



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

MUSIC EDUCATION ON ONLINE PLATFORMS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Music lessons can be disseminated in one-to-one offline sessions to get the best outcome and teaching learning experience. However, with globalization people have started residing across the globe for work but their desire to learn music has never decreased, also some great artist who propagated music with their talent and wisdom of knowledge like pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain and Ustad Allaiddin Khan have actually helped music to immerse into the heart of the people.

Indian classical music reached out to masses globally due to the efforts of these artists and people started liking indigenous art forms, especially Hindustani music. They were curious to know and learn the art from learned Indian musicians.

The major barrier in learning was the distance factor between the student and the resource person. A few decades ago, the musician Guru's would travel abroad to instruct many students through the workshops, but it would happen twice or thrice a year each one longing for a month or so. In this process the students and gurus both remained unsatisfied with the teaching learning experience.

Constant monitoring of the students was not possible.

With the advancement in technology, availability of the internet and its supportive devices and increase in the purchasing power of the people, facilities like video conferencing came into existence. With time the video conferencing experience improved a lot and people started using it so much so that in COVID 19 the whole Music ecosystem survived economically due to the usage of technology.

Keywords: Online Platforms, Music Education, Challenges, Solutions, Technology.

Objectives of the paper

1. To review the online teaching learning ecosystem.
2. To study the effect on the student motivation to learn
3. Advantages or facilities enjoyed by the students and teachers

Scope :

For this paper, the scope has been kept limited to the study of the effects on students of Hindustani classical vocal and instrumental music only however certain technical part of the study might as well apply to all the other majors in music with certain exceptions as per the field.

Challenges faced by the students in offline learning

Place utility is of highest concern if the learning place is nearby the student's residence, it would save lot of productive time, however in such a creative field of music availability of qualified and able Guru is limited, therefore students have to travel to the Guru place wherever he or she is located.

Though there can be no substitute for in person learning, it takes a lot of time to travel. Travelling requires money, so those deprived of stable financial resources may not be able to learn frequently.

Generally eminent gurus are busy performing artists, therefore they can hardly give time to their students, hence coordinating and deciding the time becomes an exceedingly challenging task for both.

For the people who are working in a different field professionally and learning Music as a passion along with it, also whose job required them to travel a lot, can never learn personally until they retire.

Music education approaches and methods

In music education the approach and method are decided on the level of knowledge, understanding, previous Training and Technical proficiency of the student.

Broadly there can be two categories:

1. Learners with career orientation and personal motivation
2. Learners with passion who do not wish to pursue Music as career

For the first category usually traditional learning system, that is oral tradition or Guru shishya parampara is followed.

The students in this category usually start training exceedingly early hence they usually appear for graduation or post-graduation programs after completing reasonable years under the training of Guru, to qualify themselves for jobs.

For the second category Guru shishya parampara is applied in the much later phase of the learning when they get acquainted with the gravity of the subject and knowledge. In the beginning they are taught in groups of the same category and interest, and they are advised to appear for diploma level exams to test their progress.

In the traditional system the depth or difficulty level of lessons is moderately high right from the beginning therefore it requires a high level of commitment from the students end. The guru keeps giving to the student and the student must receive and digest it as per his or her own capacity and development in interest, therefore in this system in the approach is more teacher centric.

In the second category students are gradually made aware of the practical and theoretical concepts, this becomes more of self-paced learning or student centric approach.

Delivery of lessons depends on the understanding of the student. As this is not the primary subject of the student, the knowledge can be disseminated in accordance with the student's efforts.

Involvement of technology in music education

In the current times, the importance of information and communication technology has grown tremendously. The importance of computer, internet and such devices has increased due to its availability and due to high demand of these equipments the price has also fallen down dramatically. Nowadays computers and the internet have become necessities after food, clothing, and shelter.

Several video conferencing applications are at the user's disposal, but some of the widely used apps in the music education sector are Google meet, Cisco WebEx, zoom and FaceTime. Saves travel time: It completely writes off the barriers in learning due to the distance factor.

Music teaching learning in Hindustani music require certain utilities for accompaniment, for example tanpura and tabla a few softwares and applications have been developed for the use of the students for example tanpura-droid, sur-sagar and iTablaPro etc.

Integration of these applications and software becomes very handy and user-friendly in an online teaching-learning environment. It can be easily connected to the computer by cable or can be paired with Bluetooth and the sound is clearly audible to the person in front without any disturbance.

Online learning provides the following benefits:

1. Saves travel time: It completely writes off the barriers in learning due to the distance factor.
2. Flexibility of scheduling lessons: It provides flexibility to both the learner and teacher to schedule classes as per their schedule and availability.
3. Frequent monitoring of the students is possible. As in offline scenario, students cannot frequently travel to guru's place when they are living far.
4. Facilities: facilities like screen sharing, recorded lessons improves the learning experience and understanding of the students. Recorded lessons do not require the teacher to be present, therefore the student can go at his own pace and watch the video repeatedly till he/she understands the concept. This improves the quality of learning of the student.
Screen sharing can be related to the blackboard/slate in offline learning scenario. So, the student gets clarity while learning.
5. Geographically unlimited: There are 0% barriers to learning due to the place. A person living thousands of kilometres away from the teacher can also take lessons.
6. Immediate practice: When a lesson is taught in a session, it can be retained better when practiced immediately after the class. As the best impression of the lesson can be reproduced during this practice. In online lessons, this is possible.

Some of the cons of online music education:

1. Lack of Personal involvement: - in an offline environment, the exchange of thoughts, feelings and vibe gets better as there is in person interaction. Energy and enthusiasm can be transmitted better in offline learning.
2. Computer/internet issues: Class cannot happen if there are any technical issues.
3. Sound quality (reference): If the equipment which is used is of average quality, then it would not provide an advisable sound reference to the student. Building right reference is immensely important in music. In Hindustani music copying the right voice texture plays a huge role in the development of the student.
4. Limited social interaction: Online lessons are on one-to-one basis, so peer discussion is not possible. This discussion at times helps students to understand things better.
5. Distraction:
If you do not have a dedicated space at home for your online lessons, you may get distracted due to your family member's activities.

Conclusion

1. Online music lessons come with a lot of advantages as well as disadvantages.
2. Online music lessons, with their convenience, flexibility, and variety of instruction, have revolutionized the field of music education.
3. However, there are drawbacks to them as well, like potential distractions and lack of physical presence.
4. You may optimize the benefits of online music lessons by making an investment in superior equipment ensuring certain objectives, keeping a dedicated space for taking lessons and being self-motivated and involved in the process of learning.
5. These online platforms give aspiring musicians the chance to learn and groom themselves in a world that values virtual connections more and more.
6. Online music lessons can be a useful tool for improving your abilities and pursuing your passion for music, regardless of your level of experience.
As far as Hindustani Vocal and instrumental Music is concerned, learning in hybrid mode (Online + offline) is best for beginners. As for instruments explaining right posture, stance, tuning and such basic lessons can be easier in offline mode.
7. For vocal, kharaj, sur practice and such initial riyaz has to be done in the physical presence of the guru.

After a certain time, when the student starts understanding what the best practices are to be followed while learning and becomes aware of the learning methodology of the guru, he may switch to online mode.