

An Investigation into Acceptance and
Commitment coaching strategies implemented
in class singing lessons for 8 to 9 year olds: A
method to improve performance skills



FLEXIBLE PERFORMING

CONTEXT

- ▶ Village Primary School with class sizes of 32 children.
- ▶ Music is a statutory part of the curriculum for these children. (Department for Education, 2021:4)

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Global Pandemic in 2020 (Daubney and Fautley, 2020)
- ▶ Budget cuts (IFS 2022)
- ▶ Child Mental Health (The Children's Society, 2022)

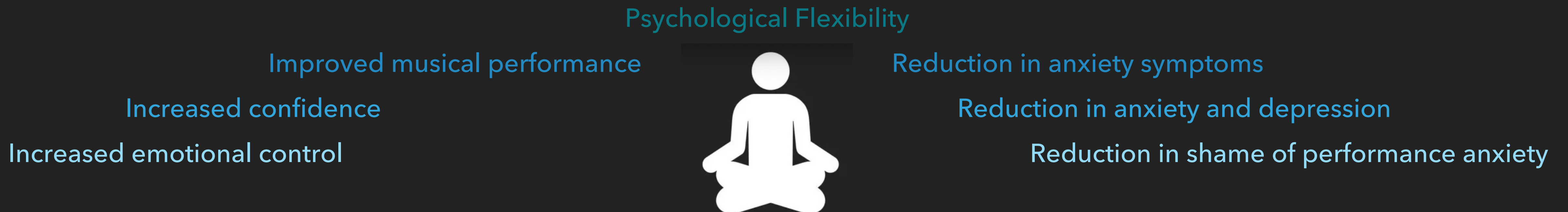


MOTIVATION

- ▶ Singing can have a positive impact on mental health. (Clift, 2010; Hallam, 2016; Dingle, 2019; Fancourt, 2019)
- ▶ Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (Ofsted, 2022)
- ▶ Limited research on approaches to reluctant singers and performers in Primary Schools.
- ▶ Acceptance and Commitment Therapy promising in Music Performance Anxiety. (Juncos, 2016;2018)

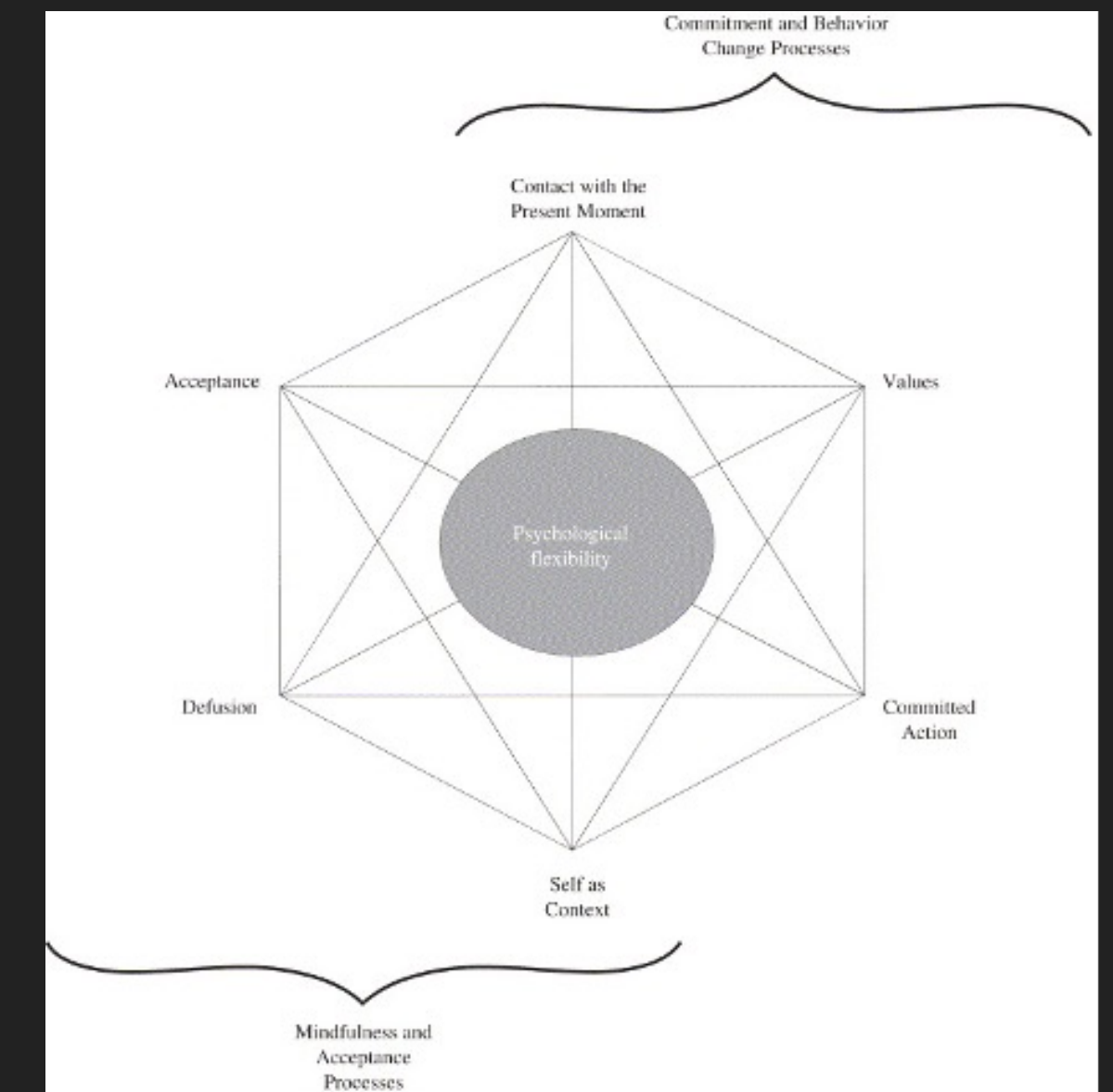
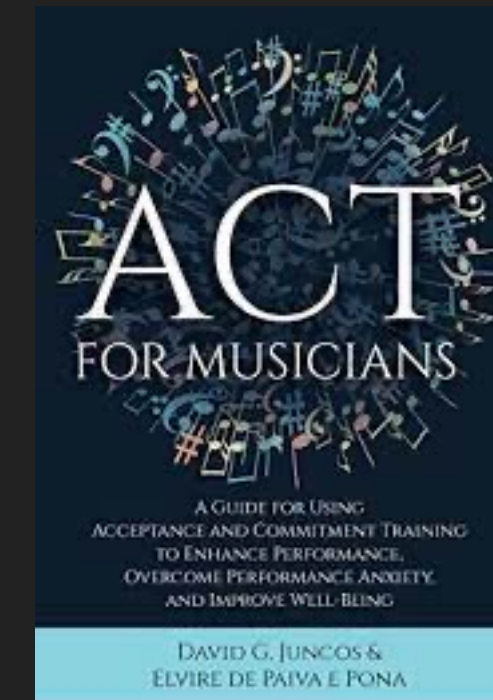
LITERATURE REVIEW

- ▶ ACT is one of the 'third wave' cognitive behavioural therapies which promote mindfulness and acceptance of emotional distress rather than mastery of the symptoms. (Juncos and Markman 2016:936)
- ▶ ACT has been used successfully by Music teachers. (Mahoney, 2022; Shaw, 2020)
- ▶ ACT-based Programs are already being used in PSHE lessons in UK Schools. (Gillard, 2021)

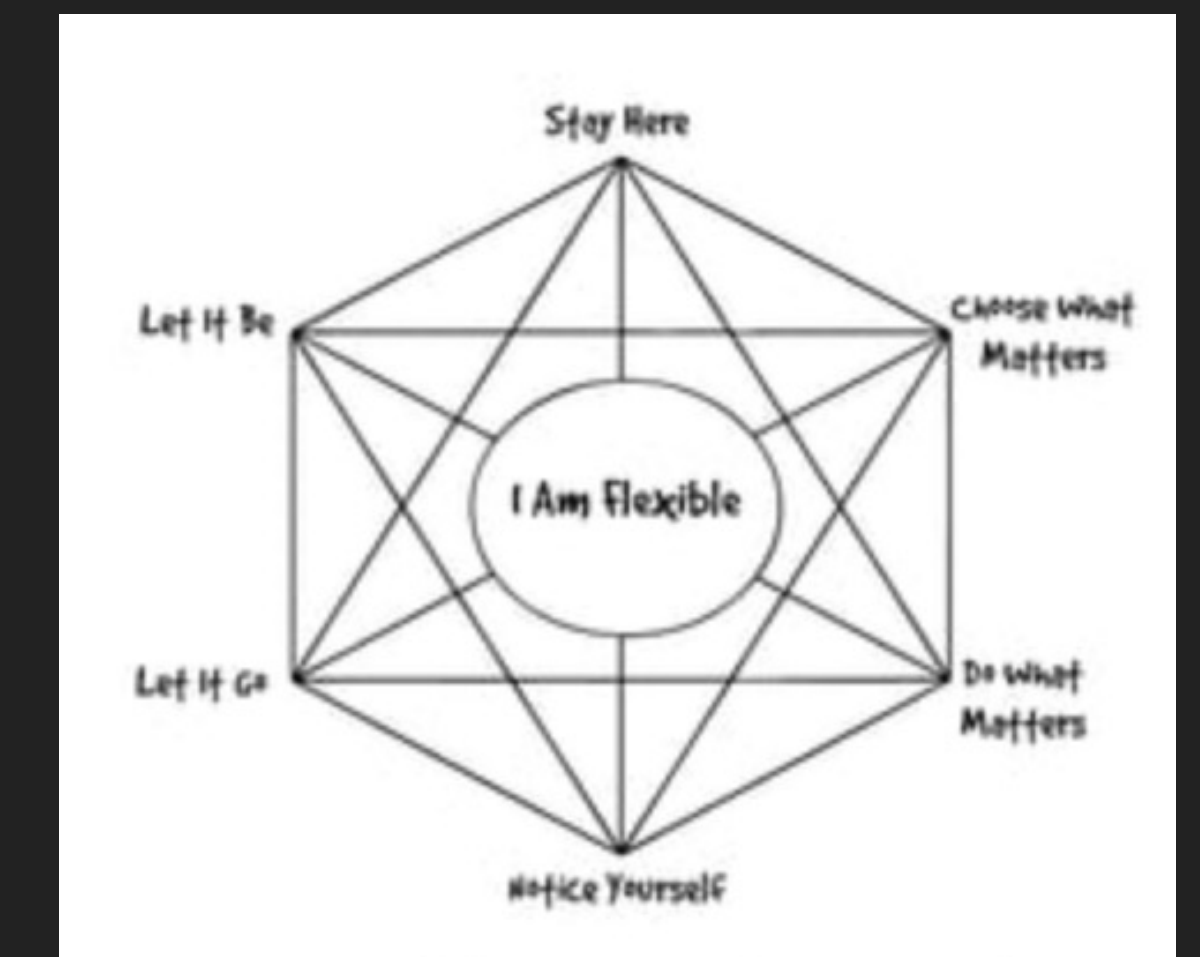
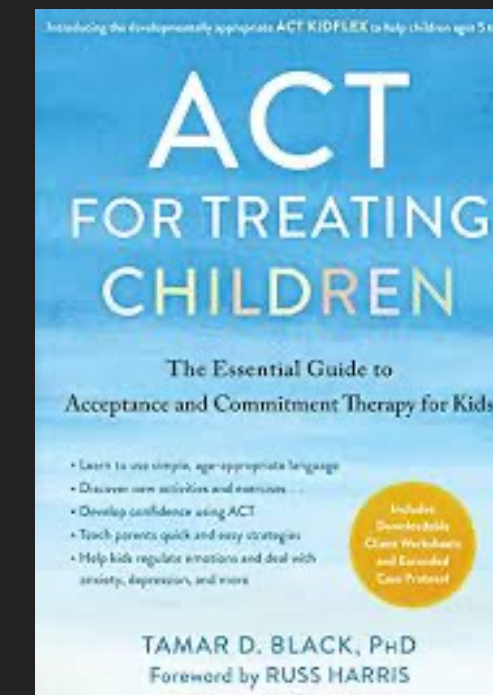


LESSON DESIGN

- ▶ Six sessions. (Clarke, 2020; Shaw, 2020; Mahoney 2022)
- ▶ A mix of the six processes in each session.
- ▶ Adapted for children and groups. (Black 2022)
- ▶ Integration of animation. (Mahoney, 2022; Swain 2015)
- ▶ Singing is included in each session. (Swain 2017)
- ▶ Performance examples.



Hexaflex (Hayes et al, 2006)



Kidflex (Black 2022)

METHODOLOGY

- ▶ Singing Tests. (Welch 2014)
- ▶ Group Performance Recording.
- ▶ Questionnaire.
- ▶ Own Participant Observations.

V O C E S 8
FOUNDATION

sing up
Help kids find their voice

HAMPSHIRE
MUSIC
SERVICE



Department
for Education


ABRSM

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ British Education Research Association and University Guidelines
- ▶ GDPR and Safeguarding.
- ▶ Permission from Headteacher, Parents and Children
- ▶ Opt out available at all times.
- ▶ Non Clinical Version of ACT

SINGING TESTS

- ▶ 9 Children took the tests.
- ▶ Children sang two songs.
- ▶ All children improved or stayed the same.
- ▶ One outstanding result.
- ▶ Confident children need different input.

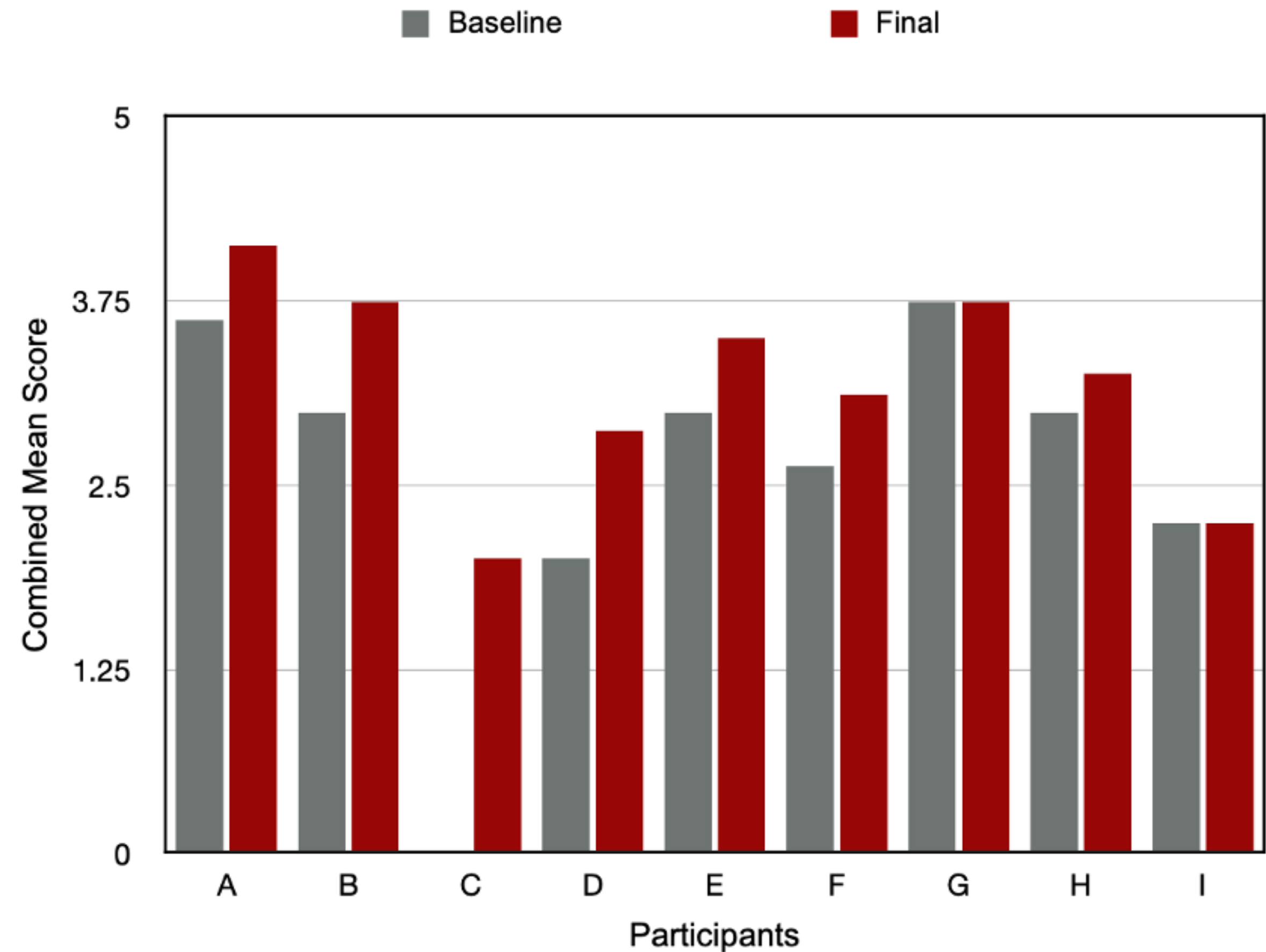


Figure 4 - Mean Singing Scores

GROUP PERFORMANCE

- ▶ Performance recorded at the start and the end of the sessions.
- ▶ Final performance showed improvement.
- ▶ Extra performance demonstrated engagement and musical learning.
- ▶ Different strands of Hexaflex evident including values. (Juncos, 2016)

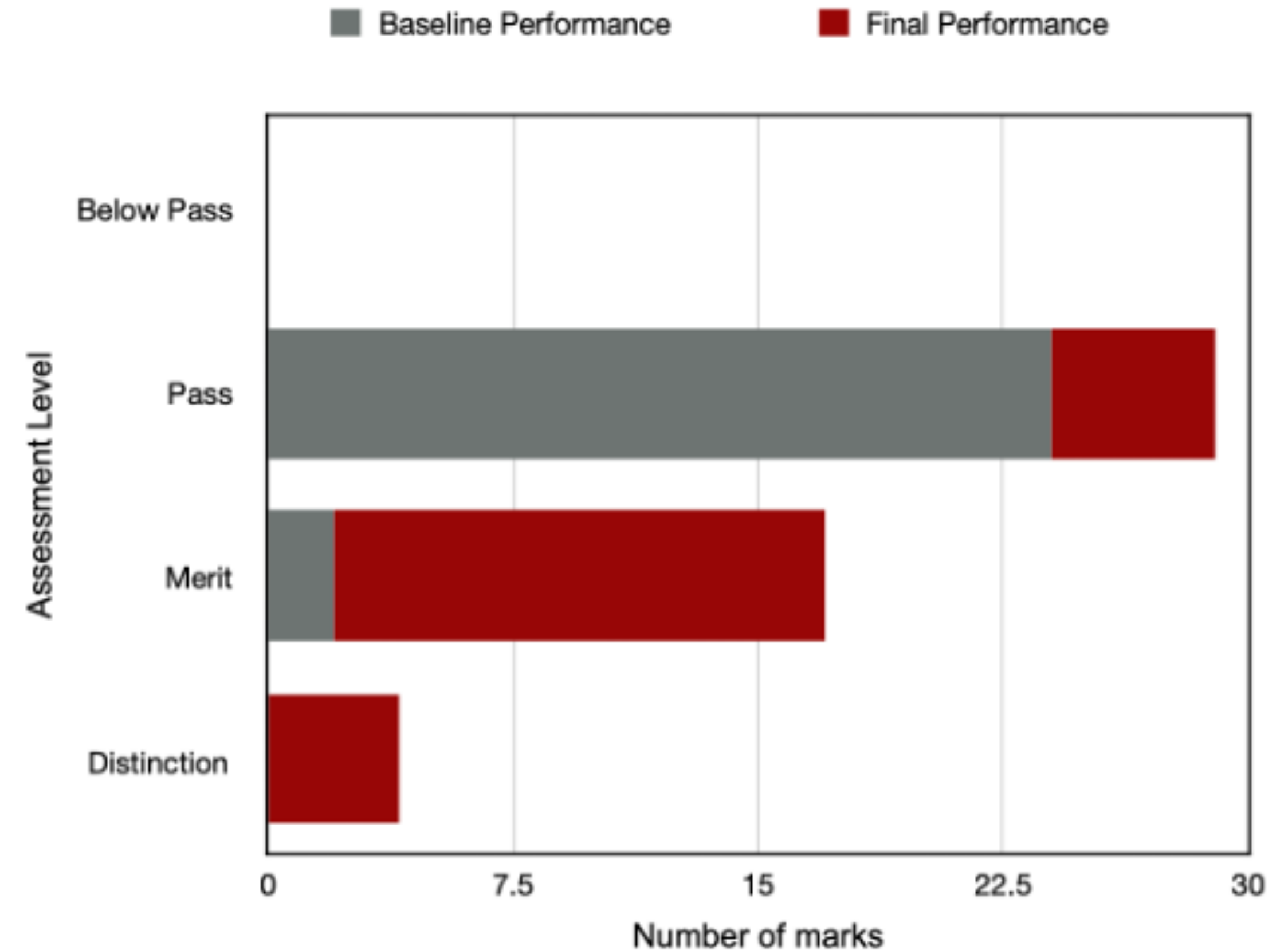
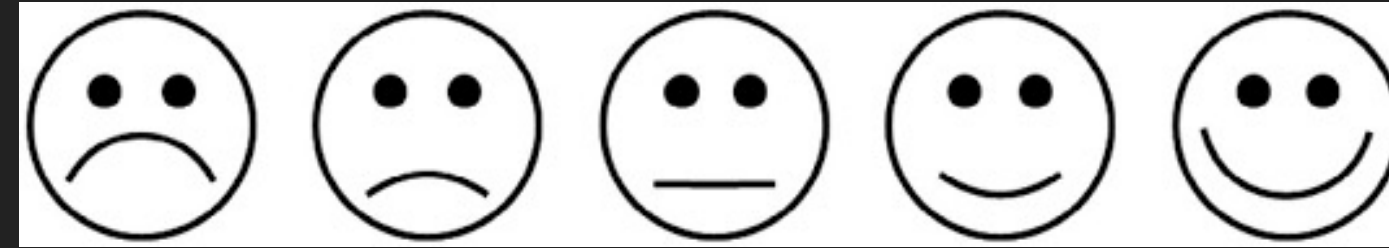


Figure 5 - Distribution of marks from assessors.

QUESTIONNAIRE



- ▶ Questionnaire using Likert scale.
- ▶ Not Statistically Significant.
- ▶ Likert Scales with 9-11 year olds 'doubtful utility as an effective method for communicating judgements' (Hall et al., 2016)
- ▶ Future studies should use Focus Groups or Interviews

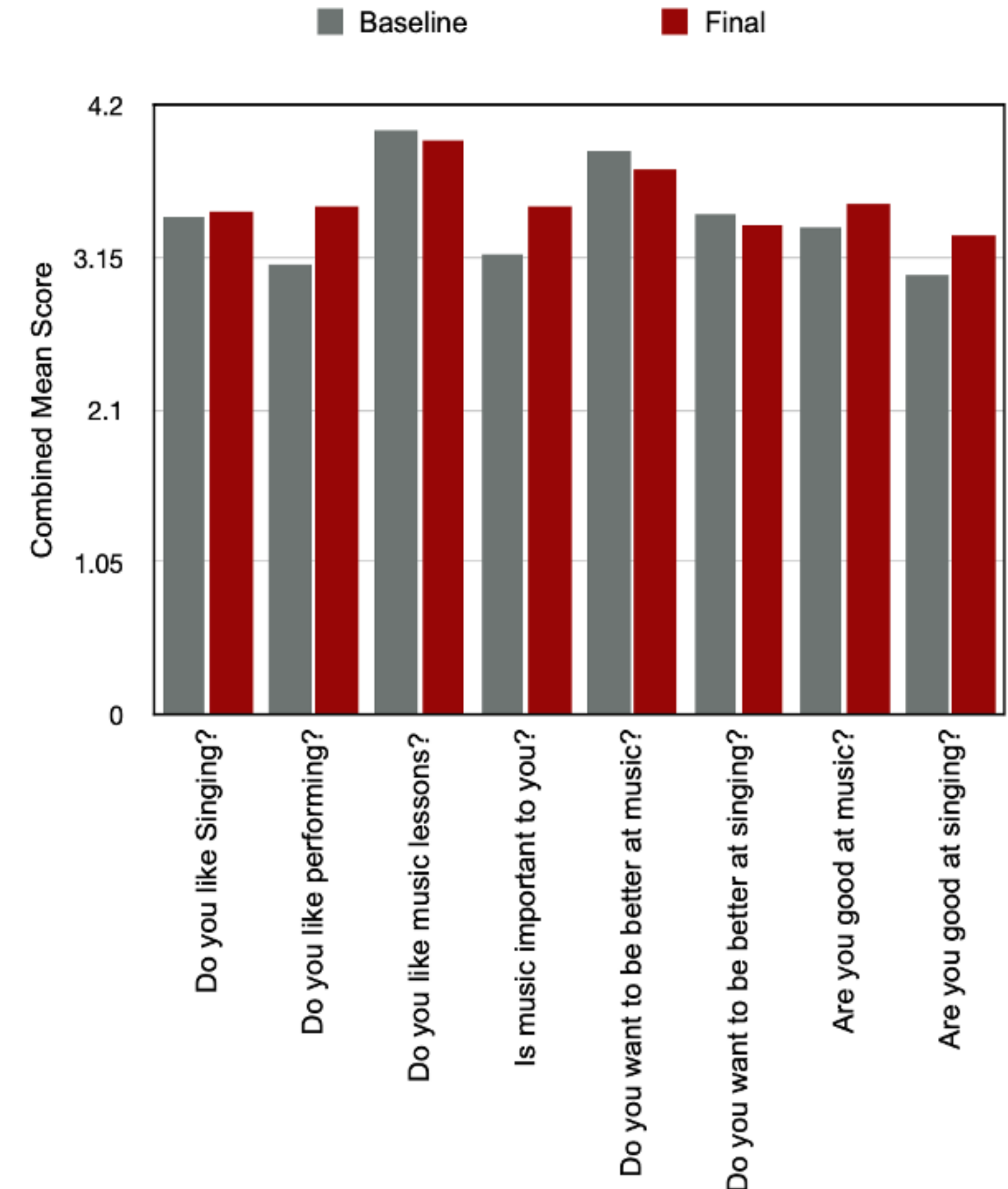


Figure 6 - Questionnaire Responses

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

- ▶ Engagement improved over the course of the sessions.
- ▶ Balance of ACT and Singing worked well.
- ▶ Group delivery of ACT has challenges and will be further refined.
- ▶ Focus groups or interviews would be a useful tool to understand why children responded to some exercises more than others.



CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Less confident children made improvements in singing and performing quality.
- ▶ Deepened my understanding of ACT applications in the classroom.
- ▶ Children are motivated by their own values to work at a higher level.

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ Small scale study with restricted scale diversity and lack of control group.
- ▶ Data analysis and richer data required.
- ▶ Delivery of ACT exercises refined during the process

FUTURE RESEARCH AND WIDER IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Combining ACT with musical learning over a longer time period.
- ▶ Wider social impact on children in order to establish PSHE value.
- ▶ Regular ACT in music education = fewer musicians with MPA?



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