



---

---

# Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi

---

---

<http://kutuphane.uludag.edu.tr/Univder/uufader.htm>

## A Research Aiming To Integrate The Online Education Approach Into Collaborative Art Education: Via Method of Swot Analysis \*

H.Turgay ÜNALAN

*Anadolu Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi htunalan@anadolu.edu.tr*

İlk Başvuru: 1.2.2011

Yayın Kabul Tarihi: 24.5.2011

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Anadolu Üniversitesinde Eğitim Fakültesi Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimi lisans öğrencilerinden Bilgisayarla Tasarım I dersine devam eden Resim İş Öğretmeni adayı öğrencinin (22 öğrenci) online ortaklaşa bir etkinliğe katılımları sırasındaki deneyimlerine dayanmaktadır. Bu etkinlik iki dönem halinde yürütülmesi düşünülen bir araştırma projesininin bir ön pilot çalışmasıdır. Öğrenciler ile Bilgisayarla Tasarım I dersi bir dönem boyunca karışık bir öğrenim yaklaşımı kullanımıyla (yüz yüze ve online ders biçimleri birlikte) ikinci sınıf düzeyinde yürütülmüştür. Dersin öğretmeni farklı gruplardan gelen öğrencileri birleştirerek ve işbirliklerini sağlayarak öğrenme düzeylerini arttırmak için çeşitli yöntemler kullanmıştır. Bu çalışma, çeşitli alanlarda kullanılan online eğitim ve swot analzi gibi yaklaşımların sanat eğitiminde de kullanılabileceğini ve belli noktalarda etkinliğini ortaya çıkarmak amacı ile yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** online eğitim ve swot analzi

---

\* Bu çalışma AERA (American Educational Research Association) kongresinde New York-ABD de sunulmuştur.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research is based on the experiences of a group of undergraduate Fine Arts Education (FAE) students at the University of Anadolu (AU) while participating in an online collaborative activity. This activity was part of an action inquiry research project that was conducted over two full cycles. The selected students were taking a one-semester module on second-year level that was presented by using a blended learning approach (combining face-to-face and online delivery modes). The course facilitator had to consider creative ways to induce a diverse group of students to actively participate and collaborate in order to enhance the student learning experience.

**Key Words:** online education art education swet analysis

## **INTRODUCTION**

The basic aim in this study is to integrate the online education to art education utilizing some theoretical approaches. One of these approaches is collaborative education. The collaborative education approach that is used generally and commonly in the other educational departments or disciplines, has been used to enhance the relation between the students doing designs. Actually, the main reason in choosing this theoretical approach is to reduce influence of computer, making the student alone, and to increase the effect between student, occurring in the classroom. In this view, art education is fundamentally element to unity the online education and collaborative approach. So, the interdisciplinary effect is to be aimed. Because of this using the computer classroom and computer lesson in art education is most initially level in the programming and preparing for the lesson.

## **METHOD**

At the beginning of each research cycle, students had to complete a profile questionnaire. Based on the results of this questionnaire, students were divided into groups where they were required to work on an online collaborative group assignment. All the communication for this assignment had to take place online. As reflection is such an important phase of the action inquiry methodology followed, students were directly involved in the reflective phase by means of an additional assignment. This took the form of an asynchronous online group discussion where the students could reflect on the positive and the negative aspects of online collaboration in their group. They also had to make suggestions on how the collaborative experience could be enhanced. As both research cycles involved a relatively large

number of students (15 and 25 respectively), a huge amount of feedback was received.

### Swot Analysis of The Current Approach

The first step was to analyze the positive and the negative aspects of online collaboration as identified by the students in their reflections and to incorporate these comments into a SWOT analysis. The identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the approach are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1:** SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation encouraged.</li> <li>• individual students dependent on group to successfully complete assignment. No need to feel isolated.</li> <li>• Less anxiety for shy students.</li> <li>• Module outcomes successfully attained.</li> <li>• No time wasted in organizing face-to-face meetings.</li> <li>• Student cooperation encouraged.</li> <li>• Workload divided among students.</li> </ul>	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Develop collaborative skills needed for future assignments.</li> <li>•Good/positive communication resulted where group members posted timely responses. Can help to strengthen group.</li> <li>•Meet new people - strengthen personal relationships/social interaction.</li> <li>•Stimulate activity.</li> <li>•Stimulate motivation.</li> </ul>
<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All the groups did not work together as a team.</li> <li>• Decisions made without group consent.</li> <li>• Inactive and non-participating individuals have a direct negative effect on the group. (Put burden/pressure on group, delay group work.)</li> <li>•No face-to-face contact between group members.</li> <li>•No immediate response due to asynchronous nature of discussions. Difficult to clarify group issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Actions (no action) of individuals can demotivate the rest of the group.</li> <li>•Assignment specifications not followed.</li> <li>•Internet access needed.</li> <li>•Lack of E-knowledge (Discussion forums).</li> <li>•Lack of interest.</li> <li>•Lack of planning on students' side.</li> <li>•Lack of the necessary "group skills".</li> <li>•Reluctance to participate and work in groups.</li> <li>•Reluctance to work in unfamiliar, diverse groups.</li> </ul>

### DISCUSSION OF SWOT ANALYSIS

The online collaborative approach presented an attractive set of strengths, as identified by the students themselves. Through their

asynchronous interactions they were not only communicating and having fun, but they also (unknowingly) became active participants in their own learning experiences (cf. Browne, 2003).

Although it was a collaborative assignment with specific group deadlines, each individual could interact according to his/her own schedule to fulfill individual responsibilities. Being part of a group meant that they never had to feel isolated (cf. Fisher, 2003); they had a communication channel through which they could ask for/provide assistance and encouragement when needed. Even though the individual work load was reduced, students still managed to attain the module outcomes. Additionally, no time was wasted on scheduling face-to-face meetings. The asynchronous nature of the discussions also meant that students had time to reflect before they participated, which could lead to less anxiety for students with less dominant personalities.

Although some of the weaknesses (e.g. lack of face-to-face contact) are not very serious and can easily be addressed, some of the identified weaknesses can have a negative impact if they are not remedied in future assignments. As soon as individuals delay the project by not keeping to deadlines and specifications, the rest of the group are likely to become frustrated and lose interest in the assignment. This can lead to the group being unable to successfully complete the assignment, which will result in a failed collaborative attempt.

## **ONLINE COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY IN LITERATURE**

Technological advances today have led to the appearance of various tools and their use in education, which, in turn, have contributed to the educational environment in terms of their own physical and educational properties, and thus provided new teaching tendencies. These tools have been developed to improve permanence and efficiency in learning, and in order to make the most efficient use of them, it has been necessary to prefer multimedia with many tools rather than classes in which a single tool is employed. Researches and ideas on areas such as educational environment and use of technology in education reveal that the use of multimedia is a common necessity among all levels of education (Altınışık Orhan, 2002; Numanoğlu, 1993; Günter, 1994)

The opportunities presented by an online collaborative activity resemble those identified in literature. Such an activity has the potential to help active participants improve their critical thinking (Pallof ve Pratt, 2001)

as well as their skills in problem-solving, team working, negotiation, group decision-making and task management (Macdonald, 2003). Collaborative activities can also help to promote deeper levels of knowledge generation (Pallof ve Pratt, 2001; Maconald, 2003), initiative and higher order thinking (McLoughlin, 2000).

Active participation not only helps to increase social interaction and strengthen personal interaction (Van Eijl ve Pilot, 2003), but it can also help to stimulate activity and motivation among the group members. Another major advantage is that participants receive the opportunity to develop skills that they will need in future collaborative assignments (Macdonald, 2003). Classes in which traditional methods are applied fail to generate personal motivation in students. Since online collaborative activity provides motivation for different learning styles and abilities, it makes possible for students to learn in their own learning style, and therefore supports the individualization of learning (Altınışik ve Orhan, 2002).

Some of the threats identified (see Table 1) have the potential to derail any collaborative attempt, as also indicated in literature. The crucial ingredient of any collaboration is active participation by all the participants (Kearsley in Kidney ve Puckett, 2003). Most of the strengths and opportunities mentioned before are unlikely to transpire if the participants are unwilling to commit themselves to the collaborative experience. There are numerous reasons why participants might be reluctant to participate. This can range from dissatisfaction with group allocation, or a lack of interest to access problems, or a lack of the necessary collaborative skills. While some students are only willing to collaborate with people they know, others prefer to work on their own because they feel that the group is holding them back. Major reasons for this unwillingness have been mentioned by Altınışik and Orhan (2002) in their study on the effects of the use of multimedia. According to this study, the differences of students, in terms of academic standing, is one of the reasons of the unwillingness. There is also the possibility that individuals might start off feeling very positive about the collaboration, but as soon as they realize that it is not what they anticipated, they start to lose interest. It is apparent that the actions (or lack thereof) of individual participants can easily serve as demotivation to the rest of the group. The lack of proper group planning/strategy seems to be the biggest threat in this regard.

Overall the strengths and opportunities of this online collaborative approach have the potential to be a major enhancement to the learning experience, while ignorance of the identified weaknesses and threats can

lead to failure. In order to create an effective and efficient online collaborative environment, it is crucial to devise ways to eliminate or minimize the impact of these factors.

## **ENHANCING COLLABORATION: WHAT SHOULD BE DIFFERENT?**

The students made various suggestions for improvement of future collaborative assignments. The suggestions were grouped into three categories, namely suggestions for individuals, for the group and for the course facilitator. The main suggestions for each category are listed in Table 2.

It is important that the enhanced collaborative strategy is designed around the current strengths while improvising attractive defensive moves to improve the mentioned weaknesses and lessen the impact of the identified threats. When learning takes place in a blended learning environment, the facilitator has the luxury of combining the best aspects of the online and face-to-face modes to form an ideal blend. Although the online collaborative approach has various strengths, it can be further enhanced by combining it with some face-to-face interaction.

Undergraduate students at the UFS do not have much experience with collaboration and are in most cases not aware of the positive impact collaboration can have on their learning experience. Students need to be made aware of the strengths and opportunities of collaboration and how it can help to enhance their learning experience. They also need to learn how to interact online with their peers (cf. Macdonald, 2003). A face-to-face contact session is the ideal place for such an orientation session (cf. Fisher, 2003). The use of multimedia suggests a more planned way of learning, and addresses more students at the same time (Günter, 1994). The facilitator will have the opportunity to encourage the students (Kelly, 2004) and guide the groups on how to approach the assignment; emphasize certain aspects that need to be considered; and explain the assessment strategy (Fisher, 2003). The orientation session can also be used to allocate the groups and give the students the opportunity to meet their group members face to face.

**Table 2:** Suggestions for future collaborative assignments

For individual students	For the course facilitator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular participation.</li> <li>• Preparation in advance.</li> <li>• Individual responsibility.</li> <li>• Patience with asynchronous environment.</li> <li>• Confidence to speak up and ask for help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator to be more "visible" online.</li> <li>• Individual feedback to groups.</li> <li>• Students involved in group allocation.</li> <li>• Initiatives to increase participation.</li> <li>• Orientation session on use of discussion forums.</li> <li>• More in-class discussions of assignment.</li> <li>• Opportunity for peer evaluation.</li> </ul>
For the group	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular, improved online communication sessions.</li> <li>• Scheduling of face-to-face meetings.</li> <li>• Scheduling of synchronous online meetings.</li> <li>• Development of a group strategy.</li> <li>• Learning from mistakes.</li> </ul>	

Many of the weaknesses and threats identified could have been eliminated if the groups did proper planning (cf. Macdonald, 2003) and if all the students committed themselves to timely and regular online participation (Kelly, 2004). It is suggested that the groups make use of a face-to-face orientation session to discuss the assignment specifications, select a group leader, plan their approach, and agree on group deadlines. Initially, they have devised a group strategy it should be set up in writing and signed by all group members. This code of conduct, as suggested by Browne (2003), will serve as a contract between the group members and should also indicate what is expected of each group member with regard to active participation and individual responsibility. This code of conduct may not only stimulate group activity and motivation, but also increase the group members' level of commitment to the assignment.

Many undergraduate students lack the necessary skills needed to be successful in a collaborative environment. As a result of time restrictions students may have limited opportunities to develop the necessary skills to be successful in a collaborative environment. If the class size and classroom arrangement allows it, group members can be seated together during face-to-face sessions. As students normally do not like to engage in face-to-face discussions with the facilitator, they will be given the opportunity to

participate in small group discussions or tasks during face-to-face sessions. Although these discussions/tasks will relate to the class topic and not to a specific collaborative assignment, students receive more opportunities to interact with their group members and practice their collaboration skills. This can help the groups to form a learning community (Pallof ve Pratt, 2001), which is likely to improve their online collaboration skills.

In addition, there are various actions the facilitator can take to enhance the collaborative experience. Although groups should continue to be small and diverse, all group members should be attending the same classes. A certain part of each face-to-face session can be devoted to discussing and answering group questions regarding the collaborative assignment. As a result of the more easily accessible information, the teacher can be relieved of the burden of transferring, and opportunities of personal contact with students can thus be created (Günter, 1994). The facilitator should also be committed to giving individual feedback to each group at various stages of the assignment, possibly through participation in the online group discussions. As additional motivation for groups, the group that achieves the highest marks for the collaborative assignment could be given the opportunity to present its end-product to the whole class. As part of the assessment, group members should be given the opportunity to do a peer evaluation of their group members' contributions.

Individual and social findings on the use of multimedia correspond to the data that emerged in the theoretical base and application of Özden's case study (2002) on *The Transition from Teacher-Based Learning to the Approach of the Internet-Based Multimedia Creation*. According to this study by Özden, the interactive use of materials has been replaced by the interactive planning of the educational environment, as the constructionist approach, which places the student and the interaction of students on the foreground, has started playing an active and efficient role in the education system.

## **DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION**

It has become clear that the incorporation of student feedback can lead to the enhancement of online collaborative activities. When working with a diverse group of undergraduate students in relatively large classes, a blended approach to collaborative assignments can help to increase the students' level of interaction. Students are given the opportunity to interact



with their fellow-students on a regular basis, while they continue to actively participate in their own technologically enhanced learning experience.

## REFERENCES

- Altınıřık S.& Orhan F. 2002. Sosyal bilgiler dersinde çoklu ortamın öğrencilerin akademik başarıları ve derse karşı tutumları üzerindeki etkisi. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 23.
- Browne, E. 2003. Conversations in cyberspace: a study of online learning. *Open Learning*, 18(3), 245-259.
- Fisher, M. 2003. Online collaborative learning: Relating theory to practice. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 31(3), 227-249.
- Günter D.1994. Çoklu ortamlarda öğrenme. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27(2), Çeviren: Nuray Parlak Yıldız.
- Kelly, H. 2004. Enhancing interpersonal interaction in online courses. *educational technology*, 44(1), 53-55.
- Kidney, G.W. & Puckett, E.G. 2003. Rediscovering first principles through online learning. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 4(3), 203-212.
- Macdonald, J. 2003. Assessing online collaborative learning: process and product. *Computers & Education*, 44(4), 377-391.
- McLoughlin, C. 2000. Beyond the hah effect: Investigating the quality of student learning online. Retrieved 10 April 2003 from: <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/sawd/moconf/mocpapers/moc16.pdf>.
- Numanođlu M. 1993. Eğitimde yeni teknolojiler ve çoklu ortam. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26(1).
- Özden M. Y. 2002. Öğretici tabanlı öğrenmeden internet tabanlı çoklu ortam oluşturmacı yaklaşım Uygulamalarına Geçiş: *Bir durum çalışması. bilişim teknolojileri uşığında eğitim konferansı ve sergisi Bildiri Kitabı* (44-50).
- Pallof, R.M. & Pratt, K. 2001. Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Van Eijl, P. & Pilot, A. 2003. Using a virtual learning environment in collaborative learning: criteria for success. *Educational Technology*, 43(2), 54-56.