
Evaluation Criteria in Strings Examinations

Hale Duru Basmacıoğlu

Associate Professor, Anadolu University State Conservatory, Eskişehir, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This study intends to provide a general idea about the criteria and how it is approached in the evaluation of the instrument examinations at Anadolu University State Conservatory String Department. Accordingly, a questionnaire was prepared consisting of two parts. As a result of various group studies, the criteria used in examinations were determined, and thus the first part of the questionnaire was formed by the evaluation of these criteria. In the second part of the questionnaire, there are questions about the factors, which were not directly related with the examination performance but may be indirectly effective on the evaluation.

Keywords: *music, strings, education, examination, evaluation criteria*

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment and evaluation have an important function in issues such as determining the effectiveness of the education, building a control mechanism, receiving feedbacks and observation of development. Both have the aim of identifying the efficiency of the training and observing the prolificacy of activities for the student and the instructor. They are also valuable as a tool for collecting data about the student within the learning period, setting goals, and a providing a systematic study plan for these goals.

The accuracy of the evaluation has a vital role regarding the student's future. A sensitive, reliable, experienced and innovative assessment and evaluation is necessary both for students and the instructors who lead them to a systematic study, learning, progress and development.

The assessment and the evaluation differ in meaning: The Assessment intends to fix whether the individuals or the objects possess certain features, and if they do, to determine the level of these features and to describe the results through symbols and especially numbers. The evaluation, on the other hand, is a process of decision on the quality assessed by comparing the assessment results with a criterion. Assessment is an activity of description while evaluation is proceeding and is based on the comparison of the assessment result with a certain criterion (Tekin).

As a result of evaluation, we come to a conclusion in the light of the data obtained. The value judgment at the end of the examination is expressed through grades. General specification of the methods used in grading and valuation is beneficial regarding the agreement between educators and evaluators, taking objective decisions, and obtaining comprehensive results. A value judgment is examined in three main elements: assessment or evaluation result, criteria, and the comparison of the result with a criterion.

The language of music, unlike the other fields of art, is entirely abstract, thus, not objective. This situation causes a subjectivity in the evaluation of music and instrument examinations. Evaluation without any reliable criteria makes the judgment process difficult. Therefore, the evaluation of instrument examination must be based on objective foundations.

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Instrument education at Anadolu University State Conservatory covers a twelve-year period, from 5th grade primary school until the end of 4th year undergraduate education. It is important to survey a student's development in his/her first year to observe whether s/he has the ability of auditory perception, musical intelligence, interest and tendency in his/her instrument and music, shortly, the core requirements of playing an instrument the capacity of development. The 5th-grade final exam is regarded as a preliminary examination where the parameters mentioned above are evaluated. When the fact that the student will be dismissed in case of failing any of the professional courses is considered, it is quite important to evaluate the mentioned criteria sensitively, to decide whether the student can undertake the twelve-year conservatory education and become a musician or not. Any false evaluation causes negative results both for the institution and the student, especially when the student fails to show success during the further grades. In opposite case, there is also the risk of taking a dismissal decision for a student who would be successful.

This study aims to identify the evaluation criteria of the instructors at Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments, during the examinations. The study primarily seeks to supply reliable evaluation criteria for the academic milieu; a secondary result of the study is to endeavor the instructors who are involved in the questionnaire to self-criticize, therefore, to develop their idea about the evaluation process in the music education.

3. EVALUATION CRITERIA IN STRINGS EDUCATION

During his/her high school and undergraduate education, graduation and employment process, it is intended to provide the student with the necessary, internationally recognized musical knowledge and manners, playing and interpreting skills, technical and musical equipment and artistic perspective. Evaluation is an inseparable part of this procedure. Each examination prepares the student for another examination, stage, and professional test provides an experience regardless the results and the awareness of his/her aspects which the student is strong at or needs to develop. For the instructor, on the other hand, each examination enables him/her to know the student better, plan the methods to apply, specify the education techniques and decide the necessary activities.

Syllabus, which is the primary criterion of examination and evaluation, has the function of identifying the target aimed at the end of the education period and provides a discipline to prepare a suitable program within the academic calendar. It is also regarded as a guideline to be followed during the preparation for the professional life.

The syllabus for strings, prepared as a result of activities and research carried out by Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments, is regularly reviewed and reconstructed when necessary, to improve the effectiveness of the education. Undoubtedly,

the determining factor at the construction activities is the examinations which provide a tangible and regular feedback.

Strings syllabus covers a range of works from different ages and styles which support the development of technical and musical skills. The works at the lowest level have been determined in line with the targets. Systematically, development is expected for each semester.

4. METHODS AND RESULTS

By means of reviewing the literature, data on the role and importance of assessment and evaluation in the education period is obtained, application methods are examined and their usage is searched. Firstly, a criterion determination activity has been carried out by a group consisting of instructors from Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments, and then the factors which are not directly related to playing but can indirectly affect the evaluation have been determined. In accordance with the data obtained, a questionnaire consisting of two parts has been prepared. In the questionnaire, each instructor has been asked whether there are any further criteria they need to add. However, none have been added. At the end of the questionnaire, the importance levels of the criteria used at the Department of String Instruments have been clarified and the factors which the instructors consider and are apart from the performance have been evaluated.

That way, data on the review and the examination of the evaluation criteria which may contribute to the education at Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments, identification of different perspectives, revealing the majority's opinion, and determination of the needs and suggestions have been obtained. It has been observed that the instructors based their evaluations on these criteria, even though these criteria are not in any official document, and there are different opinions about them.

5. EVALUATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

5.1. Part One

Part One of the questionnaire aims at identifying the criteria and revealing their levels of importance. The instructors have been asked to grade the given criteria between 0-100 and the following order is formed. None of the instructors suggested new criteria.

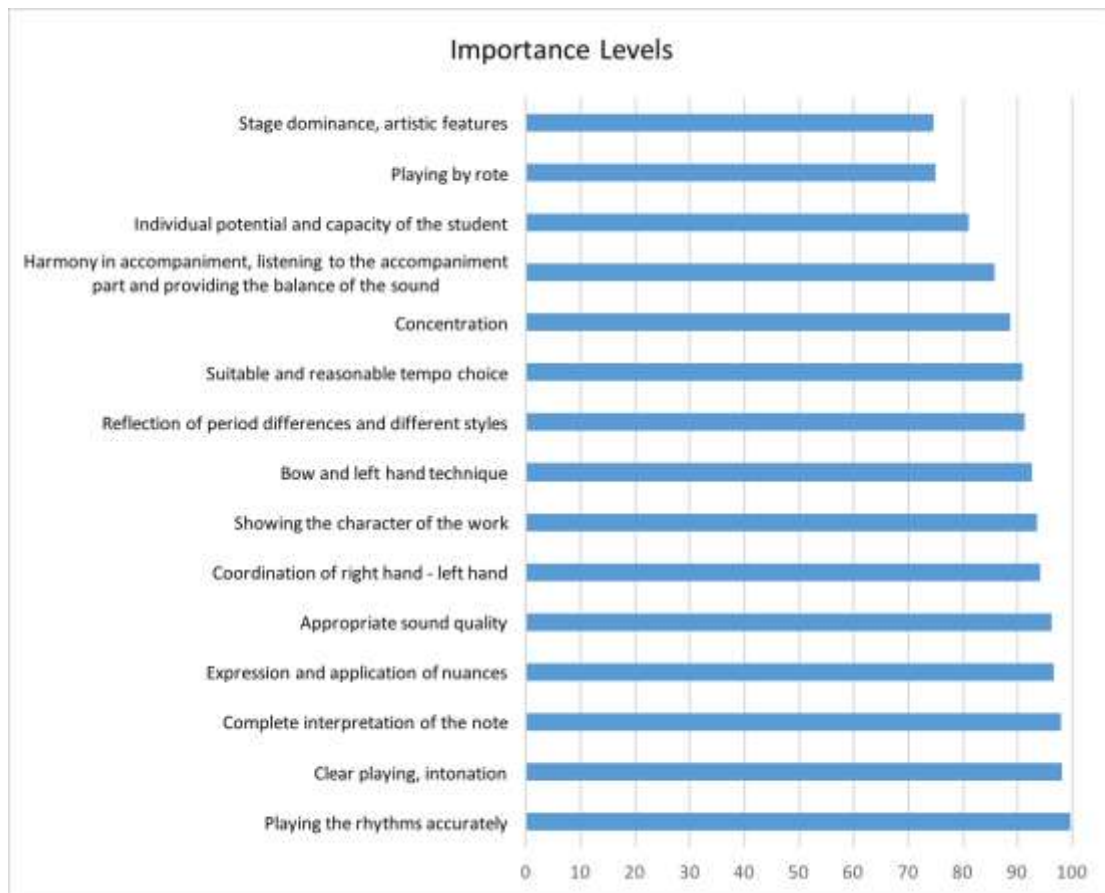


Table 1. Importance Levels

5.2. Part Two

In the second part of the questionnaire, the following questions have been asked:

- How does it affect your evaluation when you have already listened to a student's previous examinations?
- To what extent do the other students' performances affect your evaluation?
- To what extent do the instructor opinions affect your evaluation?
- Do you have different expectations in the primary, high school and undergraduate periods?
- Is the 5th-grade exam different compared to other grades' exams? What are your expectations?
- Is the 9th-grade admission exam different compared to other grades' exams? What are your expectations?
- Is the undergraduate admission exam different compared to other grades' exams? What are your expectations?
- Is the undergraduate graduation exam different compared to other grades' exams? What are your expectations?
- Did you use different grading methods at the exam? Which one is the most suitable one for you?

100% of the instructors agreed that there are differences in the evaluation of 5th-grade exams. Instructors believe that main criteria such as left hand-right hand coordination, bow and left-hand technique, sound quality, sense of rhythm and memorizing must be carefully evaluated at this grade, to decide whether the student possesses the features to become a musician or not. It is also figured that the instructors consider issues such as musical intelligence and perception, interest and tendency to the instrument and music, physical and emotional ability, excitement control, the situation in the class and the school within the year, success in the solfeggio class. About observing these factors in the classes throughout the year, while 18.2% of them emphasize the importance of the instructor only in this grade, 9.1% of them think that the instructor opinion must not be taken into consideration.

Students who finish the 8th grade at Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments are subject to another exam to be able to continue the 9th grade, by a regulation prepared in 2012. This exam is significant regarding whether the student is competent to continue his/her education in the following years and those who fail to do so are provided with the necessary assistance to transfer to other educational institutions. All the instructors expect the student to have comprehended the entire 9th-grade Syllabus, necessary technical and musical skills. Besides, the instructors who state that the student needs to obtain the necessary work discipline also defends that it is important to take the instructor's opinion "as long as it is objective".

One of the 91% of instructors who think that the admission exam must be evaluated differently, said "Undergraduate education is a critical period which the student gets prepared for the aimed professional life. Within this context, as the instructors, we need to be convinced that the student is capable to accomplish that and then pave the way for it". Another instructor believes that the interest and love of the student for his/her profession must be sensed. The same instructor also emphasized that the technical problems must be determined accurately and eliminated throughout the education period. 27.8% of the instructors think that the student must have the necessary technical equipment; such as sound quality, intonation, bow and left-hand technique, a reflection of period differences and different styles, showing the character of the work, stage dominance, and be able to perform them widely. Since data on whether the student can continue his/her undergraduate education can be obtained, 18.4% who believe that it is important to follow the progress in this exam, think the opinions of the instructor and the jury must be considered only at this exam. 9.3% on the other hand, believe that other evaluation criteria are not necessary, as long as the Syllabus is determinant for the process and fulfill the requirements.

When the difference of the undergraduate exam and the expectations are asked, 91% of the instructors said that there are differences, and underlined the necessity of the student to have the knowledge and technical equipment to be successful in professional life. 9% of the instructors suggested that the evaluation of the exams which are based on a reliable Syllabus do not have any differences. However, both groups agreed that the student must not be graduated unless s/he is not professionally competent.

For the question "To what extent do the other students' performances affect your evaluation?" 81.9% of the instructors who attended the questionnaire said it does not affect the evaluation, and it shouldn't. This part of the group who believe that each student must be evaluated within his/her capacity emphasized that the Syllabus determines the class level. The other part with a percentage of 18.1 suggested that the evaluation is important as it

determines the class level, but those who are too below or above the class level must be excluded from the comparison.

72.8% of the participants said that the instructor's opinions are valuable but must be excluded from the evaluation. The instructors also stated that "it is the exam and the performance which must be evaluated. Emotional approaches are not evaluation criteria. The opinion of the instructor is reflected through the final grade". A group of 27.2% defends that the instructor opinion must be considered. These instructors consider the instructor who knows the student best as the determinant in, especially, disputable exams.

For the question "Do you have different expectations for primary, high school and undergraduate periods?" 72.8% of the instructors gave positive answers. Instructors who are more tolerant towards the criteria such as intonation, rhythm, right hand-left hand technique in small classes, increase their expectations in parallel with the class population and find it necessary to develop the playing skills systematically. They also stated that during the undergraduate period the criteria such as reflection of different styles, sound quality, expression and nuances, and showing the character of the work become more prominent. 27.2% of the participants stated that "activities that the class is required to do, have been determined by the Syllabus in accordance with the class capability. Therefore, the criteria do not differ for each class".

63.7% of the participants said that the previous performances of a student do not affect their evaluation, even though it has an importance concerning the observation of the progress. It is also defended by the participants that the progress is a natural process, and it cannot be a criterion regarding the success of the exam. Besides, it is stated that in case of a dramatic decrease in the achievement, the reasons must be found and eliminative solutions must be discussed. 36.3% expressed that the previous exams affect the evaluation process. They suggested that observation of the progress is a part of education period and therefore, each exam must be compared with the previous one.

100% of the instructors at Anadolu University State Conservatory Department of String Instruments stated that they use different grading methods in the exams. When the most applicable method is asked, they all emphasized the importance of objectivity and offered various preferences. While 27.3% of the instructors believe that an evaluation through determined criteria will give more accurate results, 18.6% defend that evaluation must be carried out as a whole, without any categorization. 36.4% of the participants think that the instructor's opinion may bring a personal and emotional perspective to the evaluation and damage the objectivity of the jury and therefore hamper the decision process. As a result, they underlined the issue that the instructor's opinions must not be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, another population of 9.2% is for receiving the instructor's opinion. 18.2% of the participants, on the other hand, find it appropriate to perform a secret voting in order to avoid affecting each other and to grade freely; and the result to be disputable when necessary.

REFERENCES

- i. Dalkıran, Esra. “Keman Eğitiminde Performansın Ölçülmesi.”*Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 5, no.2, 2008, pp. 116-136.
- ii. Mamur, Nuray.“Görsel Sanatlar Eğitiminde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme.”*Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 28, 2010, pp. 175-188.
- iii. Mellers, Barbara A. “Choice and the Relative Pleasure of Consequences.”, *Psychological Bulletin*, no. 126, 2000, pp. 910-924.
- iv. Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.
- v. Tarman, Süleyman. *Müzik Eğitiminin Temelleri*. Ankara: Müzik Eğitimi Yayınları, 2006.
- vi. Tekin, Halil. *Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme*. Ankara: Yargı Yayınları, 1996.
- vii. Turgut, Mehmet F. *Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme Metotları*. Ankara: Gül Yayınevi, 1997.