

THE PERSPECTIVES OF MUSIC TEACHER CANDIDATES REGARDING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION TOOLS USED IN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE TOOLS AT SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study was a descriptive study that aimed to identify the perception of competence among music teacher candidates regarding the use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools. It also aimed to identify the actual use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools by music teachers in schools. Fourth-year students receiving their education at the Music Teaching Department of a Fine Arts Education Division of a University in the Central Anatolia Region during the spring semester of the 2012-2013 academic year were included into this study. The criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in this study. A form consisting of two separate sections was used as a data collection tool. The first section consisted of questions that aimed to obtain personal information regarding the teacher candidates. The second section, on the other hand, consisted of open-ended questions that aimed to identify the opinions of the teacher candidates. According to the results of the study, it was determined that alternative assessment and evaluation methods are not fully implemented.

Keywords: music teacher candidates, alternative assessment and evaluation tools, music education

1. INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, a constructivist approach in music education programs has been adopted in elementary schools starting from 2006, and in secondary education schools starting from 2010. According to the constructivist approach, knowledge is structured by students, and the teacher, who plays a fundamental role in teaching and learning processes, is no longer considered as an individual who provides information, but instead as a person who organizes the learning environment and processes, and guides the students. In addition to engendering a change in the content of music courses and the teaching methods and materials used in classes, this overall change in music education programs has also brought the use of alternative methods for assessment and evaluation.

In this context, the alternative assessment and evaluation tools recommended by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) for assessing the educational gains of music education programs are as follows:

- Interviews / Meetings
- Self Assessment and Peer Assessment
- Performance Homeworks
- Projects
- Student Portfolios
- Rubrics
- Observations Forms

Current music education programs emphasize that, just as students are provided with different and novel educational means for learning, different and novel assessment and evaluation methods should also be employed to allow students to demonstrate what they have learned (Blenkin & Kelly, 1992; Brooks & Brooks, 1996 as cited MEB, 2006). Successfully achieving the expected goals of music education programs depends largely on the adoption and effective use of alternative assessment and evaluation approaches by teachers.

Various studies (Aktaş & Aktaş, 2012; Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Koca, 2013; Yapıcı & Demirdelen, 2007; Zhang & Bury Stock, 2003) have determined that teachers experienced problems regarding the use of assessment and evaluation tools, that they considered themselves inadequate concerning the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation techniques, and that they required training on the subject of assessment and evaluation.

Teacher candidates who acquire the highest level of proficiency regarding assessment and evaluation methods prior to their time of service will, undoubtedly, contribute to increasing the quality of assessment and evaluation processes by implementing, during their period of service, the knowledge they have previously acquired (Goubeaud & Yan, 2004; Ololube, 2008). As such, the view that music teacher candidates should have prior knowledge on alternative assessment and evaluation tools used in music education programs constitutes the starting point of this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive study that aimed to identify the perception of competence among music teacher candidates regarding the use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools. It also aimed to identify the actual use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools by music teachers in schools. The study was designed by using both quantitative and qualitative study methods.

2.1. Sample

Fourth-year students receiving their education at the Music Teaching Department of a Fine Arts Education Division of a University in the Central Anatolia Region during the spring semester of the 2012-2013 academic year were included into this study. The criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in this study. According to (Patton, 1990:169), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *in formation-rich cases* for study in depth.” Teacher candidates to be included into the study were selected among fourth-year music education students who had completed their education on music and teaching. All teacher candidates who were fourth-year students thus participated to the study.

Demographic information regarding the teacher candidates are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information regarding the music teacher candidates

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	18	60
	Male	12	40
	Total	30	100
Type of high school the teacher candidates graduated from	Fine Arts and Sports High School	22	73.3
	Regular High School	8	-
	Anatolian High School	-	26.7
	Other	-	-
	Total	30	100

As can be seen in Table 1, 60% of the teacher candidates who constituted the study sample were female students, while 40% were male students. An evaluation of the type of high school the teacher candidates graduated from revealed that the large majority (73.3%) were from Fine Arts and Sports High Schools.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

In this study, a form consisting of two separate sections was used as a data collection tool. The first section consisted of questions that aimed to obtain personal information regarding the teacher candidates. The second section, on the other hand, consisted of open-ended questions that aimed to identify the opinions of the teacher candidates. "Open-ended questions allow the researcher to consider and address the subject he/she wishes to investigate by using a flexible approach" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). With open-ended questions, the participants answer the questions freely. The advantage of these types of questions is that they provide broader and more detailed information regarding the subject (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2009). For this reason, open-ended questions were used as a data collection tool in this study. To ensure the internal validity of this data collection tool, the open-ended questions were finalized by taking into consideration the views and opinions of experts in the field.

2.3. Data Analysis

In this study, the collected data were analyzed by using the descriptive analysis technique, which represents one of the analysis techniques used in qualitative studies. The aim of descriptive analysis is to reshape and restructure raw data into a format that can be understood and used (if required) by the readers. The data obtained from the descriptive analyses are summarized and interpreted according to previously determined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

3. FINDINGS

In this section, results obtained during the study were organized according to the descriptive analysis technique and presented within the following tables. The perception of adequacy of the teacher candidates regarding the selection and use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. The Perception of Competence among the Teacher Candidates Regarding the Selection and Use of Alternative Assessment and Evaluation Tools

	F
Inadequate	14
Partially Adequate	10
Adequate	6
Total	30

An evaluation of Table 2 shows that the large majority of teacher candidates ($f=14$) considered themselves as being inadequate regarding the use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools, while 10 considered themselves as partially adequate, and 6 considered themselves as adequate. Teacher candidates who considered themselves as inadequate described that they acquired theoretical information during their courses regarding assessment and evaluation tools, but that they lacked the opportunity to practice and implement these tools. Teacher candidates who considered themselves as partially adequate, on the other hand, described that they were able to use and implement some, but not all, of the assessment and evaluation tools.

Table 3. The Alternative Assessment and Evaluation Tools the Teacher Candidates were Knowledgeable About

	f
Portfolios	20
Projects	12
Observations	8
Rubrics	6

In Table 3, it can be seen that the alternative assessment and evaluation tools the music teacher candidates described themselves as being knowledgeable about were portfolios ($f=20$), projects ($f=12$), observations ($f=8$) and rubrics ($f=6$). Comments made by the teacher candidates regarding these alternative assessment and evaluation tools are provided below:

“I have limited knowledge on this subject. I believe that I will learn more in time” (Female student)

“Thanks to the assessment and evaluation course we received, I have sufficient knowledge regarding assessment and evaluation.” (Male student)

Table 4. The Opinions of Teacher Candidates regarding Assessment and Evaluation Tools

	F
They allow objective assessments to be performed	18
They allow assessments to be performed in accordance with the relevant processes	12

They allow different aspects and characteristics of students to be identified and recognized	10
They develop the creativity of students	9
Their implementation is associated with various problems	8
They increase the workload of teachers	4

According to Table 4, the music teacher candidates considered that assessment and evaluation tools allowed objective assessments to be performed (f=18), that they allowed assessments to be performed in accordance with the relevant processes (f=12), and that they allowed different aspects and characteristics pertaining to the students to be identified and recognized (f=10). Furthermore, they also considered that these tools developed the creativity of students (f=9). Negative opinions expressed by teacher candidates regarding alternative assessment and evaluation tools included their view that these tools' implementation is associated with various problems (f=8), and the view that they increased the workload of teachers (f=4).

Table 5. The Assessment and Evaluation Methods Preferred by Teachers at Practice Schools, according to the Observations of Teacher Candidates

	F
Traditional assessment methods	17
Both traditional and alternative assessment methods	10
Alternative assessment methods	8

It can be seen in Table 5 that, according to the music teacher candidates, the large majority (f=17) of teachers assigned at practice schools preferred using traditional assessment methods.

Comments made by the teacher candidates regarding the preferred assessment methods are provided below:

"... traditional assessments are performed; in our practice schools, classes are rather overcrowded, and teachers have a difficult time in even performing applied exams. Written exams are performed instead." (Female student)

"Our teacher uses alternative assessment and evaluation methods. Our teacher mostly uses performance homeworks and portfolios." (Male student)

"Because our teacher is currently doing postgraduate studies, I believe that he is more open to novelties. Our teacher uses alternative assessment and evaluation forms while teaching. He provides us with information and assists with our learning." (Female student)

Table 6. The Assessment and Evaluation Tools Preferred by Teachers at Schools, according to the Observations of Teacher Candidates

	f
Portfolios	23
Projects	16
Observations	10
Rubrics	8

As can be seen in Table 6, the large majority (f=23) of teacher candidates described that most of the teachers they observed in practice schools made use of Portfolios. Comments made by the teacher candidates regarding the preferred assessment tools are provided below:

"I saw that the teacher only made use of portfolios. I did not see him using any of the other tools."
(Female student)

"... I don't think that our teacher has much knowledge about assessment and evaluation tools. I believe that informative seminars should be organized for the teachers... we noted that the implementation of these tools was very different from what we saw in our classes." (Female student)

Table 7. The Opinions of Teacher Candidates regarding the Problems Encountered during the Implementation of Alternative Assessment and Evaluation Techniques and Tools at Schools.

	F
Lack of knowledge among teachers regarding alternative assessment and evaluation techniques	28
Teachers having difficulties when using assessment and evaluation forms, and the fact that they considered these forms as a loss of time	19
The preference of teachers for traditional methods	16
The insufficiency of the class times	12
The fact that the classrooms are overcrowded	10
Problems related to the apprehension in High Schools concerning University exams	8
Lack of motivation among students	8

An evaluation of Table 7 shows that the problem most commonly described (f=28) by teacher candidates regarding the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation tools in schools was the lack of knowledge among teachers. Comments made by the teacher candidates regarding the preferred assessment tools are provided below:

"... due to his age, I think that our teacher is rather a traditionalist. I saw that he had limited knowledge regarding alternative assessment tools." (Female student)

"I go to the ... high school for practice. The fact that the class lasts for an hour, as well as the fact that students studying for university are uninterested, complicates the implementation of the program. The assessments are performed according to traditional assessment and evaluation methods... I did not see any alternative assessment and evaluation tool being used at my school." (Female student)

4. CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

"Education and assessment are two processes that mutually support one another (Foster, 1998; Cited by: The Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2006:78)." Assessment and evaluation are an important part of education and teaching. In education, assessments and evaluations serve to identify whether a program is able to achieve the desired level of success, and whether the students can develop and acquire the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes. The continuous monitoring of educational and teaching processes by means of assessments and evaluations allows the identification and correction of any problem that might arise at any stage" (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2009:94).

According to the results of the study, it was determined that the alternative assessment and evaluation tools the music teacher candidates were knowledgeable about included portfolios (f=20), projects (f=12), observations (f=8) and rubrics (f=6).

The music teacher candidates expressed the opinion that assessment and evaluation tools allowed objective assessments to be performed (f=18), that they allowed assessments to be performed in accordance with the relevant processes (f=12), and that they allowed different aspects and characteristics of students to be identified and recognized (f=10). The teacher candidates also considered that these tools assisted in developing the creativity of students (f=9). Negative opinions expressed by the teacher candidates regarding alternative assessment and evaluation tools included the view that their implementation was associated with various problems (f=8), and that they increased the workload of teachers (f=4).

According to the music teacher candidates, the large majority (f=17) of teachers assigned at practice schools preferred using traditional assessment methods. Traditional assessments and evaluations are carried out at the end of an educational process, and are performed in order to determine the extent to which students have learned the provided information. According to this assessment and evaluation approach, it is deemed sufficient to classify students as academically successful or unsuccessful by determining the extent to which they achieved/performed certain behaviors and activities within the context of a learning unit. Another finding of our study was the teacher candidates' observation that music teachers at schools preferred using both traditional and alternative assessment methods. It has been described by the Ministry of National Education that the use of alternative assessment and evaluation tools in music education programs at schools does not mean that traditional assessment and evaluation methods and tools (multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, matching questions, etc.) should not be used. In this context, it is described that using alternative and traditional assessment and evaluations tools together and in a mutually complementary fashion will allow more accurate and comprehensive assessments to be performed regarding the students (MEB, 2006, MEB, 2009). Only eight of the students described that alternative assessment and evaluation methods were being used at the schools. In the study of Tabak (2007), it was concluded that teachers "did not make sufficient use" of alternative assessment methods. The findings of our study are in agreement with the results of other studies performed in

different areas (Birgin & Gürbüz, 2008; Çakan, 2004; Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Gömleksiz & Bulut, 2007; Güven & Eskitürk, 2007; Sağlam Arslan, Avcı & İyibil, 2008). Although these studies have been conducted in different areas, their results were similar to those of our study with regards to the adoption of the constructivist approach, and the similarity between the proposed alternative assessment tools.

The large majority (f=23) of the teacher candidates described that most of the teachers in practice schools made use of Portfolios. This finding was similar to the results of Acad and Demir's (2007) study. According to the results of Acad & Demir's (2007) study, the most commonly employed techniques were performance evaluation and student portfolios.

The teacher candidates listed the following problems regarding the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation techniques in schools: Lack of knowledge among teachers regarding alternative assessment and evaluation techniques; teachers having difficulties when using assessment and evaluation forms, and the fact that they considered these forms as a loss of time; the preference of teachers for traditional methods; the insufficiency of the class times; and the fact that the classrooms are overcrowded. In Adanal's (2008) study, it was concluded that the most commonly encountered problems were the insufficiency of class times for the implementation of assessment activities, the difficulties faced by the teachers in implementing the assessments due to the large size of the classes, and the fact that the students did not fulfill their tasks and responsibilities during group studies. Based on the results of Cansız-Aktaş' (2008) and Gelbal & Kelecioğlu's (2007) studies, it was observed that the teachers and the in-service training activities were inadequate. The results of this study were similar to the findings of our study.

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) to determine the necessary teacher competencies, one characteristic that was identified as being essential for teachers with regards to assessment and evaluation was the ability to assess the learning of students with different assessment techniques. The results of our study demonstrated that the large majority (f=14) of the teacher candidates considered themselves as being inadequate regarding the selection and use of appropriate alternative assessment and evaluation tools. Stiggins (2001) described that the most significant obstacle in teachers' use of appropriate assessment and evaluation techniques was their low level of competence in assessment and evaluation. The underlying reason for this low competence was associated with the inadequacy of the pre-service training received by teachers. Teacher candidates who considered themselves as inadequate described that they had acquired theoretical information during their courses regarding assessment and evaluation tools, but that they had lacked the opportunity to practice and implement these tools. Teacher candidates who considered themselves as partially adequate, on the other hand, described that they were able to use and implement some, but not all, of the assessment and evaluation tools.

It was determined in many different studies (Acad & Demir, 2007; Bulut, 2006; Cheng, 2006) that alternative assessment and evaluation methods are not fully implemented. One of the reasons for this is the lack of knowledge as well as the inadequacy of teachers regarding these methods. The results of our study were also in agreement with the results of Acad & Demir's (2007) study, which showed that teachers were not adequately informed regarding assessment and evaluation techniques, and that the teachers were consequently unable to implement these techniques correctly. Both the results of our study and of other studies suggest that the pre-service training of teacher candidates regarding the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation techniques should be better organized and at the same time supported with elective courses. These results also suggest that in-service trainings should be organized for music teachers assigned at schools to ensure that they become more knowledgeable regarding alternative assessment and evaluation methods and techniques.

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