

# Everything online?

Online theory teaching is currently on everyone's lips. What would change if face-to-face teaching was completely replaced by digital media?

TEXT: SYLKE BUB

**C**orona has put a lot of pressure on an exciting topic: online theory lessons for learner drivers.

Now it is important to look at all facets of this topic

– also the economic impact

– and to look beyond the horizon of the driving school industry.

For example, the renowned Institute of the German Economy (IW) has recently published a comprehensive study on the subject of "Vocational qualification and digitisation" with the conclusion that the combination of digital learning and presence phases within the framework of blended learning is seen as particularly advantageous. "All

The study found that "the use of digital learning media does not automatically lead to better and more sustainable learning outcomes than conventional methods".

"One prerequisite for this is that trainers and trainers of further education have the necessary didactic tools and develop and implement suitable didactic concepts.

This sums up well what all the experts say - whether it is the driving school industry, universities or other institutions involved in teaching:

1. Digitisation in education makes sense, but only in the form of blended learning, i.e. a mix of

digital learning and face-to-face teaching, because personal interaction is absolutely necessary for the transmission of certain contents.

2. Teachers must develop and implement didactic concepts and have the necessary media-didactic tools at their disposal so that the use of digital teaching media leads to correspondingly good learning results.

**// A HUGE NUMBER OF  
SOCIAL SECURITY  
COMPULSORY EMPLOYMENT  
WOULD BE DESTROYED //**

## COOPERATION

### Expert panel

This article was written in cooperation with Jörg-Michael Satz (President Moving), Jürgen Kopp (2nd Vice-Chairman of the Federal Association of Driving Instructors' Associations), Gerhard von Bressendorf (President of the German Driving Instructors' Academy) and Josua Stiegler (Publishing Director of Verlag Heinrich Vogel). The prices for the basic fee and the presentation for the theoretical and practical test are taken from the current Datapart Factoring price list. All other data is taken from surveys by Moving.

If, contrary to the findings of experts, pure online teaching were made possible, this would have far-reaching consequences

Especially for driver training, the important aspect of interlinking the content of theoretical and practical lessons is added. Basically, professional driving training cannot be separated into a purely theoretical and a purely practical part. Students have long since stopped learning formulas and legal texts in theory lessons. They are taught practical driving contents in a regionalised way - and this with maximum practical relevance.

### SUSTAINABLE CHANGE IN THE DRIVING SCHOOL LANDSCAPE

What would happen if, contrary to all the experts' findings, the legislator were to introduce pure online teaching for driving education?

would make it possible? This would not only have educational aspects or effects on road safety. It would also change the driving school landscape in Germany in the long term. This can be seen very clearly in the example of France, where pure online theory lessons have been permitted for some time now. The following practice has developed very quickly here: Driving students register via a platform, complete their theory lessons online and then book a driving instructor in their area for the driving lessons via the platform. The driving school receives its remuneration via the platform. This also gives the topic of online teaching an overall social aspect: According to figures from the Drive School industry association Moving

about 20,000 employed driving instructors. In addition there are about 15,000 office staff and mini-jobbers. If, as in France, pure online instruction were possible without regulation and a corresponding platform model were to develop, a huge number of jobs subject to social insurance contributions would be destroyed.

The providers of nationwide online instruction like to argue that the driving schools would then save a lot of money - after all, they could not only save themselves the theoretical instruction, but would also no longer need driving school rooms. This, it is further argued, would also make the driving training much cheaper, because the learner drivers would save the basic fee completely and would only have to pay a significantly lower amount to the provider of the online lessons.

### PRACTICAL TRAINING: WHAT DOES THE DRIVING SCHOOL EARN?

But is this true? And what does a driving school operator actually earn from the practical training? That's what Moving currently calculated: The average

contribution margin - i.e. the income minus the costs - per hour of travel of 45 minutes is 4.76 euros. If you add the considerably higher amount for the presentation for the practical test to the driving lessons, the contribution margin is 6.89 euros. All in all, the **contribution margin for practical driving training in the class**

## ELECTRONIC MEDIA

### Joint position of the associations

In August 2020, the Federal Association of Driving Instructors' Associations (BVF), the Federal Association of Driving Instructor Training Centres (Bagfa), the German Driving Instructors' Academy (DFA), TÜV|Dekra arge tp 21 and Moving issued a joint statement on

"Electronic media: new possibilities and limits for theoretical driving training" published. The joint position paper can be downloaded at: [www.moving-roadsafety.com/moving/positionen](http://www.moving-roadsafety.com/moving/positionen)



With the call for online education, important branches are being cut - including that of economic stability

se B in the federal average at 234.18 euros (see box on page 23).

With this amount, the entrepreneur without theoretical training and thus without the corresponding basic amount would have to cover all other costs: communication costs (telephone, internet), costs for purchases (for example smart phone, computer, printer), for administrative expenses (for example wage costs for office staff, administrative software), advertising etc. He would have to build up reserves and an entrepreneurial salary for the entrepreneurial risk should also be included.

#### SPACE REQUIREMENTS EVEN WITHOUT THEORY LESSONS

And of course he would also have to pay for space, because it is nonsense that

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driving schools no longer need rooms.

Even if a driving school, as in this model, does not offer theory lessons, it needs office space and it needs a contact point for the learner drivers.

How does the calculation now look for the current driving training, which consists of theory and practice? The basic amount for Class B is 255.66 euros net on a national average. Added to this are an average of 45.39 euros for the presentation for the theoretical examination and 35 euros for the sale of teaching materials. These are a total of 336.05 euros net. If this sum is put in relation to the contribution margin for the practical training, it can be said that a driving school achieves on average about 40 percent of its contribution margin with the practical training and 60 percent with the sales of teaching

materials.

with the theoretical one.

The figures in the last paragraph are a little bit misleading because no costs have been included in the basic amount theory. If one were to make a precise calculation, one would still have to calculate the costs for the teaching staff. But since these costs are distributed among all learner drivers, the amount is usually not too important. All other costs that the driving school classically covers with the basic amount (see above) would have to be covered by practical training in the future.

**// THE BASIC AMOUNT IS CURRENTLY NOT ONLY USED TO FINANCE THEORY LESSONS //**

**TWO POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR DRIVING SCHOOLS**

This results in two possible scenarios: Either the driving schools in Germany will have to register their solvency to a very large extent. This is what happened in France. Or the driving hour prices will be adjusted accordingly by the driving schools. This would make driving training considerably more expensive.

If one divides the 336.05 euros basic charge over an average of 33 driving hours, the net amount is 10.14 euros per driving hour, which would correspond to a price increase of almost 30 percent.

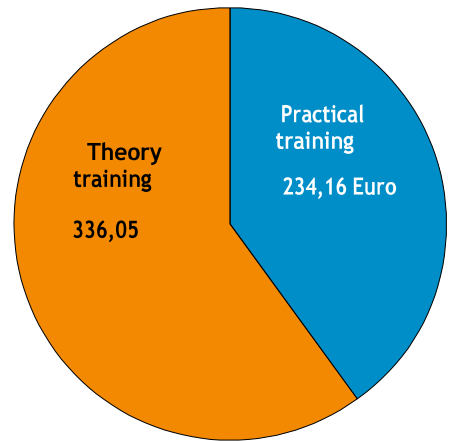
**DO THE YOUNG PEOPLE WANT ONLINE LESSONS?**

The question remains: do young people even want to learn online? Generally speaking, the satisfaction of learner drivers with face-to-face teaching is enormous. According to the Moving Trend Study 2019 - and already from 2017 - around 80 per cent of learner drivers feel good about both the theory test and road traffic

**BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION**

**Contribution margin driving training**

Only 234.16 euros net are left over in the federal average from the income of a complete 33 hours of practical class B training after deduction of the costs for car and wages. In contrast, driving schools earn an average of 336.05 euros with basic fees, presentation for the theory test and the sale of teaching materials. If this amount is omitted, all costs which have so far been covered by this amount must be earned solely from the practical training.



prepared. Around three quarters of the pupils showed a high level of satisfaction with the driving school as a whole. A similar figure of around 70 per cent was recorded at the counselling interview before the start of registration. This also shows how important this interview is.

Digital supplements to the presence information are very well received. The offer

According to the Moving Trend Study 2019, more than three-quarters of the learner drivers find the training of critical points/traffic situations at their homes/test locations on their smartphones as well as the offer of video recordings of critical points/traffic situations to be optimally prepared for the practical test interesting to very interesting.

On the other hand, young people do not want to replace face-to-face teaching with online teaching. Young people also prefer face-to-face teaching, if they have the choice. "They say, for example,

**CALCULATION**

**Contribution margin driving hour**

The contribution margin for a driving hour is 6.89 euros on average, according to the moving calculation. Which values are the basis for this? An average of 33 driving hours per driving licence was assumed. According to the Moving-Klima-Index 2nd half of 2020, the average price per driving hour class B is 43.90 gross or 36.89 euros net. Added to this is the amount for the presentation for the practical test, which averages 109.23 euros net. **This means that the net income of a driving school for practical training averages 1,326.60 euros.**

The vehicle costs for a 45-minute car driving hour currently average €2.80 in fixed costs and €1.44 in variable costs. This means that **an average class B training including a practical examination causes car costs of 144.16 euros.**

**With average wage costs of currently 27.89 euros, the employed driving instructor causes costs of 948.26 euros for this training with examination drive.** This amount must at least also be used by the self-driving entrepreneur for his teaching performance, because he too must live and pay contributions for health insurance and old-age insurance, among other things. **This leaves an average contribution margin of 234.18 euros per practical class B training or 6.89 euros per 45-minute driving lesson including test drive.**

The higher price for the presentation for the practical examination compared to the price of the driving hours was spread over all hours. **If the amount for the presentation for the exam is left out, the contribution margin per driving hour is 4.76 euros.**

that they can ask questions in class that they would never ask online. In face-to-face teaching, a completely different emotional access, trust can be built up. This is not possible digitally," says for example the experienced "digital professor" Prof. Dr. Gerald Lembke.

And for many young people, online theory lessons are not even technically possible. "A good quarter of the learner drivers cannot meet the technical requirements for online instruction," according to the results of the Moving Climate Index from August 2020. Poor network coverage plays a major role here, but also the fact that not all learner drivers have the necessary equipment. An experience that is currently also being made by schools, some of which are already handing out laptops to pupils. //