

TURKISH AND ITALIAN ART TEACHERS' VIEWS, EXPERIENCES AND SELF-REPORTED COMPETENCIES ON THE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN ARTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this cross-cultural research is to examine the content and the quality of the educational assessment practices in arts based on the views, experiences and self-reported competencies of Turkish and Italian art teachers. Data was gathered from 126 Turkish and 97 Italian art teachers by a questionnaire developed in Turkish and translated into Italian language. The results showed that performance tasks, essays, and oral exams are the most common item formats used in assessment practices by both of the cultures; the teachers commonly referred their field of arts as of a particular interest in the sense of educational assessment; most of the teachers' have a sufficient qualification in terms of their professional-technical competence and their competence in educational assessment practices, however the teachers' educators' incompetency in educational assessment practices is one of the significant factors which affected particularly Turkish teachers' relevant competency negatively and the teachers were commonly found to feel lack in the competency of developing valid and reliable measurement and evaluation instruments and in testing reliability and validity of the instruments in practice.

Key words. Art education, art teachers, cross-cultural comparison, educational assessment, measurement and evaluation.

1. Introduction

Assessment, the process of gathering information and making judgements about student achievement for a variety of purposes, is a critical element of education and doubtlessly has important implications for practice in general as well as teaching and learning (Frankland, 2007; Leong & Qiu, 2013; Seddon, Robinson, & Perry, 2010). Thus, over the last 50 years, judging students' knowledge, ability and other advanced skills through standardized or performance-based assessment practices and measurement tools has become a long standing debate in the area of educational sciences (Stecher, 2010; Chen & Brown, 2013). Darling-Hammond & Adamson (2010) reported the evidence, which suggests that the nature and format of the assessments affects the depth of knowledge in the instructional domain and types of skills developed by students. When the domain in question is artistic skills, the measurement and evaluation process becomes more problematic because the composite nature of the arts woven through cognitive, affirmative and psycho-motor behaviors requires distinctive instruments, techniques and methods of educational assessment.

English (2010) stated that the idea of assessment has been unwelcome and unaddressed in arts education for several reasons. According to Eisner (1966), there are five reasons for this: (a) art assessment is dependent on judgments of the quality and craftsmanship of student work, however some educators see these judgments as blocks in student potential; (b) both assessment and evaluation include some form of measurement of student performance, however some art educators believe that the arts should focus on the experience of creating art and that experience cannot be quantified, leaving measurement and the arts incompatible; (c) assessment and evaluation have traditionally been related to the final product or outcomes of the student's efforts, however most art educators regard the process that students engage in to be what is important, not the product; (d) many art educators believe that the art field and the desired objectives of art education are anything but standardized because assessment has been traditionally seen as closely associated with testing and particularly standardized testing; (e) assessment and evaluation are closely linked to grading and art educators believe that grading, especially at a young age is worse than irrelevant.

As mentioned above, traditionally, assessment is thought of as something done at the end of a learning process, but the context for contemporary assessment is that it is part of the whole art making process. Actually it is formative because it contributes to student learning and is seen as integral to the whole learning process.

Considering the importance of this structure of assessment in art education and the discussion presented above, the main purpose of this cross-cultural research is to examine the content and the quality of the educational assessment practices in arts based on the views, experiences and self-reported competencies of Turkish and Italian art teachers.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Data of the Turkish setting was gathered from 126 art teachers working at different grades of several state and private preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and high schools in Turkey. The sample is composed of 86 women (68.3%) and 40 men (31.7%). A big amount of teachers from Turkish study group (77.8% of total) is composed of young art teachers, whose total tenure in the profession are maximum 4 years. The total number of more experienced teachers (28), whose total tenure in the profession, in case, counts 22.2% of the total distribution. In terms of teachers' specialties, the biggest percentage (33.3%) in the Turkish distribution composes music teachers while it is followed by teachers specialized in pictorial art (23.8%) and traditional arts (11.9%). On the other hand, the least represented art area in the Turkish distribution is "architecture and interior and environmental design" with the percentage of 2.4%.

Data of the Italian setting was gathered from 97 participants, who are art teachers at different grades of several state and private preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and high schools in Italy. The sample is composed of 56 women (57.7%) and 41 men (42.3%). A big amount of teachers from Italian study group (61.9% of total) is composed of more experienced art teachers than those present in Turkish sample, whose total tenure in the profession are minimum 10 years. The total number of young teachers (17), whose total tenure in the profession is 4 years maximum, in case, count 17.5% of the total distribution. In terms of specialties, the biggest percentage (37.1%) in the Italian distribution consists of pictorial art teachers while it is followed by teachers specialized in music (20.6%) and dance and theatre (12.4%). In consistency with the Turkish distribution, "architecture and interior and environmental design" again ranks as one of the least represented art areas in the Italian distribution. Moreover, the specialty of "fashion history and costume design", which is not represented in the Turkish sample, has the minimum percentage (3.1%).

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Research data was collected by a questionnaire developed by the Turkish researcher in 2014. Translation of this instrument into Italian language was done by the Italian researchers in collaboration with a research group. The original long form of the questionnaire was composed of totally 18 items. The first five items were questioning demographical variables, such as gender, age, educational background, specialty and total tenure in the profession as a teacher; while ten of the rest were constructed as dichotomous or scaled close-ended questions and another three of the rest were constructed as open-ended questions without predefined options or categories. However, the findings reported within the current paper were obtained by using a shorter form of the same questionnaire. Expert opinions from several domain experts of educational sciences were gathered both for Turkish and Italian forms of the questionnaire in terms of content validity. Data from Turkish sample was collected between February-May 2014 by using the Turkish form of the instrument and the data from Italian sample was collected between October 2014 and October 2015 by using the Italian form. Approximately one half of the questionnaires were administered personally while the other half of them was administered electronically in both of the cultures, depending on the attainability conditions.

Expert opinions from several domain experts of educational sciences were gathered both for Turkish and Italian forms of the questionnaire in terms of content validity. Data from Turkish sample was collected between February-May 2014 by using the Turkish form of the instrument and the data from Italian sample was collected between October 2014 and October 2015 by using the Italian form.

Within the scope of the study, descriptive analysis based on frequencies and percentages was used to represent the findings and for data analyses, SPSS 20.00 was used.

3. Findings

3.1. Educational assessment instruments and techniques "used for" and "used by" Turkish and Italian art teachers

Within the scope of the research, the first query on teachers' views and experiences on educational assessments practices was performed through the questions (1) "*During your higher education in arts, which of the following instruments and techniques had been used by the educators to assess your knowledge, skills and performance in arts?*" and (2) "*Which of the following instruments and techniques do you frequently use and think that are the most appropriate to assess knowledge, skills and performance in arts?*".

Among a series of assessment instruments and techniques (*i.e. multiple-choice test items, matching test items, essays, performance tasks, portfolios, self-assessment strategies, observation techniques, completion test items, true-false test items, oral exams, projects, peer assessment strategies, concept maps*) presented to the teachers, the comparison among the cultures showed that the instruments and techniques most common used by the teachers of both Turkish and Italian art teachers are “performance tasks” and these are followed by “essays” and “oral exams”, which are essentially based on performance. On the other hand, the least used instruments or techniques in classroom assessments are determined as “true-false items”, “matching test items”, “concept-maps”, and “completing test items” among both the cultures. Moreover, “performance tasks” are the techniques that are mostly used by both Turkish and Italian teachers concurrently to assess their students’ knowledge, skills and performances in art classes and the least used instruments are again “true-false items” and “matching test items”.

3.2. Turkish and Italian art teachers’ views on the value of their field in terms of educational assessment

The findings of the second query on the Turkish and Italian teachers’ views regarding the value of their field in terms of educational assessment practices showed that, in both of the cultures, a big percentage of the art teachers (91 Turkish teachers who count 72.2% of the distribution and 65 Italian teachers who count 67.0% of the distribution) think that their field is of particular interest. Furthermore, analysis for the qualitative query on the reason of this statement showed that in both of the samples, most of the teachers think that, apart from the other disciplines such as basic sciences, social sciences or linguistics, students’ “cognitive, affirmative and psychomotor behaviors” or the “theory, practice and performance” are approached all together in arts and moreover, the arts is mainly based on individual differences much more than the other instructional areas.

3.3. Turkish and Italian art teachers’ self-assessments on their professional-technical competence in the field and views on the contribution of several variables to their concurrent professional-technical competence

By the two questions “*Please assess your professional-technical competence in your own field*” and “*Please assess the contribution of the qualities given below to your concurrent professional-technical competence in your own field considering the degree and direction of their effects*” within the third query, Turkish and Italian art teachers’ self-assessments and views were tried to be determined.

The findings showed that none of the Italian teachers assessed themselves within the “poor professional-technical competence” level in their own field while three Turkish art teachers (2.4% of the total distribution) stated that they had poor competence. On the other hand, the percentages of the art teachers, who self-reported their professional-technical competence as “good” (63.5% of Turkish art teachers and 53.6% of the Italian art teachers) and “excellent” (34.1% of Turkish art teachers and 46.4% of the Italian art teachers), are found to be close in both of the cultures.

When the contribution of several qualities (*i.e. number of the courses teachers attended at the university; total number of theoretical courses taken at the university; total hours of the practical courses taken at the university; the supporting degree of the courses in developing teachers’ higher-order thinking skills; teachers’ art educators’ professional competence in their own field, in instructional methods and/or techniques, and in educational assessment and evaluation; the frequency of observation on teachers’ performance during their art education; the quality of feedback from educators regarding teachers’ performance in arts, the manners of educators towards the teachers’; the time they spared to study their lessons at the university; their motivation towards the courses at the university; their innate aptitude in their field; their parents’ moral support during their education; financial support from their parents, government, etc. for their education; the physical school environment and provided opportunities*) to the professional-technical competence of the art teachers was searched, the Turkish art teachers’ innate aptitude in their own field was found to be the most sufficient quality that they had and this quality was determined to be the most effective item on the level of their professional-technical competence. On the other hand, teachers stated that the most insufficient item was their art educators’ professional competence in educational assessment and evaluation and that they were mostly affected negatively because of this incompetency of the educators. Additionally, it is interesting that this quality, at the same time, has the biggest percentage among the qualities, which were assessed as “ineffective”.

The Italian art teachers’ educators’ professional competence in their own field was found to be met the most sufficiently and this quality was determined to be the most effective item on the level of the teachers’ professional-technical competence. On the other hand, teachers stated that the most insufficient item was their motivation towards the courses, which they had attended at the university and that they were mostly affected negatively because of this lack in their motivation. Additionally, the physical school environment and provided opportunities were found to be mostly stated as “ineffective” by the Italian art teachers.

3.4. Turkish and Italian art teachers' self-assessments of their competence in educational assessment and views on the competencies which they have and the teachers must have

The findings on the art teachers' self-reports of their competence in educational assessment showed that in both of the cultures, most of the art teachers tend to report themselves as having a "good competence" while one fourth of the Turkish teachers and relatively a smaller percent (approximately two percent) of the Italian teachers still think that they are poor in educational assessment.

The details about these self-assessments (*i.e. identifying and distinguishing assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques sensitive/special to students' individual learning differences; selecting the most adequate assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques from the concurrent in determining differential developmental areas and individual differences of students; processing concurrent instruments accurately in assessing and evaluating students' cognitive, affirmative and psychomotor behaviors; preparing appropriate assessment situations and learning environments which support improvement in higher order thinking skills of students; in case of need, developing valid and reliable assessment and evaluation instruments; evaluating the evidence of the technical/psychometric quality of the tests / testing reliability and validity of assessment and evaluation instruments; following student performance and development level by regular and systematic assessments; proceeding with caution and accuracy when judging and interpreting the measures of students' cognitive, affirmative and psychomotor behaviors; based on the assessment results, providing effective feedbacks to the students with constructive, clear and formative explanations; using assessment results in instructional planning, assessment and reconstruction*) showed that the competency in "providing effective feedbacks to the students with constructive, clear and formative explanations, based on the assessment results" was specified to be possessed by most of the Turkish art teachers whereas a big percent of the sample stated that they are lack in the competency of "developing valid and reliable assessment and evaluation instruments, in case of need". The competency in "following student performance and development level by regular and systematic assessments" was specified to be possessed by most of the Italian art teachers whereas another big percent of the sample stated that they are lack in the competency of "evaluating the evidence of the technical/psychometric quality of the tests (testing reliability and validity of assessment and evaluation instruments)". On the other hand, the analysis on the teachers' views regarding what kind of competencies the art teachers should have in terms of educational assessment practices indicated that a quite big percentage of the Turkish sample and relatively a smaller but more than half percentage of the Italian sample determined all the items presented as essential/necessary qualities.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this cross-cultural study lay out a similarity among the views, experiences and self-reported competencies of Turkish and Italian art teachers in terms of the content and the quality of the educational assessment practices in arts concurrently in progress or they got involved in the past. To sum up, the results reveal those **common** points given below:

- Performance tasks, essays, and oral exams were found to be the most common item formats used in educational assessment and evaluation practices in arts by both of the cultures whereas objective test items such as true-false items or matching test items are being used quite rare.

It is quite obvious that there are some aspects of arts assessment that make it unique from assessment in other core content areas. As Colwell (2003) and Lane & Stone (2006) stated, each of the critical components of arts education – knowledge, process and production – is intertwined, and each needs to be represented and accounted for in the art assessment systems. Arts education is also authentic, which means that it examines students' work much like "real world" work is assessed and which aims at fostering the practical competences of students. Since the educational benefit of using performance assessments has been demonstrated by a number of researchers, the nature of the arts is found to be commonly-held as a guiding factor in specifying the shape and length of the assessments among the cultures, as it was expected.

- In both cultures, most of the art teachers' think that students' multiple-skills are taken into consideration when assessment in arts is at issue and arts is the composite area of theory, practice, and performance. Based on these properties, the art teachers' referred their field of arts as of a particular interest in the sense of educational assessment.
- In both cultures, most of the art teachers' think that they have a good (sufficient) qualification in terms of their professional-technical competence. In addition, the factors positively contributing to this competence were determined as "teachers' innate aptitude in arts" for Turkish teachers and "their educators' professional competence in arts" for Italian teachers. On the other hand, Turkish teachers specified that they were mostly affected negatively because of their educators' incompetency in educational assessment practices whereas Italian teachers stated that they were mostly affected negatively because of lack of their motivation towards the courses they attended during their higher education.

- In both cultures, most of the art teachers' think that they have a good (sufficient) qualification in terms of their competence in educational assessment practices; however the percent of the Turkish teachers who self-reported their relevant competency as "poor" counts relatively higher than the observed percent in Italian sample. On the other hand, both Turkish and Italian were commonly found to feel lack in the competency of developing valid and reliable assessment and evaluation instruments and in another quite relevant item stating the competency of evaluating the evidence of the technical/psychometric quality of the test, which is the effort of testing reliability and validity of the instruments in practice. In addition, almost all the identified and presented competencies were determined as "required for the art teachers" by at least more than half of the both Turkish and Italian samples.

When students are given the opportunity to deliver a performance in relation to what they have learned in the classroom, estimating indicators regarding the two crucial psychometric properties - reliability and validity - of the measures become more complex than obtaining indicators for the pencil-and-paper testing situations because of the more subjective nature of performance assessments, which causes a relative decrease in terms of these properties and which certainly assumes a heavier responsibility for the teachers. Besides, as Eisner (1966) and English (2010) stated, some teachers see these judgments as blocks in student potential, hence unfairly, develop a sort of resistance to mature a sufficient quality in these "standardized" and "grading-related" referred algorithms. Given the fact that the idea of assessment already has been unwelcome and unaddressed in arts education, but on the other hand the art teachers' referred their field of arts as of a particular interest in the sense of educational assessment and referred the quality of educational assessment and evaluation practices, which they had gotten involved in the past, as one of the determinant of their current professional-technical competence, it can be said that, in both of the cultures, teacher training programs and processes should focus more on the essential role, the technical structure, the development process and the importance of arts-oriented educational assessment and evaluation methods and tools to provide teacher candidates more experience in the related topic and to build up a positive attitude towards the necessity of the proper use of these methods and tools.

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Brief Biography

Göksu Gözen, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Educational and Psychological Measurement and Evaluation at the Department of Educational Sciences of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her research interests include developing educational measurement and evaluation tools and psychological tests for cognitive, affirmative and psychomotor domains, test scoring methods, teaching and assessing higher order thinking skills (particularly creative thinking and problem solving skills), constructing art and design activities for children, enhancing creativity through digital storytelling approach, project-based learning, and performance assessment. She has also published in the area of ethics in educational and psychological testing process.

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