

Learning Strategies for Saxophone Instruments for Music Study Program Students ISI Yogyakarta Batch 2022

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Abstract

The ISI Yogyakarta music study program currently refers more to the study of art. This resulted in a reduction in the study period for major instruments for students to 3 semesters. The music study program which focuses more on music studies targets students to become researchers and writers, so that the ability to play music is not too much considered when selecting new student admissions. Many students have shifted their instrument focus to other instruments they are not good at. The author focuses on saxophone instrument students class of 2022, most of whom experience this. This study aims to observe and describe the strategies and learning processes for the saxophone instrument course for students of the ISI Yogyakarta music study program class of 2022. The method used is qualitative-descriptive, with data collection through direct observation and interviews with students and supporting lecturers. Several lists of questions have been prepared and will serve as a tool for data collection. The author also made direct observations of the learning process carried out by lecturers and students in the saxophone instrument course. The research findings regarding the learning strategies applied are the design of a new syllabus consisting of several points to be presented to students as well as the establishment of good relationships and interactions between students and lecturers to create a comfortable learning atmosphere. The syllabus refers to the old syllabus which was previously carried out for 6 semesters, but now it is condensed into 3 semesters.



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INTRODUCTION

ISI Yogyakarta's music study program currently refers to music studies (Indrawan et al., 2020); (History - Department of Music, 2021). This has actually happened since the early period of the formation of the music department. It's just that the music department at that time still implemented the main interest system, which consisted of study, education, performance and composition. However, since the seventh period (2009-2014), there have been curriculum adjustments that have caused the music department to split into 4 study programs, consisting of music study programs, music education study programs, music presentation study programs and music creation study programs. Since this curriculum change, the music study program has really focused on music studies. This is done so that students can focus more on choosing their main interests in their studies. Students are required to become researchers, writers and music reviewers. This demand causes a reduction in the study period of major instruments for music study program students. If previously the major instrument course had a study period of 6 semesters, then after the curriculum change, the major

instrument course was only presented for 3 semesters. This major instrument study period was initiated in 2016 and executed in 2021 (Department Profile - Music Department, 2021). The main focus of the music program in accepting students is no longer based on their music playing competence, but rather on critical thinking skills, as well as music theoretical knowledge. Drs. Pipin Garibaldi as one of the lecturers in the music study program admits that the musical competence of the 2022 students admitted to the music study program is still below standard. Since ISI Yogyakarta accepted new students through the SBMPTN and SNMPTN channels, the musical competence of students has decreased every year. In fact, most of the music study program students are just learning about music. This can happen because the national selection prioritizes the written and academic test scores of prospective new students, so that their musical competence is not really considered. Some students are transferred due to inadequate class quota. For example, in 2022 most of the students in the music program enrolled by choosing a vocal major. However, due to the limited number of vocal lecturers teaching, some of the vocal students were diverted to choose other instruments during the *placement test*. This causes students and lecturers to be overwhelmed in running major instrument lectures. Students have to learn new instruments that they have never mastered before. However, for the music study program this is not a big problem, because students are indeed directed to become art scholars, not as music *players* (players). If students want to be a *player*, then the music presentation program (D4) is the best choice (History - Department of Music, 2021).

If you look far back, when ISI Yogyakarta still holds its idealism by accepting new students only through competency tests according to their respective fields, getting into ISI Yogyakarta is very difficult. Especially in the music department (At that time, the music department was still one unit and had not been split into 4 study programs), prospective new students had to compete with people who were already competent in playing music. Finally, when accepted as a student of the ISI Yogyakarta music study program, the lecturer only continues and sharpens the students' musical skills. Unlike today, lecturers have to work harder to guide students to learn music from scratch. In addition, the short learning period for major instruments forces lecturers to condense their learning syllabus.

Most of the 2022 saxophone students are transfers from other instruments. This means that they learn saxophone instruments completely from scratch. Of course this is a challenge for students and lecturers. The study period for major instrument courses which is only 3 semesters is certainly not enough to be able to master the saxophone instrument. The current lecturer of saxophone instrument in music study program, R. Kumara Caesar Akuari acknowledged this. He said that he was surprised by the condition of the 2022 saxophone instrument students who were still in the beginner stage. To overcome this problem, he set the right and effective learning strategy so that the 3 semesters taken by students become more useful.

Basically, the music study program curriculum focuses on the field of music sciences (musicology) which is limited to western classical music. (Indrawan et al., 2020); (Department Profile - Music Department, 2021). However, if traced historically, the saxophone is a romantic-modern musical instrument created by Adolphe Sax (*clarinetist*) in 1840 (Bureau of Personnel Administration, 2022). From its history, saxophone is not a classical instrument, while the music program mostly discusses classical music. This is really confusing. Even some students of other study programs did not expect that the music study program, which is identical to classical music, actually accepts students who take saxophone instruments. Of course for that matter, the syllabus used by saxophone lecturers in the ISI Yogyakarta music study program needs to be studied. Are saxophone instrument students directed to play classical music or even more to pop-jazz.

The problems described above are very close to the author's current life. Therefore, this research aims to observe and describe how the saxophone instrument learning strategy is applied in the music study program at ISI Yogyakarta, especially the 2022 students. The 2022 students were chosen because the phenomena and problems described above happened to them. This research observes the learning process that takes place and sees the development of students in learning saxophone instruments.

Previous research explained that the materials provided to students in one music course in the form of the *Rubank Elementary Methode Saxophone* module by Hovey, 1990 (Kania, 2016). This module contains a collection of *etudes* ranging from simple forms to high levels. Students are directed to learn to play the saxophone by reading the partiture written in the module directly. Each level of difficulty familiarizes the student to practice fingering, articulation and scales. This research explains that the steps of learning saxophone have 3 stages consisting of preparation, material delivery and evaluation every meeting. In addition, one of the other music courses applies a different saxophone learning method. The methods are expository, lecture, demonstration, imitation and drill (Ahadian, 2016). This learning strategy is considered quite effective for beginners who want to learn saxophone in the long run. Music courses prioritize process over results in training their students. For this reason, the strategies used in music courses are not effective to be applied to saxophone instrument students of the 2022 music study program. Music courses also usually teach students *privately* and can help teachers to better understand the student's development process. Meanwhile, in the 2022 saxophone instrument class there are more than one beginner student who must be handled by one lecturer. Of course, knowing the process of each student will be difficult for the lecturer. In addition, limited lecture hours also add to the difficulty for students to develop more.

One of the effective and efficient learning strategies is to optimize the interaction between lecturers, students and the study material or material presented (Nugroho & Kusumaningrum, 2021). The application of the *sight-singing* method has also proven effective in improving the ability to play musical instruments and read notation (Suryati & Widodo, 2020). The main problem in applying saxophone learning strategies is the accuracy of the material given to students so that the time available can be used effectively. Lecturers or teachers consciously have their own challenges in implementing the right learning strategy in saxophone learning. These challenges include *embouchure* (mouth shape), breathing, sound quality, articulation, playing techniques, understanding of music theory, comfort of the training ground, and the state of the musical instrument of each student being guided because each student has different conditions (Jungate et al., 2022). Another problem that must be faced by teachers is the difference in competence in each student. Differences in competence among students, can form confusion in learning which can ultimately bring doubt and ambiguity between teachers and students (Hager, 2004); (Patmawati et al., 2019). This research has the benefit of being a comparison for the design of the next saxophone learning strategy. With the application of strategies and learning processes by saxophone instrument lecturers to 2022 students, it will help other lecturers to see the gaps and shortcomings of previously designed strategies. Unconsciously, the lecturer uses the Bayesian system in its application. This technique analyzes the learning behavior of each student and then makes it a reference for learning that can be applied effectively (Lyu & Hou, 2023). On the other hand, there are 6 main things that must be achieved in the learning strategy for saxophone instrument students, namely giving students a fundamental understanding of playing, being able to relate between music theory and saxophone playing, increasing student experience, being able to provide direction for independent learning, teaching *social skills* to build relationships with the industry, and teachers must listen and discuss with students (Jungate et al., 2022). The limited time and diverse musical competencies of students are a challenge for lecturers to determine the right strategy for teaching. If the strategy applied to the 2022 saxophone students is effective enough, then other lecturers can use the same strategy to teach Instrument Studies courses which only have a span of 3 semesters. If the implementation is still not effective, then other lecturers can find the shortcomings that exist in the previously designed strategy and then improve it for future learning..

RESEARCH METHODE

The method used in this research is a qualitative-descriptive method. This method was chosen because it is relevant to the data collection needs of this research. As described above, the source of the problem raised in the title of this research is related to the experiences of students and concrete events that exist in the current environment of the ISI Yogyakarta music study program. The problem exists because of various phenomena that are mutually influential. However, to examine the cause-and-effect relationship between them, the right method is needed to avoid data bias.

Qualitative methods aim to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects thoroughly and in the form of descriptions of words (Hasan et al., 2023). However, qualitative methods have many variations depending on the focus and purpose of data collection in accordance with the research topic raised. The qualitative- descriptive method is more relevant to the topic discussed because this research is more about describing a phenomenon, in this case the process and strategy of learning saxophone instruments in the ISI Yogyakarta music study program class of 2022. Many students of the saxophone instrument of the ISI Yogyakarta music study program class of 2022 are still at the beginner stage. The trimming of instrument studies for only 3 semesters is a challenge for students and lecturers to be able to complete the material and master the saxophone instrument. Therefore, in conducting this research, data collection must be done in verbal form through interviews and direct observation. The qualitative-descriptive method is an ontological activity that emphasizes notes with detailed descriptions to support data presentation (Nugrahani & Hum, 2014).

In collecting data, the author selected several of the 2022 music study program saxophone instrument students to be interviewed. Students were selected objectively and did not look at the level of ability that had been obtained while studying saxophone instruments. From the students selected as interviewees, the author asked several questions related to the learning process and strategies applied by lecturers in carrying out saxophone instrument studies. Students gave honest answers according to what they experienced during their instrument studies without any intimidation and coercion. The interviews were conducted in the campus environment. The results of the interviews were documented with a voice recorder from a *smartphone* and typed with a word processing application to be processed into the results of this research.

In addition to students, lecturers of saxophone instrument study courses in music study programs also participated as resource persons in this research. The lecturer of saxophone instrument study program in this period is R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn. He conveyed the learning strategies applied to saxophone

instrument students that he had compiled himself. The strategy is applied in the form of a syllabus as a learning guide. The interview was conducted directly at his residence in Sewon, Bantul on Friday, April 7, 2023.

Apart from interviews, the author directly observed the learning process being carried out. The documentation of the observations made will be included in the results section in the form of pictures. Observation is carried out so that the data becomes more accurate and proves that the results of the interview correspond to events in the field. Direct observations and observations were made on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, which coincided with the schedule for implementing saxophone instrument courses in the music department this semester.

This research also slightly touched on the admission of new students through the SBMPTN and SNMPTN pathways which resulted in a decrease in the musical competence of music study program students. To collect data related to this, interviews were conducted with the head of the music study program (Kustap, S.Sn., M.Sn.) and the secretary of the music study program (Daniel de Fretes, S.Sn., M.Sn.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews that have been conducted to the campus about the reason for switching some students' instruments to saxophone is because students have a non-classical music background. The music program itself has a curriculum that focuses on western classical music. Because the students' competence is more in popular music, the campus speculates that they will be faster in learning saxophone instruments. The next reason is that the student capacity for the instrument class they have chosen when registering is full. According to the data of new admissions for music study programs in 2022, there is only one student who chooses saxophone instruments. Therefore, students who have a non-classical music background who have chosen their instrument are transferred to the saxophone class. Teachers of other instruments also objected to having to accommodate so many students. This resulted in students becoming unfocused in understanding the material, because the lecturer had to serve many students in one meeting.

The music program has a *placement test* policy, which is a test to re-evaluate admitted students. This test observes students in detail both in terms of *skill*, musicality and the material performed in their portfolio. After the observation, students will be given the opportunity to switch instruments if they wish. As there are still many quotas left for saxophone, students are often offered to switch to this instrument. However, students are not forced to switch instruments and it is more about their own choice. This is done so that students do not have difficulties in learning a new instrument. In this case, students are given a few months to adapt to the new instrument they choose, and if it is not suitable, they can return to their previous instrument or choose to switch to a new instrument. Some students have done this, with some staying and others returning to their original instrument.

The transfer of instruments and *placement tests* that occurred in the music study program initially experienced rejection and had a negative impact on students. Some responses from students who have felt the consequences of moving the instrument to saxophone are as follows:

1. Students refused to be switched to the saxophone instrument, as they felt they excelled in their previous instrument.
2. Some subjects refused major switching due to economic and family factors

This rejection occurred before students took part in learning saxophone instruments. After several months of saxophone lessons, students began to feel challenged to learn new things. They are also motivated to learn saxophone because they consider the wide job opportunities in their respective areas. Some students come from areas that lack saxophone players. Of course, when they return to their home areas, the opportunities for a career as a professional saxophone player are still very open to them. Moreover, with a background in popular music that has been lived before becoming ISI Yogyakarta students, they have no difficulty in following the learning of saxophone instruments. This comfort and motivation was formed after participating in saxophone learning activities for approximately 1.5 months.

The saxophone learning process that occurs in the music study program at ISI Yogyakarta is currently taught by R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn. When he started teaching saxophone instruments at the ISI Yogyakarta music study program, he followed the syllabus suggested by the campus with a fairly high *grade* and level. He started teaching from the 2019 batch of students. The syllabus with a high *grade* and level can still be followed by 2019 saxophone students well without any problems at all. However, since 2020, the *covid-19* pandemic has caused learning to be carried out online. Students in 2020 are also still in the basic stage of playing saxophone. In response to the pandemic, lecturers in the music study program use technological assistance to carry out teaching and learning activities (Purba, 2020). The change in the study program curriculum for the study period for major instrument courses, which was previously 6 semesters to 3 semesters, is a new challenge for him. For this reason, he only adjusts the learning outcomes to the abilities of students. Learning is done online and students practice more on their own rather than being guided by lecturers. Based on previous

research, online learning conducted in one of the universities uses the help of *WhatsApp* and *YouTube* applications (Mutiar, 2021). In this case, the lecturer teaching the saxophone course in the music study program at that time also applied the same method. He uses *whatsapp* as a medium for communicating and knowing the process of the students he is guiding. *Youtube* also helps students in finding references to learn more independently. However, these methods are certainly not effective for students and lecturers. Saxophone is an instrument whose timbre, dancing and playing position must be shown and practiced directly. Learning online is not effective for mastering an instrument like the saxophone. Although there is now video call technology, the quality of the audio produced cannot resemble when heard directly. Woodwind instruments can be assessed by hearing them in person to maximize the sound of the instrument (Ukshini & Dirckx, 2023); (Purba & Barus, 2020). Lecturers will find it difficult to assess the maturity of the *tone* produced by students when blowing the saxophone. Network limitations that are often constrained also reduce the effectiveness of online learning. Therefore, he will have to devise a new strategy for the next batch of saxophone lessons so that students will not be at a disadvantage at all. Just in case the pandemic does not end. This problem still occurs until the class of 2021. However, the 2021 batch of students is in a transitional period where the pandemic has begun to subside and offline learning activities have begun to be implemented. However, the reality of cutting the study period for major instruments to 3 semesters is still a big problem for lecturers.

A new problem then arose with the class of 2022. Many saxophone instrument students come from the results of the transfer of instrument focus through the *placement test*. Students who experience this transfer learn saxophone from scratch and don't even know saxophone instruments at all. In the end, the saxophone instrument class at ISI Yogyakarta's music study program is not much different from a music course that must teach music from scratch to be able to play well. R Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn as the saxophone instrument lecturer must certainly think hard again in dealing with this. He must be able to condense the material and utilize the time for 3 semesters to teach his students from scratch. Plus, most of the transitional students were not interested in learning saxophone at first. In addition to teaching the material, he also has to attract students to stay in his class.

In attracting students to keep wanting to learn saxophone, he tries to build charisma with his students. This is done so that students feel comfortable. He familiarizes himself with the students and builds friendships with them. Students then do not feel reluctant to ask questions and continue learning with him. The construction of this comfortable atmosphere begins with him telling stories about himself to students. Starting with telling the background of music to the various experiences that have been passed during his time as a musician. This was successful and attracted the interest of several students to stay on the saxophone instrument. From the various stories that have been presented by him, they realize that career opportunities to become a saxophone player are still wide open in their respective areas.

The minority who have been diverted back to their respective home instruments due to other factors, such as lack of parental support and economic limitations in buying a saxophone. Basically, they are very eager and interested in learning saxophone, but the factors above make them have to undo their intentions. Currently, there are five saxophone students in the 2022 batch, with three of them returning to their original major instruments and one additional student coming from a contrabass major instrument.

In dealing with the situation of saxophone students of batch 2022 of music study program who learn from scratch and the period of learning major instruments is limited to 3 semesters, R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn as a saxophone lecturer created a new syllabus to be applied to his class. The syllabus has been compiled by him with various considerations in accordance with the current problems. However, the syllabus cannot be written in full in this study because he has not yet copyrighted the syllabus under his name. The syllabus is a compaction of material from the previous curriculum syllabus which still applies a learning period of 6 semesters and several other additions by him.

The syllabus created by R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn can be described as follows:

1. In the first semester, students are introduced to the saxophone instrument and taught the basic techniques of playing saxophone from scratch. The introduction of the instrument includes an explanation of saxophone organology, saxophone history, and opens students' insights about career opportunities to become a saxophonist. Semester 1 is the stage where the lecturer tries to attract students' attention to be motivated and happy with the saxophone instrument. The basic techniques of playing saxophone given include the installation of the reed on the mouthpiece, then the mouthpiece on the neck and then paired on the saxophone body. In addition, basic techniques also include the position of playing the saxophone, how to grip the saxophone body and the position of the fingers on the keys. After the most basic things have been understood by students, the lecturer then provides students with breathing techniques and the correct way to blow the saxophone (*embouchure*). The *embouchure* exercise is in the form of practicing blowing one note as long as possible in all tones on the saxophone or often known as long note practice. The basic technique of blowing in semester 1 aims to find a good tone, not fals and character. Students are forbidden to play songs because in the first semester the lecturer focuses on the formation of good tone.
2. In semester 2 students are taught to read sheet music and practice good and correct fingering. Fingering exercises in semester 2 include major/minor scales ranging from 1 to 7 # and 1 - 7 moles. The scales include arpeggios, diatonic,

pentatonic and chromatic. After students have mastered the scales, the lecturer will provide etude material in the form of basic children's song scores. Children's songs are chosen because they are familiar to students and will make it easier for them when they first learn to read sheet music or block notes. Although they have entered the stage of playing songs and scales, students are still required to do long note exercises to further finalize the tone produced when blowing the saxophone.

3. In semester 3 students are taught advanced techniques in playing saxophone to be applied when they become professional saxophone players. The advanced technique referred to in this case is the application of ornamentation and exposure to how to play saxophone using feelings and emotions. Students will be accustomed to playing pop or jazz songs with their own improvisation and playing style. Vibrato and tonguing techniques are also deepened to give a more lively atmosphere to the songs played. In this semester, students are prepared for a career as a saxophonist and are given briefings on how to perform well and have their own selling points in the world of entertainment music. Improvisation with each creativity is a selling point in itself. Improvisation on saxophone is almost the same as scat singing applied to vocals. (Setiarini, 2023). Students are free to play with various improvisational styles and are required to play optimally by applying all the material that has been studied for 3 semesters. The final exam in this semester is a mini concert held in the music auditorium and each student will perform solo with band accompaniment to spark confidence in pursuing a career as a saxophonist.

Currently, the 2022 saxophone instrument students of ISI Yogyakarta's music program are pursuing major II studies. Data collection was carried out while they were conducting teaching and learning activities in the campus environment. Teaching and learning activities were also carried out several times at the residence of R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn to increase intimacy between students and lecturers.

At the beginning of each meeting, the lecturer checks the students' practice process independently and evaluates the things that are wrong both in terms of technique and play.



Figure 1: Students and lecturers prepare to start learning

Teaching and learning activities are conducted in a relaxed but serious manner. Often there are jokes between lecturers and students to relieve tension during learning.



Figure 2: Lecturer checks and evaluates the students' independent practice process



Figure 3: Lecturers provide direction and material to students in accordance with the designed syllabus

The result of the application of the learning method applied by R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn is that the saxophone instrument students of the 2022 music study program can master the saxophone instrument well even though it is only carried out for 3 semesters. Most students have produced a pretty good saxophone *tone* and can play scales from 1 to 7 crescents and 1 to 7 moles. Students can also play basic pop or classical songs or works with their saxophone. Although the learning method used is appropriate, of course the fast or slow process of students to learn saxophone instruments is also influenced by how hard they practice independently. Lecturers in this case only become facilitators to provide materials and materials, then trained independently by students. This method is basically included in the *drill* method where students can solve problems around saxophone playing that are faced agilely to obtain higher skills (Ramafisela, 2023). By repeating the practice cycle independently, students will find their character in playing saxophone, then directed by the lecturer so as not to make mistakes in technical matters. Other courses also help students to develop their ability to play saxophone, such as music theory, harmony and music form analysis. With the existence of other courses, students can understand and comprehend what they play. Teaching and learning activities on campus are not the same as in a music under institution. For this reason, students must play a more active role in developing their musical abilities. The learning method by R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn basically aims to attract students to be more active and happy in learning the saxophone instrument. Because he realizes that most of his students are introduced to saxophone instruments for the first time when they become ISI Yogyakarta students. When students are happy and motivated to learn saxophone, the lecturer will find it easier to provide materials and materials to be trained independently. Then at the next meeting the lecturer will check the process of each student and provide advice and input.

Most lecturers in the music study program are aware of the lack of 3 semesters to be able to learn major instruments optimally. To overcome this, some lecturers provide freedom for students to continue learning major instruments in the next semester even though it is not counted in college credits. This is an option for students to continue learning more deeply or to focus on other courses according to the existing curriculum. This also applies to saxophone instrument courses. R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S.Sn still frees students to join his class. Although the class will be combined with the new batch of students, the material provided for students who want to continue learning will be adjusted to their abilities to be more focused. Of course this is a very good thing for students to be able to deepen their knowledge of playing music even more. Regardless of grades and credits, this depends on the intention of the student himself. Some 2021 students who have previously spent 3 semesters studying major instruments are doing this. Of course, to do this, students must be able to manage their schedules so as not to collide with other courses. However, some lecturers are generous enough to provide free time that is adjusted to the schedule of students who want to continue their major instrument studies.

CONCLUSION

The 2022 batch of music study program students, especially saxophone instrument students, are mostly transitions from other instruments. This happens because the 2022 music study program students have minimal knowledge of classical music and are heavier on popular music. This instrument switch was initially strongly rejected by students and their families with various factors and reasons. But over time, students' motivation and learning intentions to play saxophone increased and finally decided to stay as saxophone instrument students. This great motivation and enthusiasm

cannot be separated from the right learning strategy by saxophone instrument lecturers to their students. The strategies used include efforts to get closer and interact with students and the application of a new syllabus that was created and refined by him. The trimming of the major instrument study period to 3 semesters due to curriculum changes forced R. Kumara Caesar Akuari, S. Sn as a saxophone instrument lecturer to rearrange the saxophone learning syllabus that had been provided by the campus to be simpler and more effective for students. The syllabus can be briefly described as follows:

1. In the first semester, students are introduced to the saxophone instrument and taught the basic techniques of playing saxophone from scratch.
2. In semester 2 students are taught to read partiture and practice good and correct fingering.
3. In the 3rd semester students are taught advanced techniques in playing saxophone to be applied when becoming a professional saxophone player.

Students who have spent 3 semesters studying their instrument are still allowed to study together in his class to deepen their saxophone playing knowledge. Of course the teaching and learning activities carried out are outside the learning hours of other courses and are not counted in the assessment.

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