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## The Evaluation of Third-Grade Music Lessons and Student Writing Skills with Student Diaries

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### Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the case of reaching the outcomes of music lessons and the development of written expression skills with student diaries. Document review technique as a part of qualitative research design was used and purposeful sampling was applied. Thirty students studying in third grade during the 2013–2014 academic year participated in the research. The participants were asked to keep a diary for 8 weeks in relation to the outcomes covered at the music lesson. Student diaries were examined based on content analysis and written expression skill was evaluated with rubrics prepared in connection with the outcomes. It was found that students developed their written expression skill in their diaries after the activities and they used the terms related to music in an appropriate way, while expressing the knowledge and skills they acquired during treatment. Student diaries can be used for all lessons, especially in primary schools.

Keywords: Student diary, music education, writing skills, third grade;

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## 1. Introduction

Music education at primary school is a process generally based on the building-and-learning principle. The process is targeted to positively contribute to the students' affective and psychomotor domains and cognitive learning. When examined, it is seen that the primary school music course curriculum adopts a process evaluation approach rather than product evaluation.

Third year at primary school marks the time of establishing several skills. Writing is mechanically learned and written expressions develop. The latter development requires support and regular practice. At this point, student diaries can be employed as a medium to evaluate both the concepts and the acquired skills in music course and their observations, reflections and ideas during the process. These diaries improve not only science, maths or music but also writing skills. The teacher co-works on the diary with the student to detect learned and unlearned items and makes corrections when necessary.

The literature review shows that student diaries are studied for science (Aschbacher & Alonzo, 2006; Avci, 2008; Kecici, Alan & Kirbag Zengin, 2017; Kilic, 2006; Klentschy, 2005; Korkmaz, 2004; Lynch, 2003; Morrison, 2005; Morrison, 2008; Ruiz-Primo, Li, Ayala & Shavelson, 2004), maths (Carter, 2009, Tanisli, Ozdas, 2009), preschool (Brenneman & Louro, 2008), psychology (learning) (Connor-Greene, 2000), geography (Park, 2003) Turkish (Arslan, Ilgin, 2011) and value education courses (Deveci, Selanik Ay, 2009) to observe their effects on the perception of self-sufficiency perception (Guvenc, 2011). It is also seen that the use of student diaries in music education is limited (Mutlu Yildiz, 2017). Considering that students learn, practice and will improve writing skills only in Turkish course means limiting the writing skills. If learning to write is a basic skill, using written expression in different fields is a higher skill.

## 2. Aim

The aims of this study are to determine the level of third-grade students reaching the objectives of a music course by using diaries, and to evaluate its contribution to students.

### 2.1. Sub-problems

How does the use of student diaries for third-grade music education affect reaching the objectives of a

1. Music course
2. Turkish writing skills course?

## 3. Methodology

The methodology of this research is document analysis. Thirty third-grade students at primary school in the 2013–2014 academic year participated. The students were asked to create entries in their diaries for 8 weeks, following song teaching directed by a different objective, meaning eight different objectives for 8 weeks. Students were pre-taught about how to keep a diary. The music course curriculum adopts a game, dance and action-based approach. At this point, courses aim at developing students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills as well as musical skills. Therefore, these factors affect determining the themes during diary analysis. The population of the class is 30. However, because there are unattended students in the first class hour ( $n = 27$ ) and the seventh class hour ( $n = 29$ ), the number of evaluated students is different. These students have not kept a student diary. Coloured papers were distributed to students to put down what they had learned and felt. 240 diaries were analysed in terms of the music course objectives and writing skills development.

Student diaries were studied for content analysis. The first and the third researchers analysed diaries for music education. The student diaries are read as a whole. The researchers determined the themes for the diaries. The diaries are divided into three themes: diaries including emotions, diaries including objectives and diaries including both emotions and objectives. Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula is applied to the analysis (Reliability= Agreement/'Agreement+Disagreement'). A score of over 70% is accepted as reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this respect, the reliability analysis is co-studied by the first researcher and scorer who is a music teacher with an ongoing Master's study. Then, the subthemes are determined according to the agreement and disagreement between the researchers. The reliability score is 0.93 (28/28+2), which shows that the study is reliable.

The analysis of the diaries for writing skills is based on writing skills objectives in the curriculum. An analytic rubric is produced using these objectives. The curriculum includes 11 objectives (Turkish Curriculum, 2015). Some of these objectives are taken completely, some are divided and some are not included. The objectives are transformed into performance expressions. The items of the analytic rubric are as follows:

1. Correct use of capitalisation
2. Correct use of the 'period'
3. Correct use of the 'comma'
4. Correct division of words at the end of lines
5. Writing the event/activity in chronological order
6. Writing about the feelings
7. Writing about the ideas
8. Connecting the feelings and ideas effectively with suitable conjunctions.

As seen above, the rubric consists of eight items. Each item is scored between 1 and 3, which means the minimum score is 8 and the maximum score is 24. The reliability analysis is co-studied by the second researcher and a primary school teacher scorer with 17 years' occupational experience. The consistency between the scorers is evaluated with Kendall W test (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz and Demirel; 2008). For validity of the analytic rubric, both the scorers are analysed for their scores in song-related diaries and are found to be in agreement (Kendall W = 0.73) ( $p < 0.05$ ). The score is accepted to be reliable for the study. Also, the word count and the number of sentences are determined according to student diaries.

Mean and frequency are used for data analysis. Direct quotation is also excerpted from diaries. These excerpts are in brackets (course number, student number).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The findings of using student diaries effects on third-grade music course curriculum objectives.

Table 1 shows that both emotion and objective related are the mostly seen categories in student diaries. It is thought that students may have expressed their feelings more than the objective because they have not written student diaries before. Moreover, students may have been affected by the fact that the objective is delivered by the song, and therefore, it is not expressed sufficiently by the teacher.

**Table 1. The evaluation of student diaries according to music course objectives**

Classes	Objectives	Categorisation of student diaries		
		Emotion related	Objective	Both emotion and objective related
1.	The student uses voice properly when speaking and singing. The student obeys rules when singing in unison	24	-	4
2.	The student repeats simple rhythm and melody	9	2	19
3.	The student notices long and short sound periods	6	1	23
4.	The student accompanies the listening or singing of music with the self-created rhythm instrument	8	1	21
5.	The student works properly with different rhythmic melodies	13	2	15
6.	The student sings the music in proper pace and volume	3	1	26
7.	The student transforms same and different words into action	8	-	21
8.	The student sings the music in proper pace and volume	9	-	21

At this point, it is realised that when writing the learning diary entries, students use the course-related music concepts and musical expressions properly. It is thought that students reach the objectives through songs and developed writing to express cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills acquired during the class hour. Below are the diary samples excerpted from students who expressed both feelings and course objectives:

‘We learned a new song. Its name is Bulmaca (Puzzle). This song taught us the long syllable and the short syllable’. (Class Hour 3, Student 12). (Objective related)

‘I liked this song because it is a nice song. This is my happiest moment’. (Class hour 4, Student 13) (Feeling related)

#### **4.2. The findings of using student diaries for third-grade music education and its effects on Turkish course curriculum objectives.**

Table 2 demonstrates that every third-year student does not show steady development of writing skills after writing a diary following a song teaching. The mean scores of the students are as follows: first diary 14.93; second diary 16.62; third diary 17.63; fourth diary 16.7; fifth diary 15.43; sixth diary 15.07; seventh diary 14.42; and eighth diary 15.93. The mean may suggest a development in writing skills, which is a progressing skill. Also, third year at primary school is accepted as a process of continuous basic writing skills development. Below are the student diary samples:

‘We learned ‘Kirk Kup (Forty Jar) named the song. Teacher made only one student sing the song. We sang all together teacher taught the rules. For example; how many times we sing a part and where slow and fast’ (Class hour 1, Student 9)

**Table 2. Student diary scores according to songs**

Students	Diaries related to songs (weekly)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	14	17	20	16	17	15	15	15
2	13	13	14	13	12	14	14	13
3	13	14	19	18	17	19	15	17
4	9	10	11	9	9	13	10	10
5	21	22	21	20	19	15	15	18
6	16	22	22	21	19	14	14	17
7	11	13	17	13	11	15	13	11
8	14	15	19	15	16	14	14	14
9	20	14	23	23	18	15	15	21
10	16	13	16	13	11	15	13	20
11	14	19	19	15	12	15	13	19
12	17	17	17	14	13	16	13	16
13	18	22	19	16	12	16	15	13
14	12	17	16	16	18	15	15	21
15	20	15	16	15	13	16	17	15
16	14	16	15	17	19	13	13	19
17	13	-	16	15	13	13	11	11
18	-	12	15	13	11	14	11	9
19	20	22	21	21	18	16	17	14
20	13	17	20	19	17	15	15	19
21	16	22	18	19	13	14	18	19
22	16	18	22	22	21	14	16	17
23	16	20	16	19	18	14	15	16
24	13	11	16	16	16	15	16	16
25	-	9	17	17	19	16	15	14
26	14	18	18	18	16	15	15	17
27	18	22	20	21	22	16	17	19
28	12	16	15	15	14	15	-	13
29	10	15	13	14	11	19	13	18
30	15	21	18	18	18	16	15	17
Mean	14.9	16.62	17.6	16.7	15.4	15	14.4	15.9

In this sample, the student defines the name of the song and its learning process. The student uses the punctuation properly. Third-year students are also expected to connect ideas and give examples. This student's overall score is 20. The weekly scores of the student do not demonstrate a steady increase. This might suggest personal differences, such as interest in writing, interest in the topic and the occasion of writing may affect the results.

'I liked the song. We learned to dance with the song. I enjoyed it. It is a nice song. The moves were different than the other songs. This song tells nice things. We flapped our hands, we did right and left with feet. The song was lively. It is composed of three parts. It is composed of two cantos. The name of the song was LET'S DANCE. I liked it. It is a nice *song*.' (Class hour 8, Student 22).

In this sample, the student diary shows the differences in the song and the way it was taught. It states the name and the parts of the song. The student connects two sentences using a comma. The student scored 17 for this entry.

The examination of Student 4's entry for Class Hour 5 and the score displays a poorly written expression and use of punctuation. Besides, capitalisation is not proper. The conjunction 'and' is overused. The spelling is also poor.

## 5. Discussion, Results and Suggestions

Teaching skills is a long-time activity, and thus, the process should be designed carefully. Both music and writing are skill based. Student diaries and rubrics are important instruments to display student performance during the process. When the process is effectively administered, the quality of the product will also increase. Besides, when the evaluation is included into the learning, students will behave naturally (Korkmaz, 2004; Morrison, 2008; Ruiz-Primo, Li, Ayala and Shavelson, 2004) and display their real performances.

This study aims at analysing two different fields together by determining the students' reaching the music course objectives using the student diaries and the diaries' contribution to students. Diaries evaluated according to music course objectives are divided into three categories: emotion related, objective related, and both emotion and objective-related entries. It is seen that students mostly express both their feelings and the objectives in the entries. At this point, it is also detected that students used musical concepts properly and utilised musical expressions in the entries.

Evaluation of primary school third-year student diaries shows an unsteady development of writing skills. The weekly mean scores of the students, however, suggest a development. Development of writing skills takes time. Besides, the third year marks a progressive basic writing skills development process. Moreover, students may have been affected by the fact that the objective is delivered by the song, and therefore, it is not expressed sufficiently by the teacher.

As for the Turkish course writing skills objectives, third-year students are expected to express themselves in correct chronological order using the punctuation and capitalisation properly. The students are also expected to improve writing skills in all other courses. Employing student diaries in music course fosters both music education and writing skills education.

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