Following the map or the surroundings? Music teachers on an assessment journey.

*Student 1:* But what score did I get?
*Teacher:* As I told you beforehand, I haven't given you scores. Instead, I have given you written responses. We will do a 'walk-through' of the test all together and after that, we'll do it again – this time individually.

*Student 2:* But did I pass the test!?
*Teacher:* You won’t get a grading until you have finished the course. This time I want to know in what ways you have been thinking to reach your conclusions. In those places, I have given you written comments.

*Student 3:* I counted myself! I got 38 points out of 47! I think… Depends on how many points you get for each answer. But that *should* at least amount to an E!?

The above conversation took place during a Music theory class, where a group of year-one students attending the National Music Programme in a Swedish upper secondary school got a test returned. In this situation, different experiences of assessment – as well as expectations regarding form and presentation – are articulated and put forward. What possible roads of travel do the students and the teacher have to choose between, and what are the consequences of those choices? Do they have to choose one before the other?

In a recently started research project in music pedagogy (part two of a doctoral thesis), the subject of assessment of musical knowledge is in focus. The research interest stems from the necessity of change described in research concerning the educational system in general, and professionalism and assessment in particular. This is due to a change in organizational settings in the Swedish school system (Skolverket, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) and a shift regarding the educational system from *professional responsibility* to *accountability* – thus creating an apparatus of control of ”school outcomes” (see for instance Zandén, 2010; Liedman, 2011; Solbrekke & Englund, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Nordin, 2012). As part of a professional institution, schools are supposed to assess as well as being assessed according to a new standard. But who is the assessor and according to what principles and in what ways?
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The aim of the study is to examine the confluence between teacher and student experience within the National Aesthetics Programme regarding assessment of musical knowledge, and this by asking the following questions:

• In what ways do teachers and students meet regarding assessment of musical knowledge?
• In what ways is knowledge, learning and assessment conceptualized within the courses of music?
• In what ways – and to what extent – is assessment organized with the students’ conceptualizations of musical knowledge and learning as a starting point?
• If there is such a division, in relation to what practice or context is teacher and student assessment of musical expression made: within or outside school?

This includes the examination of issues concerning assessment and (e)quality thereof, teacher professionalism and sharing of experience, using pragmatist philosophy as the theoretical framework as well as action based research as a method for gathering of qualitative data. The preliminary results so far show that teachers in collegial discussion on assessment touch upon subjects as professionalism vs. accountability as well as equality regarding instrument categories within the same course – e.g. what does a specific term translate to when it comes to different instruments?

References
