

Evaluation of Clarinet Curriculum in Türkiye: Challenges, Perspectives, and Future Directions

Avaliação Do Currículo De Clarinete Na Turquia: Desafios, Perspectivas E Direções Futuras



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Abstract: This study aims to evaluate undergraduate clarinet curricula at Turkish State Conservatories from the perspectives of students and instructors. The study employs a mixed-methods research design that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches. Within the scope of this research, 6 faculty members who instruct in undergraduate clarinet programs and 35 conservatory students enrolled in these programs across Türkiye were identified. The sample comprises the entire accessible population relevant to the study, thereby ensuring full population coverage. Data were collected through student-administered surveys for the quantitative aspect and semi-structured interviews with instructors for the qualitative aspect. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions, while qualitative data were examined through content analysis. The findings indicate that while the curriculum is generally effective in achieving its objectives, there are notable variations in its implementation across different universities. Additionally, certain

deficiencies were identified, particularly regarding the enrichment of curriculum content and accessibility to teaching materials and instructional resources. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need to develop a standardized clarinet curriculum that can be implemented across all conservatories in Türkiye. This program should be globally integrated while also incorporating and preserving the country's cultural values.

Keywords: clarinet education. conservatory. curriculum evaluation. instructor. student.

Resumo: O objetivo deste estudo é avaliar os currículos de graduação em clarinete implementados nos Conservatórios Estatais da Turquia com base nas perspectivas de alunos e professores. O estudo utiliza um delineamento de pesquisa de métodos mistos, integrando abordagens qualitativas e quantitativas. No âmbito desta pesquisa, foram identificados um total de 6 professores que lecionam em programas de graduação em clarinete e 35 alunos de conservatório matriculados nesses programas em toda a Turquia. A amostra compreende toda a população acessível relevante para o estudo, garantindo assim a cobertura populacional total. Os dados foram coletados por meio de pesquisas administradas aos alunos para o aspecto quantitativo e entrevistas semiestruturadas conduzidas com instrutores para o aspecto qualitativo. Os dados quantitativos foram analisados por meio de distribuições de frequência e porcentagem, enquanto os dados qualitativos foram examinados por meio de análise de conteúdo. Os resultados indicam que, embora o currículo seja geralmente eficaz no alcance de seus objetivos, há variações notáveis em sua implementação nos diferentes conservatórios. Além disso, foram identificadas algumas deficiências, principalmente no que se refere ao enriquecimento do conteúdo curricular e à acessibilidade aos materiais didáticos e recursos instrucionais. Concluindo, o estudo enfatiza a necessidade do desenvolvimento de um currículo padronizado para clarinete que possa ser implementado em todos os Conservatórios Estaduais da Turquia. Sugere-se que este programa deve ser amplamente

integrado, incorporando e preservando os valores culturais do país.

Palavras-chave: educação em clarinete. conservatório. avaliação curricular. instrutor. aluno.

Submitted on: May 31, 2025

Accepted on: October 28, 2025

Published on: November 2025

1 Introduction

Educational programs form the essential foundation of the education system by systematically organizing learning objectives, instructional methods, and assessment strategies (Ebel et al., 2020; Campbell-Philip, 2020). The quality of music education, as established through these structured programs, directly affects the overall performance of a nation's music education system (Kang, 2023). Education and curriculum are in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship that enables the ongoing evolution of both fields (Campbell-Philip, 2020). To enhance and align educational standards with international benchmarks—where appropriate—a comprehensive analysis of the current system's strengths and limitations is indispensable. Accordingly, the evaluation of music curriculum standards has become an area of increasing scholarly interest worldwide (Lawson, 1995; Harden, 2007; Tonni & Oliver, 2013; Kang, 2023).

Within the broader framework of music education, instrumental training plays a central role, encompassing instruction on various instruments—among them, the clarinet, which holds a particularly significant place in the family of wind instruments. Since the 18th century, the clarinet has gained global recognition and has held a meaningful role in Turkish music since the early 20th century (Lawson, 1995).

Due to its widespread adoption, clarinet education has been shaped primarily by the French school tradition, which offers a well-established pedagogical and methodological foundation. While some minor national variations exist, this model remains the prevailing framework for clarinet instruction worldwide (Alderaiwaish, 2013).

1.1 Theoretical Framework, International Perspectives, and Digital Innovations

The evaluation of clarinet curricula in Türkiye gains greater depth when situated within the broader international discourse on curriculum reform in instrumental pedagogy. Across diverse cultural and institutional contexts, music conservatories have undergone substantial reforms to balance tradition with innovation, standardization with flexibility, and national identity with global integration.

International research highlights the enduring influence of the master-apprentice model while simultaneously critiquing its limitations in addressing the evolving needs of contemporary education. Gaunt (2011) underlines that although individualized mentorship remains a cornerstone of conservatory training, reforms are necessary to integrate reflective practice, peer learning, and collaborative performance experiences. These findings align with the situation in Türkiye, where clarinet educators emphasize the importance of stage experience, chamber music, and mental preparation, yet acknowledge ongoing shortcomings in standardized curricular content. In this context, international reform discourse extends beyond pedagogical frameworks, underscoring the need to adapt music education to the transformative forces of globalization. Westerlund and Karlsen (2017) emphasize that instrumental pedagogy must respond to these changes by incorporating diverse repertoires and pedagogical models to ensure that curricula align with the demands of a rapidly evolving professional landscape.

Curriculum reform efforts in Europe, North America, and East Asia reveal common challenges, including equitable access to educational resources, the integration of digital learning environments, and the expansion of the repertoire beyond the Western canon. For instance, Schippers (2009) advocates for “cultural diversity in music education,” promoting curricula that bridge local musical traditions with global standards. Similarly,

Ho (2021) demonstrates how Hong Kong's instrumental pedagogy reform successfully blended Chinese and Western traditions, creating a hybrid model responsive to students' cultural contexts. These perspectives strongly resonate with the Turkish case, where efforts to balance the French clarinet school tradition with elements of Turkish musical heritage remain a central concern in clarinet education. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of blended and digital learning models worldwide, making technological integration an indispensable component of contemporary instrumental pedagogy. Incorporating such innovations into clarinet curricula in Türkiye could enhance accessibility, foster resource sharing, and better prepare students for the professional realities of twenty-first-century musicianship.

Currently, there are 35 conservatories in Türkiye offering Western classical music education; however, only 5 maintain a dedicated Clarinet Art Department. A review of the existing literature reveals that most studies in Türkiye have focused primarily on the historical and technical development of the clarinet and on repertoire analysis (Özparlak, 2020; Sopaoğlu, 2020; Kılıç, 2023; Üstündağ & Kurtaslan, 2024). However, to date, no research has systematically examined the undergraduate clarinet curricula within state conservatories. Accordingly, this study represents a pioneering effort, aiming to make a significant contribution to the development of clarinet curricula in Türkiye. It is expected to serve as a foundational resource for the design of a more comprehensive, cohesive, and globally informed clarinet curriculum.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

This study aims to evaluate undergraduate clarinet curricula in state conservatories in Türkiye from the perspectives of instructors and students. In line with this objective, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the opinions of conservatory instructors and students regarding the four dimensions of the clarinet art department curriculum and its implementation principles and processes?
2. What recommendations do conservatory instructors and students have for the development of the clarinet art department curriculum?

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel design, a mixed-methods approach that allows for the simultaneous collection and separate analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, which are later integrated to generate a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with clarinet instructors to gather in-depth qualitative insights, while survey instruments were used to collect quantitative data from conservatory students. Both data sets were analyzed independently using appropriate analytical techniques for each method. The results were then merged and compared to validate findings across methods and to provide a more nuanced interpretation of the educational practices and perspectives under investigation. The use of this design was particularly appropriate given the aim of capturing both educators' subjective experiences and the generalizable trends reported by students within the conservatory context.

2.2 Study Group

The population of this study comprises faculty members teaching in undergraduate clarinet programs within the music departments of state conservatories in Türkiye, as well as students enrolled in these programs. In total, six faculty members and thirty-five students currently participate in these programs nationwide. Given the relatively small and accessible population, the sample for

this study includes the entire population, and thus, full participation was achieved. Among the six instructors, five were male and one was female. Their academic experience ranged from 6 to 24 years, and all had professional backgrounds as clarinetists in orchestras.

The student participants included nineteen females (54.28%) and sixteen males (45.72%). The institutional distribution of these students was as follows: Anadolu University (n = 3, 8.57%), Dokuz Eylül University (n = 6, 17.14%), Istanbul University (n = 7, 20.00%), Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (n = 8, 22.86%), and Hacettepe University (n = 11, 31.43%).

2.3 Data Collection, Analysis, and Ethical Considerations

The data for the study were collected during the 2022-2023 academic year's fall and spring semesters using a survey and a semi-structured interview form. The researchers prepared both the research and the semi-structured interview form. The survey instrument comprised 24 items and was administered face-to-face by the researchers. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of 17 questions and was similarly conducted in person by the researcher, with each interview lasting approximately 25 minutes. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant ethics committee and all necessary institutional permissions were obtained. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

In the study, the quantitative data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 21.0, with frequency and percentage distributions. In interpreting the quantitative data, the following percentage intervals were used: 0% as "none," 1–9% as "a very small portion," 10–40% as "a small portion," 41–49% as "approximately half," 50% as "half," 51–59% as "slightly more than half," 60–90% as "a large portion," 91–99% as "almost all," and 100% as "all."

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the content analysis technique was employed. Similar responses were grouped into the same categories, and the data were coded by identifying themes.

The coding key was developed by combining the independent coding results of three researchers. In presenting the qualitative data, the themes were organized in tables and supported with direct quotations.

2.4 Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the survey and interview instruments were reviewed by five subject-matter experts—three specializing in Clarinet Performance within Conservatory Departments and two in Curriculum and Instruction from the field of Educational Sciences. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives.

A pilot study was subsequently conducted to test the survey instrument. The reliability coefficient, calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.844, indicating high internal consistency. Additionally, a pilot implementation of the semi-structured interview protocol was carried out before the main data collection. This process aimed to evaluate the functionality, sequencing, and comprehensibility of the interview questions. Minor adjustments were made based on pilot feedback to enhance question clarity and ensure alignment with the study goals.

To ensure reliability in the analysis of qualitative data, inter-coder agreement was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula:

$$\text{Agreement Percentage} = \left[\frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}} \right] \times 100$$

The inter-coder reliability was 92%, indicating a high level of consistency.

3 Findings

In response to the first research question, the survey findings related to four key curriculum dimensions—*objectives, content, teaching and learning processes, and assessment*—are summarized in Table 1.

Regarding the **curriculum objectives**, a substantial majority of students (85.7%) stated that the program meets their expectations. Similarly, 88.6% reported achieving the intended learning outcomes, indicating strong alignment between student goals and the curriculum. However, a minority of respondents expressed concerns: 14.3% felt the curriculum did not meet their expectations, and 11.4% reported not having attained the expected outcomes.

Regarding **the program content**, 74.25% of students found the curriculum and educational repertoire appropriate for their level, while 25.75% disagreed. A notable insight emerged regarding practical skills: a majority (85.7%) reported lacking sufficient training in clarinet reed-making, instrument maintenance, and selection—suggesting a potential gap in technical instruction. In contrast, 14.3% did not perceive this as a deficiency.

Finally, regarding **curriculum diversity**, 82.9% of students expressed a desire for broader course offerings within the clarinet education program. This finding suggests a perceived need for curricular enrichment to meet diverse student interests and career aspirations better, whereas 17% felt the existing structure was sufficient.

Table 1 - Conservatory students' opinions on the four dimensions of clarinet curricula (N=35)

Opinions	Strongly Agree		Moderately Agree		Slightly Agree		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Objectives							
1. The curriculum I am studying meets my expectations regarding my field education.	21	60.0	9	25.7	5	14.3	0	0
2. I believe I have achieved the learning outcomes of the courses I have taken.	15	42.9	16	45.7	4	11.4	0	0

Content	1. The clarinet curriculum and the educational repertoire are sufficient and appropriate for my class level.	14	40.0	12	34.25	9	25.75	0	0
	2. I do not have sufficient knowledge about reed making, instrument maintenance, selection, and usage, and I think receiving training in this area would be beneficial for me.	25	71.4	5	14.3	3	8.6	2	5.7
	3. I believe diversifying the courses in clarinet education at state conservatories would be beneficial.	15	42.9	14	40.0	6	17.0	0	0
Teaching-Learning Process	1. I think the materials I use in my education (methods, books, sheet music, etc.) are understandable.	15	42.9	17	48.6	3	8.6	0	0
	2. I prefer the method books used in my education to be written in Turkish.	29	82.9	3	8.6	1	2.9	2	5.7
	3. The materials I watch and listen to in digital media are helpful for improving my clarinet performance.	20	57.1	12	34.3	3	8.6	0	0
	4. I think I can easily access the materials I use in my education.	5	14.3	11	31.4	18	51.4	1	2.9
	5. The teaching methods used during the instruction process are adequate.	9	25.7	21	60.0	5	14.3	0	0
	6. The physical environment of my school (cleanliness, temperature, lighting) and the available equipment are sufficient for my education.	6	17.1	5	14.3	15	42.9	9	25.7
	7. I believe the educational model applied during my undergraduate studies is sufficient for my post-graduation professional life.	7	20.0	18	51.4	10	28.6	0	0
Evaluation	1. I believe the assessments conducted in our courses adequately measure what we have learned.	12	34.3	16	45.7	6	17.1	1	2.9
	2. I am aware of the grading and evaluation criteria used in our courses.	10	28.6	11	31.4	9	25.7	5	14.3
	3. I experience anxiety during my concert and exam performances.	20	57.1	10	28.6	3	8.6	2	5.7

As shown in Table 1, regarding the *teaching and learning process*, almost all students (91.5%) reported that the instructional materials were clear and comprehensible; however, they preferred that the method books used in education be written in Turkish. A tiny portion (8.6%) stated that they did not have such a need. The data also indicated that nearly all students (91.4%) believed that the digital media they watched or listened to was beneficial to their clarinet practice. On the other hand, slightly more than half of the students (54.3%) reported difficulties accessing instructional materials, while approximately half (45.7%) stated they could access them easily. Regarding the teaching methods used in lessons, most students (85.7%) found the methods appropriate, whereas a smaller group (14.3%) found them not to facilitate their learning. The data further revealed that most students (68.6%) considered the physical environment of their school (cleanliness, temperature, lighting) and the available equipment to be inadequate, while a smaller portion (31.4%) found them sufficient. Finally, most students (71.4%) believed the instructional processes were adequate for their professional careers after graduation, whereas a smaller proportion (28.6%) thought they were insufficient.

As presented in Table 1, regarding the program's *assessment dimension*, most students (80%) believed the evaluations were effective, and slightly more than half (54.3%) stated they were aware of the assessment criteria. Conversely, a small portion (20%) reported that the evaluations were not effective, and approximately half (45.7%) stated that they were not familiar with the assessment criteria. Finally, the data indicated that most students (85.7%) experienced anxiety during concert and exam performances, whereas a smaller portion (14.3%) did not report such problems.

In response to the first research question, the survey responses regarding *the implementation principles and processes of the curriculum* are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - Conservatory students' opinions on the implementation principles and processes of clarinet curricula (N=35)

Opinions	Strongly Agree		Moderately Agree		Slightly Agree		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. The number of weekly lesson hours is sufficient for my education.	12	34.3	12	34.3	11	31.4	0	0
2. I think the technical studies in the repertoire are sufficient for clarinet performance.	9	25.7	15	42.9	10	28.5	1	2.9
3. I believe that implementing separate practice programs for stage performances would positively affect my clarinet education and help reduce stage anxiety	29	82.8	5	14.3	1	2.9	0	0
4. I believe implementing separate practice programs for stage performances would positively affect my clarinet education.	27	77.1	7	20.0	1	2.9	0	0

As shown in Table 2, regarding the curriculum's *implementation principles and processes*, most students (68.6%) stated that the weekly lesson hours and the technical exercises in the repertoire were sufficient for clarinet performance. In contrast, a smaller proportion of students (31.4%) considered the lesson hours and the technical exercises insufficient. On the other hand, the data indicated that nearly all students (97.1%) found it beneficial to participate in activities such as recitals, class concerts, chamber music performances, and workshops in addition to their formal education. Moreover, they believed that implementing separate practice programs for stage performances would have a positive impact on their clarinet education and help reduce stage anxiety.

In response to the first research question, the views obtained from the interviews, categorized under *the themes of objectives, content, teaching and learning process, and evaluation*, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 - Themes obtained from instructors regarding the four dimensions of the clarinet curricula (N=6)

Themes	Frequency
<i>Objectives</i>	
High achievability of objectives	6
Lack of common objectives in the curriculum	5
<i>Content</i>	
Based on the French school of clarinet	4
Sufficiency of course content	6
The importance of solfège, chamber music, and orchestra courses	4
Insufficient emphasis on preparation for stage performance	5
Insufficiency of contemporary music repertoire	2
Lack of common content in the curriculum	5
<i>Teaching Learning Process</i>	
Educator's professional experience facilitating teaching	3
Positive impact of student diversity on teaching	6
Selection of teaching methods according to the student	6
The importance of developing musical expression	2
Positive impact of masterclass participation on students	6
Lack of emphasis on anxiety management within instructional processes	6
<i>Evaluation</i>	
Closed evaluation	3
Open evaluation	3
Evaluation by committee decision	4

As shown in Table 3, within the *theme of program objectives*, all participants stated that, due to the program's long duration, students achieved a sufficient level of proficiency through systematic study. In other words, the objectives of the clarinet education program were largely achieved. Additionally, five participants emphasized that there were differences among conservatories because each institution defined its own educational objectives independently. Some of the views expressed by the instructors on these topics are as follows:

"In Türkiye, the age at which one starts playing the clarinet typically involves about 12 years of education, with the last 4 years being the undergraduate years. By the time students reach the undergraduate level, they have already reached a certain level of proficiency..." (Instructor3)

"I believe that the objectives of the undergraduate clarinet program have been adequately achieved... but the objectives of each curriculum are not the same." (Instructor1)

As seen in Table 3, within the *theme of program content*, four participants indicated that the Clarinet Department curriculum is comprehensive, as it was developed based on the French school, which has a 200-year history. All participants agreed that, in this context, the course content was sufficient. In particular, four participants stated that courses such as solfeggio, chamber music, and orchestra, which are taught as professional courses in conservatories, were beneficial for students. Moreover, five participants highlighted the importance of preparatory studies for stage performance, noting that mental practice activities were not adequately emphasized during actual implementation. Finally, two participants mentioned the lack of a *Contemporary Music Repertoire*, including works composed in the 20th and 21st centuries, stressing that these works should be included to give opportunities to new composers. In this context, it was also noted that the curricula among conservatories were not standardized. Some of the instructors' views on these topics are as follows:

"...since the instrument itself is of French origin, the entire education system is, frankly, based on the French system..." (Instructor1)

"...I believe that clarinet education, together with courses like solfège, chamber music, repertoire study, and orchestra, is highly adequate." (Instructor3)

"There is no unified curriculum among conservatories in Türkiye. This is a very significant issue" (Instructor2)

"...in conservatories abroad, the classical repertoire, which is also what we apply, is almost the same. However, contemporary works by new composers are unfortunately not featured much in our country..." (Instructor6)

As illustrated in Table 3, within the *theme of the teaching and learning process*, three participants emphasized that instruction is carried out through an individualized, master-apprentice model of education, in which professional experience plays a significant role. It was noted that the age at which students begin conservatory education varies across institutions. Therefore, all participants stated that they employed different teaching methods according to each student's perception, age, and individual circumstances, and that this diversity among student profiles enriched the teaching process. In addition, two participants emphasized the importance of posture in clarinet performance, noting that maintaining the correct posture is crucial to preventing potential injuries. They further explained that physical comfort directly influences musical expression, highlighting the significance of proper playing position in the educational process. All participants underscored the importance of stage experience, supported students' participation in masterclasses, and noted that such activities help reduce performance anxiety. On the other hand, all participants also indicated that sufficient attention was not given to anxiety management practices within the instructional activities, suggesting that this aspect of training requires further development. Some instructors' opinions on these matters are as follows:

"We have to explain the same thing to each student in very different ways... Every child understands in a very different way." (Instructor4)

"...masterclasses, both domestically and internationally, play a crucial role in broadening the student's perspective ..." (Instructor3)

"I believe the purpose of education is to perform on stage... Of course, the more you perform, the more you learn to cope with excitement and setbacks." (Instructor5)

As shown in Table 3, within the *assessment theme*, three participants reported that their institutions use *closed assessment* methods, whereas the remaining three reported using *open assessment* practices. In addition, four participants explained that, in critical situations such as student repetition or borderline performance cases, the student's performance is jointly evaluated and discussed by a jury of faculty members, leading to a collective decision. Some of the instructors' views on this topic are as follows:

"I believe that closed grading is more appropriate. This is the method we use." (Instructor1)

"We use open evaluation, where each instructor gives their grade, and the student is assessed accordingly." (Instructor6),

"Grades are given after consultations, with each instructor providing their grade, and the final grade is determined based on the average through discussion." (Instructor5)

In response to the first research question, the views obtained from the interviews, categorized into *themes of student selection, implementation process, challenges faced, and qualifications of graduated students*, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 - Themes obtained from instructors regarding the implementation principles and processes of clarinet curricula (N=6)

Themes	Frequency
<i>Student Selection Criteria</i>	
Compatibility with physical characteristics is important for clarinet performance	6
Having a musical ear	1
Identification of existing health issues in the student	1
<i>Implementation Process</i>	
Sufficiency of weekly course hours	4
Flexibility in extending course hours when necessary	2

<i>Challenges Faced</i>	
Financial difficulties in students' participation in masterclasses	2
Lack of practice rooms and performance halls	1
Difficulty in accessing instruments and instrument parts	1
Difficulty in accessing teaching materials such as sheet music, books, and methods	5
Lack of teaching materials in Turkish	5

<i>Graduate Student Competencies</i>	
High level of musical expression skills	3
Ability to perform the entire repertoire specified in the curriculum	5
Demonstrating effective stage performance	6
Being disciplined	2

As presented in Table 4, within the *theme of student selection criteria*, all participants stated that, during the conservatory entrance examinations, they pay particular attention to physical characteristics such as dental structure, jaw structure, hand shape, and embouchure suitability when selecting clarinet students. Furthermore, one participant emphasized the importance of musical aptitude in admission decisions. Another participant noted that any existing physical conditions of the applicants should be documented, explaining that students whose physical characteristics are not well-suited to the clarinet may experience future health issues or injuries. Some of the instructors' views on this matter are as follows:

“...I pay attention to the jaw structure, mouth structure, dental structure, and finger structure of the person who will play the clarinet; all of these are important.” (Instructor6)

“...for example, conditions like asthma...although we try to pay attention to these issues during selection, since it's not our area of expertise, I believe professionals should document these.” (Instructor5)

As shown in Table 4, within the *implementation process theme*, four participants believed the weekly course hours were sufficient, while two participants considered them inadequate and suggested

that class hours should be more flexible when necessary. Some of the instructors' views on this topic are as follows:

"The class hours are actually quite sufficient. However, occasionally, meeting for an additional 1 or 2 hours outside of class can be enough." (Instructor3)

"...we have 4 hours per week at the undergraduate level... but I believe it would be more appropriate if it were more." (Instructor2)

Within the *theme of challenges encountered*, two participants pointed out that masterclasses are often held abroad, creating financial barriers that limit student participation. Additionally, one participant noted the lack of practice rooms and concert halls in conservatories, emphasizing that many students are forced to practice in unhealthy or inefficient environments because of this deficiency. Another participant also noted the difficulty of accessing instruments and their parts. Regarding educational materials, five participants reported challenges obtaining sheet music, books, and method resources, stating that many of these materials are unavailable in Turkey and must therefore be ordered from abroad. Lastly, five participants highlighted the scarcity of Turkish-language educational materials as a significant limitation. Some of the instructors' views on these issues are as follows:

"The issue here is not so much with sheet music, but with the instruments themselves. Spare parts, for example, leather bows...these kinds of shortages are more prevalent." (Instructor4)

"...none of the books consist solely of sheet music. Therefore, the concepts discussed in them need to be translated into Turkish by us...Of course, having a Turkish source in this context would be very helpful." (Instructor3)

"...we solve it with the documents we obtain through the internet, and as I mentioned, it is almost impossible for us to afford the original sheet music." (Instructor5)

As indicated in Table 4, within the *theme of graduate competencies*, three participants noted that, once students reach a sufficient technical level, they are also expected to demonstrate strong musical expression skills. Moreover, five participants emphasized that undergraduate students must perform the entire predetermined repertoire before graduation. All participants agreed that graduates are expected to deliver compelling stage performances, stating that increased stage experience directly contributes to students' artistic development. Consequently, all participants recommended that students perform at least two chamber music, recital, or orchestra concerts each year. Finally, two participants stressed the importance of maintaining a disciplined practice routine, asserting that systematic work habits, discipline, and effective time management are key factors in achieving proficiency in clarinet performance. Some of the instructors' views on these issues are as follows:

"We expect that once a student enrolled in conservatory education reaches an adequate technical capacity, their musical expression skills should also be at a high level."
(Instructor5)

"I believe that if a student performs one recital, one chamber music concert, and plays in one orchestra per semester, that should be sufficient." (Instructor 1)

In response to the second research question, suggestions for curriculum development were collected through both open-ended survey questions for students and interview questions for instructors. However, the students did not provide any suggestions for program development. The views of the instructors obtained through the interview are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Themes obtained from instructors regarding the development of clarinet curricula (N=6)

Themes	Frequency
<i>Curriculum</i>	
Use of a standard curriculum	5
Continuous improvement of implemented curricula	4
<i>Implementation Principles and Processes</i>	
Increasing communication among educators	5
Organizing joint activities	2
Greater emphasis on mental exercises	5
Establishing communication with amateur music institutions	1
Creating specialized libraries containing sheet music, books, and other materials	4
Increased use of language translation programs for education	2
Increasing student participation in masterclasses	6
<i>Student Selection</i>	
Starting music education at an early age	5
Beginning clarinet education after physical development is complete	2

As presented in Table 5, within the theme of curriculum development, five participants emphasized the need to design and implement a standardized curriculum that defines the general framework, learning outcomes, and content of clarinet education to be applied uniformly across all conservatories. Furthermore, four participants underlined that this curriculum should be periodically revised and updated to reflect contemporary pedagogical and artistic developments. Some instructors' views on this matter are as follows:

"Curricula can certainly be improved. For this, unity is required. If everyone were more integrated and united, I believe it would be advanced further." (Instructor1)

"...everyone has different programs, and within the framework of these programs, everyone is trying to find their own path... However, I believe that with regular efforts, the curricula can be improved further." (Instructor3)

As shown in Table 5, within the *implementation principles and processes theme*, five participants recommended enhancing communication and collaboration among educators. In this context, two participants specifically proposed organizing joint activities among conservatories to promote interaction and exchange of experience. Additionally, five participants stressed the importance of incorporating more *mental practice techniques* into lessons. The participants also suggested that, throughout conservatory education, students should be encouraged and supported to engage with amateur music institutions, participate in masterclasses, establish dedicated libraries containing sheet music and method books, and make greater use of language translation tools for educational purposes. Some of the instructors' views on these topics are as follows:

"I believe that platforms where all clarinet instructors in Türkiye can meet at a common point should be established and discussed." (Instructor5)

"...the materials in school libraries are ancient, with torn and worn-out sheet music...New libraries could be established" (Instructor3)

"I definitely think that masterclasses are a valuable addition for students." (Instructor 6)

As indicated in Table 5, within the *theme of student selection*, five participants recommended that students begin music education at an earlier age, while two emphasized that the appropriate starting age should also consider each student's physical development to ensure suitability for instrumental performance. Some of the views of the instructors on this issue are as follows:

"...we see that very famous clarinet artists or musicians playing other instruments often start their instrument training at the age of 3 or 4, or even earlier." (Instructor1)

"... the child's hands might not be fully developed at the age of 8, and they may not be able to attach the reed properly. Physical development is important." (Instructor2)

4 Discussion

The continuous evaluation of curricula implemented in schools is a globally recognized scientific necessity (Wiles & Bondi, 1998), as is their development based on empirical data (Oliva, 1997), to cultivate individuals who meet both societal expectations and the demands of their respective fields. This study aims to contribute to the scientific literature by assessing clarinet department curricula at state conservatories in Türkiye, thereby providing a foundation for enhancing clarinet education programs.

The findings indicate that starting music education at an early age facilitates quicker adaptation to the instrument and has a positive impact on breath control, technical skills, and overall instrument mastery. This result is supported by various studies in the literature (Persson, 1994; McPherson, 2005; Smith, 2008; Powell, 2020). In particular, McPherson (2005) demonstrated that students who begin music education at an early age have a higher potential for success compared to their peers.

The defining influence of the French school on clarinet pedagogy and performance practice can be observed worldwide (Alderaiwaish, 2013). In this study, the educators reported adopting a system based on the French school, which has a long-standing tradition in the content and methodology of clarinet education. Additionally, the study's findings align with previous research indicating that teaching processes in conservatories are conducted within the framework of the 'master-apprentice' relationship (Almqvist & Werner, 2024) and that the curriculum should include not only Western classical music but also the country's traditional music (Alderaiwaish, 2013). Specifically, the research highlights that the repertoire chosen in the curriculum is shaped within the French school and emphasizes the importance of developing a repertoire that includes traditional Turkish music and contemporary works.

There is substantial evidence in the literature indicating that orchestra and chamber music lessons integrate individual and collective learning experiences, directly contributing to students'

academic (Linari-Melfi et al., 2022; Williams&Goff, 2019; Baker et al., 2020; Lonnert, 2023) and musical development (Sánchez, 2020; Kokotsaki&Hallam, 2007). Additionally, solfège lessons have been shown to enhance students' abilities in pitch recognition, rhythm perception, and sight-reading (Fitch, 2021). In this study, both educators and undergraduate students reported that solfège, chamber music, and orchestra courses play a critical role in clarinet education. Furthermore, students reported lacking sufficient knowledge of clarinet reed making, selection, and use, and indicated a need for additional training in this area. All these findings highlight the need to review the content and objectives of the current clarinet teaching program.

Research in the literature indicates that individual differences, such as a student's age, gender, culture, personality traits, learning style, and the learning strategies they use, directly impact the quality of their learning process (Conway, 2020; Riding, 2005; McDonald, 2021). Similarly, King (2018) and Liu (2023) emphasized the importance of individualized teaching methods in clarinet education. In this study, the instructors reported that they conduct their lessons in small groups, tailor the teaching process to students' individual differences, and achieve successful results. The students' findings also support this approach.

One significant finding regarding the curriculum's learning-teaching process, obtained from both instructors and students, is the anxiety students experience during their clarinet performances. This is a situation commonly observed among musicians (Sternbach, 2008; Kenny, 2011; Brotons, 1994) and can be overcome through increased use of auditory imagery, motor imagery, and mental practice during the teaching process (Immonen et al., 2012; Dobre-loniță, 2023; Clark et al., 2011; Brooks, 1995; Allen, 2007). In this study, instructors stated that a solution to reduce performance anxiety would be to guide students towards mental exercises. Both instructors and students expressed that, in addition to mental and physical exercises, stage experience also plays a critical role in managing performance anxiety. These findings align with those of

Patston (2013), LeBlanc (2021), Zakaria et al. (2013), and Creech et al. (2008), who highlighted that the quantity and quality of performance experience are significant factors in reducing anxiety.

Masterclass events provide students with numerous benefits, such as gaining new perspectives, learning through experience (Creech et al., 2009), enhancing motivation, developing professional insights, and improving musical skills (Haddon, 2014; Lafosse, 2014). In this study, instructors stated that they encourage students to participate in masterclasses, while students expressed a desire to attend these events but, due to financial difficulties, have not been able to take full advantage of such opportunities. Another challenge encountered in the learning-teaching process is the difficulty in accessing teaching materials such as instruments, instrument parts, sheet music, and books. Due to the scarcity of these materials and professional clarinet pieces in Türkiye, students reported that they are forced to obtain the necessary materials from abroad. Finally, the insufficient availability of individual practice rooms and concert halls in conservatories is another significant infrastructure issue highlighted by both students and instructors.

Assessing teaching is an essential aspect of determining a program's effectiveness and defining the quality of the teaching process (Oliva, 1997). In conservatories, two primary systems are generally used to evaluate clarinet performance: open and closed grading (Oberlander, 2000), with practical exams based on a set repertoire across categories such as etudes, solos, and concertos (Cowley, 2020). This study revealed that success evaluations are conducted in this manner. Additionally, the necessity for students to perform at least two chamber music concerts, two recitals, and one orchestra concert each year was emphasized in relation to success assessments. Another finding regarding the evaluation of teaching is that students are unaware of the criteria for their assessments and experience high levels of anxiety during their exam performances. The literature shows that in environments such as conservatories, where performance evaluations are used, students' performance anxiety negatively affects their

performance (Güven, 2017). It is also suggested that using rubrics in evaluations (Maugars, 2006; Alvarez-Diaz, 2021) and sharing the assessment criteria with students can positively influence anxiety levels (Güven, 2017; Kenny, 2011). In this context, it can be said that using standardized measurement tools such as rubrics and sharing assessment criteria with students would enhance the objectivity and reliability of the evaluation process.

The literature shows that, in conservatories, in addition to physical characteristics, posture, and the ability to use the body properly, play a decisive role in clarinet performance (Weijden et al., 2018; Rolf, 2018; Copeland, 2007; Baadjou et al., 2017). This study also revealed that these attributes are essential criteria for student selection.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study highlights several critical needs within Turkish clarinet education:

- The development of a nationally standardized and internationally aligned clarinet curriculum,
- The expansion of repertoire to include both traditional Turkish and contemporary works,
- The integration of mental practice and performance psychology into instruction,
- The enhancement of educational materials and institutional facilities, and
- The adoption of transparent, rubric-based assessment systems.

Future research should focus on comparative evaluations of clarinet curricula, the design of Turkish-language instructional resources, and the establishment of music education research and development (R&D) projects. Strengthening conservatory infrastructure and promoting international collaboration will further elevate clarinet education standards in Türkiye.

Ultimately, the absence of a unified, globally compatible clarinet curriculum remains the most significant gap identified in this study. Developing such a framework would represent an essential step toward enhancing the quality, consistency, and global competitiveness of clarinet education.

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