

## **Competence of Playing and Teaching the Piano of Music Teaching Undergraduate Students: The Piano and Piano Teaching Lesson**

(Müzik Öğretmenliği Lisans Öğrencilerinin Piyano Çalma ve Öğretme Yetkinlikleri:  
Piyano ve Öğretimi Dersi)

**Feyza SÖNMEZÖZ**

---

**Abstract:** On the institutions training music teachers, the level of piano teaching affects the competence of music teachers working at elementary schools and high schools. Therefore, during the undergraduate education, a music teacher candidate should show interest on piano lesson as much as he or she shows interest on main instrument lesson. Meanwhile, besides the piano lessons, he or she should show interest at same level and work on lessons related to the piano like ‘Musical Hearing Reading and Writing’, ‘Harmony, Counterpoint, Accompaniment’, ‘Playing Accompaniment’, ‘Musical Styles’, ‘Turkish Music Poly Vocalization’, ‘Composing Educational Music’, ‘The piano and Piano Teaching’. For this reason, ‘The piano and Piano Teaching’ lesson became an important stage for the piano education on music teaching from the stand point of earned information and abilities, resources regarding the piano literature, piano education and works containing various methods and techniques.

**Keywords:** Music education, the piano, piano education.

**Özet:** Müzik öğretmeni yetiştiren kurumlarda piyano öğretiminin düzeyi ilköğretim, lise ve dengi okullarda görev yapan müzik öğretmenlerinin yetkinliklerini etkilemektedir. Bu yüzden lisans eğitimi boyunca müzik öğretmeni adayı piyano dersine ana çalgı dersi kadar ilgi göstermek durumundadır. Bununla birlikte piyano derslerinin yanı sıra piyano ile ilişkili ‘Müziksel İşitme Okuma Yazma’, ‘Armoni-Kontrpuan-Eşlik’, ‘Eşlik Çalma’, ‘Müzik Biçimleri’, ‘Türk Müziği Çok Seslendirme’, ‘Eğitim Müziği Besteleme’ ve ‘Piyano ve Öğretimi’ gibi derslere de aynı düzeyde ilgi göstermesi ve çalışma yapması gereklidir. Bu açıdan ‘Piyano ve Öğretimi’ dersi kazanılan bilgi ve beceriler, piyano edebiyatına ilişkin kaynaklar, çeşitli piyano öğretim, yöntem ve teknikleri içeren çalışmalar açısından müzik öğretmenliğinde piyano eğitiminin önemli bir aşaması olmuştur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Müzik eğitimi, piyano, piyano eğitimi.

## **Introduction**

Whatever his or her main instrument is on the undergraduate stage, level of piano competence of a music teacher must be high.

Besides only being able to give music lessons to students and teach school songs using voice and main instrument, a music teacher should also be able to use the piano, should have a good command of keyboard, and should be able to accompany school songs at any level with the piano.

The piano is a rich and satisfying instrument from the stand point of its broad sound range and its being harmonically rich, its being appropriate for playing school songs, marches, The Turkish National Anthem, and other national anthems, its being appropriate for poly vocalization, its being able to apply various melody and rhythm templates, also from the stand point of accompanying music of class and school choirs, music of individual or assembled instrument pieces, and music regarding various days and weeks. Therefore, a lesson can be taught which is closer to “General Purposes of Music Lesson Teaching Program” which are listed below and which are included in “Elementary Music Lesson Teaching Program”.

- Developing esthetic side of oneself by means of music.
- Letting one express his or her emotions, thoughts and experiences by means of music.
- Developing creativity and talent by means of music.
- Recognizing local, national and international music cultures.
- Providing help for developing personality and self confidence
- Providing development of mental skills by means of music.
- Entering individual and social relationships by means of music.
- Developing musical perception and information
- Providing activities of song listening, singing and playing individually and in groups.
- Providing the correct and effective use of Turkish for them.
- As Turkish National Anthem being the first, providing them to sign our national marches appropriate to original
- Developing affection, sharing and responsibility feelings by means of music.
- Providing them to have music culture and knowledge which reinforces our national unity and making it easier for us to unite with the world.

- Comprehending Atatürk's views about development of Turkish music, making them grow as individuals who are strongly devoted to Atatürk's Principles and Reforms.

“With its polyphonic property, the piano not only makes teaching school songs more fun and effective, but the piano also has more priority than other instruments as it provides a better education in shorter time for music teachers. From another point of view, the piano plays an active role on teaching all songs thanks to its high sound range, and it gains the effective accompaniment instrument property for music teacher to have command on song teaching with its rotund sound, it even gains the most ideal class instrument property” (Sönmezöz, 2006: 5).

Piano: since it is an accompanying instrument, tool for polyphonic education it is the primary instrument of every music class” (Şenel, 1983 s. 78).

Therefore, a teacher who plays the piano on his or her lessons will provide more effective development of tone-rhythm-harmony feelings, at the same time he or she will empower the students' musical liking, expression and creativity and make the students gain musical personalities.

For this reason, piano education on institutions training music teachers is required and music teacher candidate's taking piano education will make him more self-confident and competent.

### **The Importance of the Piano Education on Music Teaching Education**

On the Higher Education Institution's Music Teaching Undergraduate Program, piano lesson is taught under name 'The piano' for first seven semesters and “The piano and Piano Teaching” for the last semester.

It shouldn't be noticed that, abilities of music teacher candidates being trained in Music Teaching Departments are not only related to attendance and success rates regarding piano lessons but also related to other lessons.

Because piano education is directly related to solfeggio, harmony, form knowledge, correpetion educations, a music teacher candidate should also show interest and work on lessons “Musical Hearing Reading and Writing”, “Harmony, Counterpoint, Accompaniment”, “Playing Accompaniment”, “Musical Styles”, “Turkish Music Poly Vocalization”, “Composing Educational Music”, “The piano and Piano Teaching” which are included in Music Teaching Undergraduate Program.

Furthermore, the music teachers working in elementary and high schools can increase students' desire and interest by not only using the instrument for accompanying school songs but also for education for pleasure. In connection with this, music teachers should have piano teaching competence at beginner level.

The most important aim of Music Department of G.E.E. is to improve music perception, music love and pleasure of student. For this purpose, piano classes should have practice area, general music knowledge, music theory, music forms and history even foreign language. Especially, a young person learning as an auxiliary instrument, should benefit from his instrument. (Zuckmayer, 1970 s.1)

For this reason, starting from 2006-2007 academic year, "The piano and Piano Teaching" lesson was added to be taught in eighth semester.

This lesson is described as "In the direction of works conducted previous periods, works intended for various age groups containing piano methods, samples and applications, comprehensive presentation of piano literature, examination of samples, Turkish and foreigner composers gave piano compositions. Determination of powerful and weak sides by examination of beginning methods." (YÖK, 2006 s.23).

As gained from other lessons related to the piano, the knowledge and skills gained from this lesson will provide a great addition to music teachers for their quality, performance, ability and repertoire of playing the piano.

As it is known, Music Teaching Departments give an education that focuses on training music teachers, and they are carrying out an application where individual specializes on a specific instrument and becomes teacher of that instrument. Students from this undergraduate program can graduate with "Music Teacher" title, and they may target to specialize by making academic and scientific studies for their own individual desires and expectations. Therefore, none of the lessons included in Music Teaching Undergraduate Program is at a level of science expertise considering technical knowledge and skills. Therefore, "The piano and piano teaching" lesson shouldn't be expected at that level.

But, a music teacher working at an elementary or high school should have the formation to teach the piano to his or her students to a beginning or intermediate level.

The approaches aiming the young students just beginning their piano education are very important for their emotional and social lives, their creativity and also for their personality development. It should also be considered that these children may decide to be professional piano players in the coming years. Even if they want it just as a hobby but not a profession, the teacher must again make the students like playing the piano to keep their interests alive. Therefore the music teacher

that will give their first lesson must have an undergraduate degree and initial teacher training and must be competent and equipped with enough skills in piano playing.

For this reason, the opinions of the instructors are of high importance in realizing the expectations relating to the course “Piano and piano Education” which is given in the 4<sup>th</sup> year in the undergraduate program of Department of Education at the Schools of Education, in which techniques and methods of piano education are analyzed.

As also stated by the Board of Higher Education in the Undergraduate Program of Music Education of, in “Piano and piano education” courses, the studies including the various method examples and applications aiming various groups of age, comprehensive introduction of piano literature, introduction of the works of Turkish and foreign composers and their primary methods must be analyzed and the instructors need to give their opinions on this issue.

## **Method**

In this qualitative research, data were constructed by using the answers of the instructors to the questions in the interviews, who participated voluntarily in this research by using semi-structured interview.

For the purpose of this research, 1 Faculty member from the Department of Music Education at Gazi University, School of Education; 2 faculty members from the Department of Music Education at Marmara University, School of Education; 2 faculty members from the Department of Music Education at Niğde University, School of Education; 1 faculty member from the Department of Music Education, at Harran University, School of Education and 1 faculty member from the Department of Music Education at Karadeniz University, which makes 7 faculty members in total (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7,.) were interviewed. Two of the faculty members are professors, one of them is associate professor and four faculty members are assistant professors.

## **Findings and Opinions**

During the interviews, 5 questions were asked to the faculty members about the way in which piano and piano education courses should be delivered. Even though they are piano teachers, 2 of the faculty members in question don't attend the piano and piano education course since this course is given as a mass course in line with the decision of their departments. However, they have voluntarily participated in the research since they have experience as piano teachers and they

wanted to contribute to solving the problems encountered in this subject. The questions prepared based on the behaviours aimed at the definition of the Higher Board of Education for the course “Piano and piano education” and asked to the faculty members are as follows:

1. Are there studies conducted in “Piano and piano education” courses that include method examples and applications and aim various groups of age?
2. Are the works from the piano literature for various groups of age being introduced comprehensively in the elementary and intermediate levels of “Piano and piano education” courses?
3. Are the works of Turkish and foreign composers introduced in “Piano and piano education” courses?
4. Are the starting methods analyzed in “Piano and piano education” courses and their strong and weak points determined?
5. Should this course be an individual course?

Findings obtained from the interviews were given in the tables below and their content was analyzed.

Yapılan görüşmelerde ışığında elde edilen bulgular aşağıdaki tablolarda belirtilerek içerikleri analiz edilmiştir

**Table 1**

**Opinions of the Faculty Members on the first question.**

QUESTION 1: Are there studies conducted in “Piano and piano education” courses that include method examples and applications and aim various groups of age?	
A1	Yes, there are. Examples to teaching methods and techniques for the piano methods written for the elementary ad intermediate levels are given and these examples are analyzed. All study books which has been written on piano education for centuries are important in this respect. Therefore all the available sources need to be reviewed.
A2	There should be. Various composers of studies and pieces composed for piano have already been covered in piano lessons in previous terms. In this course, the teaching methods and techniques for these works should be analyzed.
A3	There should be. Especially, -middle c- methods with up-to day colourful pictures

	and figures should be preferred for preschool children. The way these studies about starting playing the piano and teaching the places of the notes should be observed and evaluated.
A4	There are. All the starting method available are analyzed in lessons and also each student is given the task to do a method analysis.
A5	There are. Especially the starting methods written for piano education in class are analyzed and each student is assigned to do a method analysis.
A6	There are. However, they aren't comprehensive enough. We have difficulty in reaching some old sources. Nevertheless, studies on piano teaching methods can be still conducted with the methods available.
A7	There are. In addition to the methods analyzed together with the students, some studies are also given as assignment to find solutions to the possible problems that may be encountered in starting playing the piano.

The answers of all the faculty members to the 1st question are seen at Table 1. All the faculty members answered the question ‘Are there studies conducted in “Piano and piano education” courses that include method examples and applications and aim various groups of age?’ as “Yes, there are”. In addition to the fact that all the 7 faculty members gave similar answers to this question, one faculty member thinks that the course is not given efficiently due to the difficulty to reach some sources and methods. On the other hand, two faculty members, since they don't attend these courses themselves, said that this course should be given. In addition, it is seen that two faculty members give this course in the same way.

According to these results, it may be concluded that to analyze the methods and sources and to see the piano teaching, methods and techniques in these methods and especially to give method analyzing assignments and to conduct studies titled “solution suggestions” are important for the faculty members.

**Table 2**

**Opinions of the Faculty Members on the first question.**

QUESTION 2: Are the works from the piano literature for various groups of age being introduced comprehensively in the elementary and intermediate levels of “Piano and piano education” courses?	
A1	Yes, they are. Following the analysis of piano methods, teaching methods of techniques, all the studies and works about piano education are introduced.
A2	They should be. The way the editors of that age and composers apply the teaching methods and techniques to the studies and pieces written based on the piano pieces of composers belonging to various musical periods is important
A3	They should be. The way the editors, who wrote the notes in that years and the composers apply the teaching methods and techniques to the studies and pieces written based on the piano pieces of composers belonging to various musical periods is important.
A4	Yes, they are. Studies are conducted about teaching the pieces on which the students worked in previous terms.
A5	Yes, they are. The students should know the piano repertory of the departments of music at schools of education.
A6	Yes, they are. In order to understand the pieces taught in piano lessons better in respect of teaching methods, the students must attend the piano courses of lower classes.
A7	Yes, they are. The elementary and intermediate levels of the piano pieces taught at the departments of music in the schools of education should be separated, examined and analyzed.

The answers of all the faculty members to the 2<sup>nd</sup> question are seen at Table 2. All the faculty members answered the question ‘Are the works from the piano literature for various groups of age being introduced comprehensively in the elementary and intermediate levels of “Piano and piano education” courses?’ as “Yes, they are”. On the other hand, two faculty members, since they don’t attend these courses themselves, said that this course should be given. However, the content of the faculty members’ answers are similar. They all emphasized that studies and pieces of piano literature should be introduced and analyzed comprehensively in the departments of music.



According to these results, it may be concluded that introducing pieces from the elementary and intermediate level piano literature aiming various groups of age and knowing how the composers and note writers present the teaching methods and techniques of these pieces are important.

**Table 3**

**Opinions of the Faculty Members on the third question.**

QUESTION 3: Are the pieces of Turkish and foreign composers introduced in “Piano and piano education” courses?	
A1	Yes, they are. Especially the pieces of Turkish composers which are used in piano education in the departments of music are analyzed.
A2	Yes, they are. The piano pieces of contemporary Turkish composers suitable for educational purposes should be analyzed.
A3	Yes, they are. The piano pieces of contemporary Turkish composers suitable for educational purposes should be analyzed. In addition, it should also be checked if there are piano starting methods among Turkish composers and the sources found needs to be analyzed in terms of teaching methods and used for that purpose in the departments of music.
A4	Yes, they are. The piano pieces of contemporary Turkish composers suitable for educational purposes are analyzed.
A5	Yes, they are. The pieces of contemporary Turkish and foreign composers, especially the ones that represent the national currents of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, which are suitable for use in piano education, should be preferred.
A6	Yes, they are. The piano pieces of contemporary Turkish composers suitable for educational purposes are analyzed.
A7	Yes, they are. The piano pieces of the Contemporary Turkish and Foreign composers taught at the departments of music at schools of education, especially the ones suitable for elementary and intermediate levels, are analyzed in terms of teaching methods.

The answers of all the faculty members to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question are seen at Table 3. All the faculty members answered the question ‘Are the pieces of Turkish and foreign composers introduced in “Piano and piano education” courses?’ as “Yes, they are”. On the other hand, two faculty members,

since they don't attend these courses themselves, said that this course should be given. The answers of the faculty members to this question are similar as well. In addition, it is of high importance according to all the faculty members that the pieces of the Contemporary Turkish composers which can be used in piano education are also analyzed. Especially one faculty member emphasized that it should be checked if there are piano methods written by Turkish composers and if there are they have to be included in the repertory. Apart from that, they also stated that in addition to the Contemporary Turkish composers, the pieces of the representatives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century national school should also be analyzed in terms of piano methods and techniques.

**Table 4**

**Opinions of the Faculty Members on the fourth question.**

QUESTION 4: Are the starting methods analyzed in "Piano and piano education" courses and their strong and weak points determined?	
A1	Yes, they are. Many starting methods were written with different contents. It is told to the students that when examined, many of these methods have strong and weak sides. In this way, piano teacher candidates see that they shouldn't stick to a single methods and that they should be open to novelties.
A2	They should be. The future piano teachers should be reminded of the fact that there are many methods that can be applied in accordance with the qualifications of the students, namely to the preschool children, primary school students and adults. It is important that these methods are determined according to the individual that will take the course. Therefore, information on these methods needs to be precise. For this reason, piano methods should be analyzed comparatively.
A3	They should be. The basic skills that the starting methods will bring in are of high importance. As well as the teachers, the methods will also contribute a lot in developing these basic skills of the student efficiently and permanently. Therefore, it shouldn't be forgotten that all the methods are not the same. For this reason, piano methods should be analyzed comparatively.
A4	Yes, they are. All the methods written for starting playing the piano are analyzed and their strong and weak points are presented, the qualities that a piano method should have are determined and the future teachers are informed about them.
A5	Yes, they are. It is checked especially if the methods written for the preschool

	and primary school children help in developing their basic skills while starting playing the piano.
A6	Yes, they are. It is checked especially if the methods written for the preschool and primary school children help in developing their basic skills while starting playing the piano.
A7	Yes, they are. It is discussed if the starting methods are suitable for the physiognomy of young children, if systematic ways of studies are applied, the needs of the students are met and how much they encourage the students to play the piano.

The answers of all the faculty members to the 4<sup>th</sup> question are seen at Table 4. All the faculty members answered the question ‘Are the starting methods analyzed in “Piano and piano education” courses and their strong and weak points determined?’ as “Yes, they are”. On the other hand, two faculty members, since they don’t attend these courses themselves, said that this course should be given. The answers of the faculty members to this question are again similar as well. The piano teachers think that determining the basic technical behaviours in a piano method is important. In this respect, it is important to analyze these methods comparatively.

**Table 5**

**Opinions of the Faculty Members on the fifth question.**

QUESTION 5: Should this course be an individual course?	
A1	Yes, it should. This course needs to be an individual course. In this course many methods to be applied in preschool, primary school children and adults are analyzed, the strong and weak points of these methods are determined, the targeted behaviours by these methods are presented and discussed with the students, the piano literature is introduced comprehensively, the study-practices and pieces that can be played at elementary and intermediate levels are analytically evaluated for technical purposes and the elementary and intermediate level Turkish and foreign pieces are analyzed. Therefore it has to be a private lesson.
A2	Yes, it should. This course must definitely be an individual course. Since many starting methods will be examined and these methods will be analyzed in detail with the students, it must be an individual course. In addition, since

	the studies and pieces of various composers will be evaluated by be playing the piano, time will be of importance. As these kinds of evaluations are impossible to conduct in crowded classes, this course has to be an individual course.
A3	Yes, it should be. This course should be given as an individual course.
A4	Yes, it should be. This course should be given as an individual course.
A5	Yes, it should be. This course should be given as an individual course.
A6	Yes, it should be. This course should be given as an individual course.
A7	Yes, it should be. This course should be given as an individual course.

The answers of all the faculty members to the 5<sup>th</sup> question are seen at Table 5. All the faculty members answered the question ‘Should this course be an individual course?’ as “Yes, it should. This course should be given as an individual course.” and emphasized its importance. Since the methods for preschool and primary school children and adults; studies and pieces of elementary and intermediate level taught at the departments of music in schools of education and the examples from the Contemporary Turkish composers and 20<sup>th</sup> century world music composers which can be used in piano education are introduced and analyzed in this course and also they are evaluated by playing on the piano in class, all the faculty members emphasized that this course must definitely be given as an individual course.

As a result of the reviews, it is seen that in order to develop the basic skills at the piano starting level as required, the methods have to embody some basic qualities.

According to Çimen, the method with which it is expected to develop some basic skills has to bear the following qualities.

1. It has to be parallel with the contemporary general education principles, has to be prepared in accordance with the latest methods in piano education.
2. The method has to be suitable for the psychological and bodily structure of that group of age for which it was prepared.
3. The studies, exercises and pieces covered by the method have to interest the students and make them work systematically.
4. In addition to the content of the book, its cover, the design, pictures and drawings of its papers should also be appealing; notes have to be legible.

5. Theoretic information and pieces of music in the method must be balanced.
6. It has to give place to piano harmony, music theory, improvisation and creative performance. (Çimen 1995, p.13).

## **Conclusion**

It is seen that piano education is of high importance in institutions training music teachers. However, the importance of the course “Piano and piano education” given in the program of the 8<sup>th</sup> semester has been increasing. Knowing the literature and analyzing the studies and works of composers belonging to various musical periods are crucial in training an equipped music teacher. However, in this case, it is not enough for a music teacher just to play the piano well; the piano teacher that will give the “Piano” and “Piano and Piano Education” courses also has to be competent and have the professional knowledge and equipment.

Therefore, the realization level of expectations from “The Piano and piano teaching” lesson being taught on fourth class of Music Teaching Departments of Education Faculties, where piano literature is presented, where basic functions of piano teaching is considered, and where piano teaching methods and techniques are examined plays a major role on the piano education of music teacher candidates.

## **Results**

On Music Teaching Departments of Education Faculties, piano instructors play an active role on the education of teacher candidates. Therefore, for instructors, continuing studying on their own area gains a major importance for better information for them to give undergraduate students, and for instructors to encourage undergraduate students and be an example for them. Thus, there’s an important mission for piano instructors on Music Teaching Departments in order to maintain music teacher candidate students’ interest and skill high. From this viewpoint, it is important for undergraduate piano instructors to have piano knowledge and playing ability to train music teacher candidates and they should have high academic and scientific qualities.

In the eye of his or her students, being a piano instructor who has command to keyboard, who knows literature, -who is a piano instructor that can play the piano- is as important as –being a music teacher who can play the piano- in the eye of elementary and high school students.

## Recommendations

During the undergraduate education, music teacher candidates should;

- Should show interest and work on lessons “Musical Hearing Reading and Writing”, “Harmony, Counterpoint, Accompaniment”, “Playing Accompaniment”, “Musical Styles”, “Turkish Music Poly Vocalization”, “Composing Educational Music”, “The piano and Piano Teaching” as well as on the piano lessons
- Should acquire all accessible resources prepared on the piano education methods, and make his or her own archive gain the ones especially at beginner and intermediate levels.
- Should recognize the piano compositions of Turkish and World composers taking place in piano literature, should listen to high level compositions even he or she didn’t work on it, and acquire sound recordings of them for pleasure education of his or her job.
- Should be able to play with all technical details basic songs, exercises and practices taking part in all albums and methods of beginner level, and to maintain this level, he or she should keep his or her knowledge and performance fresh by making exercises and repetitive practices.
- Should develop the deciphering ability on the piano, and should access various resources which contain exercises and practices, and should examine them.

## References

- Çimen, G. (1995). Pişano Bařlangıç Metotlarına Genel Bakıř. Mavi Nota Müzik ve Sanat Dergisi. Trabzon: Selva Yayıncılık
- Ercan, N. (2008). Pişano Eđitiminde İlke ve Yöntemler. Birinci Basım. Ankara: Sözkeseñ Matbaası.
- Fenmen, M. (1947). Pişanistin Kitabı. Ankara: Akba Kitapevi
- MEB, (2006). İlköđretim Müzik Dersi Öđretim Programı. Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı, Ankara: Türkiye
- Sönmezöz, F. (2006). Müzik Öđretmeni yetiřtiren Kurumlardaki Eřlik Öđretiminin Müzik Öđretmenlerinin Görüřleri Doğrultusunda Deđerlendirilmesi. Yayınlanmamıř doktora tezi, Gazi Üniversitesi Eđitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara: Türkiye
- řenel, N. (1983). Müzik Öđretim Yöntemleri. Yayınlanmamıř Ders Notları. İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi
- YÖK, (2006). Müzik Öđretmenliđi Lisans Programı. Yüksek Öđretim Kurulu, Ankara: Türkiye
- Zuckmayer, E. (1970). Pişano Öđretimi Hakkında. Yayınlanmamıř Ders Notu. Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi