

***CALL FOR RETHINKING ON FASHION DESIGN EDUCATION IN THE  
ERA OF POST-PANDEMIC: Insights from Turkey***

**Convocação para reflexão sobre educação de design de moda na  
era pós-pandêmica: Insights da Turquia**

***POST-PANDEMİ DÖNEMİNDE MODA TASARIMI EĞİTİMİNİ YENİDEN  
DÜŞÜNMEK: Türkiye'den İçgörüler***

Şakir Özudođru<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in Communication Design and Manegement at Anadolu Üniversitesi (2019); Master's degree, Fashion/Apparel Design at Anadolu Üniversitesi (2008); Head Of Department at Eskişehir Technical University; Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5451-1971>; email: [sharcho@gmail.com](mailto:sharcho@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*In this study, the benefits and challenges of remote education in textile and fashion design are examined. The case of the study is Department of Textile and Fashion Design, Faculty of Architecture and Design in Eskişehir Technical University, Turkey. The data is collated through many assessment meetings with academics, students, and top management held during and after the pandemic, as well as personal experiences as a manager and faculty member, plus varied unstructured interviews with academicians, undergraduates, management, and other employees. The meeting and interview notes were transcribed and analyzed by descriptive analyses. As the result, critical insights from various aspects and a SWOT analysis of remote education activities performed during the pandemic are provided.*

**Keywords:** *Fashion design education, Distance education in design education, Education in the post-pandemic.*

## Resumo

*Neste estudo, os benefícios e desafios da educação à distância em design têxtil e de moda são examinados. O caso do estudo é o Departamento de Design Têxtil e de Moda da Faculdade de Arquitetura e Design da Universidade Técnica de Eskişehir, na Turquia. Os dados são coletados por meio de muitas reuniões de avaliação com acadêmicos, alunos e alta administração realizadas durante e após a pandemia, bem como experiências pessoais como gerente e membro do corpo docente, além de várias entrevistas não estruturadas com acadêmicos, alunos de graduação, administração e outros funcionários. As notas do encontro e da entrevista foram transcritas e analisadas por meio de análises descritivas. Como resultado, são fornecidos insights críticos de vários aspectos e uma análise SWOT das atividades de educação remota realizadas durante a pandemia.*

**Palavras chave:** *Educação em design de moda, Educação a distância na educação de design, Educação após-pandemia.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic that appeared in Asia in 2019 September and disseminated to various parts of the world (WHO, 2020), many schools at all grades around the world have had to restrict educational activities. Later, education has been continued through the tools of remote education (DANIEL, 2020; HAMUTOGLU, 2021). At the end of 2020, face-to-face education activities stopped or were interrupted in 169 countries (UNESCO, 2020). Turkey was among the 169. When the pandemic spread in the country, at first, educational activities at all levels was ceased, then referring to the principle of “education right” (BOZKURT, 2020, p.114), education and training were continued by distance and online learning tools. In the literature, the learning/teaching activities used during this period are called “emergency remote education.” It is underlined that emergency remote education is unsystematic and spontaneous education organization which should be considered as a crisis’s result and solution. A body of literature marks on the difference between emergency remote education and distance education. (BOZKURT et al., 2020; HUDGES, et al., 2020). Since the process has been witnessed forced the institutions and educators to adopt the tools of remote education, it is hard to claim that educators and students were ready to adopt and employ distance education strategies into their educational process. The differences between emergency distance education and education are shown in Table 1.

Table 1-Differences between emergency remote education and distance education

Emergency Remote Education	Distance Education
Obligational	Optional
Focused on finding temporary solutions	Focused on developing permanent
Reactional decisions and applications	Planned, systematic decisions and applications
Physical distance	Physical, interactive, and psychological distance

From: (BOZKURT et al., 2020, p.117)

As illustrated in the table, emergency remote education was utilized as an obligation. In this process, the focus was on finding temporary solutions for small and medium scaled crises and educational activities were shaped by daily basis decisions made by administrators of educational institutions. Educators found themselves in an educational environment they never experienced. While they were trying to support remote teaching strategies developed daily basis by top management (ÇETİNKAYA, 2020), they were required to deve-

lop their personal strategies. Students found themselves in the same situation. Therefore, emergency remote education applications can be handled as a tremendous social experiment varying from country to country, institution to institution.

At the beginning of the pandemic, higher education institutions took a break from the education in Turkey. Later, referring to the order of Higher Education Council, institutions started their educational activities in the frame of emergency remote distance education, particularly employing online applications to teach the lessons conventionally. In the press release given by the president of the Higher Education Council of Turkey, Mehmet Ali Yekta Saraç, it is stated that the theoretical course in the training-based programs would continue with remote education methods by utilizing online means, but the practice-based courses would be given after the pandemic to compensate the insufficiencies. However, the effects of pandemic did not decrease during the academic year, thus all courses were operated online. The materials, environment, and methods of distance education should be designed and developed carefully. However, during the remote education process, the stages of planning and designing were too short. At the first stage, a lot of institutions and tutors continued their face-to-face curriculum on online applications such as Zoom, Hangouts, and Teams on the platforms provided by universities. And most of the tutors uploaded conventional teaching materials like Power point slides, Word documents, and Pdf files to the modules (HAMU-TOGLU, 2021, p.104). A bunch of distance education researcher claim that in the era of post-pandemic, our understanding of education would change, experiences earned during the pandemic would affect our style of learning and teaching, and a blended education model based on mix of face-to-face and remote education would rise.

In this study, the benefits and challenges of remote education in textile and fashion design are examined. The case of the study is Department of Textile and Fashion Design, Faculty of Architecture and Design in Eskişehir Technical University, Turkey. The data is collated through many assessment meetings with academics, students, and top management held during and after the pandemic, as well as personal experiences as a manager and faculty member, plus varied unstructured interviews with academicians, undergraduates, management, and other employees. The meeting and interview notes were transcribed and analysed by descriptive analyses. As the result, critical insights from various aspects and a SWOT analysis of remote education activities performed during the pandemic are provided.

## 2 INSIGHTS FROM AN INSIDER: THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF REMOTE EDUCATION IN TEXTILE AND FASHION DESIGN EDUCATION

### 2.1 The Case: Department of Textile and Fashion Design, Eskişehir Technical University

The case of the study, Department of Textile and Fashion Design, was established as part of the School of Industrial Arts in Anadolu University in a medium size, student city at central Anatolia, Eskişehir, under the name of the Department of Fashion Design in 2021-2002 academic year. In 2018, four departments, Fashion Design Department, Interior Design Department, Industrial Design Department, and Architecture Department, were gathered under the roof of Architecture and Design Faculty by council of minister's decision. In the same year, Anadolu University was divided the universities as many universities in Turkey. The faculty of Architecture and Design was incorporated into Eskişehir Technical University, which was a part of Anadolu University. With the updated organizational structure, the Fashion Design Department needed to update itself. The curriculum of the department had mostly focused on clothing design, including compulsory courses Fashion Design, Pattern Application, and Fashion Illustration. In renewed curriculum under the name of Textile and Fashion Design, courses on textile design such as Introduction to Textile Design, Dyeing Technics, Fabric Construction, Printing Technics and Woven Design were added as compulsory ones. As a necessity of 21st century, compulsory courses on general knowledge, such as History of Civilization and Art History, were added to the curriculum. Also, to improve analytical thinking skills of pupils, Design Research was added as a compulsory one. Plus, we changed the structure of selective and vocational selective courses. Since courses like Textile Sustainability and Textile Handcrafts were formed to rise awarenesses about the importance of sustainability and cultural inheritance in textile and fashion sector, courses like Design Culture and Creative and Critical Thinking were added to the curriculum to boost the creative, critical, and flexible thinking abilities of pupils. During preparing the curriculum of the Textile and Fashion Design Program, we examined curriculums of national and international alike programs, considered the expectations of Council of Higher Education in Turkey and the mission and vision of the relatively new university and the necessities and expectations of external stakeholders. Thus, the structure of the curriculum transformed into a program providing required knowledge and abilities of textile and fashion sector from a simple clothing design program.

### 2.2 Views on Remote Education during the Pandemic and Experiences

First, to define the textile and fashion design education, we can state that educational textile and fashion design programs concentrate on training-based courses requiring atten-

dance and practicing in a sufficient atelier environment. Besides, these programs include theoretical-based courses such as the history of civilization, art history, aesthetics, creative thinking, branding, and entrepreneurship. Graduates of these programs struggle in a highly competitive sector need not only perfection in vocational knowledge and competence but also skills of analytical thinking, social networking, basic knowledge of marketing and management, and a passion for hard working.

Basically, we may separate the educational process into two main branches as vocational education and social preparing in textile and fashion education. To maintain a healthful and beneficial distance education in such programs, these two branches should be harmonized through a rigorous planning. Course contents should be formulated systematically for distance education, and these contents should be tailored in the light of program outputs.

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As a preparation for shaping our programs to blended education, in advance, training-based and theoretical-based courses are required to be restructured to cover remote learning activities. Training-based programs like textile and fashion design are designed fundamentally for face-to-face education, and these programs rarely have a distance education framework. Most of us, as lecturers teaching in such programs, lack knowledge and background in distance education. Thus, we typically build our teaching contents and process upon face-to-face education. Social interaction occurring spontaneously during sharing a physical environment usually cannot be provided with online teaching/learning tools. Most of the professors complain about the lack of interaction. Because of social anxiety and lack of readiness, graduates do not prefer to open their cameras or microphones during online courses. This situation increases social anxiety level of lecturers who have a limited experience of distance education and struggle to accomplish the task of giving the lecture to names on black squares or profile pictures, if they are lucky.

Most of the instructors have completed their own trainings through a model based on mentor-protégé relationship requiring spending long hours together in an atelier environment. They cannot identify how to reconstruct their teaching practices into remote activities except giving homeworks taking remarkably long hours. More importantly, most of them have reasonable doubts about distance education. On the one hand, because of the increasing number of homeworks, students can not complete their tasks on time. On the otherhand, because of lack of knowledge and trust in distance education, lecturers consider online and remote teaching activities simply as a temporary solution for a crisis. Thus, both of the parties experience a lack of motivation.

To overcome the lack of knowledge and motivation, intensive-additional vocational training courses, including practices of online teaching applications, theoretical foundations and good examples of distance education, might be designed for lecturers. Also, designing orientation courses for students can be an option. Because, during the pandemic, students lacking distance education experience have found themselves in an unfamiliar situation and environment, and, depending on chooses of their professors, they had to use various online learning platforms and tools at the same time. Providing a psychological and technical readiness to them might help to reduce their anxiety and improve their motivation. Also, using same distance education platforms and online tools might reduce the excess workload of both students and lecturers. Accordingly, students' workload should be restructured by minding dynamics of online teaching/learning environments.

One handicap occurring both theoretical-based and training-based courses is an insufficient interface. Most of the courses are given in a synchronic manner in which students and professors meet at a time on an online meeting application such as Zoom, Hangouts or Teams. During these meetings, previously prepared course materials are shared with students. During the courses, interruptions causing by power cuts, software bugs, and hardware problems frequently occur. Nor professors neither students have the same opportunities. Because of the socio-economic and geographical differences, students' ratio and quality of live-course attendance, watched records of live-courses and access to supportive course materials differ. Thus, a group of students become disadvantageous. According to sociologist Robert K. Merton's Matthew Effect (1968), advantageous individuals and groups have a higher potential to find themselves in more advantageous situations, or vice versa. We can observe such an effect in all aspects of social life and education is not an exception. However, the gap between technological equipment ownership and digital literacy may boost the effect. Thus, it is vital to mind the echoes of Matthew Effect in education and develop strategies to minimize it when it comes to distance education.

For art and design education, copyright is one of the other challenging issues. In the curriculum of a design education program, it is inevitable to have courses concentrating on

art history, art theory, contemporary design and art events, and so on. In these courses, visual materials are used by necessity. Apart from free royalty materials, lecturing on contemporary developments and today's visual culture demands to cover visuals of copyrighted art and design objects. According to law, it is legal to use such materials during the courses without redistribution. However, in distance education, the courses can be recorded and circulated on social media sites by students or third parties. This situation generates anxiety for educators and institutions. Therefore, those visual and audial materials used for scholarly purposes should be free of royalty to overcome that anxiety.

The problems listed insofar maybe common for most of the educational programs. But the major problem in distance art and design education is coordinating training-based courses remotely. First, these courses need sufficient equipment such as sewing machines, silk-screened equipment, weaving looms, and powerful computers. For example, in textile and design education, the main courses are clothing design, printing design, and weaving design. And it is impossible to provide essential equipment individually to perform the tasks. Also, for courses including applications like dyeing, printing, and washing, an atelier environment becomes a necessity in the sense of work safety and health. Short-term internship applications and an appointment system for managed atelier visits may be temporary solutions for a limited period.

Second, training-based courses are largely formed upon a mentor-protégé model, suggesting a shared time between student and teacher, and learning collectively. However, the physical distance in remote education brings to a standstill to this synergy. It needs further research to reconstruct the model in distance education. This problem also should be considered as a major problem of the future of design education. In today's world, CAD/CAM softwares like Kaledo Lectra, Clo 3D, and Assyst give opportunities to prepare digital patterns, present 3D cloth and textile simulations, and even create virtual fashion shows. Troubles like slowdown of production during the pandemic, interruptions in supply chains and logistics, decreasing in consumption, and so on are the problems of the near future of textile and fashion sector. Many schools in the world have adopted CAD/CAM softwares into their curriculum as selective courses, yet, during the pandemic, such softwares became more popular among the prestigious institutions including London College of Fashion, Fashion Institute of Technology, and Amsterdam Fashion Institute (VAID, 2020). Besides, a bunch of other online materials such as pre-recorded, instructive videos, multiple screen sharing, and step-by-step exercises became common learning materials. In the Textile and Fashion Design Department, Eskisehir Technical University, we employed all the applications listed above. However, now, during the early stages of post-pandemic, we experience that student's motivation aimed at face-to-face applications or remote courses decrease. It seems that a new, updated model for design education is needed.

Last but not least, art and design education is dedicated to teaching materials, how to use, form and transform them. It needs to improve tactile senses of students (ALP, 2009). However, intrinsic properties, such as color, texture, and structure, cannot be narrated properly in online environments. For example, a piece of cloth can be seen in various colors in altered light conditions and on different displays. So, the right knowledge about the material cannot be given. In certain training-based courses, students choose a theme or a design problem to develop design solutions or produce products. But because of the problems mentioned earlier, for the tutor, it becomes a challenging issue to lead the student. This situation brings us to a crucial question: With distance education, can we provide program outcomes and train students to become qualified labor force in the textile and fashion sector? Expressions like “The graduate chooses the proper material for the project”, “the graduate can use the material properly”, and “the graduate can perform vocational knowledge and skills” take place in most of the outcomes of textile and design programs in Turkey. It is vital to provide a collective learning and experiencing space, to be more precise, an atelier environment. Thus, the skills like sewing, modelling, collection preparation, and prototyping cannot be gained through a full distance education process. On the other hand, considering the increasing number of students year by year and insufficient infrastructure of universities, a blended model of design education can be more effective in achieving the learning goals of programs. In such a model, theoretical parts of the courses can be maintained by remote education by supporting live courses and supportive learning materials and training hours can be performed with an appointment system in a face-to-face manner.

During the pandemic, another problem was material supply. Since students live in various cities, each student had limited and different opportunities to access proper materials to complete the tasks. Students living in large cities had a higher chance of finding and buying qualified and various materials, but others living smaller cities or towns had to perform their tasks in a limited range of options, and sometimes there was no mercer or hosiery in their towns. We developed a strategy to transform this challenge into a win situation. When the total closedown was announced, we updated our project-based courses contents, and developed a project aimed to raise awareness on sustainability. In this context, we asked students to find design problems focusing on re-design and re-use. In their projects, they used wasted clothes, textiles and accessorizes and transformed these materials into new, design objects.

The other example of transforming crisis into a win situation is online professional seminars. During the pandemic, it was impossible to invite professionals to our department or organize technical visits. When we realized that in distance education, physical distance is not a matter at all, we held a lot of online meetings with sector professionals and designers. Online meetings and workshops also can be used as a new model for industry and university integration.

## RESULTS

In today's world, information and communication technologies develop rapidly. Before the pandemic, there were experiments on incorporating these technologies with our curriculum. But the pandemic made the process inevitable. In the post-pandemic era, we are forced to restructure and update our curriculum and ways of teaching to include opportunities for distance education and online learning tools. However, this task needs to build a systematic structure through rigorous planning. For art and design education, we have already realized the importance of social interaction and learning together. Now the first mission in front of us is to find methods allowing to integrate the mentor-protégé model into a digitalized environment. To achieve this task, it is vital to gain professors', students' and other stakeholders' trust and improve their motivation. Leading learners to a self-oriented learning model can be seen as a challenging mission at first glance, but it is obvious that conventional methods of teaching are not sufficient for digital natives. With the experience of struggling to maintain educational activities during the pandemic, it can be claimed that distance education activities will always be not only in the middle of our educational processes but also in the middle of our life. In our experience, theoretical-based courses, such as the history of civilization, art history, aesthetics, and so on, became more effective and self-oriented. If we can get rid of our doubts, we can create a self-oriented, self-disciplined, and more effective training-based course structures giving opportunities to students to feel themselves as professionals.

To provide a roadmap, a basic SWAOT analysis of our experience of remote education during the pandemic is shown in Table 2

Table 2 - A SWOT analysis of the remote education of the Department of Textile and Fashion Design, Eskisehir Technical University during the pandemic

Strengths			Weaknesses		
General	Theoretical-based Courses	Training-based Courses	General	Theoretical-based Courses	Theoretical-based Courses
Autonomy in learning  Diminishing in social phobia	Access to recorded live-courses  Self-orientation	Interaction provided via online applications  Practice-based education supported with step-by-step videos	Inequality in technological equipment ownership  Inequality in digital literacy  Screen fatigue	Lack of motivation  Lack of concentration  Social digital anxiety	Being away from atelier environment  Inability to establish mentor-protégé relationship  Interruption in learning together processes

Opportunities			Threats		
General	Theoretical-based Courses	Training-based Courses	General	Theoretical-based Courses	Training-based Courses
Access to information from everywhere  Adaptation to Society 6.0	Being free of psychosocial constraints caused by insufficient infrastructure	Opportunities for establishing new models of design education	Ethical issues  Health issues  Copyright issues  Resistance to change	Diminishing in social interaction  Lack of motivation  Adoption issues	Lack of basic vocational knowledge  Need to a self-disciplined agenda

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