9: *As I mentioned earlier, viola lessons together have been very good for me in terms of socialization, not musical ability. My friends think I'm a bit of a megalomaniac. I started having coffee and chatting with someone I hadn't even said hello to before. Now he has become one of my best friends.* S6: *Although there were not as many violists as violinists in the school, communication among violists was limited. When our teacher said that a viola choir would be formed and we would also have viola lessons together, I was hesitant at first. But later, our communication with each other became stronger and stronger. Sharing notes, rehearsing ourselves, talking about deficits, etc. Then our relationships became stronger.*

“Effect on cooperative learning”

S4: *You cannot act individually while acting as a group. Each must put his hand under the stone. Each is responsible for the other. This requires acting cooperatively.* S5: *Playing as a group is useful to see each other's mistakes. Together you go through the mistake and show the will to solve the problem. One observes each other while playing. He realizes where he has made a mistake. One meets in the same pot with friendly hints. When we play our own group, we try to play as if only one person is playing the viola. This gives resistance in the community.*

“Effect on strengthening the bonds of friendship”

S1: *While working on the viola together, I have made friends with people I previously said I would have nothing to do with. Our relationships have strengthened and deepened. That means you shouldn't talk big. When you work and produce together, a bond inevitably forms between you. I had the opportunity to reconcile with the people I unintentionally hurt.* S8: *When you act in a community for a common goal, it naturally creates a culture of solidarity. Giving a concert as a viola choir was one of our main goals. Towards this goal, we acted with a focus on success in the work we did together with our teacher. Focusing on this point led to the development of communication skills among friends and the formation of a culture of tolerance. Thanks to the success-oriented study, the spirit of friendship developed.* S3: *I can say that struggling with the difficulties of making music together, the power of music, the requirements of teamwork are the reasons why we form a band with our friends. This was crowned with the successful concert we gave.* S3: *Since we worked on a piece with my friends in my viola training together, we also got to know each other well socially. At this stage, when we meet with my fellow players, which I want to know, we understand each other and perform the pieces by checking each other. As we help each other with the techniques on our instrument with our friends, practicing the viola together has an important role in developing our social skills.*

The effect of playing together on personal development

Participants indicated that playing together with their friends who play the viola increased their motivation to learn the viola, improved their focusing and musical interpretation skills, increased their

self-confidence, and developed their identity. Under the main theme of the impact of playing together on personal development, four sub-themes emerged. These were determined as the effect on motivation and concentration, the effect on self-confidence, the effect on musicality, and the effect on improving self-esteem.

“Effect on motivation and concentration”

S2: Your teacher may tolerate the mistake you made in individual class. But if you make a mistake in a group, it bothers you in the presence of other people. Therefore, you want to try harder. This automatically motivates you to work harder. S7: Through the process we went through in the ensemble viola training, my motivation to play individually has increased. S3: When working for the concert our viola choir is to give, you have to concentrate on your segment. Your concentration should be at a high level because, one mistake you make will affect the whole group. Gathering around a common goal to succeed together is enough to motivate you. You even tell yourself, I need to play exemplary. Ensemble viola training has also improved my personal skills. In ensemble viola training, a great deal of motivation was required when working on or performing the pieces, and playing with the group gave me motivation. S4: I realized that I need to focus more on the music in ensemble work. Over time, I discovered some things that I didn't pay attention to when I played individually on my viola. This has had an impact on my personal work as well. At the end of the day, there will be an audience. That's enough to motivate you.

“Effect on developing self-confidence”

S10: I started to believe that I can do better things when I play with my friends. Before I started playing in the group, I said to my teacher that I am not that good, couldn't I play? He also motivated me in a positive way. After two or three studies, I said that I actually could, and I started working more carefully and diligently. That boosted my confidence. S6: I thought that I could play more boldly on the beat by watching the others in the ensemble. Over time, I overcame my initial concerns. I found myself playing in a more and more positive environment, both in class and in rehearsals. I realized that there were people who were making the same technical mistakes that I was. Day by day, everyone was anxious to make fewer mistakes, and the work increased. This positive environment led to the development of my self-confidence.

“Effect on the Musicality”

S1: As I watched my other friends doing group work, I saw that we all struggled to make music at first. As the work progressed, we began to pay attention to nuances, dynamics, and bowing technique. Before the concert, we realized that we had gone far beyond the first piece. We were playing the pieces in a much more musical way. I observed that every violist in the ensemble made an extraordinary effort to play the musical. S5: You can play more musically if you pay attention to the length, speed, pressure, nuances, and positional transitions of the left hand. As friends, we all thought about these issues, sped up the etudes, and played by listening to each other. From time to time we would do extra etudes in doubles and sometimes triples or quads. This helped us to interpret the works musically.

“Effect on improving self-confidence”

S3: Until third grade, I had a structure that was not outgoing, had little confidence, and preferred to stay in the background. With the orchestra, choir, and chamber music classes, my self-

confidence gradually increased and I began to socialize. I can say that I found myself in the works we performed with the viola choir and in the beautiful performance we did. I began to feel more competent and successful. S10: Thanks to viola training together, I began to love myself more. My awareness grew and my relationships started to become healthier. It's nice to have coffee and chat together at the end of rehearsals, to feel that you belong to a community. S4: One of the biggest benefits for me was that I could express myself more easily. When I was in first grade, frankly I couldn't move as easily.

4. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

In the research, it was found that the ensemble viola lessons of the students whose individual instrument is the viola contributed significantly to the improvement of their cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviours, and that the students improved their musical, social and personal skills thanks to the ensemble viola lessons. It was understood that individuals who play the viola make group music among themselves, act cooperatively, strengthen their communication and bonds with their friends, increase their motivation and concentration, improve their techniques, listening skills, repertoire, self-confidence and self-esteem.

These findings that emerged in the research support the findings of Kokotsaki and Hallam's (2017) research, concluding that making music together with the ensemble develops musical skills, provides deep musical knowledge, and strengthens social bonds.

This study was similarly paralleled by Biber Öz (2001), Çimen (2008), Ordo (2018), Uslu (1999), Uslu (2013), Özmenteş (2013a), Varış (2016), Yöndem (2016) and Yüksel and Mustul (2015). The commonality of the results of all these studies is that ensemble instrument education gives the student a personality in addition to all other gains and strengthens sociality by increasing the student's motivation and performance. In order to enhance the performance of his students, the viola teacher should engage in various pursuits, create an active learning environment, and incorporate both ensemble viola studies and individual viola instruction. In addition, he should encourage his students by turning the products of study into concert activities, giving individuals the opportunity to realize themselves and develop their self-confidence, thus raising the quality of viola education. The number of comparative studies should be increased by looking at this research topic with different study groups.

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