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## Exposition

## EXPERIENCING MUSIC ASSESSMENT

# Authentic Assessment Tasks in Group Work

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## PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this research is to examine how students experience authentic assessment tasks in group work.

## QUESTION

How do students perceive and respond to the assessment task?

To what extent do students participate and contribute to the assessment task?

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Authentic assessments:

- # Mirror real world tasks or expectations
- # Are commonly used as classroom assessment to engage learners
- # Often involves students, for example, in the establishing of scoring rules and in self-evaluation to increase student ownership and commitment

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- # Authentic assessment should involve tasks that are “intellectually interesting and personally meaningful”. Students’ commitment will increase if they are involved in their own evaluation (Frey, Schmitt & Allen, 2012)
- # One of the goals in music composition is for students to develop a “unique creative point of view and compositional ‘voice’”. Teachers must continually seek to understand their students’ expressive intentions and provide feedback and assessment strategies that are grounded both in the individual music context of each composition and in the context of each student’s unique profile as a learner and creator (Deutsch, 2016)

## ASSESSMENT TASK

Having gone through a series of lessons on instrumental playing and basic composition/song-writing techniques, students formed friendship groups to complete a group composition project. The chosen theme was “PL 100”, in celebration of the school’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The students’ compositions were assessed via a “live” performance at the end of the project through the use of assessment rubrics.

## METHODOLOGY

The project is a descriptive research.

Data was collected through:

Questionnaire for all students

The students were posed 10 questions which they answered using the Kahoot<sup>1</sup> platform.

Focus group discussions with two groups of students (35 minutes per group)

The objectives were:

- # To further understand their perception of their roles and contributions in a group composition setting
- # To understand if the project was an authentic one and helped the students in their learning

<sup>1</sup><https://kahoot.it/>

Students’ reflections for all students

These were the reflection questions asked:

- # Did you enjoy the project? Why?
- # Did the project benefit you musically? Why?
- # What were some of the challenges you faced when you embarked on the composition project?
- # Do you feel that you contributed to the group composition? Why?
- # Do you feel the music project task is an authentic task that mirrors real world expectations?
- # Did you find the teacher’s facilitation useful? Why?
- # Any suggestions for future music lessons?

The students’ reflections were analysed together with the questionnaire and input from the focus group discussion in order to understand how to implement good authentic assessment for quality learning outcomes and how group composition task could be better implemented in a class with mixed music abilities and motivation.

# FINDINGS

## QUESTIONNAIRE



Do you think the music project mirrors real-world tasks or expectations?



Does working in a group help you complete the tasks assigned to you?



Do you appreciate getting feedback from your teachers?



Do you feel that you contributed to the group composition?



Do you discuss your teacher's comments and feedback to try to improve for the next lesson?



Having gone through the project, are you now more confident about composing music?



Do you think you have learnt music knowledge and skills through the music project?



If you are given another chance to learn more or do another music composition, would you do it?



Do you enjoy working in a group for the music project?



Did you feel engaged in the music lesson while you were working on the music project?

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ANSWERED "YES"



LESS

MORE

## STUDENT REFLECTIONS



### STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMPOSING

#### Positive attitude

- # Enjoyed the process
- # Had fun working in groups
- # Okay with composition

#### Negative attitude

- # Not interested
- # Preferred if lessons were more relaxing
- # Don't think music should be graded
- # Don't need music lessons in my life but need songs or entertainment

### COMPOSITION TASK

- # Not an interesting project
- # Not relevant
- # Would like the freedom to choose
- # Found composing very difficult
- # Found theme too restrictive; would prefer having more choices and themes

### COMPOSING AS A LEARNING PROCESS

- # Messed up a lot, which made it fun
- # Would like to create nice songs with nice lyrics and nice chords
- # Very important to have nice tunes
- # Wrote whatever came to mind

### GUIDANCE BY TEACHERS

- # Teacher interfered too much
- # Too little attention from teacher
- # Can't do it without teachers

### STUDENTS' SATISFACTION LEVELS

- # Have seen better compositions
- # Satisfied with the outcome as we gave our best
- # Not satisfied with outcome

### STUDENTS' APTITUDES FOR COMPOSING

- # Familiar with GarageBand
- # Lacked exposure and experience

### BENEFITS OF LEARNING TO COMPOSE

- # Learned to play guitar in air-con room
- # Learned how to do something
- # Learned what it's like to be a composer

### CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS

- # Found it hard to compose - needed more step-by-step guidance
- # Needed more guidelines
- # Didn't know which chords went together
- # Had to keep trying to succeed
- # Preferred if chords were provided
- # Environment was too noisy - too many people in one room, not enough pianos

### PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- # Felt that I couldn't contribute
- # My music skills are not strong enough
- # Seemed like I was anchoring everything
- # Jobs were split between members

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## Exposition

## STUDENT SUGGESTIONS



## DISCUSSION

## Authenticity of composition task

- # Students' perception of the role of music in their lives
  - More often associated with listening and performing
  - Enjoyment and entertainment
  - Composing to develop creativity and critical thinking

## Amount of guidance

- # When to give guidance?
- # How much guidance?
- # What kind of guidance?
- # How to offer guidance?

## Students' individual contributions

- # Using peer assessment rubrics to measure students' level of attainment and contribution
- # Assessment rubrics do not help to enlarge their contributions
- # Defining the scope of contribution of each student using a matrix (aka target setting)

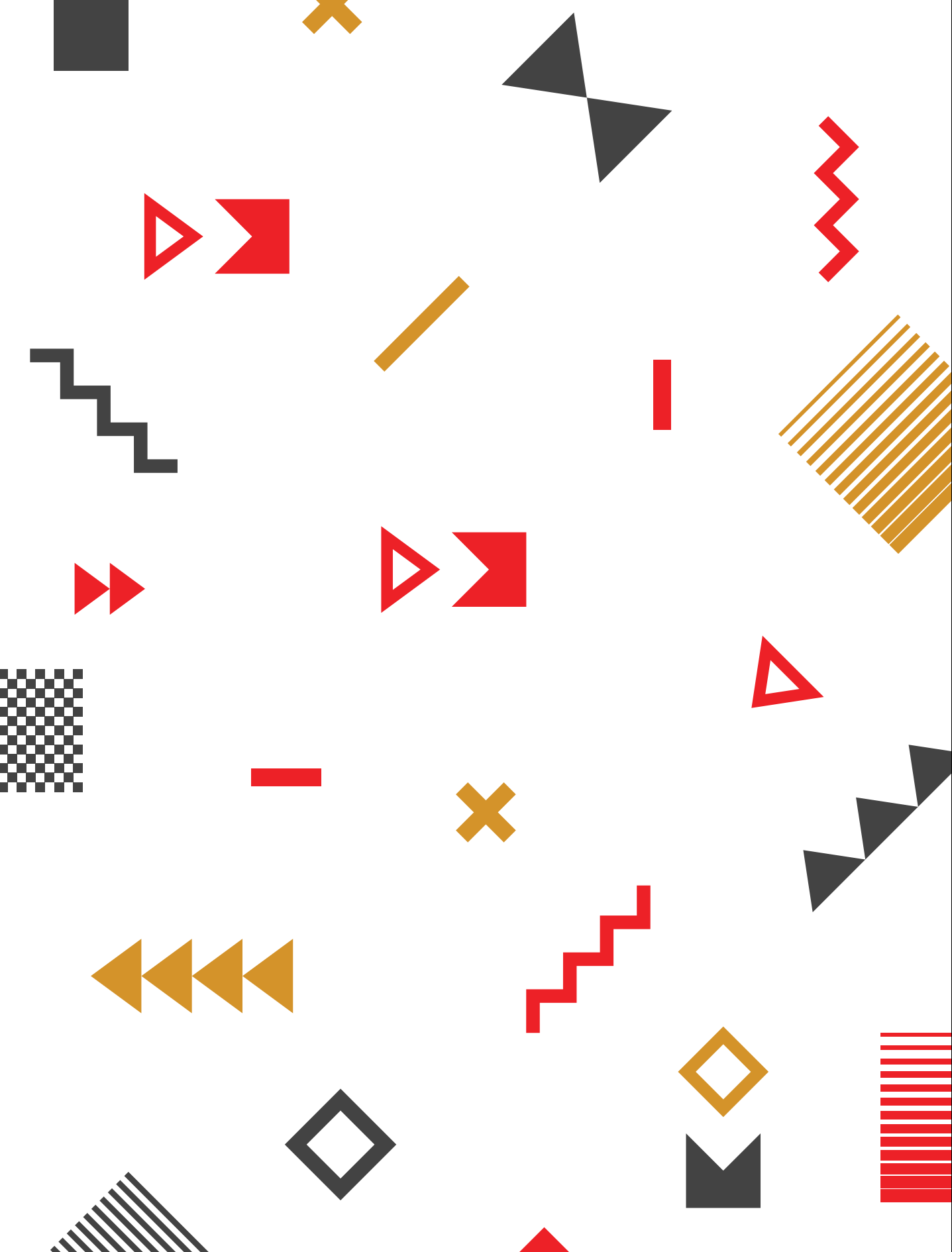
## CONCLUSION

This project gave me the opportunity to examine my own professional practice. I would say that it has been impactful and meaningful to my growth. I have made improvements to the Schemes of Work as a result of this research project.

My Secondary 2 music programme will take into account the research findings. For example:

- # Term 1: Teaching of guitar and percussion skills
- # Term 2: Students to work on covers in groups
- # Term 3: Song writing skills following song writing project

It also made me more aware of the difficulties faced by students during composing. I hope the changes will enable my music colleagues and I to better meet the needs of our students.



## THOUGHTS

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Authentic assessment tasks can motivate students as they provide choice, scope for open-ended responses, room for differentiation and place accountability on the students. Yet, we should not assume that all authentic assessment tasks can motivate all students and inspire their learning. Hence, there is a need to introduce tasks in a way that helps students see their value, and to place the task at the end of a curriculum plan designed to prepare students to help them experience success for a fulfilling music learning experience.