

DISTANCE EDUCATION AT THE HUNGARIAN DANCE ACADEMY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The Hungarian government prescribed distance learning for higher education institutions due to the spread of the coronavirus epidemic. Adapting to the situation was challenging at the Hungarian Dance Academy. On the one hand, the development of movement skills was difficult to imagine without personal presence in the specially equipped dance rooms at the University, and on the other hand, no common e-learning practice had existed in the institution before the pandemic. In our research we explored the distance learning and teaching practices developed at the theoretical and practice-oriented dance courses at the Hungarian Dance Academy, as well as the experiences of both teachers and students during the almost 3 and a half months. Instructors (n=65) and students (n=240) completed an online questionnaire on digital tool use and course management, furthermore 13 of the responding instructors also shared their experiences in a structured interview. Most of the instructors welcomed everything they could benefit from distance learning (e.g. creating new curricula, learning about new digital tools, improving relationships with students), but understandably, online distance learning of dance was considered impossible by many. Some students enjoyed distance learning because of their own schedule and the convenience of their home, but there were many critical remarks about its methods.

Keywords: distance learning, higher education, arts education

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government Decree 41/2020. (III. 11.) prescribed a ban on visiting universities for the duration of state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. Higher education institutions had to ensure the continuity of teaching in the form of distance education, which meant that instructors had to switch from attendance-based teaching to online course management within a week.

The Act CCIV on National Higher Education (2011) mentions distance learning as the third among the program delivery modes, in addition to full-time and part-time forms of training. According the law distance education is "a form of education in-

volving the use of ICT based teaching materials, special teaching and learning methods and digital learning materials, based on an interactive teacher-student relationship and independent student work, where the number of contact hours is less than thirty percent of that of a full-time programme (2011: § 108. 44.)". With the help of this conceptual definition the kind of challenges can be outlined that instructors had to face at the Hungarian Dance Academy (hereinafter HDA).

(1) The use of ICT tools for communication, knowledge transfer and course organization was not characteristic at the HDA in a methodologically grounded system, it could only be found in the practice of individual (mainly theoretical) lecturers.

(2) Although the use of external sources appeared regularly in the practice of the instructors (by courtesy of the Vályi Rózsi Library, Archives and Dance Science Research Center of the HDA), modularly structured digital learning materials or own university databases were not available to students and instructors of the HDA.

(3) The form of distance learning course organization is defined in the number of thirty percent of full-time lessons. This type of reduction can not be interpreted in the practical courses of the HDA because most of the exercises (e.g. jumps, group or pair dances) can not be carried out in a home environment with individual acquisition and practice.

The transition to distance learning was organized in several stages at the HDA. Taking into account the suggestions and requests of the maintainers, the HDA first developed an action plan, then in the second step the instructors were prepared to use ICT tools, and finally in the third step each instructor prepared their own course schedule and communication strategy. In addition to the educational organization issues of the study period, a solution had to be found for the specialities of the examination system and the admission procedure, which partly overwrote the previous practice.

The transition to a digital work schedule has been an extraordinary situation for our University. Despite the most thorough planning, we faced a number of challenges, but the period also enriched educational practice with considerable positive experience. The aim of the study is to summarize the experiences of the distance learning period that started in the spring of 2020 and to formulate further development directions.

In the first half of the study, we examine the experiences of the digital teaching solutions in times of COVID-19 both in the Hungarian and international context. Next, HDA's strategy will be presented in detail. Finally, the results of the research entitled "Distance Learning at HDA" will be presented. In the concluding part of the study, the institutional experiences will be summarized by comparing them with the research results already published at the national and international level, and then recommendations will be formulated.

2. INTERNATIONAL DISTANCE TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The challenges by the pandemic situation did not differentiate between countries — universally, at the international level, problems and difficulties emerged that had to be addressed in one way or another. Some of the challenges were the transition from face-to-face education to online education, the changes in measurement and assess-

ment, the semester fulfilment of foreign students who managed to travel home, and the mental status and mental health of students and academic staff (Sahu, 2020).

It can be important to learn about the reactions and actions of international universities because there are presumably some that are worth adapting. In China, for example, Beijing Normal University (BNU) has set up a so-called support team, which was primarily charged with providing support and assistance for the entire university community in the use of online interfaces and online courses. Educational assistants from this team primarily helped students to participate fully in digital education, including those living in poorer conditions. The team was also entitled to gather information about the digital tools used in the online courses, the schedule of the courses, and student readiness. Six weeks after the start of the spring semester, online education was judged to be successful: students enjoyed online learning and educators found that their students are much more active in online space than they were in the classroom (Zhu & Liu, 2020).

At a Spanish university, a study of student achievement was launched, and they wondered whether student performance would improve or worsen as a result of the pandemic. The control group experiment showed that the pandemic had a significant positive effect on students' performance, both in courses where distance course requirements were not changed due to distance learning and in courses where instructors increased the number of students' submissions. As a further conclusion, the researchers concluded that while before the pandemic students did not have a continuous learning strategy (but studied on a campaign-by-campaign basis), they changed strategies due to distance learning, studied and prepared more regularly and thus increased the efficiency of their learning (Gonzalez, de la Rubia, Hincz, Comas-Lopez, Subirats, Fort & Sacha, 2020).

The researches at Hungarian universities focused more on students' reactions and experiences. According to a student survey conducted at Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, the respondents (n=609) were moderately satisfied with distance learning (the average value measured on a scale from 1 to 5 was 2.99). More than 60% experienced a flexible scheduling and the convenience of learning from home, and 40% of the students liked that digital contents and forms of communication can be retrieved at any time. On the other hand, they experienced the lack of social learning support (82%), self-management of tasks (69%), and the fact that there is no real teaching, only tasks and assessments (65%). In the survey, students were also given the opportunity to explain what help they would need in a similar situation in the future. The following were stated: the lecturer should be helpful and available, he or she must respond to feedbacks; the students need more explanations and learning support (online lesson, consultation, shared video, audio ppt); they also need clear, precise, unambiguous instructions for the tasks; the instructors should be flexible, understanding, and patient in handling online interfaces, especially when it comes to meeting requirements (e.g., filling out tasks). The authors drew the main conclusion from the research that the learning-teaching process is predominantly a communication process, and the quality of distance education depends little on digital and technological solutions, but more on the attitude of individuals (Serfőző, F. Lassú, Svraka & Aggné Pirka, 2020). It is also worth hearing the student echo, which comes from a survey conducted by the HÖÖK

(Hallgatói Önkormányzatok Országos Konferenciája=National Conference of Student Councils. Students from 279 departments at 22 universities commented on the impact of distance learning. Only 40% of those who completed the questionnaire (n=17,605) were satisfied with distance learning on the whole, and 65% would prefer traditional classroom lessons. According to 42% of the respondents, distance learning could replace contact hours even after the epidemic situation (HÖÖK, 2020).

In Gócza's (2020) interview, instructors from three art universities told about the losses and joys of the distance learning period in higher art education. Regarding the teaching of movements, Katalin Lőrinc (HDA) said that the major positive outcome of the recent period was that it was possible to analyze individual movements more thoroughly by replaying students' videos, and that the time saved by transport could be transformed into effective teaching. According to Eszter Novák (SZFE, University of Theatre and Film Arts), the students' desire for knowledge has multiplied in the recent period and the lecturers have become better acquainted with the students' emotions and social circumstances. Bocsárdi (University of Arts in Târgu Mureş) emphasized that he had a deeper relationship with the students online, and that his lessons were more flexibly organized. According to Bocsárdi, technology magnifies people's relationship with one another.

On the other hand, all three instructors mentioned as a negative consequence that the improvement and analysis of the submitted materials multiplied teachers' working hours compared to traditional education. Bocsárdi believed that since all students submit video recordings, the format of those resulted in a turn to the language of film. Although conference conversation can be a space for a common experience and community feedback, Novák said that making music together is not possible due to slips, nor is it the basic experience of singing together, and Lőrinc believed that it was not possible to touch each other online. According to Novák, the education of performing arts is basically limited by being online, which is why the shooting of exam films and the preparation for exam performances at SZFE could not be fully realized. In addition, all three lecturers highlighted the excessive and mixed quality of self-representation on social media and the Internet. However, all three agreed that art analysis appeared more deeply during the period of distance education in art higher education.

3. DIGITAL WORKING AGENDA AT THE HDA

3.1. Background - educational methods before the pandemic

Education at HDA takes place in two institutes according to the Bologna system. The Institute for Training Dance Artists has a BSc-training program in different specializations such as classical ballet, folk dance, modern dance and theater dance. The Institute for Training Choreographers and Dance Pedagogues has a Dancer and Coach training program in BsC-level in five specialisations: ballroom dances, commercial dances, classical ballet folk dance, modern dance and theater dance. The Msc-program of this institute is the dance pedagogue training program accredited to five specializations (classical ballet, modern dance and modern ballroom dance, folk dance, dance history and theory). Practice-oriented dance courses and theoretical education appear in the trainings of both institutes.

In dance lessons, movements, touches, continuous individual and community feedback, and imprinting of techniques are the foundation. The evaluation of dance courses mostly involves complex decision-making situations before committees. Most of the theoretical classes are frontal lectures, and at the end of the courses students usually write a paper and take an oral or written exam.

Prior to the pandemic situation, the conscious, planned use of digital devices appeared sporadically at the HDA. Lanszki (2016) has been using digital storytelling in a media literacy course since 2015 to explore students' career motivation. In addition, Lanszki and Bólya (2018) used two types of Learning Management Systems (LMS) on an experimental basis in their English language courses at the HDA to supplement contact hours with multimedia resources and to structure course contents and tasks.

At dance classes, videos on the Internet are shown, and during dance history classes, students watch performances. Lőrinc (2018) used movement analysis with the help of videos as a tool for developing self-reflection.

All teachers and students also have access to scientific and art databases, as well as thematically organized journals and books on dance science and pedagogy.

Right before the outbreak of the pandemic, an Educational Informatics and Methodology Committee was established at the HDA in February 2020, with the aim of organizing the integration of ICT tools into education and coordinating the development and implementation of methodological and conceptual innovations.

3.2. Distance Teaching and Learning in the Spring Semester 2020

As the epidemiological situation arose, the HDA developed a general action plan for the implementation of the basic educational tasks of distance learning in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry in charge. The action plan did not prescribe to educators what platforms to use in distance learning, but they had to set up a timetable and topics (unchanged or modified) for each of their courses in digital education.

In the teaching practice of the HDA, there was no closed Learning Management System (hereinafter referred to as LMS) available to all instructors at that time, and only a few of the instructors used digital tools to support their courses. The Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the HDA responded quickly to the unexpected situation: (1) it prepared a guide for educators on what pedagogical methods and digital tools should be used in distance learning, (2) provided a quick video tutorial for colleagues interested to help them find out using different tools, *fx.* Zoom, Google Meet, or the LMS Course Garden.

As far as the methodological solutions of education are concerned, the transfer of knowledge and the practice were realized in distance learning in three ways:

- Some of the instructors made videos and then emailed those (along with other source materials) or uploaded them to a Facebook group, LMS or a shared folder for students.
- In particular, dance instructors held live classes at regular intervals using a video conferencing tool.
- Some teachers used both solutions: sometimes they shared resources (whether they made their own video or other videos), and at other times they held a video conference class.

The measurement and evaluation was solved by the instructors in the following ways:

- they regularly gave students smaller tasks to solve;
- at the end of the semester a larger assignment was requested;
- the students managed a project;
- the students were examined orally by videoconference;
- the students were examined by an online test.

It should also be mentioned that the exams before a committee in dance rooms or on stage, such as the end-term exams and closing concerts did not take place at all during the epidemic. These could only take place at later times.

4. RESULTS

We considered it important to assess the experiences of instructors of both faculties and students in distance learning in this emergency situation, therefore in April 2020, we launched measurements in both target groups.

An online questionnaire was used in the study. 72% of the University instructors completed our questionnaire (n=65) and 51% of all active students answered (n=240) the questions. This relatively high willingness to respond to a voluntary questionnaire can be considered very favourable.

The questions covered three content units: in the first group of questions, we compared the previously typical use of digital devices with the typical use of digital devices in distance learning; the second group of questions concerned the pedagogical aspects of distance learning; while using the third set of questions, we measured the attitudes towards digital technology and distance learning.

Sorting out the answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, we highlighted 5 items from the online questionnaire and conducted a structured interview with 13 instructors who also completed the questionnaire. Thus, we can supplement the quantitative analysis with additional qualitative data.

4.1. Academic staff

Based on the the trainings of the HDA, academic staff can be divided into 3 major groups according to the type of courses they teach: (1) dance, movement courses, (2) theoretical courses, and (3) both theoretical and dance courses. We used the data on educators as background variables. *Figure 1* shows the proportion of respondents in the three groups.

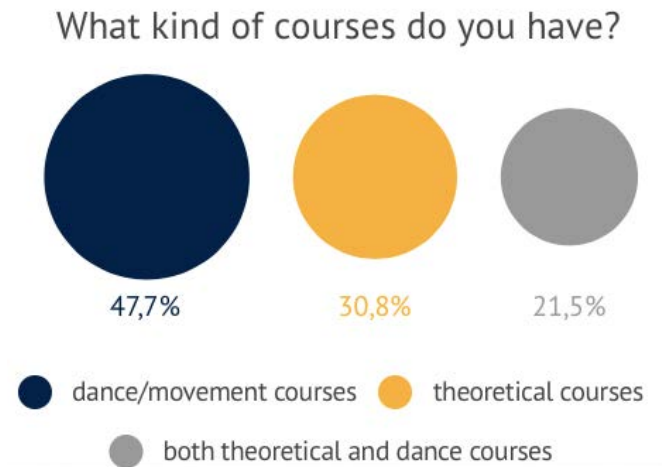


Figure 1: Proportion of instructors according to the courses of the instructors

The first question was what tools were used by instructors before the distance learning situation and what are they used now. On the one hand, it can be seen in *Table 1* that the instructors did not fundamentally change the range of tools because the same two tools were most commonly used before distance learning and during distance learning, but understandably videoconferencing was at a prominent place because of the lack of face-to-face meetings.

Before distance learning		During distance learning	
Videos	55,4%	Videos	81,5%
Word	47,7%	Word	70,8%
Google Drive	35,4%	Conference Tools	60%

Table 1: TOP3 tool used by instructors in different periods

The results in *Table 1* can be explained by the interviews: there was a big difference between the instructors in terms of how open they were to digital devices. There was an instructor who thought that the situation was not suitable for learning how to use new programs, so he applied the digital tools he had used every day so far. This way, the high use of Microsoft Word software could have remained and increased significantly, which can be explained by the fact that the instructors asked the students to prepare a lot of written assignments - not only for theoretical, but dance courses as well.

Although *Figure 1* shows that the use of videoconferencing has increased six and a half times compared to the pre-pandemic period, there were several instructors who consciously avoided synchronic video conferencing lessons. There were those who avoided it because they considered it a much more serious methodological solution to have students continuously submit their tasks via email or LMS. And there were some lecturers of theoretical courses who thought they would leave the use of the video conferencing app to dance instructors because they didn't want students to spend their entire day with conference calls. Instead they discussed students' assignments in the LMS or FB forum. Others felt that this was an opportunity to learn about many new digital applications, so they experienced this period as a time during which their digital competencies developed a lot.

The following figures give further details about the topic above: in the questionnaire the instructors were asked how and with what tools they achieved 3 didactic goals (such as knowledge transfer, practice and assessment) within the two types of courses (dance or theoretical course) (*Figures 2, 3, and 4*).

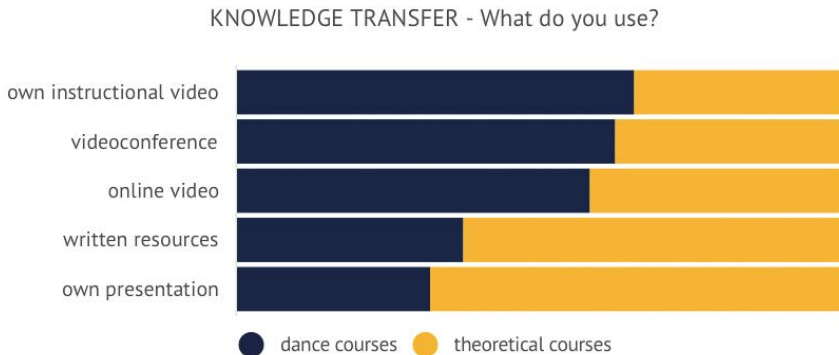


Figure 2: Digital devices used by instructors at the two different types of courses for knowledge transfer

In the case of knowledge transfer, the preparation of one's own instructional video, in which the instructor presents the given practice and series of movements, is of greater importance in dance lessons. In these courses, colleagues use fewer written resources or their own presentations (*Figure 2*).



Figure 3: Digital devices used by instructors for practice at the two different types of courses

For practice, making student videos on dance courses and returning them to the instructor are by far the most commonly used method. In the theoretical classes, the preparation of individual student presentation serves as a way of practicing. In addition, practice with tests is also popular, and the use of forums is similar in both types of courses. This is the online communication field where students and instructors can discuss issues and experiences. However, it is important to emphasize that no matter how much we want, communication in the forum does not start on its own on the course surface of an LMS, but it is explicitly necessary for the instructor to manage it in a planned and continuous way until students become accustomed to it. Students create and run a communication interface for themselves without the instructor in parallel, if the LMS-forum is not a well-functioning channel where answers and questions can arise.

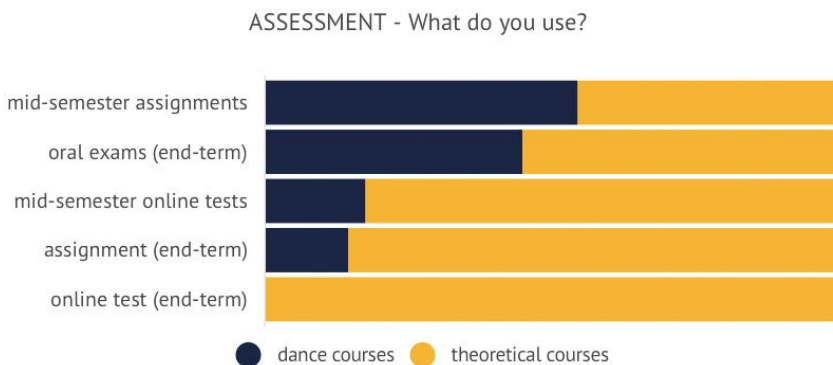


Figure 4: Digital devices used by instructors for assessment at the two different types of courses

According to *Figure 4*, smaller mid-semester assignments are preferred among instructors for both course types, but in addition, many take exams at the end of the semester, both in writing and orally. The difference between dance and theoretical courses is most evident in the use of written assignments and online tests because these assignments can not be used in dance courses.

It is a particularly positive result that the implementation of distance learning in this form was mostly considered effective by the instructors. Instructors of dance courses rated the effectiveness of education on average 4.75 (median=5) on a scale from 1 to 7. The instructors of the theoretical courses indicated a much higher efficiency on average 5.49 (median=6).

In the interviews, the issue of effectiveness was discussed in more depth. It turned out that although the interviewed instructors really considered the completion of the semester to be quite successful compared to the circumstances, there were some factors that strongly influenced the feeling of effectiveness:

- The presence of the teacher can not be replaced by anything, the **lack of personal contact** sometimes gave the feeling that the pedagogical work was not effective. The instructors told that the explanation and correction of assignments can be easily communicated during contact hours, which is a long correspondence and an increased workload for the instructor in distance learning. Humor and meta-communication occur in live university lectures, and questions are answered immediately by the student. All of these are non-existent, or only to a limited extent in the distance learning framework.
- The **instructor does not receive immediate feedback from students** as to whether they have understood the curriculum or the task. During distance learning, the instructor can only start from the fact that the student's submitted solution was correct and creative, and how he / she performs in an examination situation. Even in a theoretical lesson using a video conferencing app, the majority of students turned off their cameras, creating a sense of uncontrollability in the instructors. Some mentioned that students could not be called either as in attendance education, because many times they did not even respond to the request.
- **In case of dancing, efficiency is affected by the lack of space, the floor, a bar of the right height or, a mirror.** According to one ballet master, even the whole posture can slip away from a poorly executed grip, while it is very difficult to instruct young students from a distance, as their body consciousness is not yet developed enough to be able to be corrected along distant instructions.

During the many attempts, creative solutions were created that are worth sharing among the instructors so that others can benefit from them and, if necessary, can adapt the good practice to their own group of students.

- A classical ballet instructor tried to maintain the effectiveness of her contact lessons by creating a **methodological curriculum package** by providing music and methodological additions to the exercises and thus recording each topic. Pre-service teachers received the modules with gratitude and took advantage of being able to look back at it at any time. Their submissions were also creative and professional, so the effectiveness of the methodology lesson increased, according to the instructor.

- Another instructor solved the classes of young classical ballet students by a video conference call. With the permission of the parents, three lessons per week were recorded, and based on the videos, the students wrote an **individual movement analysis diary**. The goal of the instructor with this task was to develop the body awareness through students' self-reflection and self-correction. With this method, the instructor observed less class conflict and more progressive development, so he was able to record efficiency in this area as well.
- An instructor in folk dance methodology has developed curriculum materials for distance learning that can be sent to students online in the normal educational order as well. The huge benefit and professional efficiency-enhancing power of this will be reflected in the fact that **the instructor and the students will have more time in contact hours to discuss issues related to pre-posted videos** (see mirrored classroom methodology).
- A ballroom dance instructor also tried to replace the space caused by the lack of physical dance with something else, and provided space for students' creativity and the analysis of emotions through images and video. "In ballroom dancing, it's like a man who would make the table DIY and the woman would lay it. Understanding the action and reaction is very important in ballroom dances: the man is in the lead, followed by the woman. Since it was not possible to dance now, I tried to show these characters with videos to understand the concept of partners in ballroom dancing." The tasks were replaced by **analyses of male-female relationship characteristics** in ballroom dances. „I didn't fill the materials into their heads through a funnel, but I lit the torches and they blazed."

Despite the difficult circumstances and the necessarily rapid transition, the instructors seem to have adapted well to the unexpected new situation. But the extent to which this caused difficulties for instructors could be indicated on a scale of 1-9. There is a significant difference ($p=0.004$) between the 3 subgroups according to the type of courses taught. Dance courses were experienced by instructors as the most challenging transition to distance learning (average=7.23) and compared to this, theoretical course instructors treated it as a slightly higher than average challenge (average=5.5). Instructors who conducted distance learning in both types of courses felt the least challenging transition (mean=4.79). Presumably, those who teach both theoretical and dance courses may have a very broad repertoire of teaching methodologies, and this may explain why this group of instructors felt the least challenging transition to distance learning.

From the responses to one of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, we got further details about the nature of these challenges. The instructors mentioned ($n=7$) as a positive phenomenon that they had to catch up and thus develop their digital competence. One teacher also found it a positive challenge to deepen their theoretical knowledge, to develop digital curricula or to have a more personal relationship with students. Among the negative challenges, communication difficulties were most often mentioned which were mostly in the case of task-related feedback. Several technical challenges mentioned before (poor software environment, audio and video delays in video conferencing), as well as personal issues such as tiring delays in working time frameworks or administrative difficulties, were also mentioned.

In another open-ended question, we asked whether instructors had a specific digital teaching tool or method depending on student age, training content, or level of training. Only 10% of respondents answered this question. Some mentioned shorter individual consultations, some said that students' individual data gathering could be successfully applied at all levels of education. One instructor reported that small group project work also works in a digital learning environment. And two instructors made a thematic video series for the students. Perhaps the inadequate questioning caused the interviewed colleagues to answer the question inaccurately, as the question was whether the age of the students, the level of training or the content of the curriculum influenced which digital tool or method could be used. Unfortunately, we do not get satisfactory answers to this.

The subsequent open-ended question, which explored the positive and negative effects of distance learning, was answered by 70% of respondents (46 people).

+	-
active, motivated students (7)	it is impossible to teach pair and formation dances (6)
the students are more committed, more responsible (6)	students are demotivated due to lack of personal contact (4)
more honest relationship with students (3)	increased workload (4)
the novelty is inspiring (3)	only keeping up one's level is possible (3)
creativity, working together (3)	passivity (3)
students' adaptation, collaboration (2)	unreliable internet resources (2)
self education (2)	home conditions (2)
to strive for conciseness (1)	problematic feedback (2)
individual development (1)	cheating on the tests (1)
behavior improved (1)	disturbing sounds (1)
	untraceable student activity (1)
	weaker student attention (1)
	weak software environment (1)
	student-teacher relationship weakens (1)
	the difference between students has increased (1)

Table 2: Positive (+) and negative (-) effects of distance learning by instructors

With regard to the positive and negative effects, the question inevitably arises as to whether a suddenly introduced distance learning necessitated a modification of the original subject matter of the courses. Several instructors indicated that teaching of certain parts of the curriculum seemed impossible or that just keeping up levels was possible (Table 2). The interviews revealed that the instructors did not dare to start teaching new material, instead maintaining physical fitness and keeping up the level was the primary goal in the classical ballet lessons. Similarly in ballroom dancing, the framework of the dances remained the same, however, the instructor entrusted the figurative tasks more to the creativity of the students. The modern dance instructor also made a big change in his subject and put more emphasis on theoretical elements in online dance education. As for the theoretical instructors, some of them did not change the subject matter of the course at all, or most only to a small extent.

Summarizing the opinion of the target group of teachers, the positive need was mentioned by all the interviewees that they would like to **use the fruits of the work during distance learning in the future** as well. One instructor suggested that instructors should send smaller tasks on a regular basis throughout the semester in the future, as this would better aid objective assessment than the achievement measured only once at a traditional oral exam which is misleading in many cases. Two other instructors recommended the introduction of blended education after the epidemic period. Similarly, instructors who also had theoretical and dance courses would like to use their methodological innovations developed during the quarantine period.

4.2. Students

240 of the University's students filled in the questionnaire, about whom we know the following based on the background questions:

- in terms of age groups, it can be said that more than half of the respondents (51.7%) are between 18 and 22, and a further 35.8% are between 23 and 29;
- there are respondents from all fifteen specializations, but the largest proportion of them were folk dance students from the Dance and Coach Bsc training (24.6%).

4.2.1. Use of digital tools

The informal feedback of the students revealed that the obligatory use of many different online interfaces was very disturbing for them in order to complete the courses successfully. The figure below shows how many different online interfaces they had to use. The proportion of those who said it was necessary to use 5 or more surfaces was quite high (45.2%).

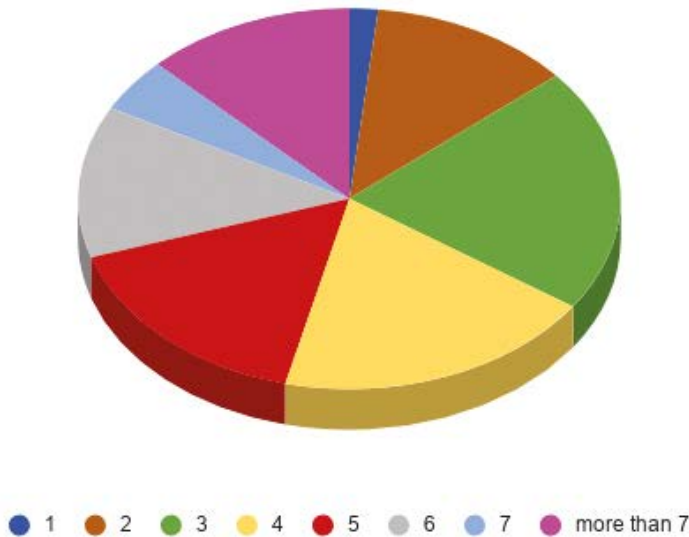


Figure 5: Number of digital interfaces used by students to complete the courses

Regarding the use of tools, we also wondered whether distance learning has changed the range of digital tools that students have actively used for studying. It was surveyed, as with the instructors, what tools had been used in the courses before and what were used now.

Of those previously used, Word (73.75%), Facebook Group (72.5%), and a video sharing platform (YouTube) (65.42%) were the most frequently mentioned. In distance learning, Word retained its leading position (89.58%), but it was preceded by two other tools used by almost all respondents in distance learning: video conferencing (95.42%) and LMS (92.5%). The largest increase in usage, based on student responses, was for video conferencing (38 times higher than before), but self-video production also increased almost 6-fold and LMS use quadrupled. The surprisingly high proportion of Word is explained here by the preparation of many papers to be submitted here as well, as will be reflected in the further student responses below.

In the student questionnaire, we also assessed the extent to which the successful completion of the courses is influenced by the use of tools, the ability to self-regulate learning or the pedagogical activity of the teacher. The graph below (Figure 6) illustrates the results obtained for this question, separately for the dance and separately for the theoretical courses.

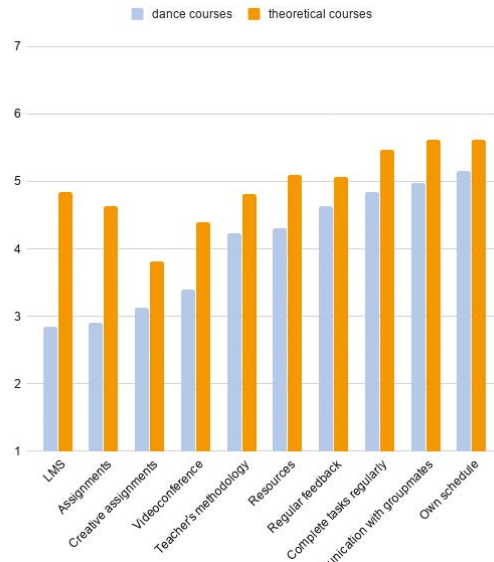


Figure 6: Factors to the successful completion of the courses

What is clearly outlined on the graph is that students consider almost every factor related to theoretical lessons to be just as important as the dance classes. **The most important factors are their own schedule, communicating with groupmates and completing tasks regularly.** (It is also worth mentioning that these 3 factors are entirely the responsibility of the students, so it can be said that the successful completion of the course depends more on them than on the methodology of the teacher.) Other important factors are naturally the **teacher's methodology** or the presence of **video conferencing**. In contrast to this, what is really important and what is not, can be clearly detected in dance courses. **The three most important activities are the same as in the theoretical classes**, but the role of LMS or the role of assignments is much more marginal. Thus, the difference between the two completely different types of courses is that while students consider that the use of LMS and assignments are important in theoretical classes for the successful completion of the course, this does not apply for dance courses. But according to students, the components that fall under individual responsibility are the most important factors.

The above-mentioned question is approached from another point of view: how students think a theoretical and a dance course can be successfully implemented in distance learning. According to the students, **theoretical courses are more effective in digital distance learning**: on the scale from 1 to 7, the average is 5.32 (median=6), while **the distance learning form of the dance courses is almost not considered effective at all by students**, because the mean is 2.44 (median=2) on a scale up to 7. We wrote a lot about the reasons why students may have this opinion in the chapter on the research results of the target group of teachers, as the teachers also perceived the difficulties. The most unpleasant of them was that there was no mention of new material in the dance courses, only keeping the level up was the primary goal.

4.2.2. Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning

With the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, as done with the instructors, we wanted to explore the positive and negative effects of distance learning. 111 students (46.2%) gave a more detailed answer as to the advantages. Outstandingly many (n=42) mentioned that during the distance learning they formed their time schedule flexibly and tailored it to their own individual pace, from which the logical deduction is that students were happy to participate in independent, in-depth research work (Figure 7).

„I was mostly able to organize the learning process according to my own schedule, there were no (often unnecessary) contact hours where I had to sit even though I could optimally prepare for the exam from elsewhere.”

„I found the tasks in which the curriculum was elaborated / marked to be extremely useful and valuable, because we were able to learn the curriculum in our own language, and we could also give feedback on what we understood.”

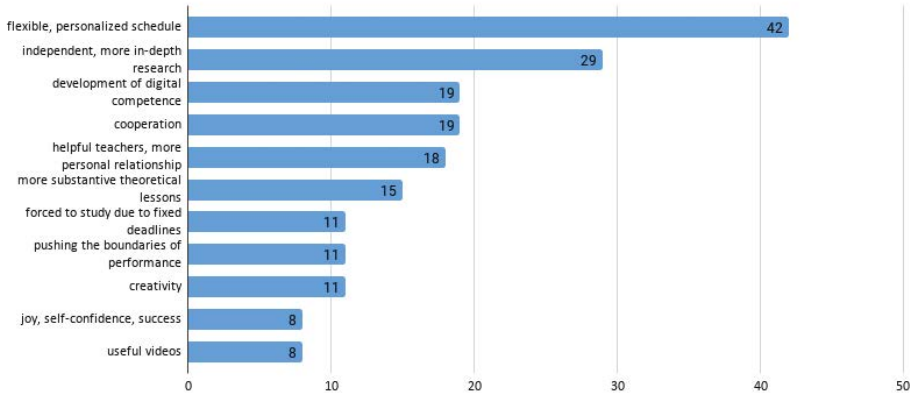


Figure 7: Positive aspects of distance learning according to students

Many students felt that their digital competence developed through the use of digital interfaces during this period (n=19).

“The energy I invested in theoretical subjects is valuable, I keep learning the contents, I don’t just core 20 random items for an exam that I forget the next day. More videos are expected of us, and I have improved in editing and recording them.”

Several students shared not only things about themselves, but also rated the in-

structors: they experienced helpfulness from the instructors (n=18) and organized lesson management and teaching was also appreciated (n=15).

“With the help of conference calls, theoretical lessons can be implemented with the same efficiency, it is easier not to have to travel, we can discuss important contents from home. Theoretical knowledge can be deepened in the same way as at school, communication can be solved.”

“I was very pleased that some educators were able to learn how to manage the Course Garden platform in a short time, so most of them sent the requested assignments there. It was positive for me that some educators had a task in which we had to express our own opinions. In my opinion, if the teachers of the theoretical courses all worked on the same platform, it would have been much easier, but in a short time it was also a successful solution. If this could be solved and developed, even the blocking of theoretical classes could be realized here, as most people come from the countryside.”

In addition to a lot of positive feedback, the HDA also received negative feedback on distance learning (Figure 8). Knowing and processing these data gives the institution and its staff the opportunity to develop in the field of educational organization or administration.

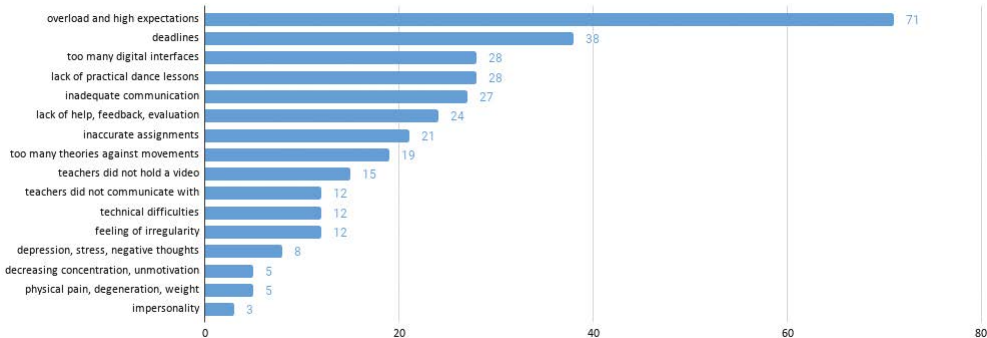


Figure 8: Negative aspects of distance learning according to students

Most students complained of overload and high expectations (n=71).

“I finish the semester of a part-time training like a full-time student, because for about 2 months I have been forced to do my homework from morning till night. If I missed a day, I slipped my deadlines that arrived on 4 different surfaces and it was hard for me to follow the tasks.”

“I don’t know how much communication between our teachers was possible, but it would have been essential anyway, as virtually every instructor sent out their assignments according to their own train of thought. With this in mind, we were given 5-10 assignments at a time for one or two weeks, followed by a longer break, and we were given the tasks in blocks again, not on a day-to-day basis. These tasks did not take 1-2 hours to complete (there are exceptions), most of the time I had to work 3-4 or even 5 hours.”

The answers quoted from the above students show several problem areas, one of them is assignment overload. In addition, the difficulty of using **too many digital interfaces** (n=28) or **inadequate communication** (n=27) appear as negative characteristics in several responses.

„Information from educators scattered on multiple platforms, which is almost completely opaque, as well as requesting projects to be submitted at about the same time, imply that instructors are unlikely to communicate with each other properly.”

“Many times I didn’t get some important information because the teachers advertised the dates of the tests or assignments at the wrong place. It would have been good if teachers had used a common system.”

It will be very interesting and especially important for the future to explore students’ knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards distance learning. Many have expressed critical opinions concerning some teachers’ approach, whether that can be considered distance learning at all. Such is the complaint that the teacher did not hold a video conference (n=15) or that the timetable was terminated, which caused a feeling of irregularity (n=12).

“It’s not distance learning to sprinkle students with all sorts of assignments! I sit in front of the machine from morning till night, causing my eyes to dry out and my head to ache. The submissions do not help complete the exam period, in my opinion. Classes held online contribute much more to successful exams! Unfortunately, quite a few teachers have chosen videoconferencing.”

“Most of the theoretical lessons were not held online, instead we were given readings and presentations, which often required a lot more investment of time and energy than attending a one and a half hour lecture. Most of the theoretical lessons, in my opinion, could have been fully held online as well, yet very few undertook this. Compensating for the lack of well-summarized material told by the lecturer, acquiring information from other sources requires an enormous amount of energy.”

5. CONCLUSION - DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The results obtained, especially on the student side, are in many cases consistent with other research findings cited in Chapter 2. At ELTE TÖK, for example, students experienced distance learning in a similar way as at HDA: “there is no real teaching, only tasks and accountability”. But the results of the HÖÖK research are also similar

(without exact numbers) in the opinion of HDA students, according to which 42% of students consider contact hours to be substitutable with distance learning.

The HDA can learn a lot from the extraordinary distance education situation caused by the pandemic: students, instructors, administrative staff and heads of institutions alike. After all, on the one hand, there were positive operational features that we knew little about before, and on the other hand, many areas were revealed where we need to develop and improve in operation and education.

Theoretical education at the HDA, as at other universities, could be replaced in part or in whole by distance learning, which is likely to work very effectively if the results of the current research are consciously used in our future work. Even if this does not happen, we made progress during these 3 months in the practice of instructors' use of digital tools and, in many cases, in the development and systematization of teaching materials. All this created a favorable basis for moving towards blended learning in the next academic year, unifying the use of LMS.

However, besides the favorable change in theoretical education, dance education, which determines the essence of HDA, was greatly damaged during distance learning. We have seen how many difficulties have arisen in this field, which can not be changed in contrast to the difficulties encountered in theoretical classes. After all, we can not influence students' home, which may be an unsuitable environment for dancing, and we can not teach dance itself without physical contact.

According to the instructors' interview, the students' initial enthusiasm and motivation decreased in direct proportion to the time spent during the pandemic. Because "nothing replaces a teacher's personal charisma. There's no Zoom that would come through that I'm standing there and five are sitting around me. There is no substitute for this. When we're in a workout, the adrenaline is at its peak, we move and the music plays, and I say something in the meantime. And now everyone is sitting at home on their couch with a pulse of 50, and so the message doesn't come through like in a three-dimensional situation."

Whether we are talking about teaching theoretical or dance courses, there is also a need to reflect at the institutional level on the experiences of the students and their instructors, according to which communication and students' individual work were very poor. The reason for this was stated by an interviewee as follows: in traditional education, "**for students, there is only input, information goes in one direction, they sit quietly in class, the teacher delivers the material, and they just have to digest it. They get the stimulus and that is it. In online education, however, there should be two-way communication, but for students this is an unusual situation.** For most dance students, dance is like learning English, but they have only a passive vocabulary. They understand everything but can't speak. It would be good if they dared to make mistakes, ask questions, combine things, discover creativity."

Based on the results, at least three educational organization proposals can be formulated, which can make our educational work more effective in a similar situation, but even in blended education. These are the following:

1. The use of a unified, closed LMS aimed at reducing the number of platforms, thereby enabling smooth and regular communication and learning management between instructors and students.

2. Organizing education and mentoring on the use of digital tools embedded in the methodology for both teachers and students.
3. Regular meetings by organizational units or between teachers of the same students, in which instructors can share individual good practices, as well as discuss problematic situations and review students' learning progress.

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