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How do teachers of primary school approach the music assessment in Chile? Differences and similarities between professors' experience and ministerial guidelines

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Abstract

This research reflects the considerations of music teachers when assessing their students, the tools used and their consistency with guidelines issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education, along with theoretical approaches to assessment. In this way, we have analysed the theoretical contribution of renowned scholars such as Pujol, Santos Guerra, Chacón, and Fautley, as well as the music curricula of the Ministry of Education from first to eighth grade. We propose that it is essential to understand the experience of teachers in the assessment process from a constructivist perspective, analysing their agreement or disagreement with the current ministerial theoretical foundations in relation to assessment.

Keywords: Curriculum; formative assessment; summative assessment; significant learning; assessment tools

Introduction

In the framework of academic discussion, it is interesting to observe how theories related to assessment have been preponderant, as evidenced by the writing of Fautley (2010), Santos Guerra (2014), Brown and Pickford (2013), Leclercq and Cabrera (2014), among others. In this context, all topics in which the act of assessment is included assume great importance, in different stages of education.

In this context, Chile has recently renewed its curricular guidelines for Primary Education, which involves students between 6 and 14 years of age. The music syllabus has been part of this renewal. It should be noted that the new guidelines include learning objectives and guidance in various fields, such as planning, didactics and assessment. For grades 1 to 6, the new curricula were edited in 2013, while for grades 7 and 8, they were edited in 2016. Assessment has a special place in this field because it has been an issue in music in primary school, and it has also been used to be focused on objectivity and given scarce research on the subject.

Therefore, and given the current study programmes, it is important to analyse how the syllabus approaches assessment in music as an issue in primary school, along with theoretical sources that deal with this topic. Likewise, we have considered the experience of teachers in terms of their knowledge and practice related to assessment in music, and its consistency with the curricula currently in force. Thus, by virtue of this analysis, we propose the following questions:

- Is there any coherence between curricular guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education and the acquired knowledge added to practice in assessment of music teachers, specialists in Primary Education? If so, what are these?

- What do the guidelines of the Chilean Ministry of Education propose regarding evaluation in Music Education?
- What do music teachers think about assessment in this area and its possibility of implementation?
- What relevant aspects coincide and differ in assessment between the guidelines of the Chilean Ministry of Education, and knowledge and experiences of music teachers?

General objective

- To analyse the coherence between the curricular guidelines by the Chilean Ministry of Education, and the knowledge added to practices of teachers' specialism, in relation to music assessment in Primary Education.

Specific objectives

- To analyse the music plans and programmes of the Chilean Ministry of Education in relation to manage music assessment.
- To analyse the opinion and experience of music teachers in relation to necessary theoretical and practical knowledge about assessment in this area.
- To analyse coincidences and differences about assessment conceptualisation between the guidelines of the Chilean Ministry of Education and the knowledge and experience of music teachers.

The concept 'Assessment' in Chile is understood as the action of placing value upon competences as part of the learning process both qualitatively and quantitatively, which happens from the beginning of the process by a diagnosis and continues throughout the period in question. By this way, it is considered 'Formative Assessment' when the process is more valued than the product. The teacher gathers the learning evidence collaboratively and has dialogue with the students every time before obtaining or agreeing the final grade according to the type of assessment (self-assessment, co-assessment and others). Instead, 'Summative Assessment' is realised at the final learning stage, and culminates with a grade, preferably including feedback to the student at that moment. In this frame in Chile, teachers as much as the Ministry of Education adhere to the constructivist model, emphasising the process and, as a result, prioritising significant learning by providing feedback as formative assessment. Nevertheless, we can identify a coherence dilemma between the ministerial guidelines and the duty of a music teacher, either by their own decisions, or external situations that may condition the teacher's planning and management, such as infrastructure difficulties, equipment, reduced classes workload, large class sizes and the requirement to fulfil with a specific amount of grades.

Theoretical framework

Ministerial guidelines and academic discussion

Assessment tools

The assessment of learning postulated by Juntunen (2017) is a topic that every day has been gaining more importance both nationally and internationally. Likewise, it is possible to identify how the Chilean educational system has become aware of the impact of assessment. The study programmes have been actualised by the Ministry of Education, adding concrete specification for assessment which include varied assessment instruments, obtaining valuable information that permits guidance for the student, the consideration of different learning styles and the importance of feedback, among others. In contrast, as a part of the future music teacher training, assessment is one of the most important subjects in their curriculum. However, the role of the educator in the

classroom, in terms of their formative practices as a component of their teaching duties, create contextual conditions that may hinder application of the ministry guidelines for this topic.

Regarding assessment, both general and specific guidelines for the area of music are proposed for different grades (first until eighth grade) in the education system in Chile. A significant issue is that of the variety and diversity of both assessment instruments and learning assessment methodologies (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2016). For this reason, for a better understanding of the students learning process, a variety of instruments such as portfolios, reports, deliveries and projects are required. In the same way, different methodologies, such as self-assessment and co-assessment, provide a range of perspectives to better understand each student's abilities and aspects to improve. In this way, the assessment guidelines for the music syllabus give importance to the different kinds of learning, highlighting those that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, as well as those that will generate feedback from teachers in order to obtain valuable information about the learning process. In this context, these assessment tools are emphasised: the use of auditory and visual registers, anecdotal records, self-assessment and co-assessment, portfolios, presentations of what is done in the classroom and the various assessment guidelines.

The diversity of assessment instruments helps to bring rigour to the process, since the achievements of a student cannot be reduced only to a quantification grading, given the complexity of the educational reality. In addition, the perspective of different evaluators strengthens this task, bearing in mind the subjectivity inherent in the assessment process (Santos Guerra, 2014); indeed, the writings of this author coincide with the general assessment guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, given that both suggest an integral vision from several observers.

Rubrics are used to help reach a consistent cognitive, procedural and attitudinal assessment (Chacón, 2012). At the same time, self-assessment and co-assessment are needed to help guide the student to an outcome that the student himself or herself expects; moreover, alternative tools of learning, such as informal and group learning, are important pedagogies. This relates to what is stipulated by the guidelines for the assessment of the learning contained in the curriculum, given that reference is made to a variety of assessment agents, whereby variety of assessment methodologies take an active part in the process.

In connection with anecdotal records, it is worth remarking on the importance of teachers' notes, where individual observations should be separated from the collective ones. The individual records can include all the personalised information of each student, while in the group notes teachers can make a general reflection of the learning process of the whole group. The reflection in learning logs has obtained high-level approval, since the outcome that is made is general, including all the relevant individual aspects (Pujol i Subirà, 1997). The use of anecdotal records is found in the assessment guidelines within the music syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2016) as one of the important assessment instruments to keep track of, for example, tests and classroom activities, and significant events.

There are various perspectives on student portfolios, and this is one of the assessment instruments suggested by the Ministry of Education (2013, 2016) for the subject of music. The portfolio is a useful tool to keep, for example, an auditory record of the musical activities of students. As well, students can save their scores, comments, spreadsheets and any notes that are of interest for their musical training, transforming the portfolio into a log of the subject. In this way, the students can collect relevant suggestions derived from their teachers' feedback, together with the scores and important notes in subjects such as instrumental performance, musical theory or music history study. Additionally, necessary aspects can be improved, transforming the portfolio into an evidence repository of a constant improvement process, provided that the student devotes time and study in every required aspect.

In the portfolio, the student's varied learning experiences can be recorded along with the different observations that constituted the process. In this way, the student can reflect at all stages of the training process (Leclercq & Cabrera, 2014). From this a sample of evidence, selected by the

student to account for his learning (Tardif cited by Leclercq & Cabrera, 2014: 244) can be taken. Used in this fashion, portfolios constitute an advance in learning process. They can include oral or written testimonies, online activities, actions related to the effective combination of resources, etc. In this sense, the collection of evidence is not intended to question the work produced by the student, but rather to become a focus for reflection. This is because the students must comment on each piece of evidence through their learning path, specifying the actions and perspectives for its continuation (Leclercq & Cabrera, 2014). This compilation of evidence in a portfolio is closely related to the Chilean ministerial guidelines for the subject of Music. They reflect the student's progress, through several assessments and auditory or written record, among others. All of these demonstrate a formative process.

Other important considerations concerning portfolios are discussed by Prieto (2001); however, it should be noted that a positive aspect of portfolio assessment used in this fashion is that both *process* and *product* have been given equal importance. Even more, we would dare to say that the process has a fundamental effect on learning, and that this is closely linked to formative assessment. However, a possible negative trait is that the student's work could be excessively categorised, which would involve more work for the teacher.

Formative assessment and summative assessment: understanding the constructive perspective

According to the curricula of the Ministry of Education for seventh and eighth grades (Ministry of Education, 2016), given that assessment allows the teacher to know his or her students, the teacher may optimise planning considering academic progress. For this reason, the collection of evidence verifying student learning and achievement of the objectives set is of great importance. Thus, thanks to the various assessment instruments, both teachers and students benefit from the act of evaluating. On the one hand, students receive feedback from their teachers, which allows them to grow musically, and on the other hand, teachers obtain important information for decision-making in relation to their pedagogical work.

Music curricula for grades 1 to 6 and 7 and 8 (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2016) consider two types of assessment according to their function: formative and summative. The core of formative assessment is a constant interaction between teacher and students based on feedback, comments and corrections. It has a permanent character and carries no grade points, and therefore both teachers and students can benefit from the general comments of both parties that arise in classroom activities.

By way of contrast, summative assessment generally corresponds to the culmination of a cycle, it includes grading, and the use of assessment instruments is important. Accordingly, it should also reflect the evidence gathered in various forms within the process, both by the teacher and the students, thus making use of appraisals made in the course of academic activities. Taking into consideration what is expressed by Philpott (2012) and Errázuriz (2002), the question arises here as to whether it is possible to assess arts objectively, especially music. By way of answer, it seems to be the case that we ought to consider not only the teachers involved in the objectivity, as the ones who have the responsibility to value it, but also perceptions of the students who will, by the acquisition of new learning competences, be moving towards their continuous improvement; in other words what interests us is the learning space generated, along with teacher–student intersubjectivity (Luhmann, 1998; Husserl, 1985). Summative assessment relates to the way in which the tests to be used at the end of the teaching–learning process are constructed. This type of assessment conveys valuable information about students' own learning process. This facilitates the teacher's work in assisting the students in their progress based on their individuality (Pujol i Subirá, 1997). It is possible to establish a link with Fautley (2010) regarding the communication and reporting of all the information collected, in the third stage of the assessment process.

Formative assessment begins with the collection of information through various means, and the data are recorded for later use, while summative assessment occurs when the content of the

assessment is communicated through a score, report or assessment tools (Fautley, 2010). The music curriculum of the Ministry of Education (2013, 2016) is consistent with Fautley's approach, which includes formative assessment through the collection of information within the teaching process, and then a report by means of a score, among other modalities. Assessment, considering all its complexity, helps in the teaching–learning process, since it fits the characteristics of each student. It allows the teacher to know their students by facilitating decision-making and reflection through all the information collected. It is helpful to know the skills and abilities of the students, as well as the important aspects to which to attend; in this way, it is possible to determine the procedure of necessary and adequate support for them to show progress, both at the level of discipline and personal maturity (Pujol i Subirà, 1997).

However, assessment should not only be an isolated act of scoring at the end of the process, which some Chilean teachers believe to be the case, because many factors contribute to the final assessment score. For example, if the student is to be summatively assessed by means of a final assessment event, the student may not be able to perform in normal conditions, which can lead to error. Therefore, assessment must be an ongoing and continuous part of the teaching and learning process, and the assessment agents must be those who work with the student in the process (Santos Guerra, 2014).

In the real context of the classroom, it is very common to see the idea of assessment as being separated from teaching (Fautley, 2010), where only the formal instances of assessment including grading can be considered valid. In this regard, it is possible to observe that Chilean teachers consider formal resources or results as a relevant part of the assessment, being in stark contrast to some standpoints where importance is given to the process, and not only the learning results. We observe the fact that if some Chilean teachers consider summative assessments as high value in the teaching–learning process, this is because of the characteristics of this kind of application owing to the prevailing context; in the Chilean educational system, the implementation of personalised and constant follow-ups for the students is often unfeasible in a school classroom where there are often 35 students on average. This is compounded by the requirement by educational institutions to provide a considerable number of grades, a situation that forces the teachers continuously to think about how to transform student performance into quantifiable results. It is also very common in a schoolroom context that music teachers are busy organising their student's musical performances, and this involves a large amount of practice and rehearsal in concert; thereby, they can become less concerned with personalised feedback and more focused on providing grades.

We know that formative assessment can improve student retention and enhances self-confidence (Brown & Pickford, 2013). In this sense, formative feedback is fundamental in an assessment process. Students receive feedback on what they have done in their teaching–learning process and what is very important is that they are invited to reflect on their progress in the next work activities. This is especially useful in practical scenarios. In this way, students can improve important aspects during the process itself and not only in its final stage. 'Pre-information' would then be the most important part of a formative assessment process, and this concurs with the views of other authors, for example, Santos Guerra (2014) emphasises the importance of ongoing and continuous assessment, while Pujol i Subirà (1997) stated that formative assessment allows the teacher to make decisions regarding the type of help students need to improve their learning.

It is important to emphasise that formative assessment is not about performing small summative assessments to finish with a larger one, thus reducing the process to a multiplication of summative assessments. This subject has been addressed by several authors. Relating to continuous and formative assessment, Monedero (1998) highlights the formative nature of the former, while showing what often occurs: formative features are given to a process based on "micro-summative" assessments, which leads to misunderstanding of the real purpose of formative assessment.

Finally, the music curricula for grades 1 to 8 (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2016) refer to the closing of a cycle; therefore, the assessment should reflect all evidence collected during the entire teaching–learning process.

Methodological framework

Design and type of research

Constructivism as a methodological approach

The proposed objective was fulfilled through interviews with music teachers during the second half of 2016. Teachers with extensive experience and others with fewer years of practice gave their opinions based on their professional experience. Due to its emic and synchronous nature, a qualitative methodology was used, within the framework of the constructivist paradigm (Flick, 2004; Flores, 2009) that supports the present investigation. According to Hernández (2006), this research involves a descriptive, cross-sectional, non-experimental design, since second-order observations were made for 6 months. From a constructivist paradigm, and based on the empirically grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967), triangulation of the results was sought, observing reality without altering it.

Given that interpretive analysis does not seek external and internal validity, but rather transferability and veracity based on the self-references of those consulted, the proposed constructivist approach was utilised in order to respond to the research questions, and general and specific objectives indicated.

Research techniques

As a research technique, interviews were employed, because, as Sautú et al. (2005) suggest that, it is a systematised conversation that aims to obtain, recover and record life experiences stored in the memory of people. In an interview, the interviewee tells his or her stories in his or her own spontaneous language and the interviewer asks about situations or events (Benadiba & Plotinsky, 2005; Sautú et al., 2005). According to Sautú et al. (2005), each researcher conducts a different interview according to his or her culture, sensitivity and knowledge about the subject, and, above all, according to the space-time context in which the interview is conducted.

Credibility, confirmability and transferability

It should be noted that the credibility of this research is based on the following elements:

- Protection of field notes that arose from actions and interactions during the investigation, where the interviewee's profile data and complementary data were recorded.
- Use of textual transcripts from the interviews to back up the meanings and interpretations presented in the study results. These transcripts were later used as hermeneutic units in Atlas.ti 7.0 software.
- Use of triangulation in the collection of data to determine the consistency between the results, the bibliographical backup material, mainly the music curricula of the Ministry of Education, and the theories related to the proposals.
- Discussion of the interpretations with a team of interdisciplinary researchers, composed of teachers of Music education and a sociologist specialising in education.

Confirmability (Moser & Korstjens, 2018) or auditability, which refers to the way in which the researcher can track or route what somebody else did (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), was achieved by reviewing foreign experiences, since at the national level this research is unprecedented. The following aspects were considered:

- Description of the characteristics of the informants and their selection process through a selection by volunteers.
- Use of recording mechanisms, with the authorisation of key informants, protecting their anonymity.
- Analysis of the faithful transcription of the interviews made to the informants.

Finally, transferability, applicability or the possibility of expanding the results of the study to other populations is a fundamental point according to the approaches of Guba and Lincoln (1981).

The findings can be transferred to a different context, based on the representativity of the data obtained, since we made a typological characterisation of the teachers of each type of establishment in Chile: municipal schools (government-dependent through municipalities), private subsidised schools (shared financing, parents and government subsidy) and private non-subsidised schools (100% financed from tuition payments, mainly high socio-economic stratum). This typology represents – in some way – different socio-economic strata and is the distribution that, in general terms, is recognised at the national level.

Application protocol

Each teacher was contacted via telephone and e-mail. His or her consent to participate in the interview was confirmed by this same means. Individual interviews were conducted in a single-interview session between May and November 2016. Volunteers were provided with the respective informed consent. Finally, as an ethical aspect, the anonymity of research participants was maintained.

Participants: practicing music teachers

The study included the following volunteer participants: 17 music teachers with experience in the classroom from the first to the eighth grade in Chile distributed as follows: 14 teachers from the Metropolitan Region (RM), 1 teacher from Region VII (Maule) and 2 teachers from Region X (Los Lagos). These participants were selected through a voluntary non-probabilistic sampling. Research subjects were included in the sample according to their availability (Cardona, 2002) and typological representation according to the management of the school where they work.

Theoretical sampling was used, which consists in the selection of cases or participants according to the need for precision and refinement of the theory that is being developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, unlike the sampling used in a quantitative paradigm that is defined in the pre-field work phase, theoretical sampling takes place during the data collection and analysis process stages (Charmaz, 2006). Although we do not intend to extrapolate results from this study, there was a coincidence in points of view regarding the concept of assessment and its scope. This occurred among typological representatives of each type of school (municipal, private subsidised and private non-subsidised)¹, and teachers who work outside the Metropolitan Region (where the capital city is located).

Therefore, the initial decisions regarding sample selection are not based on a preconceived theoretical structure, but on the emergence of ideas, respecting each discourse. The authors of the present investigation have experience in pedagogical, sociological and musical aspects. Based on this theoretical sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we sought to identify categories of analysis to discover the conception of teachers about assessment in music at the primary level in order to contribute new knowledge on this subject. In this context, ‘the ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to normal models of theory in general, and theory development in sociology, is the essence of theoretical sensitivity. Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the research’ (Glaser & Holton, 2004, 43) is appropriate.

Analysis plan

After the protocol of observation, content was analysed using Atlas.ti 7.0 software, selecting categories, establishing constant comparisons, axial relations and finally an analytical induction, and considering strategies of intertextual analysis (determining the virtual meaning of a text with other texts). This research technique provides an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of the communication (Andréu Abela, 1998) generated in the interviews carried out (See section 3.7).

Table 1. 'Analytical Matrix Interview With Teachers', 2017

| |
|---|
| Dimension 1: Considerations when evaluating |
| 1.1. Experiences associated with application |
| 1.1.1. What are the assessment methods you use in your classes to achieve the learning objectives? Why? |
| 1.2. Conceptions around about assessment as process or product |
| 1.2.1. How do your assessment guidelines demonstrate meaningful learning in your students? |
| 1.2.2. How do you design assessment in the students' formative process? |
| 1.2.3. What do you use the information provided through the assessments in the teaching–learning process for? |
| Dimension 2: assessment tools |
| 2.1. Instruments used |
| 2.1.1. What are the assessment tools you use to measure student achievement and why? |

Analytical matrix interviews with teachers

In order to operationalise the objectives of the present study as they related to the observations of the teachers interviewed, the Table 1 Analytical Matrix Interview With Teachers provide dimensions, indicators and questions that represent them.

Analysis of results

The information obtained from interviews with the sample of 17 music teachers shows some common and other divergent conceptions about assessment, its impact and the decisions made to improve the teaching–learning process from information gathered based on the assessment of their students. It should be noted that teachers with less years of professional experience hold a constructivist view of assessment, regardless of the area or type of school where they work. This is reflected in their knowledge of the curricula for Music Education from the Ministry of Education. However, it is interesting to emphasise some assessment considerations and the recurrent use of certain types of assessment resources. By the way of contrast, the most experienced teachers tend to focus on the objectives or expected learning to achieve, without excluding the importance of the formative aspect, while others consider e-assessment as being mainly administrative, necessary for the school system. This can be seen in the opinion of the teachers when they express:

'Assessing is being able to recognize in every student if he or she has achieved the expected learning outcomes' (Interviewee Nr. 4).

The same teacher also says about the formative assessment:

'It is more important; I think it is. In fact, I do it in my copybook, let's say only for me, where I'm trying to incorporate by any way in the rubric different things, I've seen in the child development process' (Interviewee Nr. 4, 2016).

Finally, despite of the importance of formative assessment s/he expresses that:

'No, we are not. At this moment at school we are not using it because there are rubrics elaborated by other colleagues that have always been implemented' (Interviewee Nr. 4, 2016).

In this way, it is possible to observe diverse teachers saying even though there are some aspects in common, such as the importance given to the learning process, diagnostic assessment is utilised

NUMBERS OF MENTIONS / TOPIC

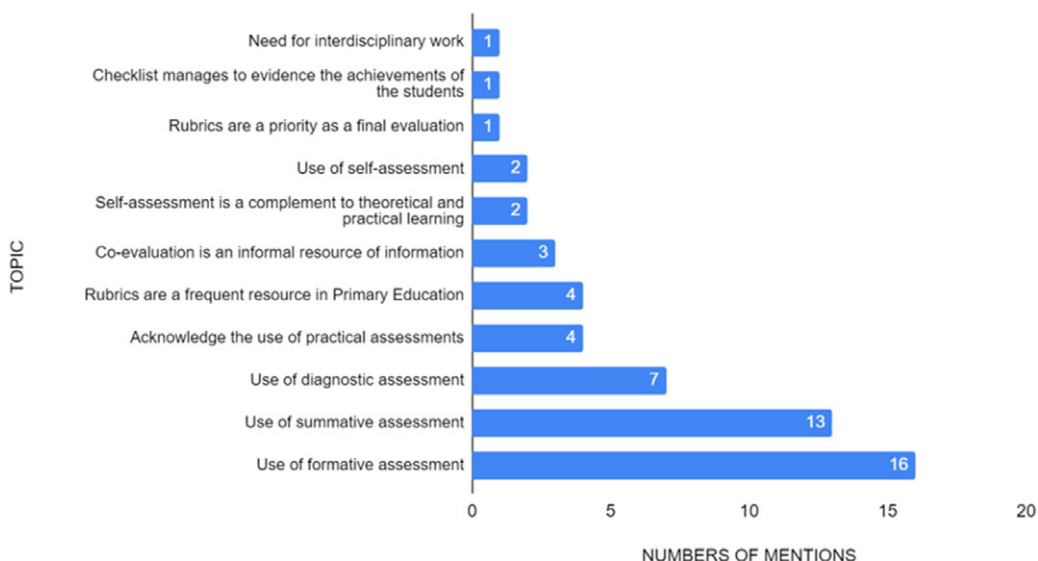


Figure 1. 'Experiences associated with the methodology', 2019.

to identify student learning requirements, and contextual and institutional factors (e.g. educational project) that define the teaching tasks.

Some teachers declare that assessment is an administrative and non-formative goal; others mention that it includes cognitive, procedural and attitudinal competencies, while others still indicate that assessment reflects a meaningful learning process as students recognise their skills. Meanwhile, according to many of the comments, we can see some teachers' perceptions that assessment is an instrument that must be quantitative. However, this view is outweighed by those who believe that assessment should be qualitative. Very few teachers confuse formative assessment with summative assessment. Some others consider the cultural context when designing their assessments; according to these teachers, assessment should consider the significant experiences of students, without overvaluing grades and this can be achieved using rubrics.

Figure 1 shows the correlation between experiences related to educational methodologies and diverse-related subjects, according to the experience of the interviewed teachers. First, it is interesting to observe how assessment can be a way to incorporate innovative and novel methods, for example, at the moment of implementation of previous learning or musical preferences by the students themselves. In this way, a musical piece previously known can motivate them to study, while the assessment process is constantly evaluated. This can be performed together with other assessment strategies as co-assessment and self-assessment, already present in the assessment practice implemented by the teachers.

For teachers, constant formative assessment is important and forces them to choose an adequate selection and setting of assessment instruments. In their experience, the interviewed teachers consider that rubrics need to be adapted for students with disabilities or a learning disorder, as this reinforces pedagogical and musical experiences better. Therefore, this type of registration will facilitate taking decisions about the most suitable methodologies and best repertoire selection. This can be reflected in the words of this interviewee who indicates their assessment methodology for these students:

‘Class by class one rubric, where I allocate scores to the responsibility of one requested musical instrument, music exercise sheet and songs practiced in class. I also assess respect and enthusiasm during the session. I currently use one special rubric to assess integrated students process that I work together with the special education teacher’ (Interviewee Nr. 17, 2016).

In this sense, it is possible to relate what expressed by the teachers with ministerial guidelines around assessment since both cases highlight the assessment instruments, giving also relevance to the choice of varying instruments according to the students’ needs.

According to the interviewees, music should not be conceptualised in the same fashion as other disciplines. This is because of its subjective characteristics that may cause some difficulties at the moment of assessment. This is why it is important to develop assessment instruments that make the subject observable and amenable to measurement, taking into account that musical performances take place in the classroom, with students immersed in learning processes actively and dynamically. This means that music classes are not sought silent or quiet, because sound is part of the learning process, making it different from other school disciplines.

The aim is to achieve a comprehensive educational experience for the students, not only focused on classroom or school activities, thus there needs to be active participation from all those involved in the student’s assessment. In this context, the parents’ role in the teaching–learning process is relevant due to their role in organising and motivating musical work at home. In this way, it is possible to stimulate the students’ learning by the family commitment to learn music. In turn, at the attitudinal level, the family instil the responsibility, perseverance and discipline that can be reflected in the musical educational process. The interviewed teachers assert that when there is significant parental involvement in the musical assessment process of their children, aspects such as constant responsibility in their studies, attendance with musical instruments and the results in general improve. In a similar sense, the student’s participation in their assessment process is also considered as an important element in accordance with both ministerial guidelines and teachers’ opinions. In short, with this enabling environment, students can reflect on their own learning process, achievements and goals to reach.

This suggests that the students’ and parents’ participation in the assessment process adds valuable information for continuous improvement. Accordingly, teachers can take appropriate decisions for the students’ requirements and select appropriate didactic resources for achievement of the learning goals. In this way, the process is transformed into an agent of change, adjusting to the features of each learning situation. Thus, by means of an initial diagnosis, the interviewees consider it facilitates planning due to clarification of starting point of the students’ performance. This first step of assessment is then an important way by which students demonstrate musical knowledge and skills. That assessment becomes a process that provides valuable and useful planning information can be seen in the comments of teachers:

‘I feel it will give me also instances to think and reconstruct some things in the planning’ (Interviewee Nr. 1, 2016).

Added to:

‘Well, to improve, let’s say, the planning. What it must be done, what’s necessary to be done and maybe also reconfigure some a priori ideas, not only for this year but for next years. Reconfigure for example the methodologies’ (Interviewee Nr. 2, 2016).

And finally:

‘The assessments results contribute also in the planning for the following classes because the improving aspects must be taken into account’ (Interviewee Nr. 15, 2016).

The opinions expressed by the teachers are related to the Ministry of Education guidelines (2013), since they highlight that information analysis improves results by taking decisions. These decisions can generate changes linked to planning, methodologies, etc., as well as after the diagnosis or during the school term.

With younger ages, diagnosis is principally based on musical skills, such as tuning and tempo, while in higher grades diagnosis can include a musical or vocal performance, as well as questions about history or theory of music. The use of initial diagnosis is reflected in teacher comments:

‘... what I do it at the beginning is a diagnosis assessment and that one will give me the class level I’m facing, the knowledge they have and how much I can go forward with them according to the results’ (Interviewee Nr. 8, 2016).

According to the teacher’s opinions, not all the assessment strategies or instruments are useful for every situation. For example, numbers of students, the teaching–learning process and didactic units inform diagnosis at the outset of the process.

However, summative assessment with a mark is seen as a limitation for understanding of learning and needs constant follow-up. Thus, teachers consider that the assessment process must show the students’ progress. This means that in case of music teaching as a discipline, constant formative assessment would be successful for the achievement of significant learning by cultural and social experiences as formulated by Vygotsky (1978).

The result of the assessment process and associated quantitative and qualitative analysis are important topics for the teachers. Quantitative aspects are principally based on results from general statistics of the whole class, whereas qualitative analysis has more relevance for the teachers. Using this analysis, teachers can make appropriate decisions to implement the necessary changes both at planning level and for teaching–learning strategies. From this assessment process, the students can be given feedback individually or collectively, with the purpose to improve their studying methods as well as recommendations for instrumental and vocal performance, along with such areas as theory, music appreciation or history.

Analysing the teachers’ experiences, it is possible to find that many of them are directly related and complement each other; however, it is possible to identify confusion in terminologies, such as ‘to assess’ and ‘qualify’. Doing this, it is also possible to establish the following agreements in their opinions:

- The assessment process must involve the subject teacher, the parents and students, with the recommendation that the students must be actively included in the process. With this, it is possible to say that for all the interviewed teachers it is important to have all stakeholders actively participating in the process. This includes knowledge of assessment strategies as well as results, analysis and feedback.
- The assessment process can be used as a source of information for planning, and this will affect teaching methods. In this way, it is possible to observe that all along the teaching–learning process assessment is a source of primary importance for decisions facing the school and musical work.
- The assessment must involve a continuous and constant process, because it provides music learning indicators from information obtained regarding student achievements.
- A process of continuous assessment in music facilitates the learning of students with disabilities or learning disorders, utilising various assessment activities. These should also affect planning as well as teaching and learning strategies.

With regard to the concept of assessment, teachers have a range of opinions. For some teachers, assessment represents a process, and, at the same time, the learning state of a student at a certain time (Figure 2). For others, it is principally a verification of an objective achievement at the

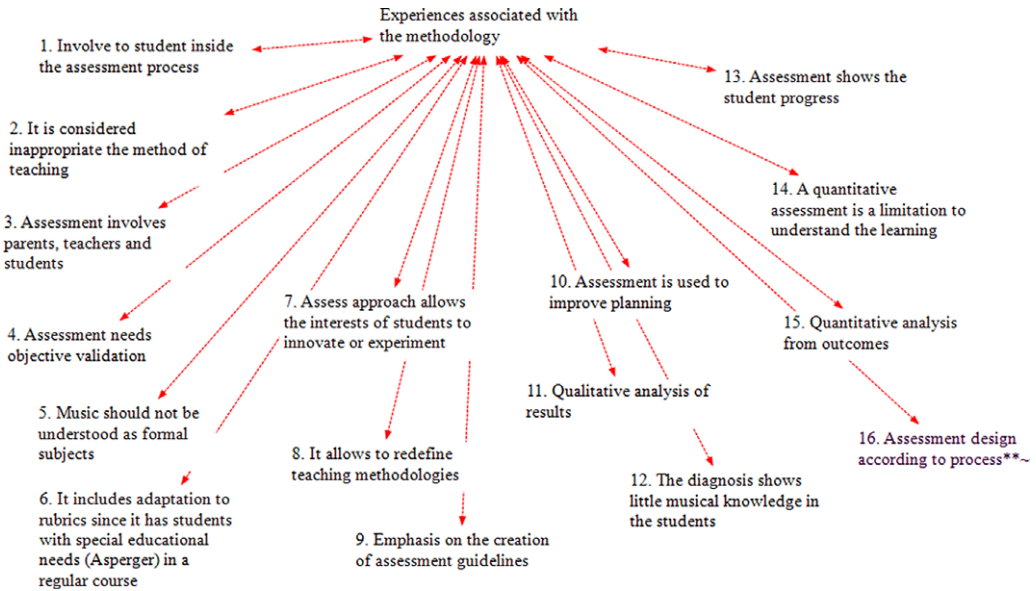


Figure 2. ‘Assessment design according to process’, 2019.

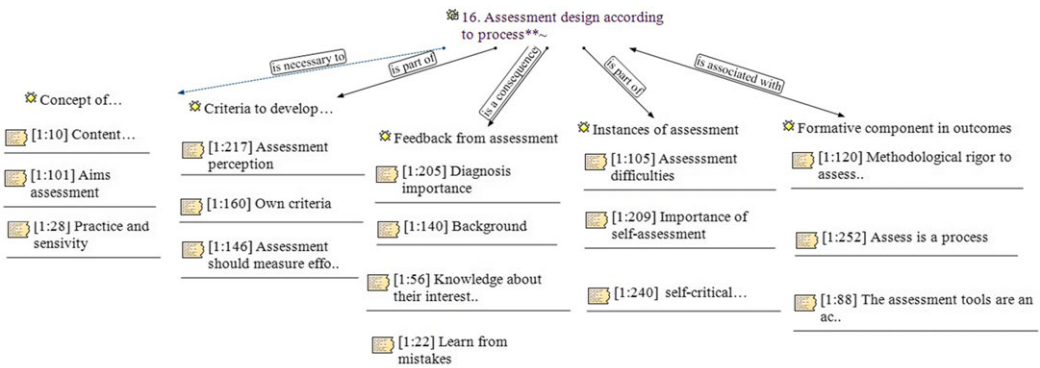


Figure 3. ‘Meaningful learning associated with learning objectives proposed by teachers’. Own elaboration, 2019.

beginning of the formative process (Figure 3). This difference reveals the importance that some teachers give to the process, noting formative assessment, while others are focused on achievement of the final objectives. We can highlight the practical effect of the assessment, inherent to the discipline of music that defines the distinctive attributes of the assessment.

It is worth commenting on the different opinions about the assessment impact and the contribution of feedback for significant learning achievement. On the one hand, information given by the student through the assessment process helps the teacher to take decisions to improve the teaching methods and the planning with the aim to strengthen the procedure and attitude competences (see Figures 2 and 4). In the same way, this is a method to get to know the students and their interests with the purpose of doing the music performance orientation with any song or piece s/he likes. Providing a way to know them and strengthen repertoire selection decisions is indicated by the following interviewee.

‘It is also a way to approach to their interests and of course trying to be innovative’ (Interviewee Nr. 3, 2016).

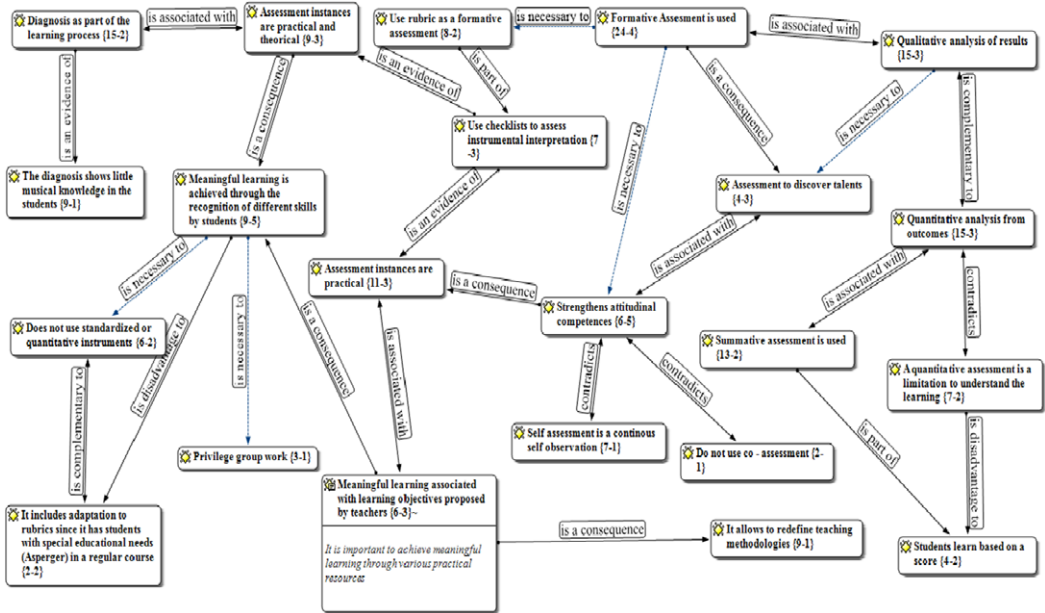


Figure 4. ‘Mentions of relevant topics for the interviewees’. Own elaboration, 2019.

It also highlights how working together with the student to provide positive feedback is useful, as doing this they know the most important aspects to improve. On the other hand, others consider that the assessment process and associated feedback do not generate any impact, because music is not an area considered important inside of the classroom. There are, however, also teachers who express a negative impact as part of the student’s information, because of how conditioned they are to achieve higher grades. This opinion is possible to relate with a possible conceptual error by some teachers between to assess and qualify.

It is important to note differences produced by some opinions in relation to the assessment process in general. By these ones, it is possible to observe important differences in the variations around a concept and the assessment of it. For some teachers, it is directly linked with the scores and scoring actions. By this way, the student would have the tools to be promoted to the next grade. For others, it corresponds to an element of the teaching process that is directly related to the objective’s achievements. This is possible to observe in some interviewers’ experiences, for example:

‘... the assessments are being used as resources, let’s say marks of every student in process being promoted to the next grade covering all the subjects’ (Interviewee Nr. 4, 2016).

Similarly:

‘To assess is just a process of teaching that is more related to realize how much I could do in comparison with what I aimed to do’ (Interviewee Nr. 14, 2016).

Based on the interviewees’ answers, we can highlight the following issues where the observation of the students’ significant learning is relevant. Specially, formative assessment confirms the accomplishment and academic background of student.

As a consequence, we can appreciate that the teachers identify guidelines established by the Ministry of Education for music and try to adjust their planning, methods and teaching frameworks for the achievement of significant learning for their students. Even so, from their

experience, however long they have been teaching, they may be forced to implement methodological adjustments and, as a result, assessments as well, to achieve the educational results that every school demands, or to reach the rating that other disciplines obtain.

Conclusions

In this analysis of the Music Education curricula for Primary Education of the Chilean Ministry of Education (2013, 2016), two important areas have been identified in the assessment process: the instruments used and the different types of assessment according to their function. Given the contribution that these issues can make to the teaching and learning process, this paper has focused on the exploration of authors who have approached the subject of assessment in Music Education, both generally and specifically, and in the opinion of music teachers in schools.

With respect to academic discussion, it can be concluded that the ministerial guidelines are related to the thoughts and concepts of the consulted authors. When referring to the use of assessment tools, the curriculum emphasises the use of a variety of instruments, which is consistent with the work of Santos Guerra (2014). Likewise, when assessment as a process is considered, this is consistent with what was proposed by Fautley (2010), along with the importance of continuous assessment (Monedero, 1998). When analysing the different instruments, it is possible to find publications on rubrics (Chacón, 2012), anecdotal records (Pujol i Subirà, 1997) and portfolios (Leclercq & Cabrera, 2014, Prieto, 2001).

The views of teachers are consistent with ministerial guidelines. In general, they use a variety of assessment tools such as rubrics, checklists, rating scales and sometimes written tests. They do this mainly through musical presentations. It is important to note that some teachers showed some confusion when referring to assessment instruments, particularly in the description of instruments such as the checklist and the rating scale. In general, teachers have different thoughts about assessment. While a group consider it as a continuous process, others emphasise its link with final objectives, more associated with the formal instances of assessment, those arising out in a qualification. Regarding the types of assessment in relation to their function, the ministerial guidelines speak of formative and summative assessment to evidence learning. In the case of Music, formative assessment plays an essential role, since the daily work with the student requires a constant feedback on the part of the teacher. This is key to the progress of students in this subject.

Similar ideas have been found in academic discussion. Formative assessment appears as the core of the assessment process, both in general education and in Music Education. As assessment is a continuous development and not an isolated event, changes can be made that will be observable in the medium term, which will lead to a better final result. Likewise, feedback appears as the driver of the correct development of the assessment process, with student learning as the final goal.

As for the teachers, agreement was found with both ministerial guidelines and academic discussion. Assessment is considered as a tool to measure learning achievement and, at the same time, as an important source of information about the students, regarding their progress in the musical activities addressed in class. According to some interviewed teachers, timely feedback clearly causes a change in the students, which is reflected in their attitude to the carried-out activities, and for the final result. Similarly, information collected in personal notebooks or through direct observation is important for feedback given to students. Because assessment usually consists of musical performances, formative assessment is of great importance for the steady progression of students. However, teachers do not use the portfolio as a tool to evaluate the musical process, although this is present in the ministerial music curricula (2013 and 2016); thus, students lose the opportunity to keep a personal log of their process and progress, as well as a file with the various scores and recordings of their musical work in the classroom. For some teachers, however, the assessment process and its following feedback do not have an impact on the students because of the undervaluation that music has in schoolrooms in general. Some even consider a negative impact because of the pressure the students experience in order to obtain high qualifications.

These standpoints evidence a possible conceptual error by some teachers concerning assessment processes for students and the action of qualification.

Given the importance of formative assessment and the teachers' perception that music learning is a process, it is important to emphasise that assessment is associated with the quantitative qualification of the students' musical work. This is especially relevant considering that, in general, teachers use formative assessment tools to gauge progress in the pupils' learning. It is possible to argue, therefore, that despite considering that the students' process of musical learning is crucial, these teachers believe that, in practice, grading gives them specific information to define the success of a learning process, rather than personal notes or qualitative records. This could explain the teachers' scant reference to portfolios. On the one hand, there is a tendency in music teachers to use grading as part of formative assessment, which is contrary to what is set forth in the ministerial guidelines; on the other, for these teachers, formative assessment consists of small summative assessments made throughout the teaching-learning process.

In general terms, it is possible to establish that teaching practice in the classroom is consistent with the ministerial guidelines in terms of use a variety of tools to collect the valuable information provided by the students, with the purpose of giving feedback and strengthening significant learning. It is also consistent with the concept of assessment as a continuous process, not necessarily related to a qualification, though in this case there are some teachers that relate it principally with the achievement of objectives at the end of the academic period. This difference may be due, in practical terms, to the implementation of a constant and systematic follow-up because of numerous factors, such as the numbers of students per class, the teachers' requirement of counting with the respective qualifications, shortage of time for the teachers management of assessment topics, planning, methodologies, and so on. That is why a confusion is identified in terms of the practice as formative assessment, and discussions that talk about qualifications linked to summative assessment.

Finally, this study aims to be a reference for the development of further research in different school contexts, since its results lead to a fruitful reflection on assessment in Music Education. In this sense, we seek to open a debate on this topic, since it seems to us fundamental to consider the experiences of music teachers, with a view to promoting a constructive and meaningful learning process in Music Education.

Note

1 Municipal: Public: Schools that are financed and belong to the State of Chile.

Private Subsidized: Schools that are private properties and administration but perceiving state financing by state subsidy per enrolled student and attending classes

Private nonsubsidized: Private schools (Organization of American States)

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Cite this article: Sepúlveda-Ortega A and Magnitzky-Vargas D (2023). How do teachers of primary school approach the music assessment in Chile? Differences and similarities between professors' experience and ministerial guidelines. *British Journal of Music Education* 40, 80–95. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051722000109>