

Tensions between assessment and music teachers' values in the Swedish compulsory school

In 2011, Swedish teachers in compulsory schools implemented a new curriculum (Skolverket, 2019). With this, a new era of measurement was brought into Swedish classrooms. Because of the wording in this new curriculum and the music syllabus, music teachers had to assess their students on a variety of instruments, different aspects of composition as well as the effects of music on the individual and society. This led to many teachers feeling obligated to simply 'tick the boxes' and focus on assessment rather than learning, using rubrics and digital tools to keep track of their extensive documentation. In the autumn of 2022, the Swedish compulsory school gets a new curriculum and new syllabi for all school subjects which are said to make it easier for teachers to make overall assessments of a students' abilities.

In the present study, which is a part of my PhD project, I have interviewed five music teachers in compulsory schools in the south of Sweden focusing on how they work with assessment and grading in and out of the classroom as well as talking about what their ideal assessment and grading practice in music would be. The analysis has been based on Clarke and Braun's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis. With a focus on Hammerness's (2006) *teachers' visions* as well as examining the concepts of music teachers' *discretionary powers* (Houmann, 2010) the participants' statements are studied with a theoretical point of departure in social constructionism (Collin, 2002).

The findings indicate a potential struggle between what the music educators would like their practice to be and what they perceive they must do, both according to regulations as well as in relation to society's increased focus on assessment and accountability. However, the teachers have, to some extent, internalised the curriculum and music syllabus and made it a part of their ideal practice, thus decreasing the struggle between their beliefs and external regulations.

It is vital for music education to constantly discuss what quality in music and learning is. It appears to be easy to 'fall into' an assessment practice where only that which is straightforward to assess and can be measured without any competence in music education is communicated and focused upon. With this project, the aim is to aid the discussion about

what quality in music and music education is, thus assisting music educators to claim their place as the ones capable of making these judgements.

References

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