



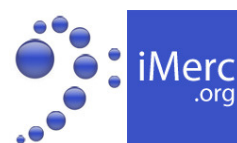
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An overview of initial research data (2007-2008) concerning the Vocal Force component of workforce development under the umbrella of the National Singing Programme *Sing Up* in England

Welch, G.F. & Himonides, E.

Institute of Education, University of London, UK

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Introduction

One key component of the UK Government's National Singing Programme 'Sing Up' (produced by Youth Music in partnership with Abbot Mead Vickers, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead) is to ensure that children's singing development is fostered by adults who have appropriate musical knowledge, skills and understanding. This 'workforce development' strand of 'Sing Up' is led by the Sage Gateshead. Its stated role is to

'deliver inclusive, learner-centred training for leaders singing with primary-age children in 60 target areas across England from September 2007 to March 2011, and each project runs for two years.'

The workforce development – embracing 'Vocal Force' – draws on principles developed through 'Vocal Union', part of the Sage Gateshead's 'Access to Excellence Music Manifesto Pathfinder Programme'. Vocal Force is working in collaboration with existing schemes, projects, organisations and individuals across England as part of Sing Up. The intention is to

'encourage and exemplify healthy, musical singing within primary education and develop a broad repertoire base using singing in the context of the whole curriculum, working to encourage schools to become singing communities. The Vocal Force emphasis is on providing training, skills, repertoire and networks for those who lead singing with primary age children or who are interested in developing their confidences and abilities in order to lead singing with this group.'

(retrieved from <http://www.singup.org/skills-training/vocal-force/> 1 October 2008)

The programme has been designed to support the development of approximately 50 vocal leaders in each of the 60 areas, working in collaboration with colleagues from across the country.

The Institute of Education, University of London agreed to undertake an external evaluation of a significant number of workforce development participants that was complimentary to, but separate from, the Sage Gateshead's own internal evaluation processes. This made use of a specially designed, *Acrobat pdf* based, on-line evaluation instrument that examined two main areas: (i) participant 'singing self-efficacy' – their self concept concerning their own singing ability; and (ii) 'knowledge about singing' in three sub-areas (related to learners, pedagogy, and the choice of appropriate repertoire). Each section used a 7-point Likert scale responses (1-7) which required participants to signal the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with statements about themselves and singing. These statements were drawn from established research models and published data. It was estimated that responding to the various statements would take up to

10 minutes. Ideally, the intention was for participants to complete the instrument both *before* and *after* their input from Vocal Force. Data were completed on-line and submitted direct to our server at the Institute of Education for data syntheses and analyses.

The text below presents a synthesis of the main findings from the data collection during the first year of the workforce development, i.e., from late 2007 through to the summer of 2008.

Participants

Overall, we received n=249 responses from participants. These were made up of n=172 (n=155 female and n=17 male) who undertook the survey as an initial ‘baseline’ activity, i.e., prior to receiving their Vocal Force development. Subsequently, n=77 of these (n=70 female and n=7 male) completed a follow-up, repeat survey to allow us to begin to generate an independent assessment of particular impacts (if any) of their workforce development.

The participants were drawn from various age groups as follows (Table 1).

| Baseline Age Group | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 20-29 | 23.3% | 40 |
| 30-39 | 27.3% | 47 |
| 40-49 | 30.2% | 52 |
| 50 | 19.2% | 33 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 172 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | 0 |

Table 1: Age groups of participants

There was a roughly equal spread of ages, but with slightly fewer aged 50+ years. This pattern was repeated in the ‘follow up’ age groupings, but with a slight majority aged 40-49 years.

Just over half of the baseline participants (53.8%) reported that they held a qualification in either music and/or singing. (This increased to 60% of follow-up participants.)

Nearly 2:3 (61%) held Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

When asked about the age groups of children or young people with whom they normally led (or taught) singing, as might be expected, the majority reported that their prime focus was Primary-aged children (see Figure 1). This was the same for both baseline and follow-up respondents.

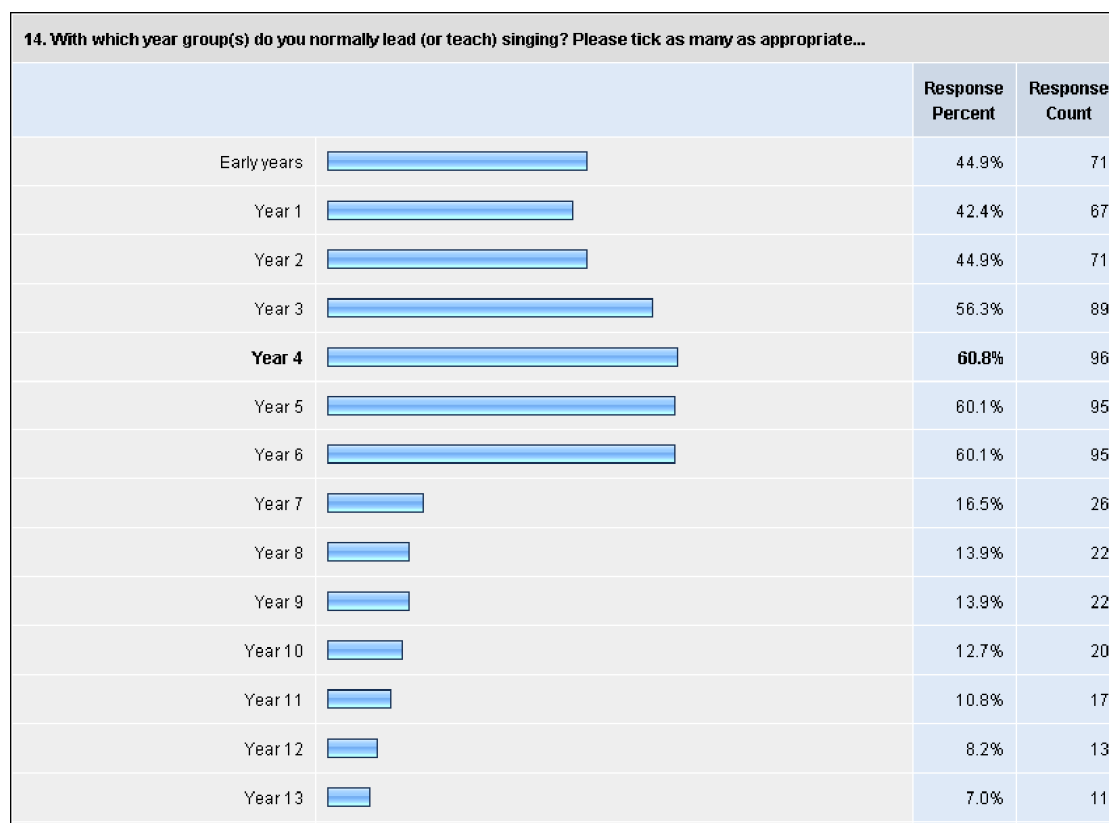


Figure 1: Age groups of children and young people normally led/taught by participants

Less than half (40%) reported that, if school-based, they had some formal responsibility for music within their school (although this proportion changed to 71% of the follow-up respondents – a sub-set of the original).

Of the n=172 participants, 21% (1:5) reported that they had completed their National Singing Programme Workforce Development experience. This reduced slightly to 16% of the follow-up respondents, presumably because each project (see Introduction) lasts up to two years. Of those who *had* concluded their development experience, just under half (46%) had had two sessions and a third one session (36%). The others had had three plus sessions of development. (The small number of follow-up respondents had had equal numbers of sessions, with 33% either one, two or three). Not all respondents, however, appeared to recognise that their development sessions were under the National Singing Programme, or provided by Vocal Force.

An overview of Year 1 Vocal Force findings

- In all the charts that follow, 1= disagree and 7 = agree.
- Overall, the singing development activities appear to be having a positive impact on participants' singing self-efficacy and their views on their own singing leadership (Q68 onwards).
- However, there is also evidence that a minority of participants continue to be aware of continuing personal weaknesses that need to be addressed (e.g., Q7, Q9, Q19) and/or that their workforce development may not be touching an underlying lack of self-confidence (e.g., Q10, Q11, Q17), nor a weakness in their personal strategies for addressing such weaknesses.
- The majority of participants believe that they provide a good role model in their singing (Q23).
- However, there is more variability in their professed understanding of vocal development (Q24, Q25) and how children use singing as part of their identity to define their culture (Q26).
- More follow-up participants provide opportunities for children to lead singing (Q28).
- But there is more variability in their involvement of parents and other members of the community in singing (Q29).
- Concerning their knowledge of singing pedagogy, the data suggest that there is a positive shift towards increased confidence in how to promote vocal health and function (Q30), in addressing basic singing issues (Q31), establishing a safe environment for singing (Q33), differentiation (individual and group) (Q35), integrating singing into other activities (Q36), their ability to draw on singers and singing leaders from the wider community (Q39) (although a minority still find this difficult).
- However, there are still a minority who are less certain about their ability to promote and support high quality singing performances (Q32) and to promote varied performing opportunities (Q34).
- There is more general ongoing uncertainty about how technology might be used to support the creative use of voice (Q38).
- There is also a positive shift in participants' awareness of extending repertoire choice (Q41) and knowing where to access support (Q42). Similarly, there is a greater awareness of cultural diversity and its contribution to singing (Q43, Q44), in how to use the space for singing (Q46) and to lead singing activities (Q47).
- But there is less certainty about how to draw on musical genre-specific expertise from the wider musical community (Q45, Q48).
- Overall, participants report that children are positive about singing (see section on 'Pupils in my class').
- But they also recognise that the same children may be less developed in their singing, composing and listening.
- Participants report a positive shift in their enjoyment of leading singing (Q71) and confidence (Q72, Q73).
- Not all are convinced that specialists should be leading music in primary schools (Q77), suggesting that they believe that there is a clear role for the generalist Primary school teacher in the promotion of singing development.

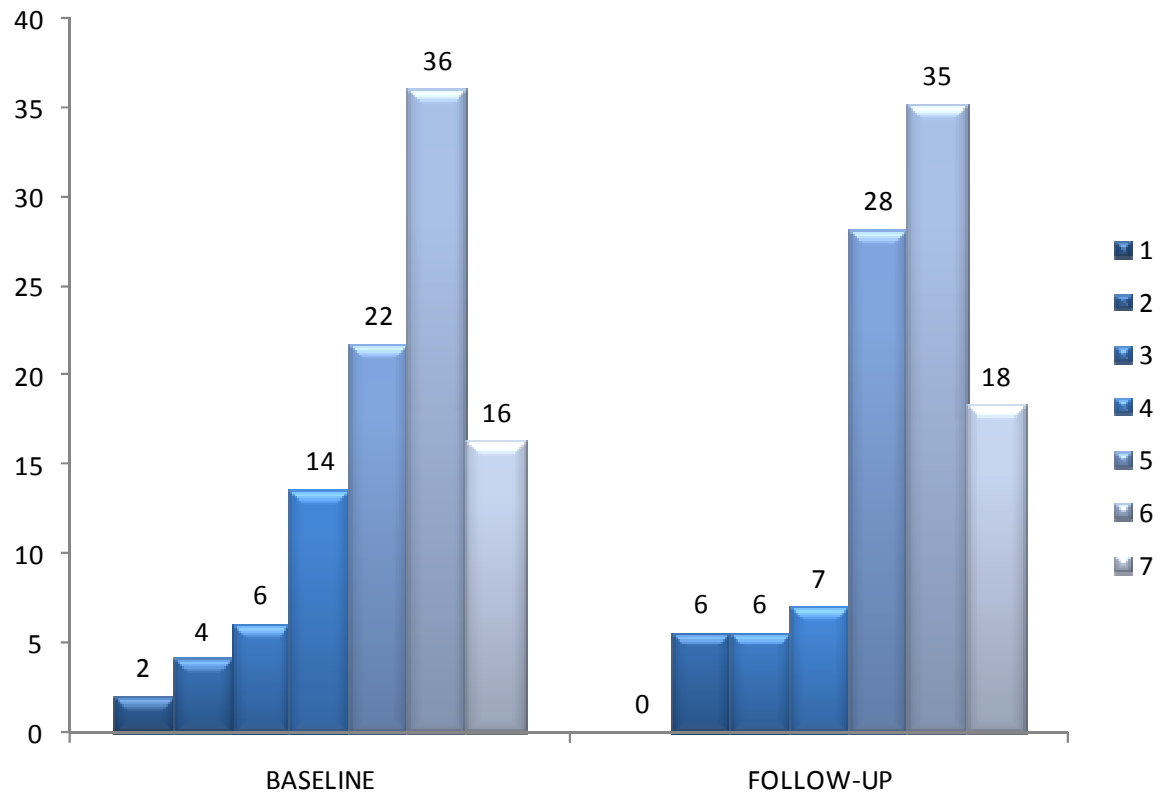
Participants' answers to the six main clusters of questions were also analysed statistically. A comparison was made between the mean scores for the baseline data compared to the follow-up data. These revealed that:

- There was no statistical difference between the two data sets (before and after/during the Vocal Force intervention) for participant's self efficacy (their rating of themselves as singers), although both means were positive (baseline $\bar{x} = 4.464$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.559$ on a 7 point scale; $t(169) = 1.787$, ns). It may be that the interventions had not yet had an opportunity to make a difference to the underlying self-perception of their own singing skills.
- There was a slight improvement (approaching statistical significance) in participants' knowledge of how children learned to sing (baseline $\bar{x} = 3.887$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.345$; $t(172) = 2.890$, ns).
- In contrast, there was a significant improvement in participants views on (a) their knowledge of singing pedagogy (baseline $\bar{x} = 3.672$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.270$; $t(180) = 7.798$, $p=.006$); (b) their knowledge of appropriate repertoire (baseline $\bar{x} = 3.786$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.386$; $t(177) = 6.408$, $p=.012$); (c) their own children's engagement in singing (baseline $\bar{x} = 3.947$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.584$; $t(182) = 11.383$, $p=.001$); and (d) their perceived ability to lead singing activities (baseline $\bar{x} = 4.137$; follow-up $\bar{x} = 4.790$; $t(176) = 9.935$, $p=.002$).

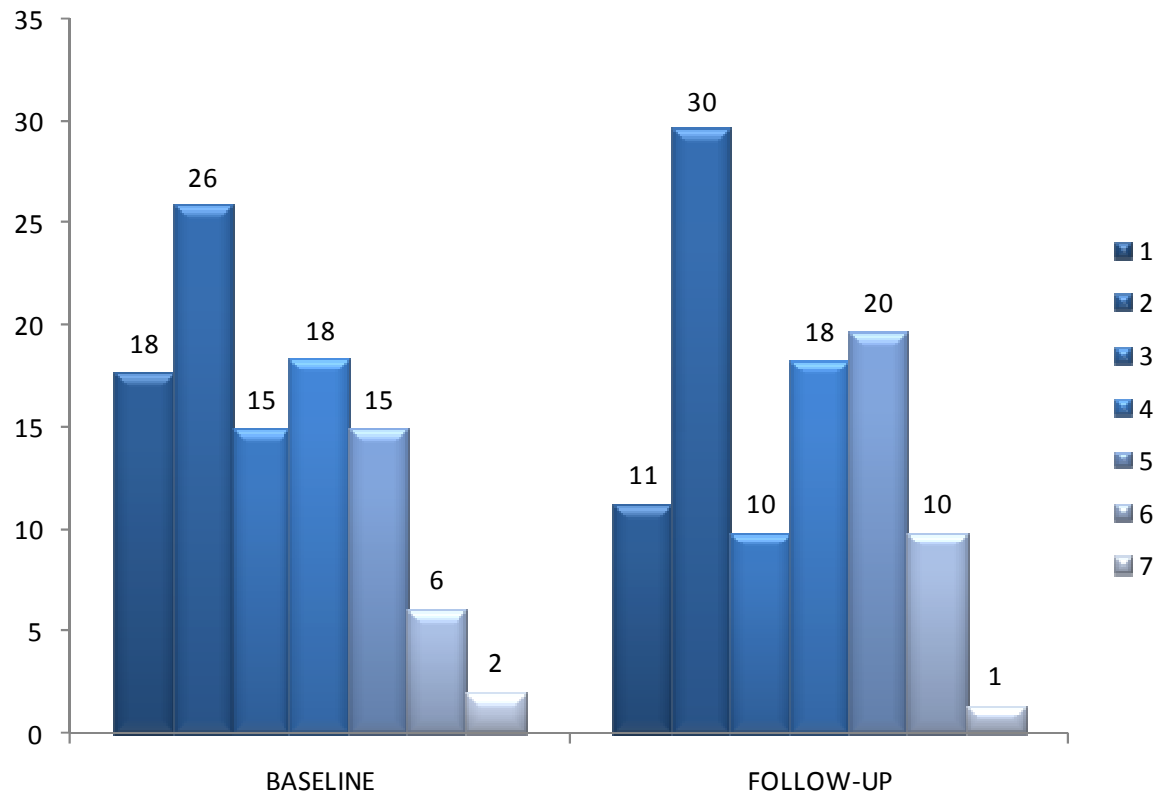
Overall, the initial data sets suggest that Vocal Force is having a positive impact on many different aspects of participants' underlying knowledge, skills and understanding, notwithstanding any additional improvements that continue to be needed.

Singing self-efficacy

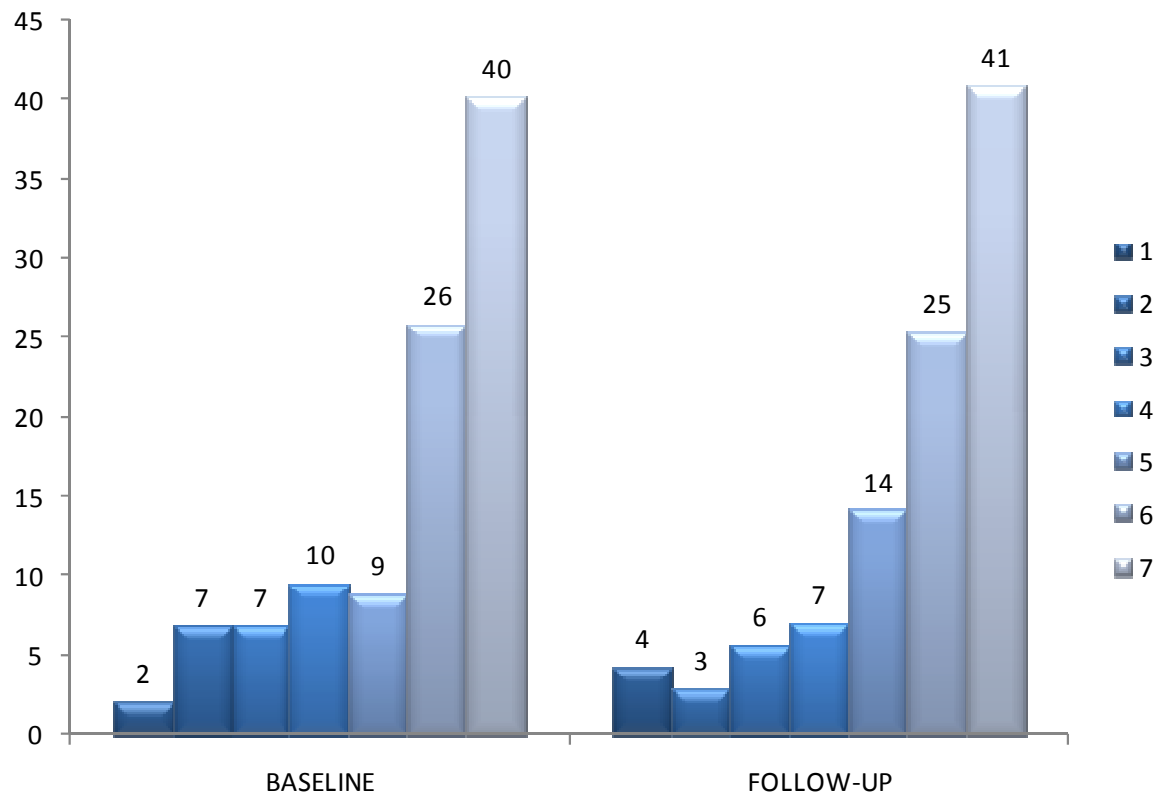
6. When I plan a singing activity, I am certain I can complete it successfully



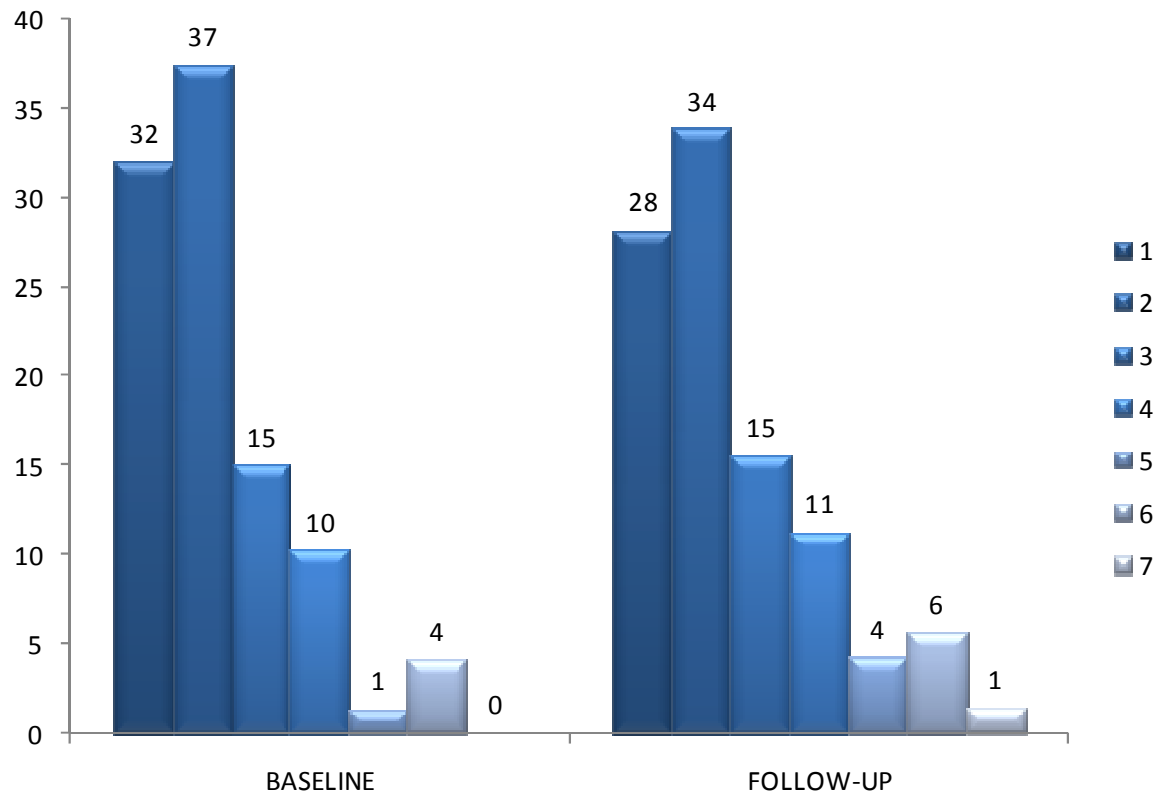
7. One of my problems is that I cannot get down to practising or rehearsing singing when I should



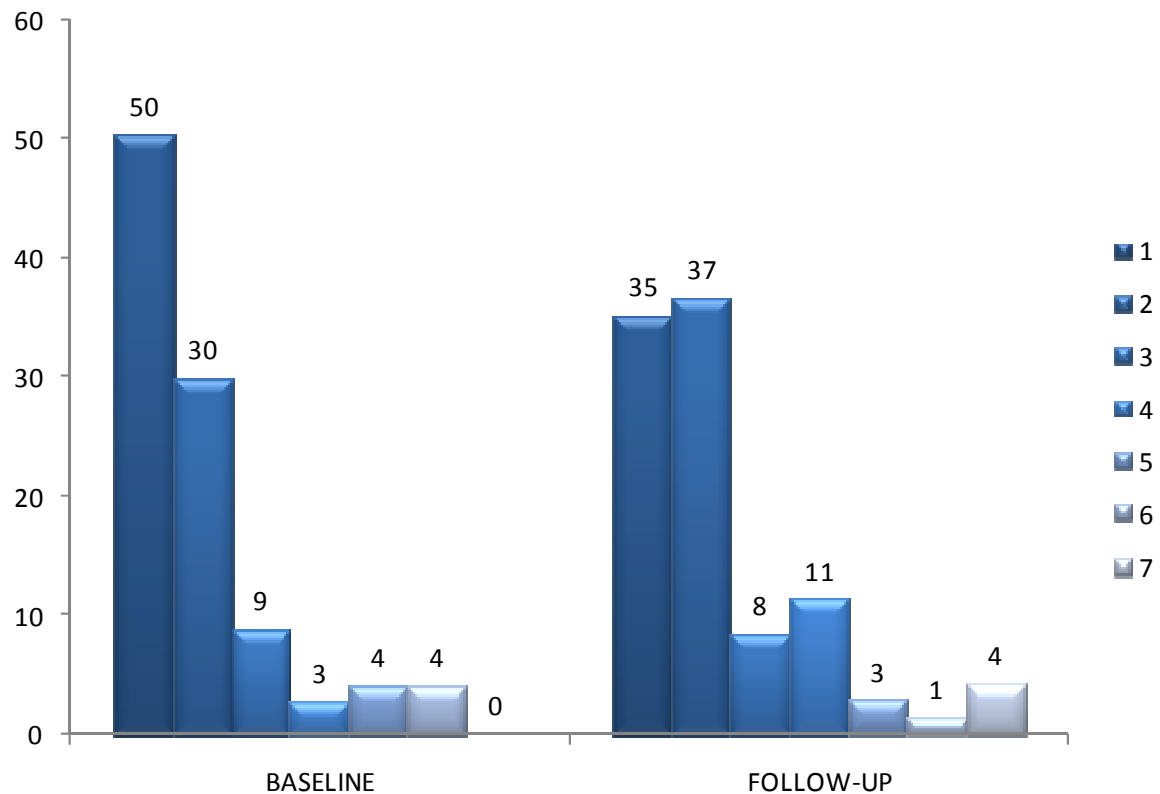
8. If I can't sing something at first, I keep trying until I can



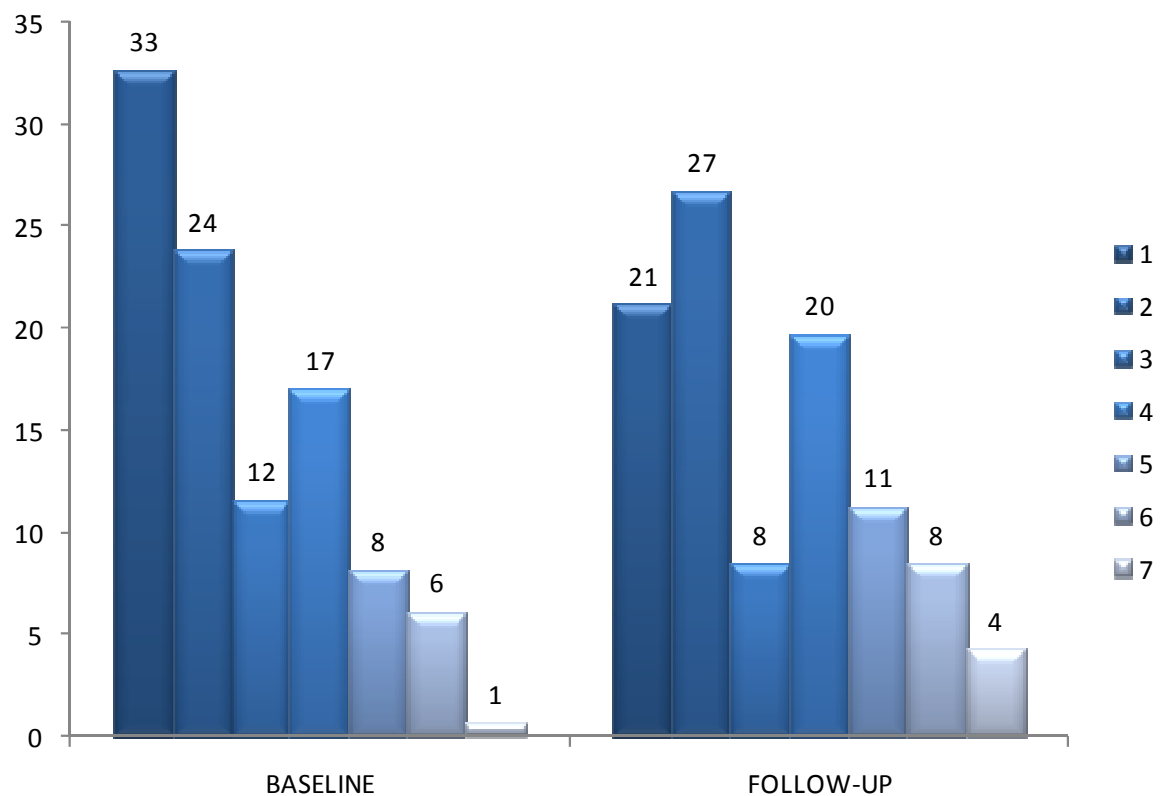
9. When I set important goals for my singing activities, I rarely achieve them



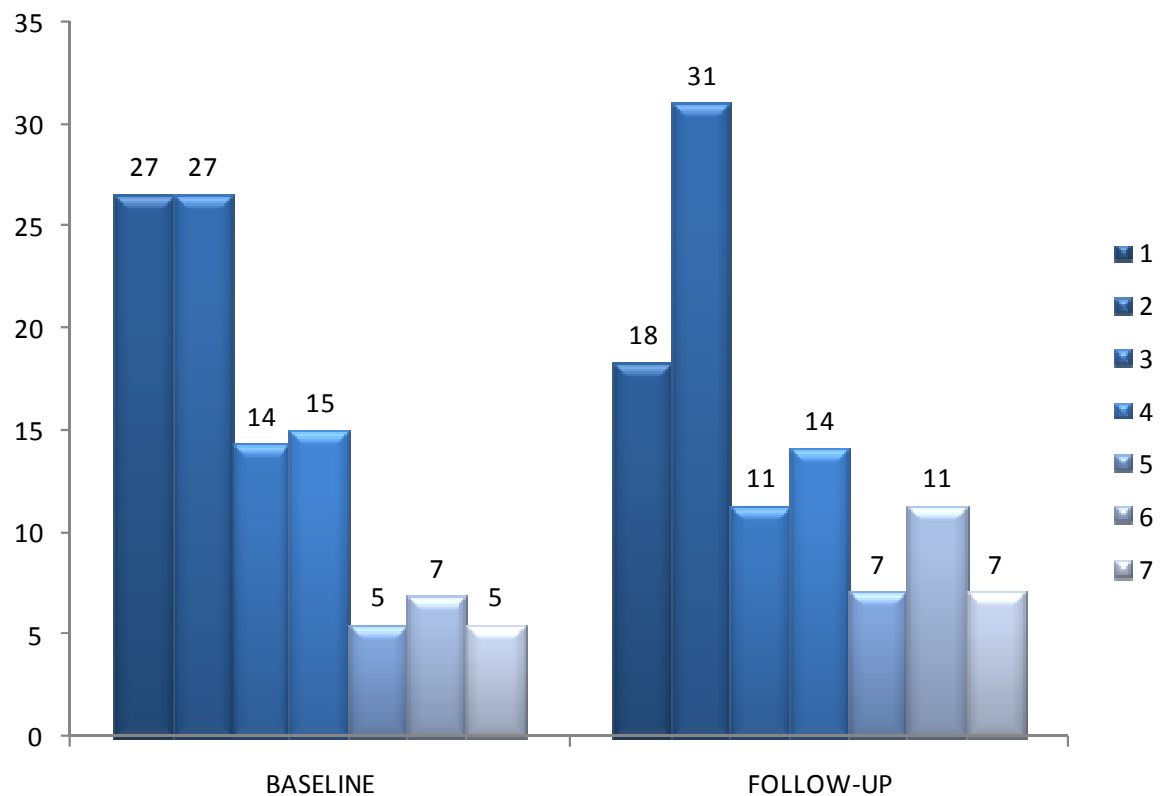
10. I give up on things before completing them



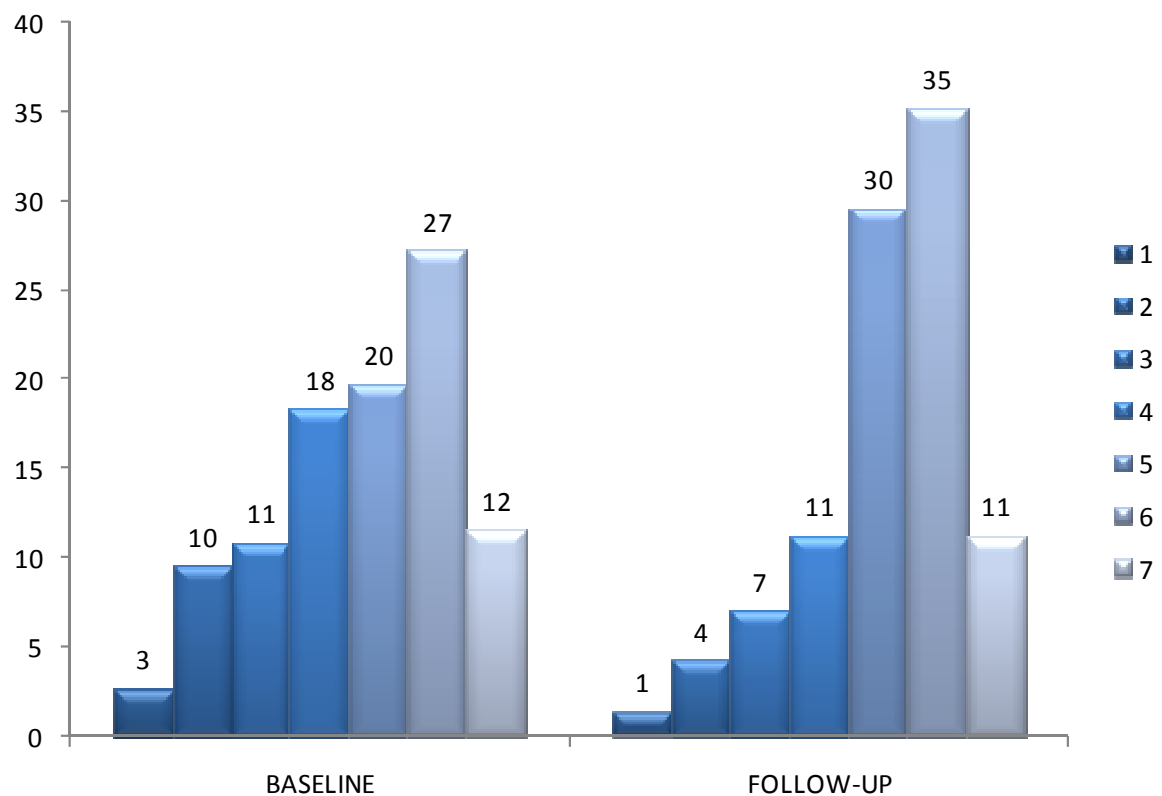
11. I avoid facing difficult situations in my singing activities



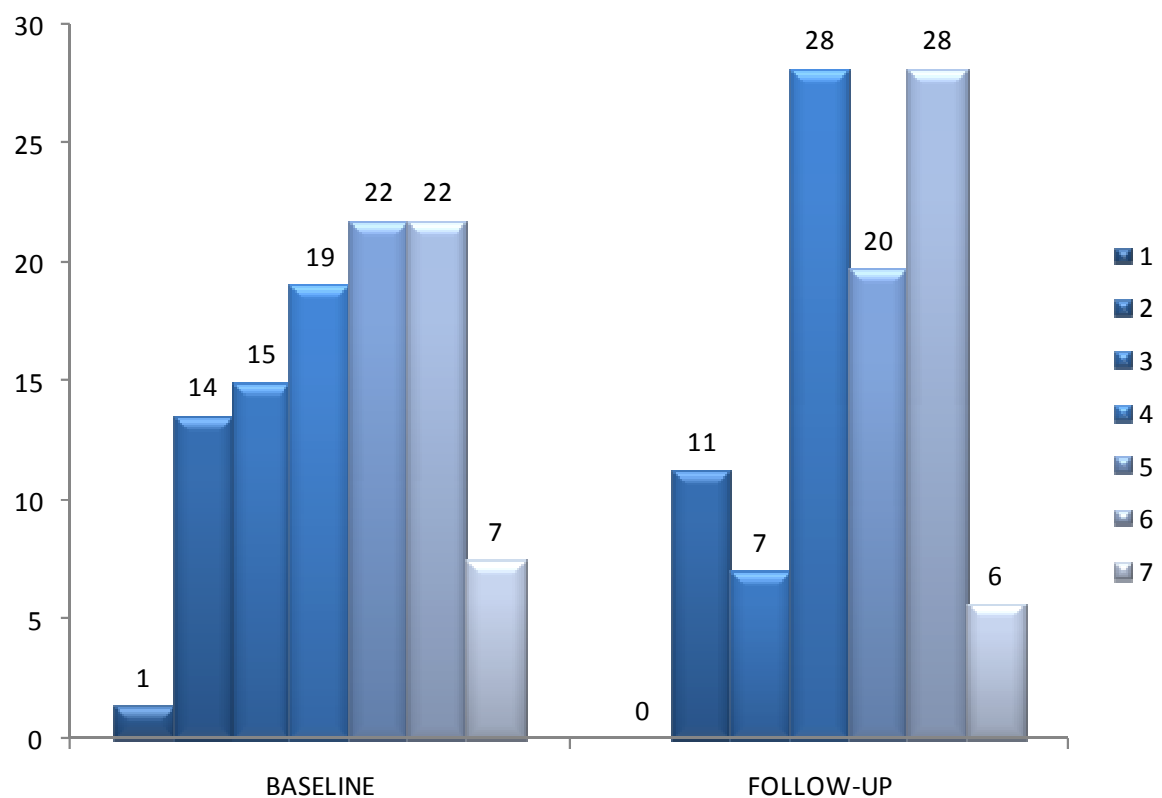
12. If a piece of music looks or sounds complicated, I will not even attempt to perform it



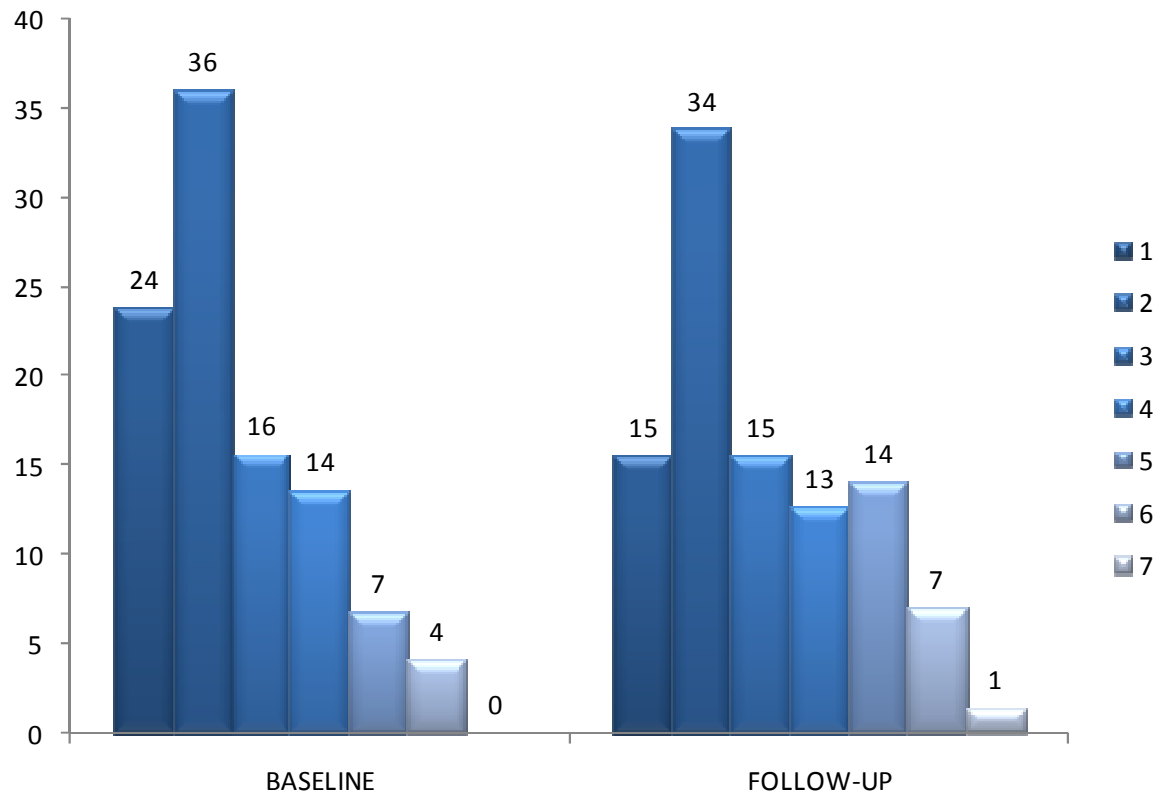
13. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it



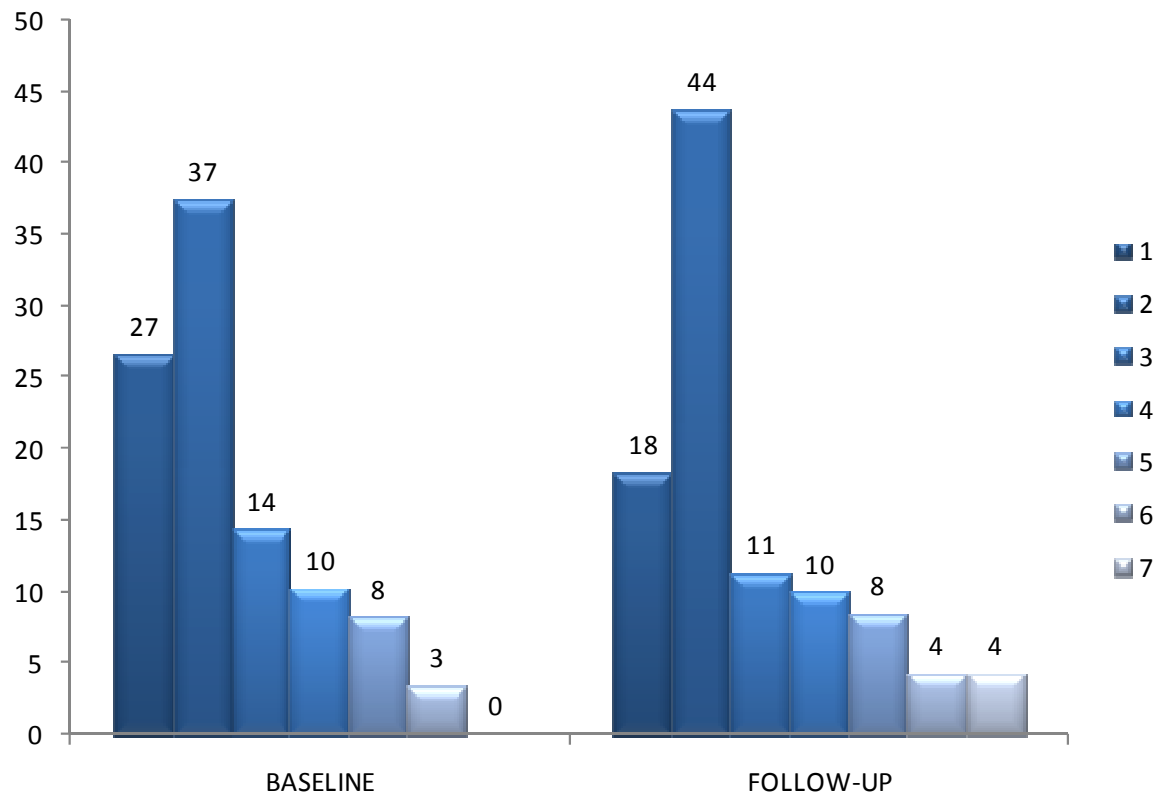
14. When I decide to do something, I do it straight away



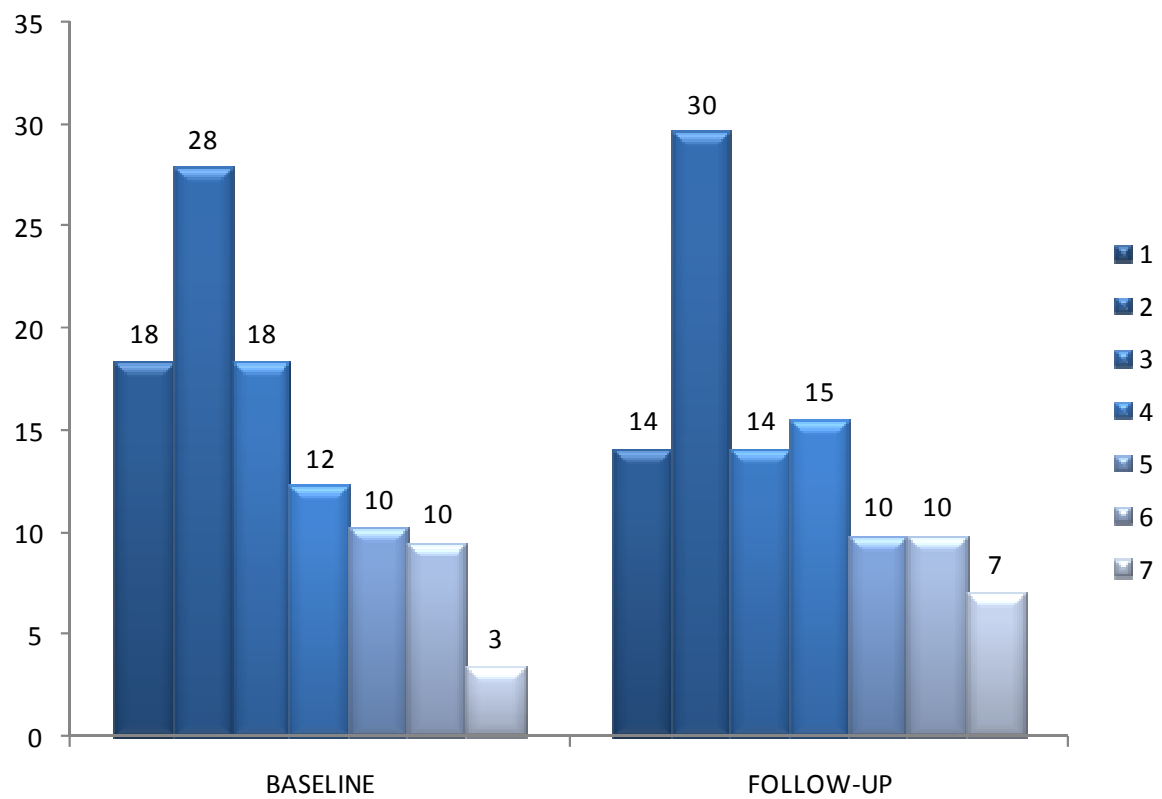
15. When trying out a new piece of music, I soon give up if I am not initially successful



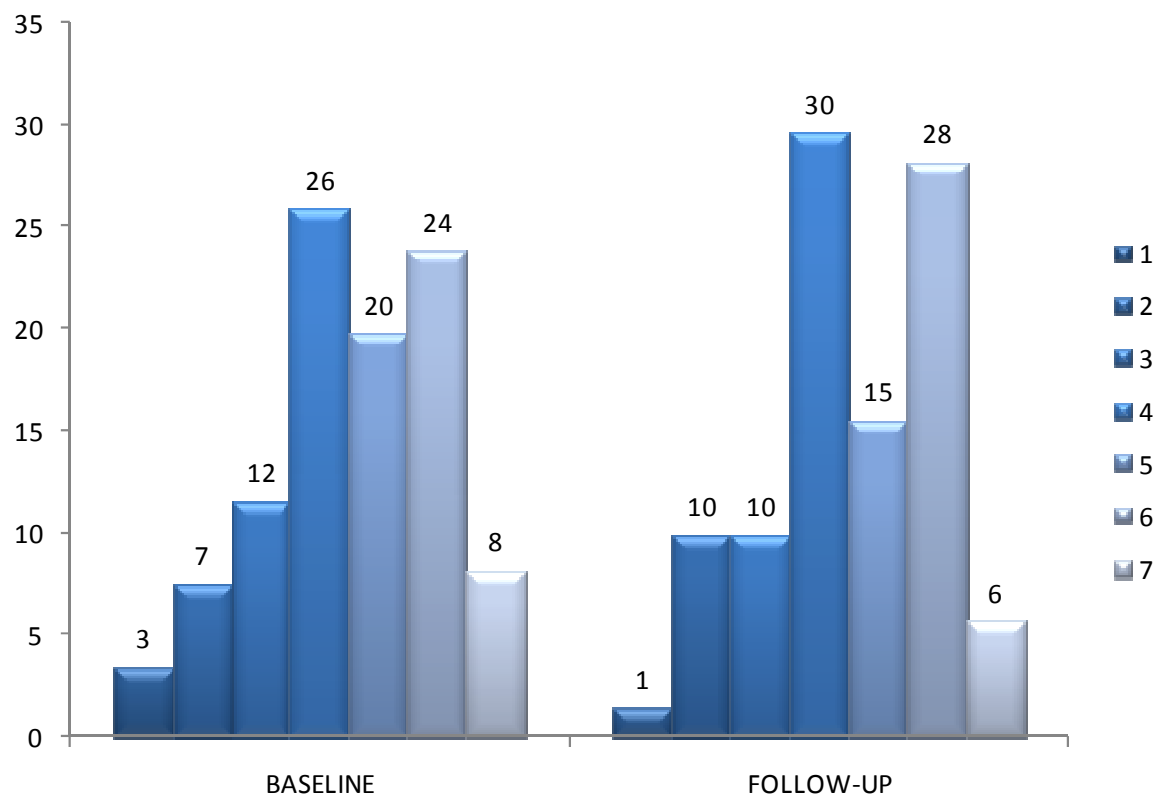
16. If something unexpected happens when I sing, I do not handle it well



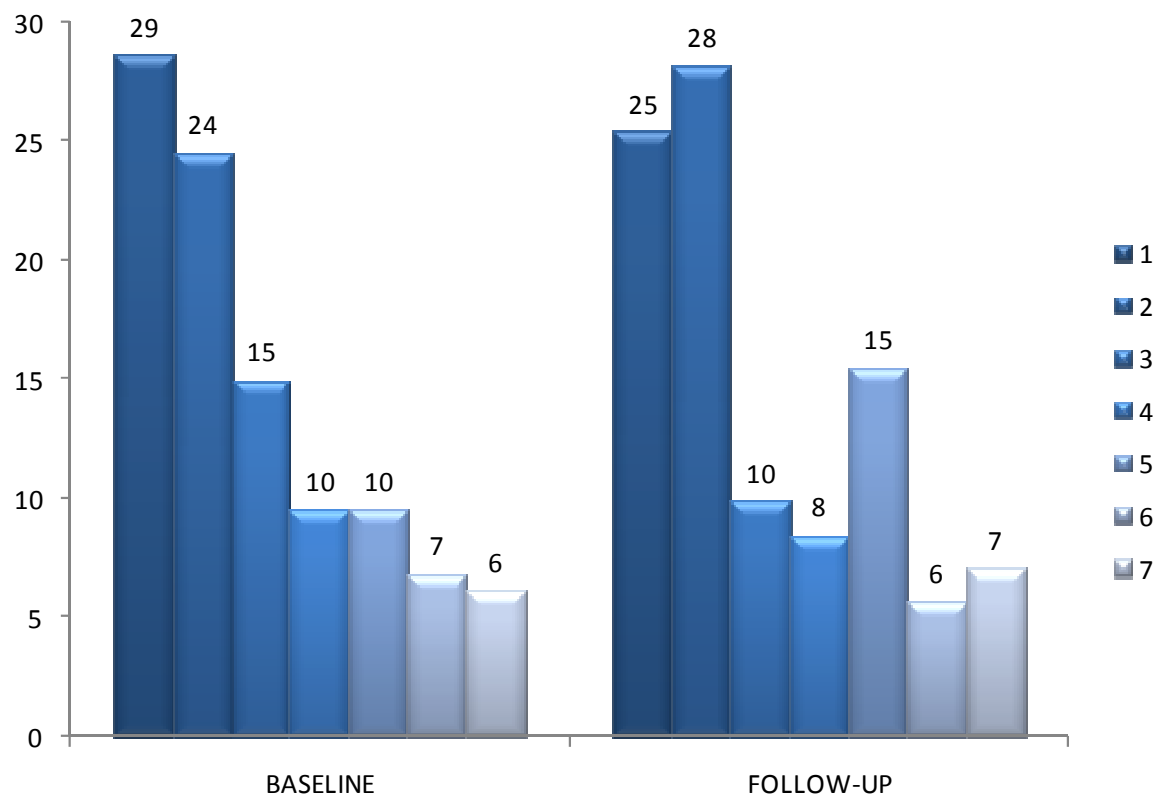
17. I avoid pieces of music that look or sound too difficult for me



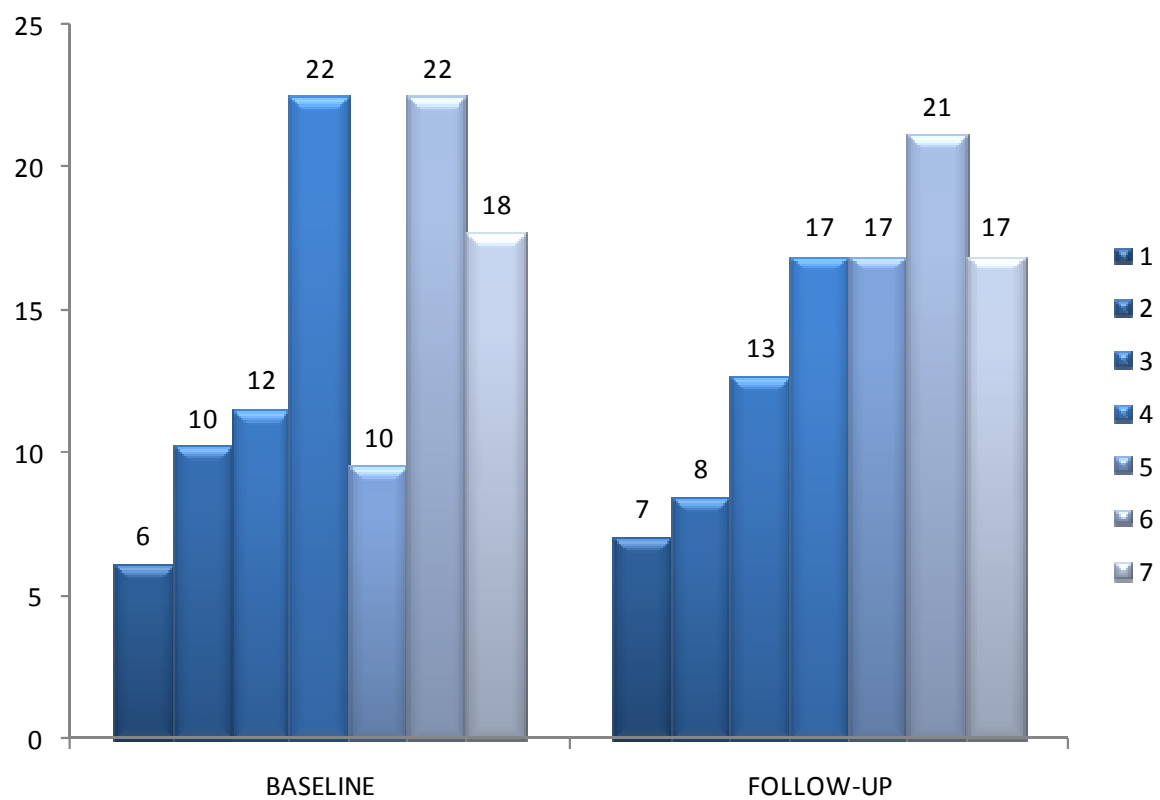
18. Failure in a singing activity just makes me try harder



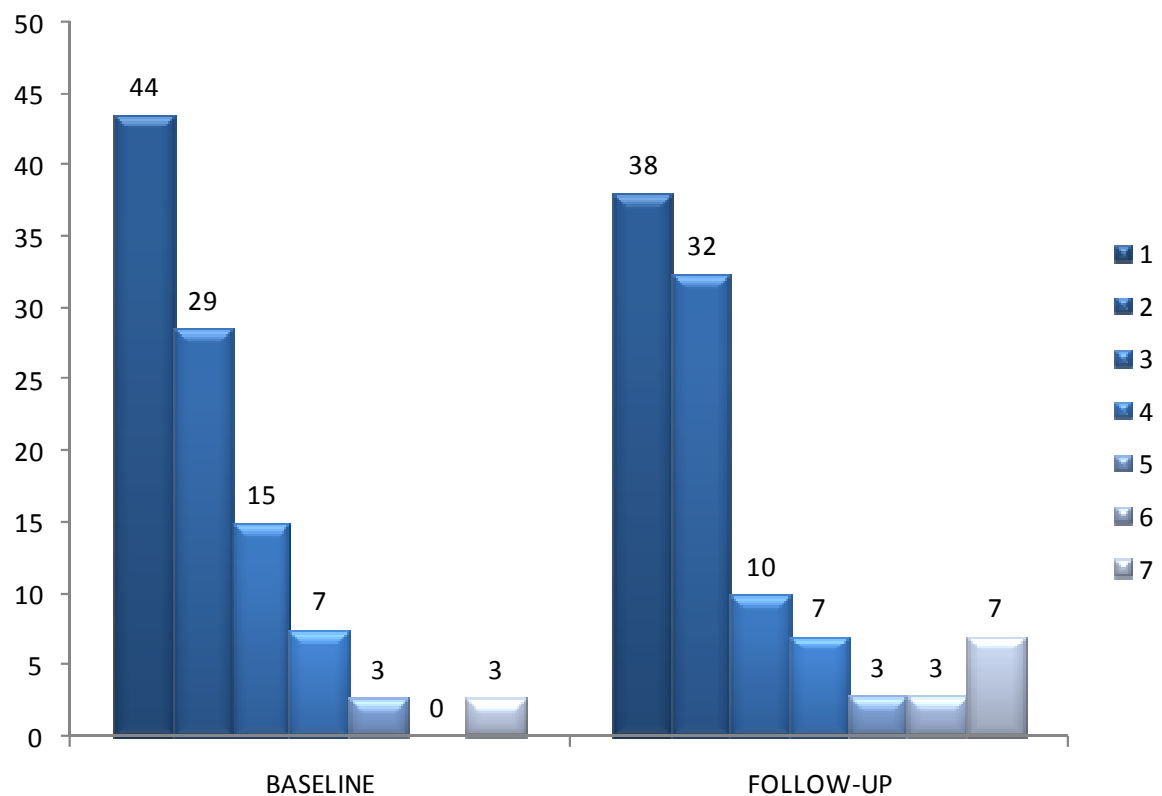
19. I feel insecure about my singing



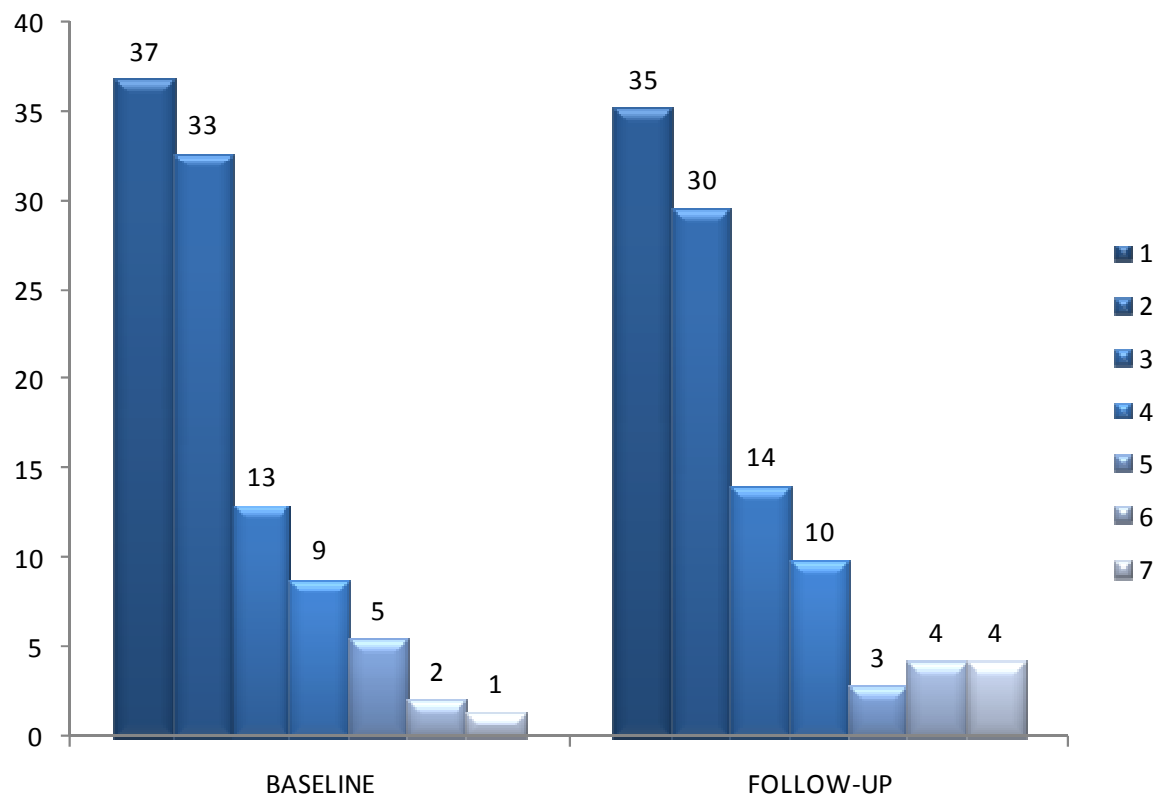
20. I am a self-reliant singer



21. I give up singing activities easily

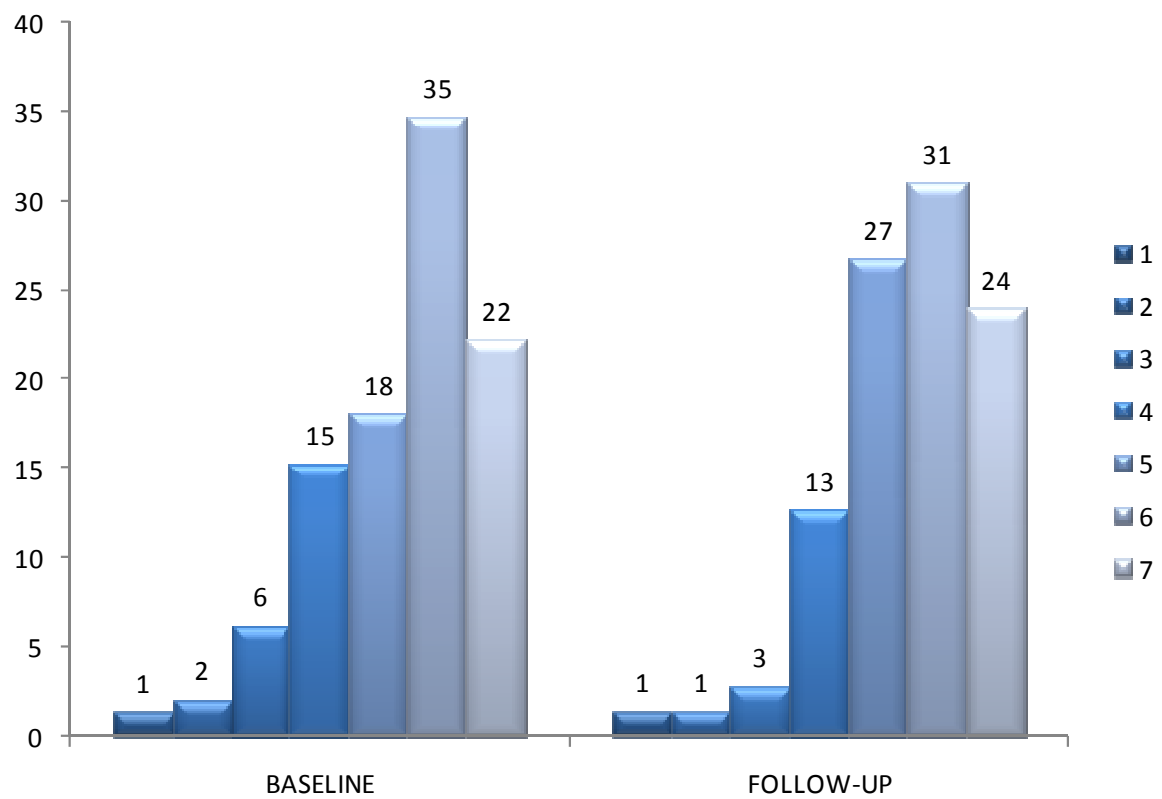


22. I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my singing activities

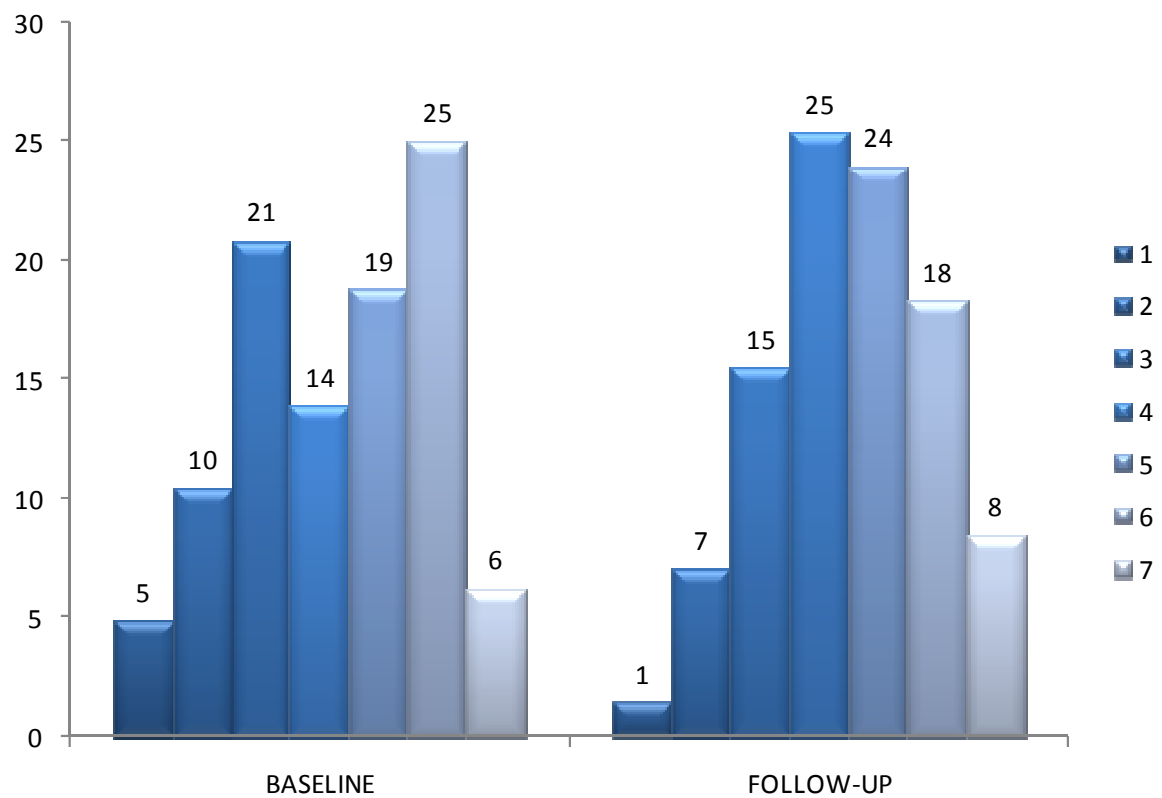


Knowledge about Learners

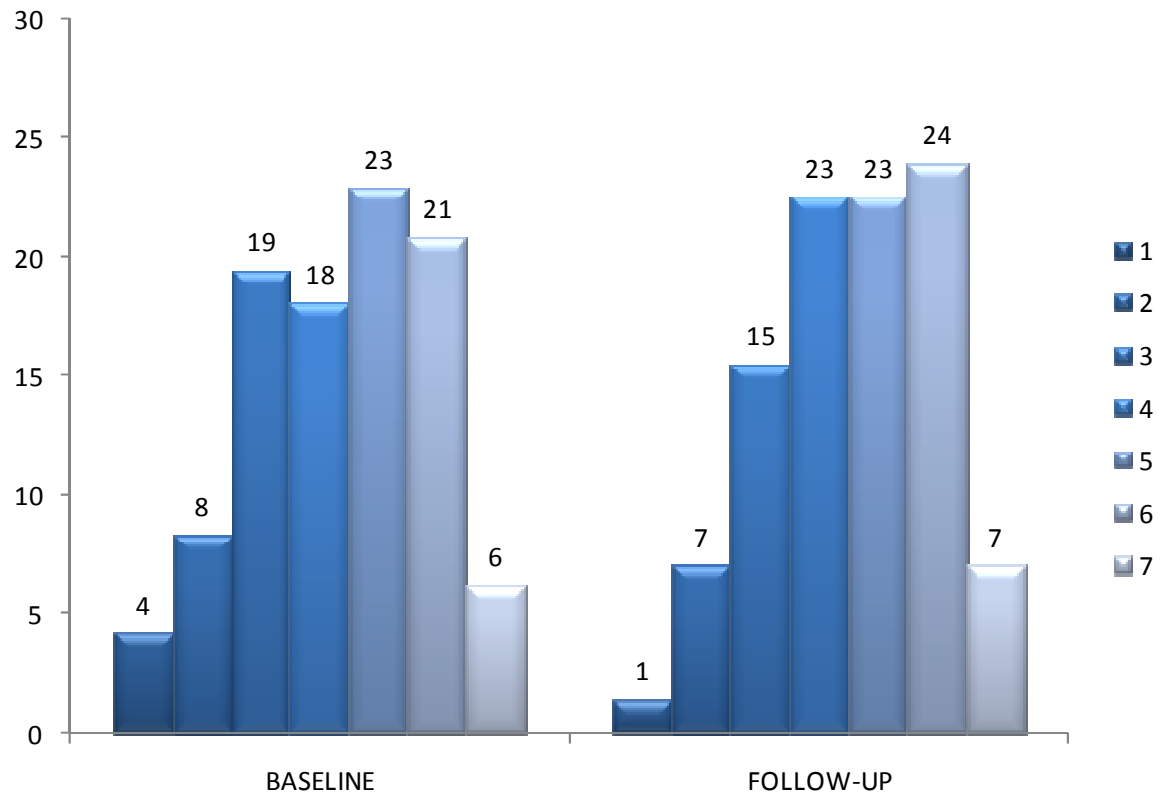
23. I am a good role model



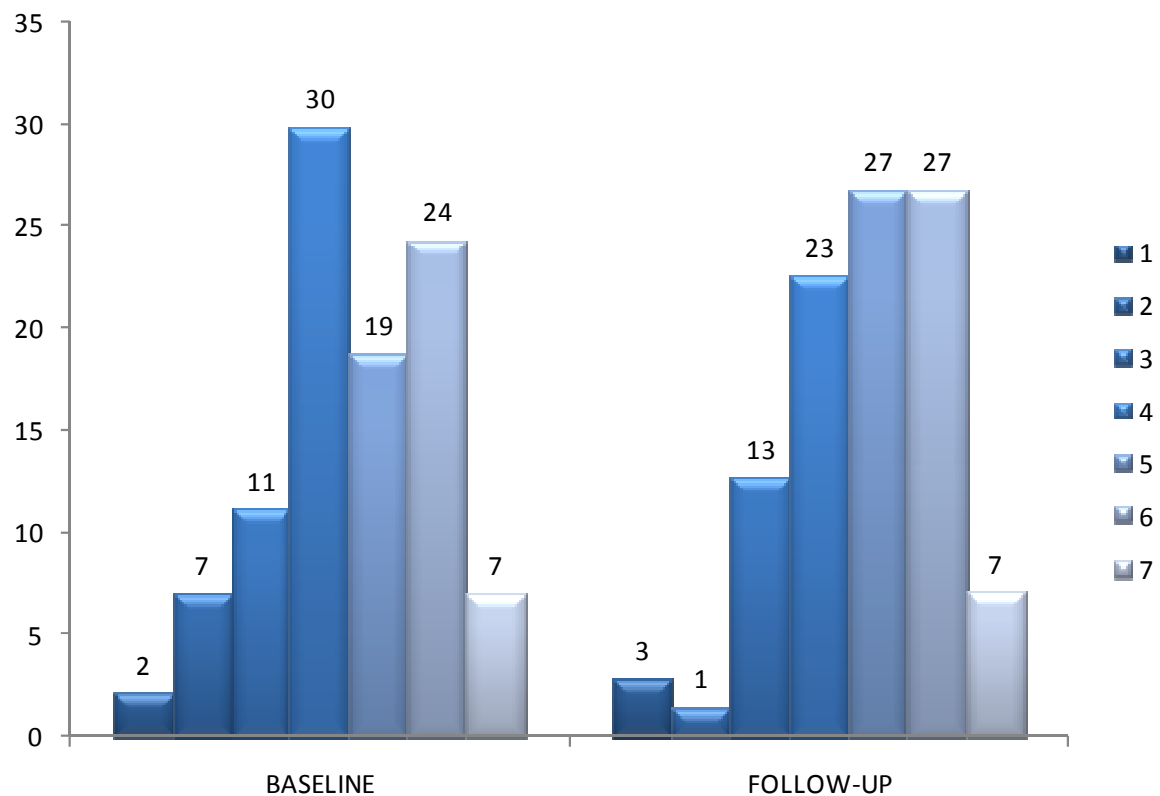
24. I understand vocal development



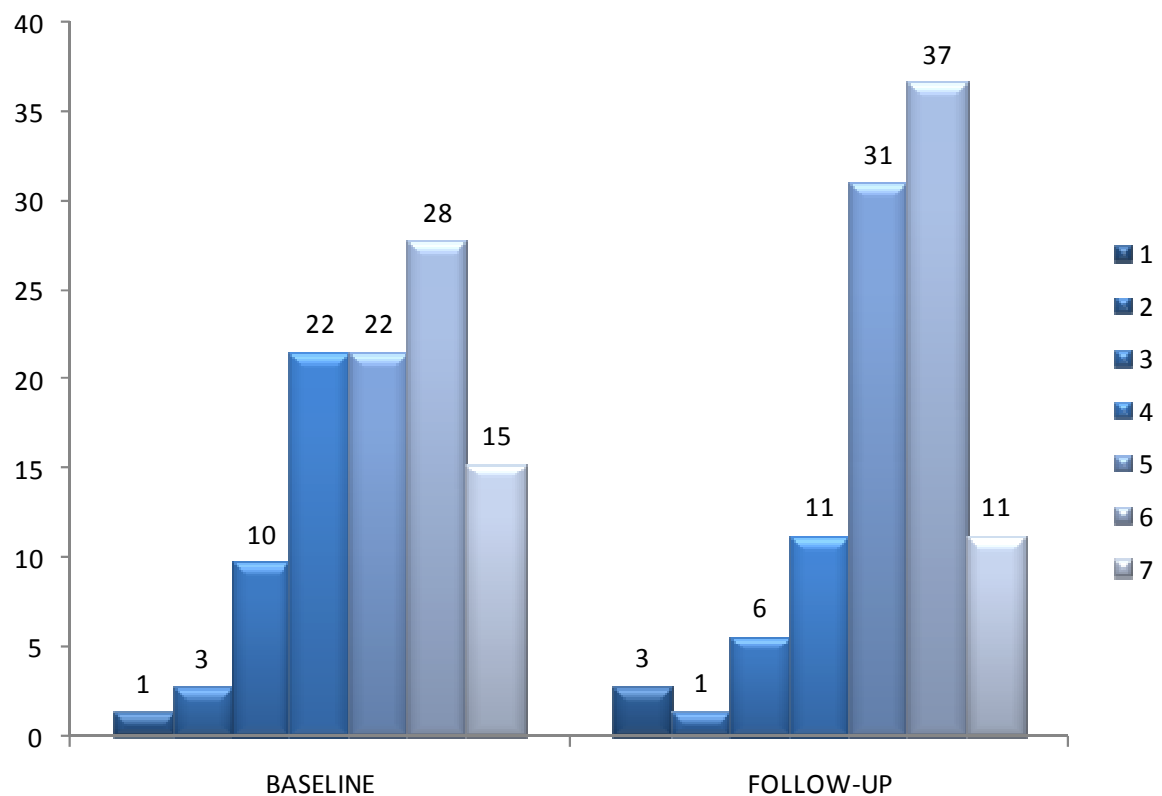
25. I understand vocal development and I can plan teaching and learning in singing



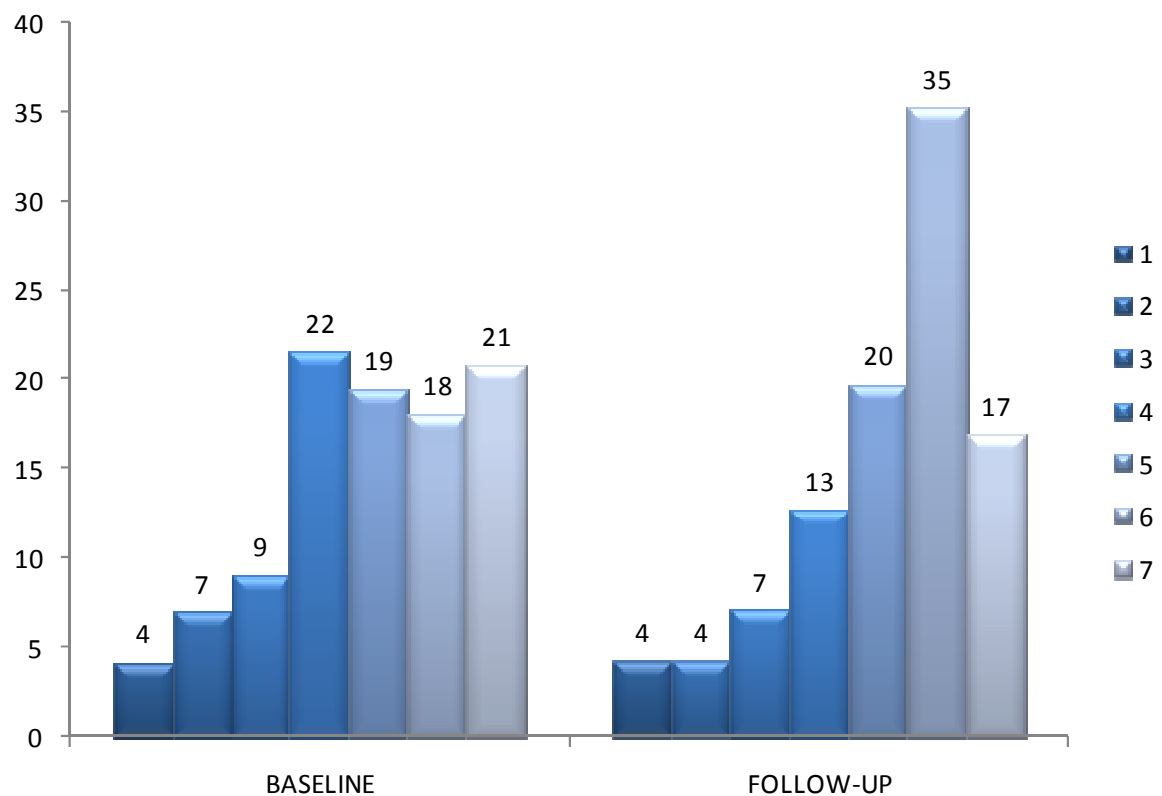
26. I take account of how children use singing to define their culture



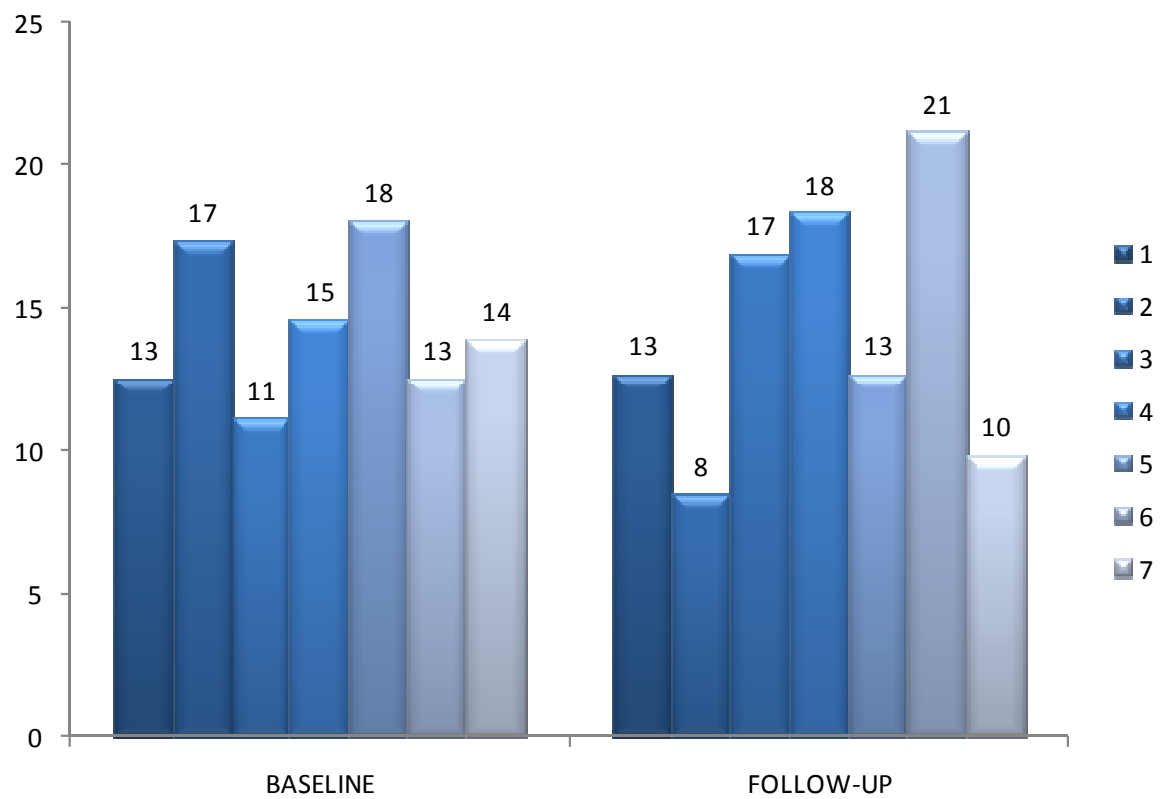
27. I take account of the learning that children bring from other contexts



28. I provide children with the opportunity to lead singing

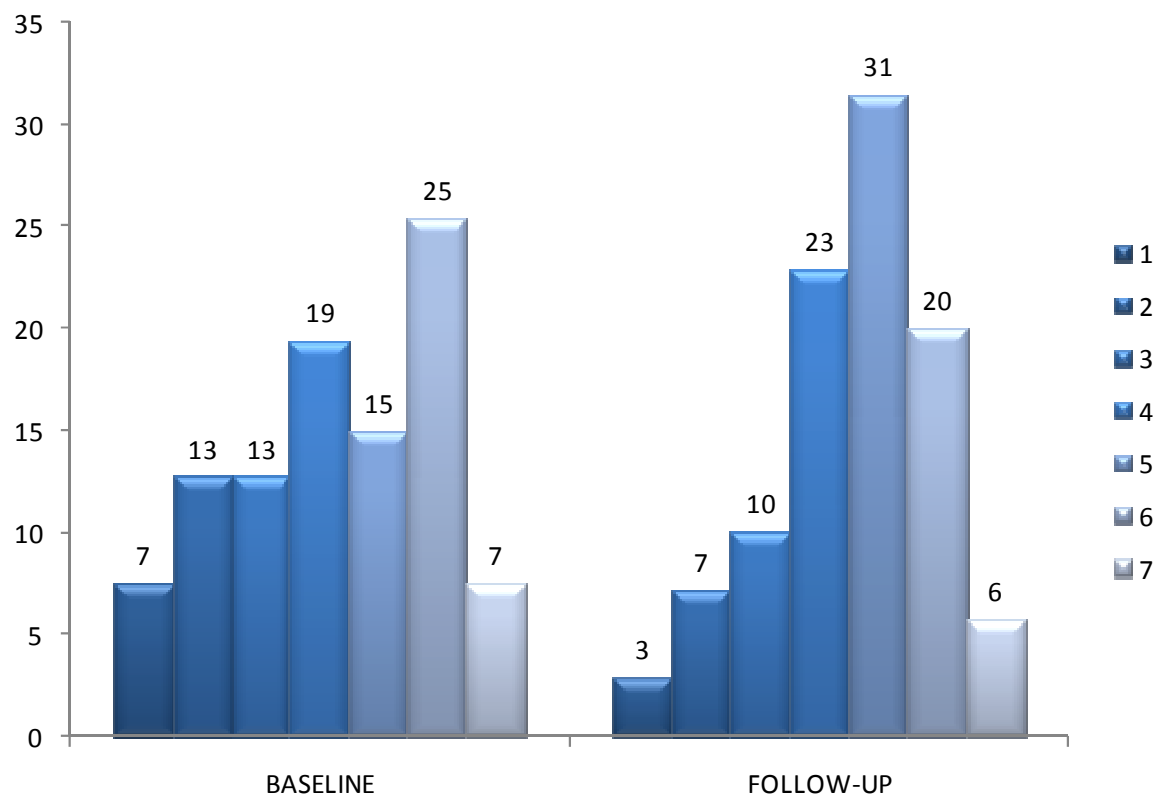


29. I involve parents and other members of the community in singing

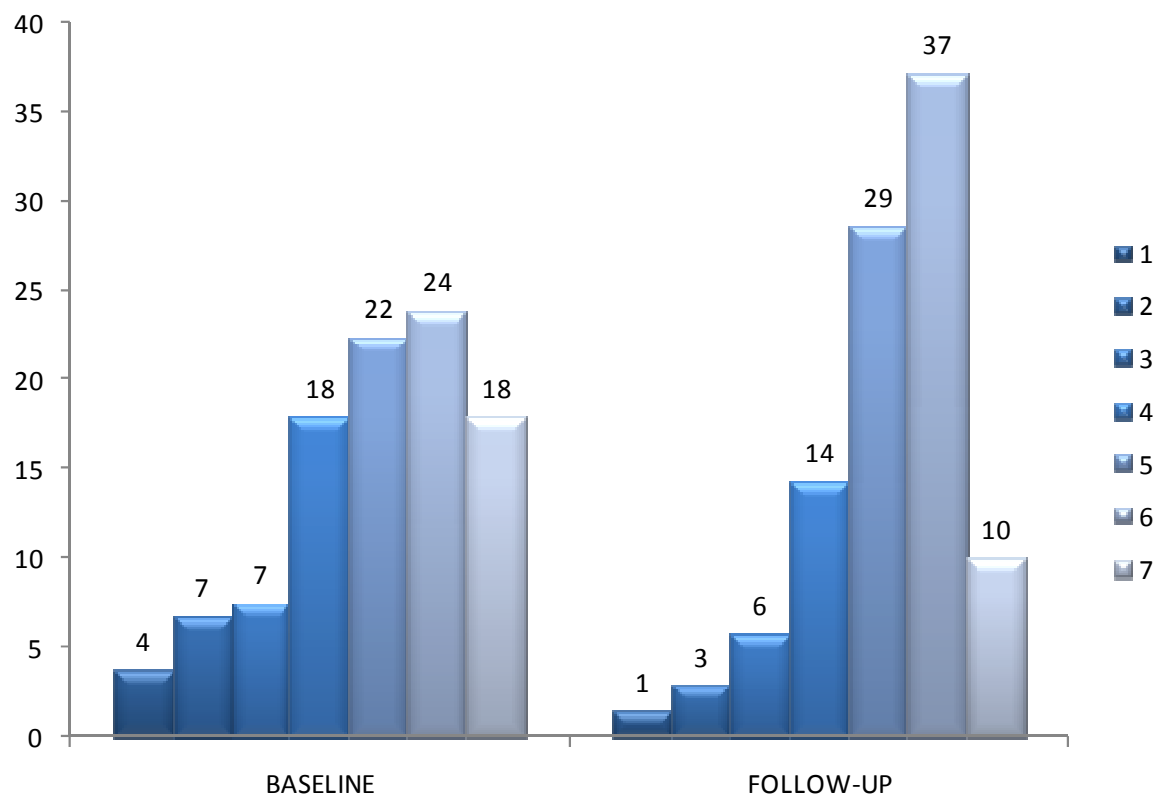


Knowledge of Singing Pedagogy

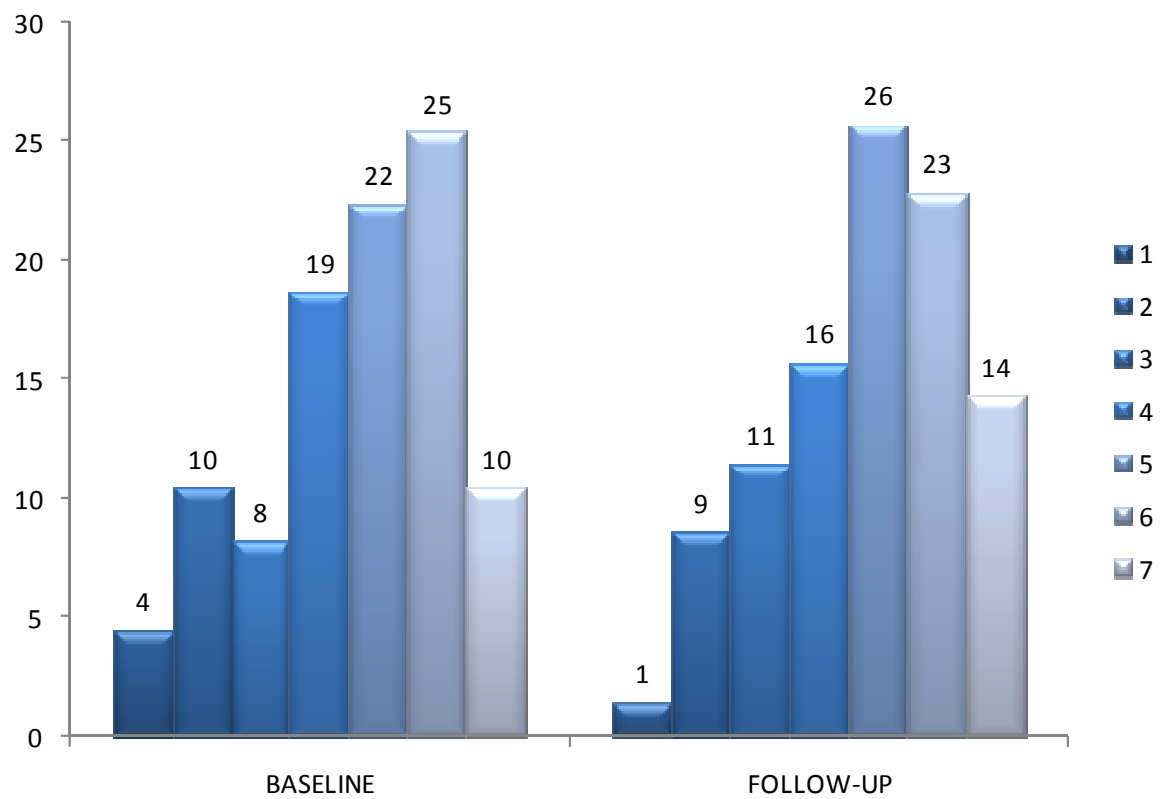
30. I am able to promote vocal health and function



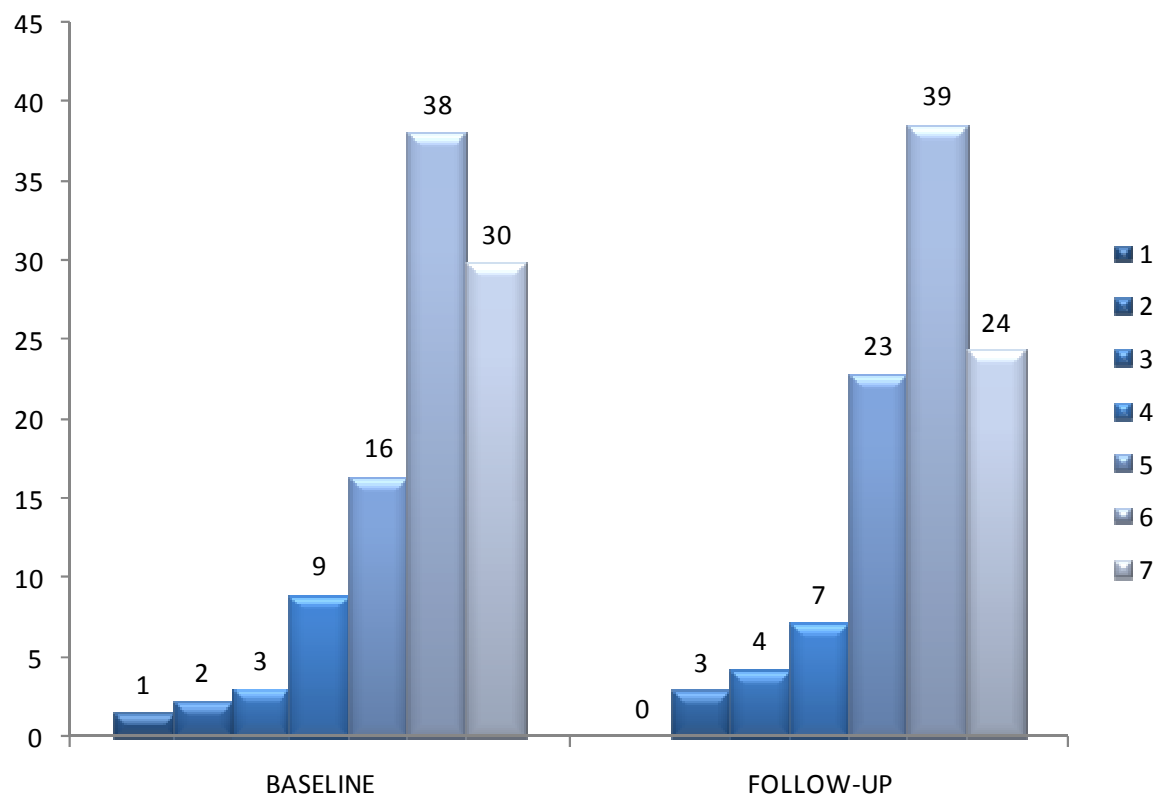
31. I am able to address basic singing issues



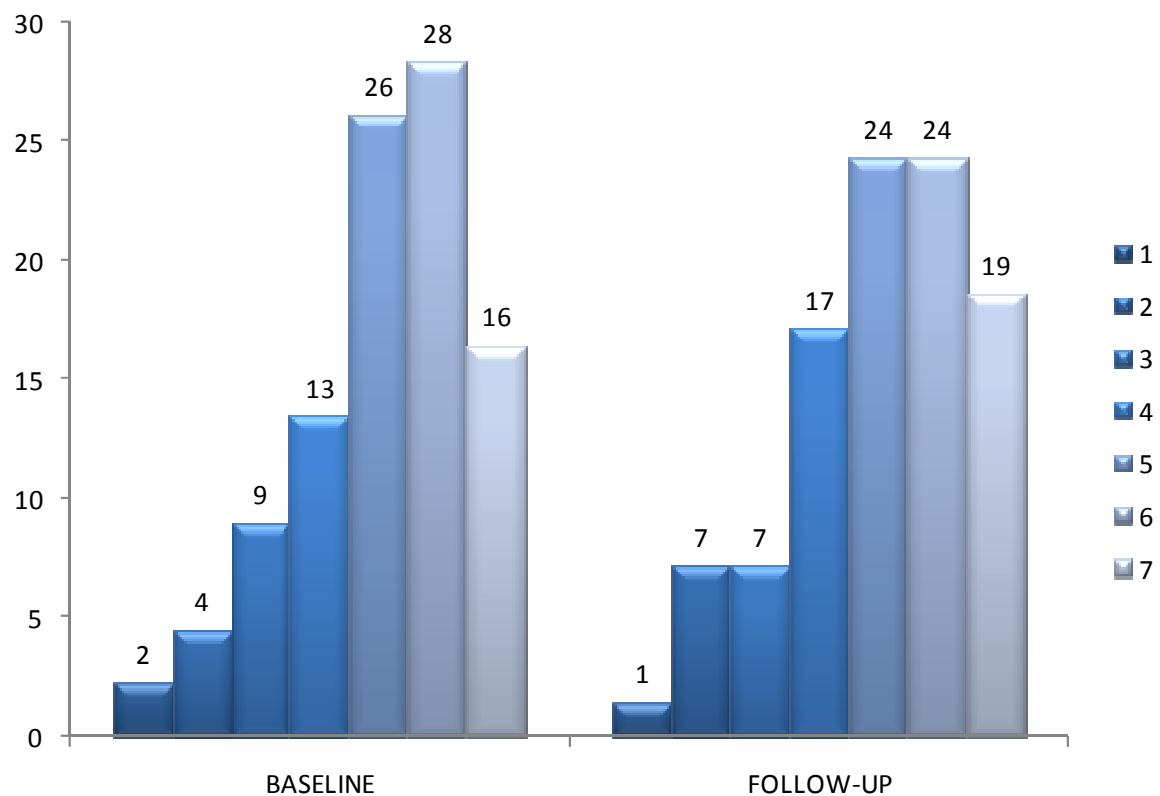
32. I am able to promote and support high quality singing performances



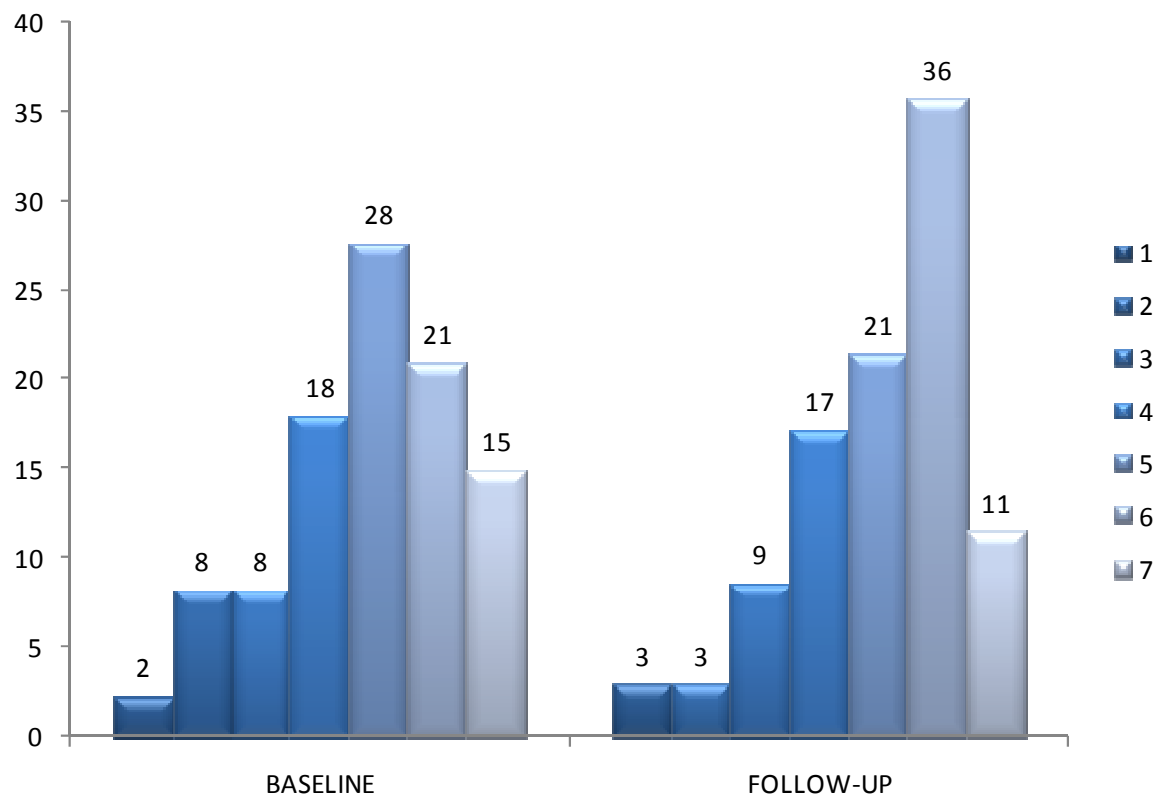
33. I am able to establish a 'safe' environment for singing



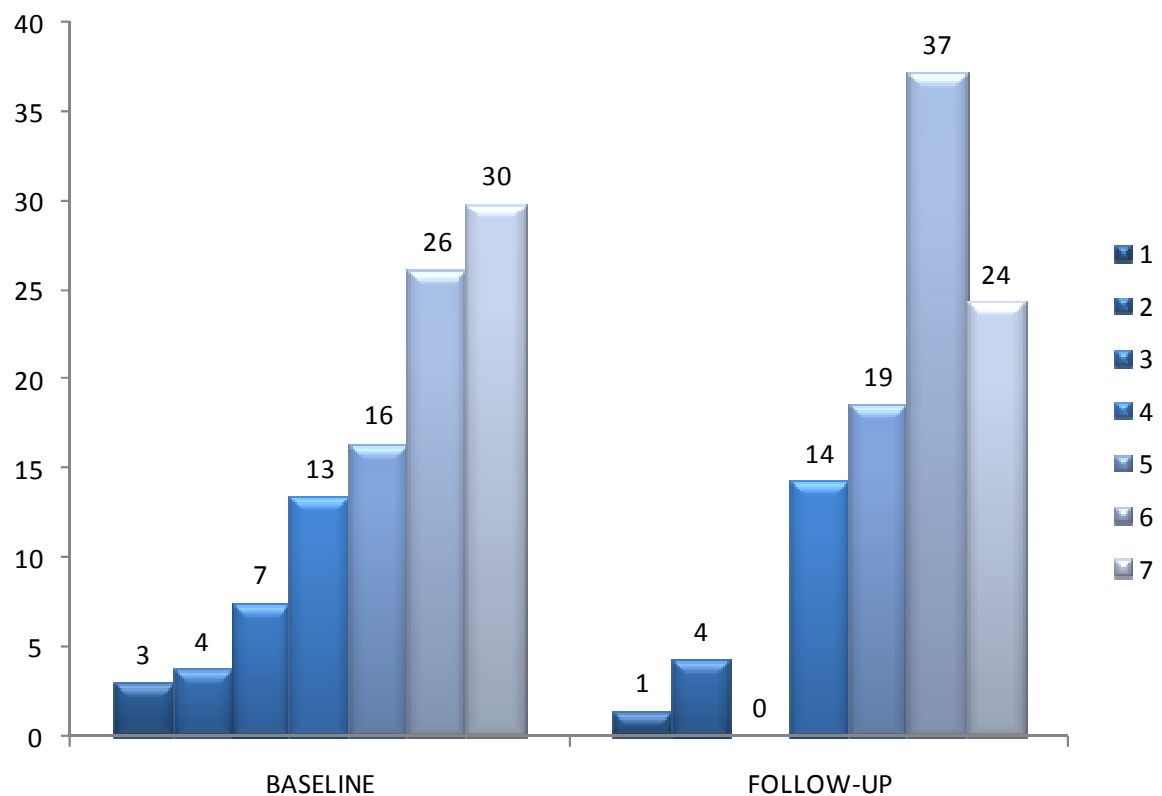
34. I am able to promote varied performing opportunities



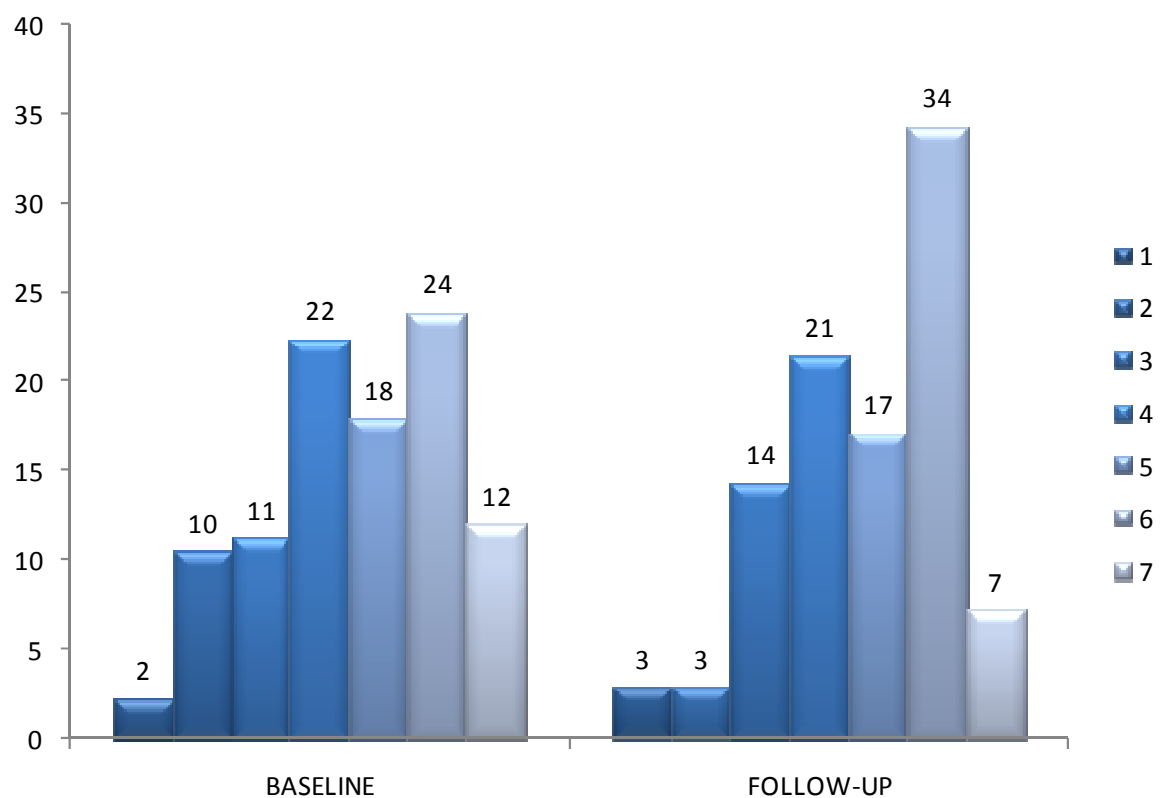
35. I am able to differentiate teaching strategies to meet individual and group needs in singing



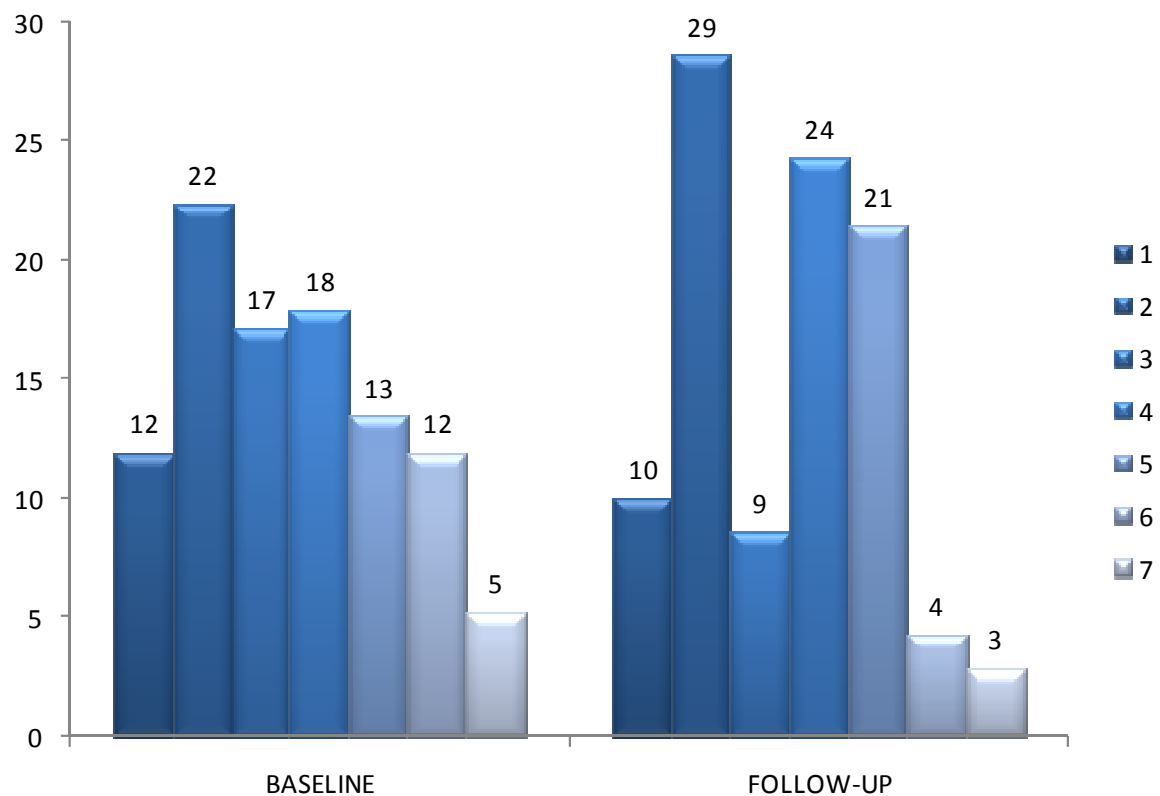
36. I am able to integrate singing into other musical activities



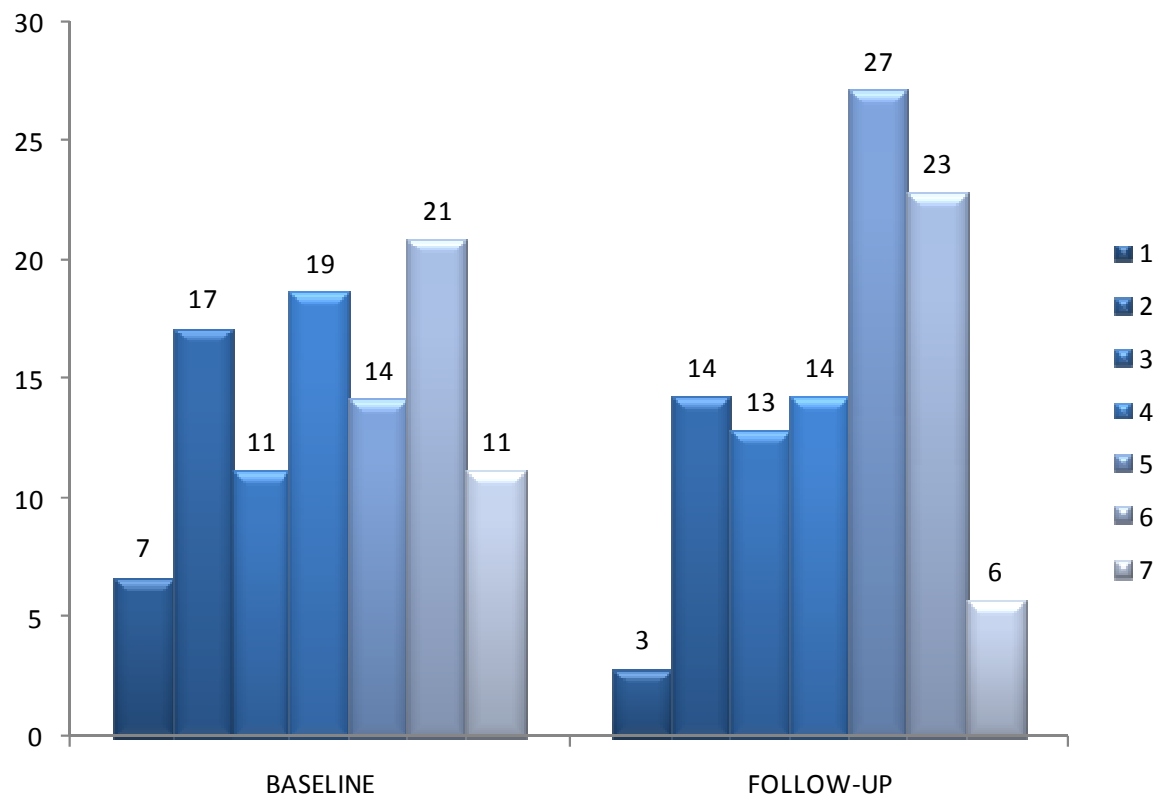
37. I am able to extend vocal use in non-conventional ways



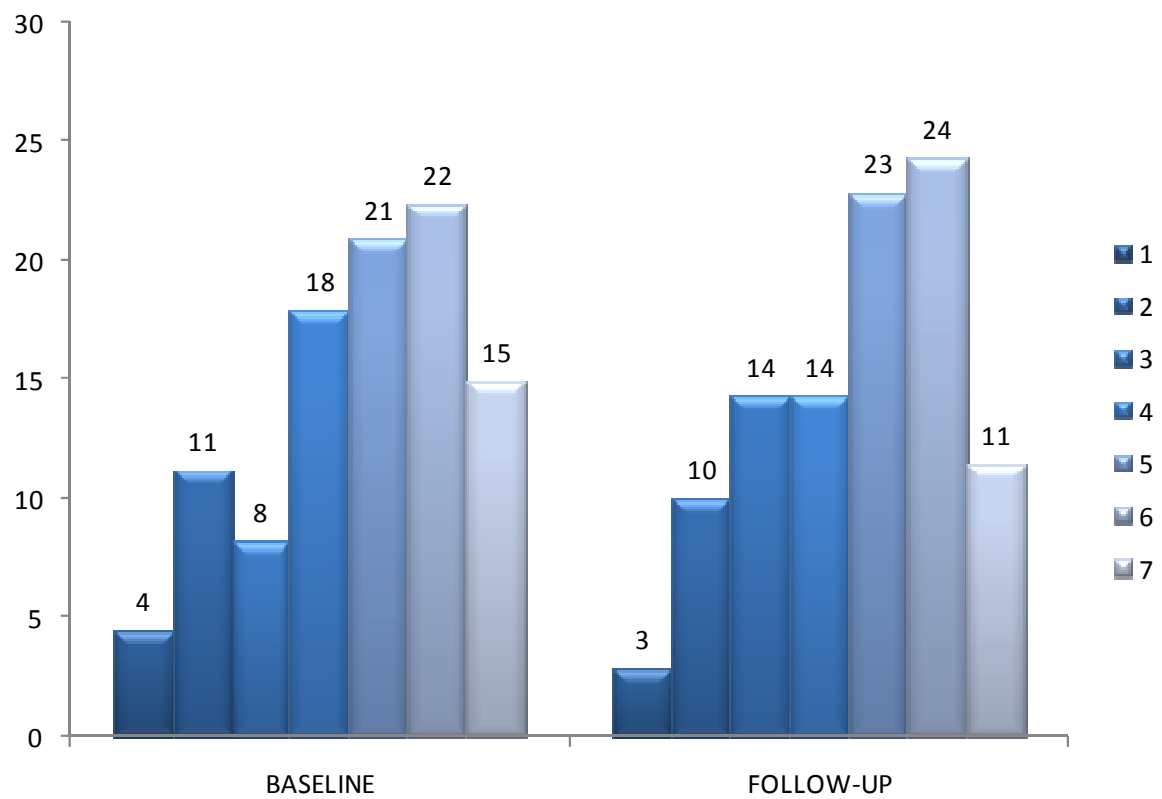
38. I am able to use ICT to support the creative use of the voice



39. I am able to draw on singers and singing leaders from the wider musical community

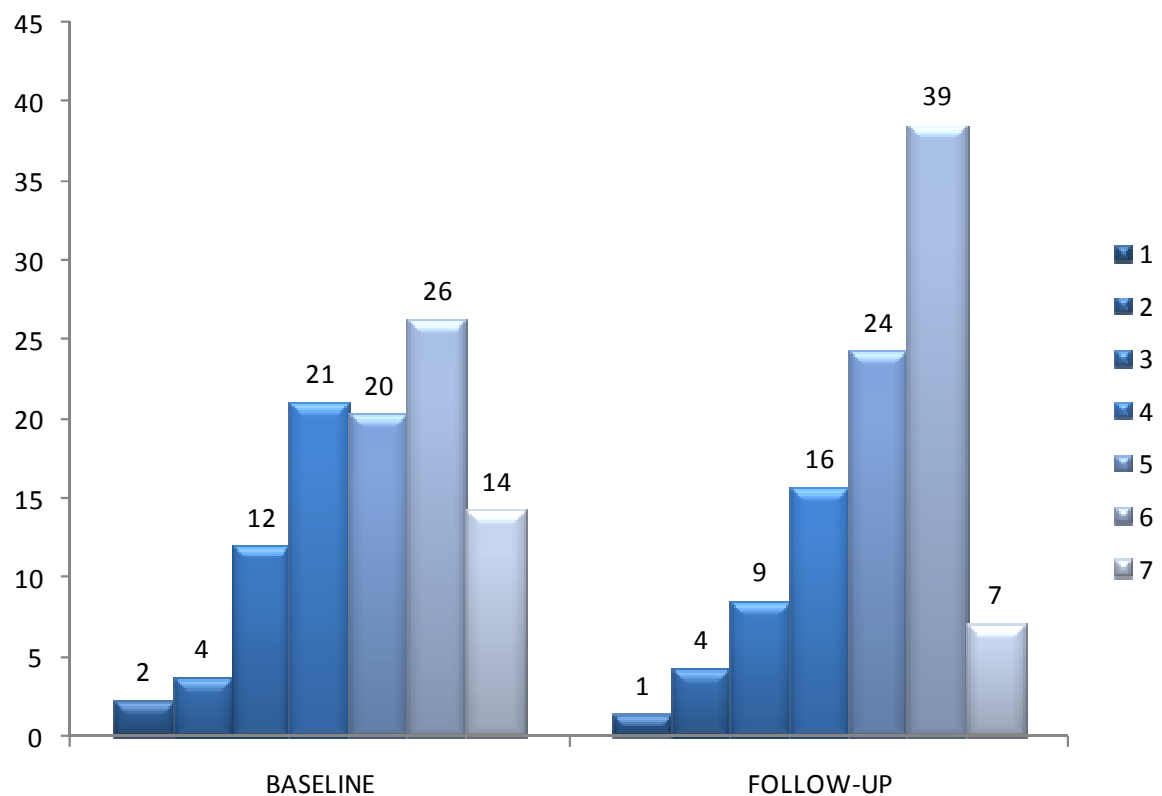


40. I am able to encourage cultural exchange and diversity in singing

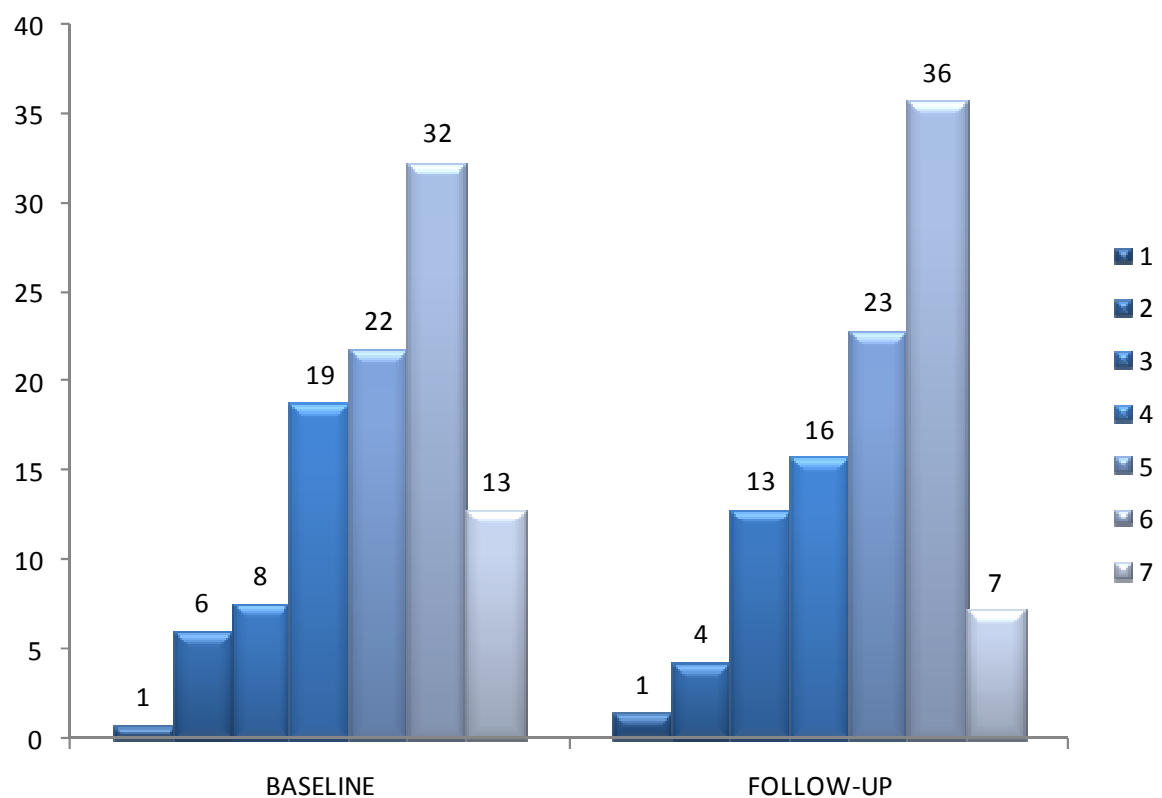


Knowledge of different musics appropriate for children's singing development

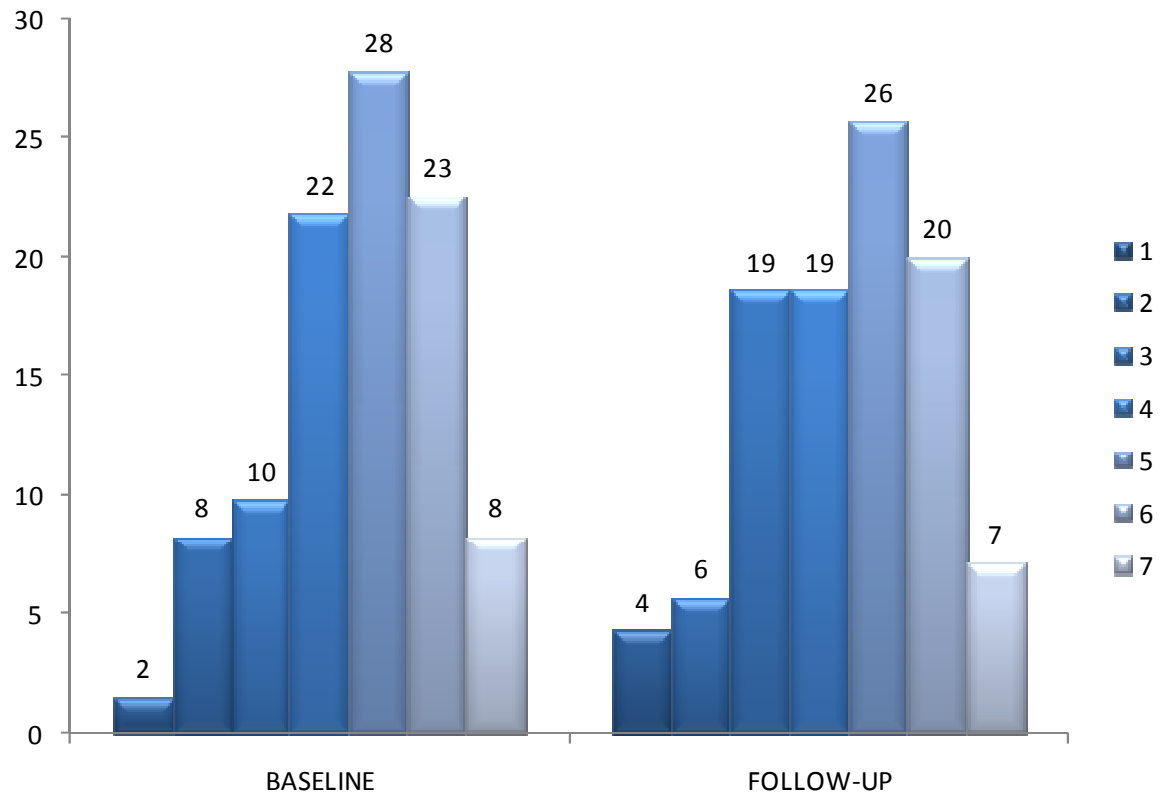
41. I am able to make informed and appropriate repertoire choices



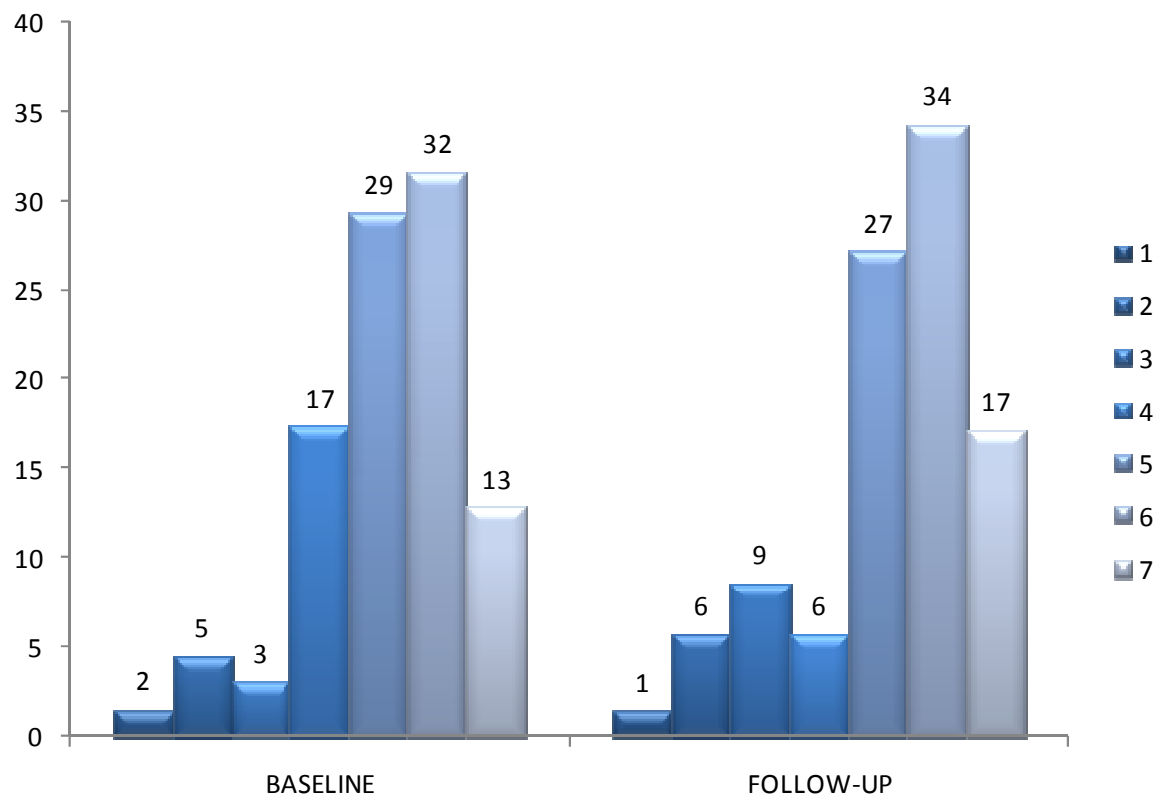
42. I know where to access support



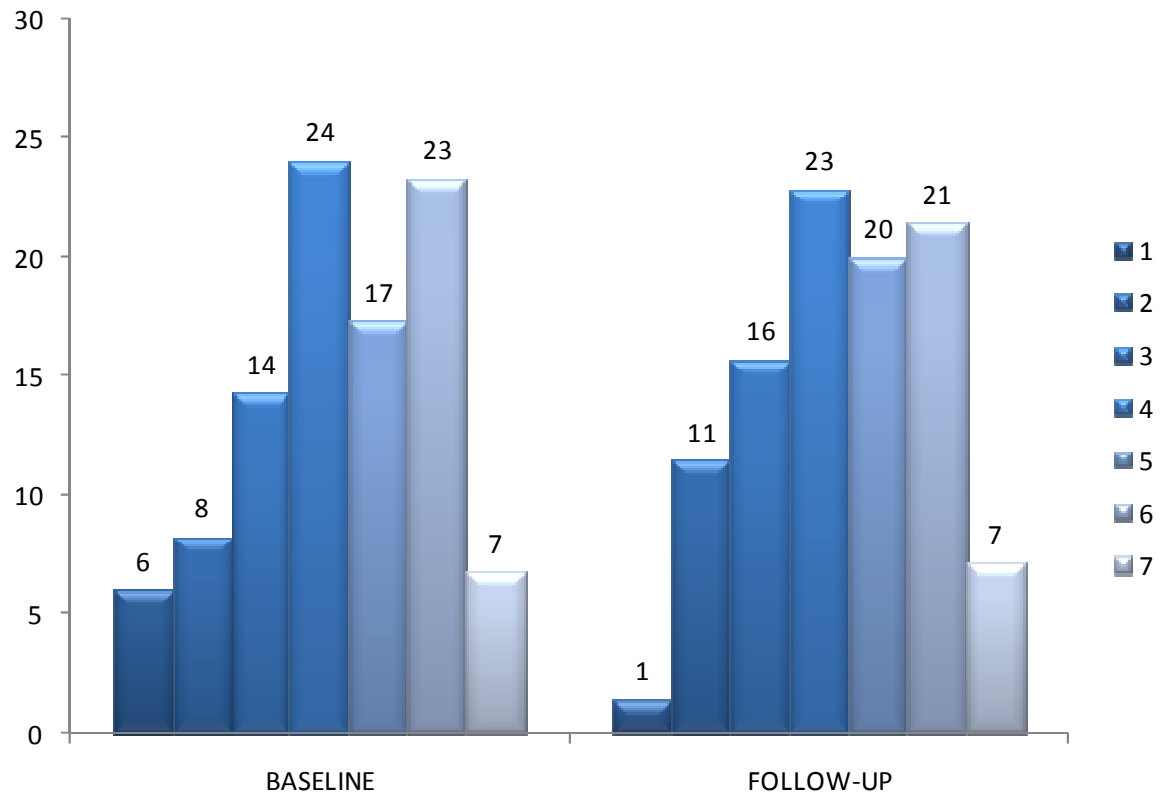
43. I am able to explore and understand the vocal implications of music from a wide range of genres and cultures



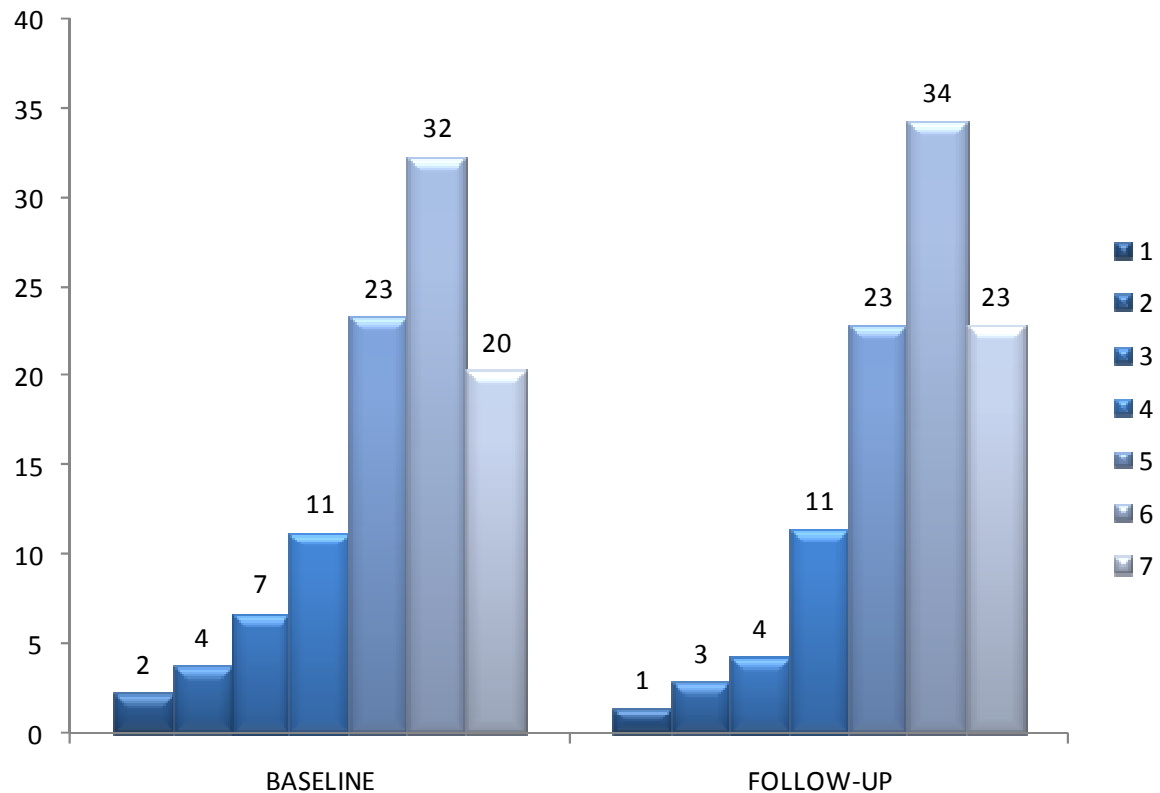
44. I understand the role that singing plays in different cultures



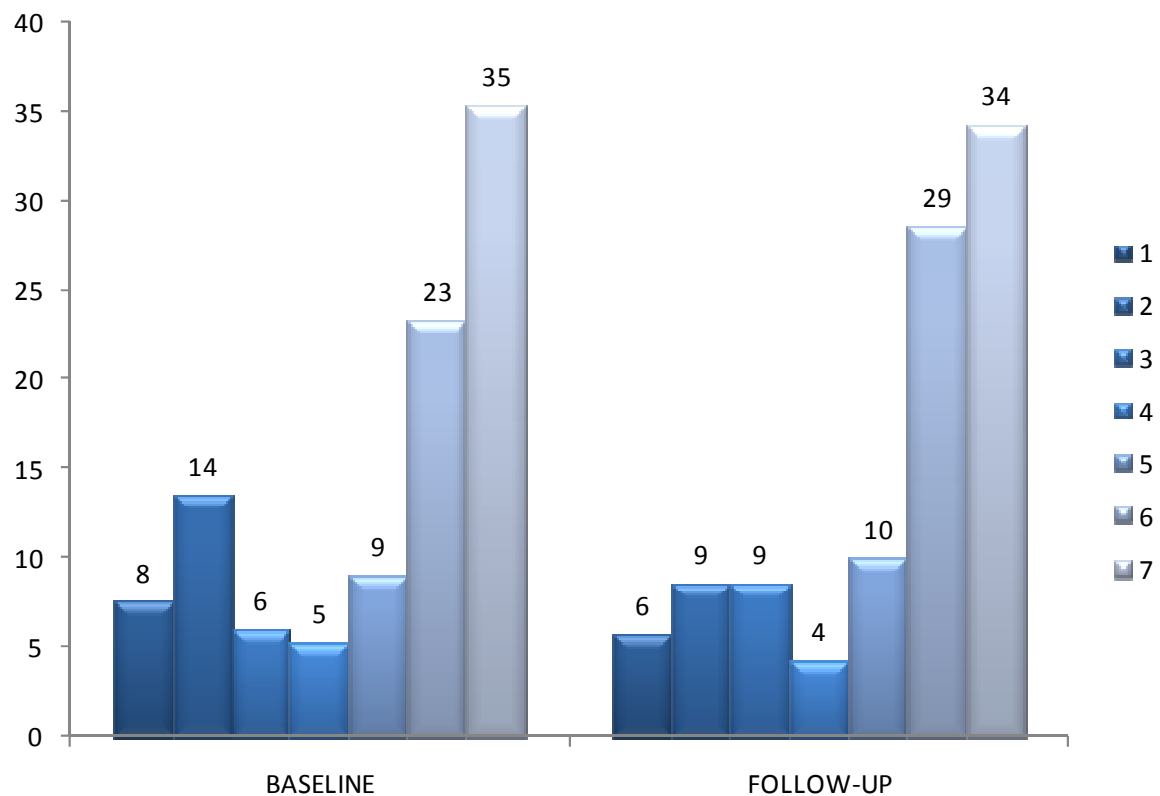
45. I am able to draw on musical genre-specific expertise from the wider musical community



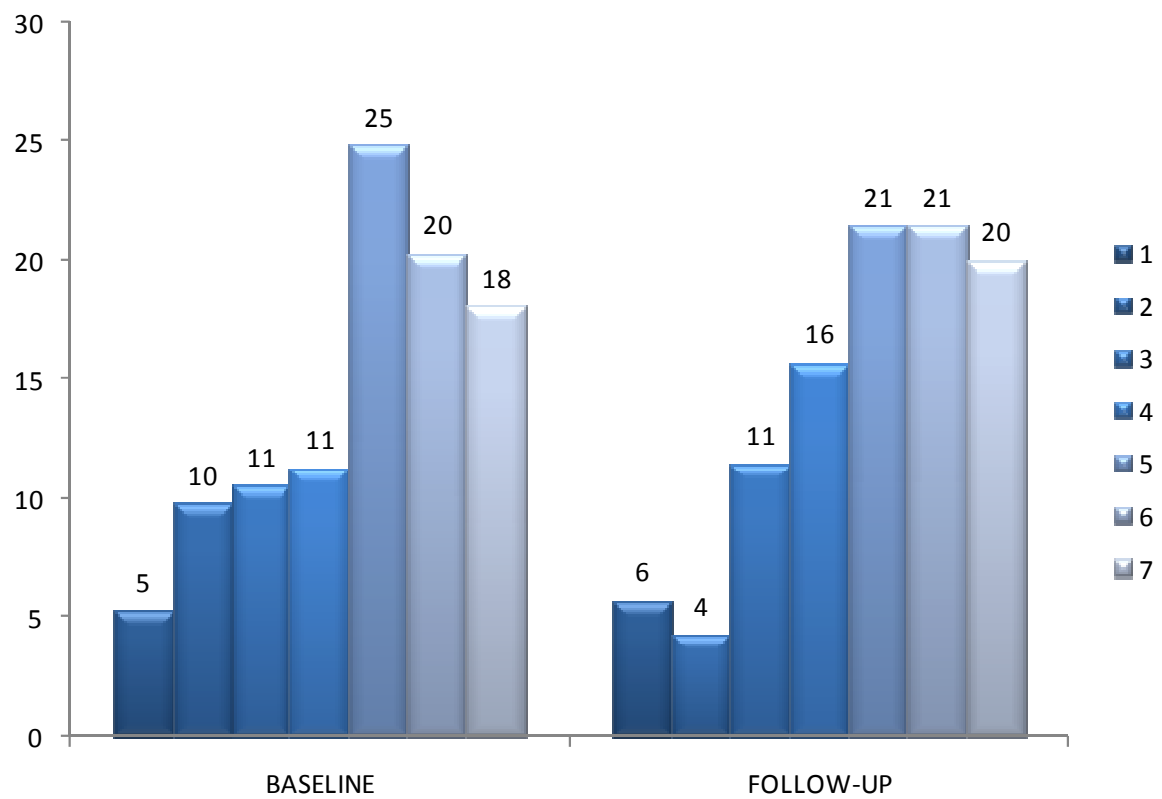
46. I understand the importance of the physical space in which singing takes place



47. I lead and conduct singing groups

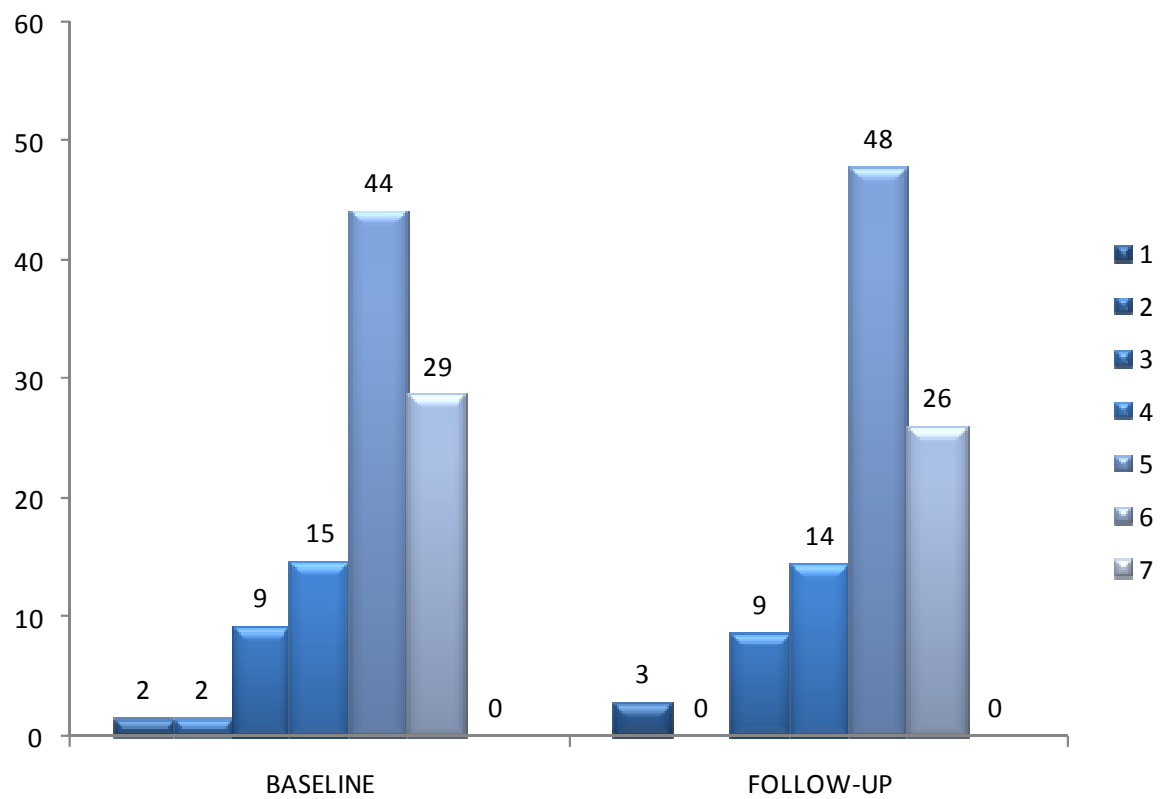


48. I celebrate local, regional and national musics

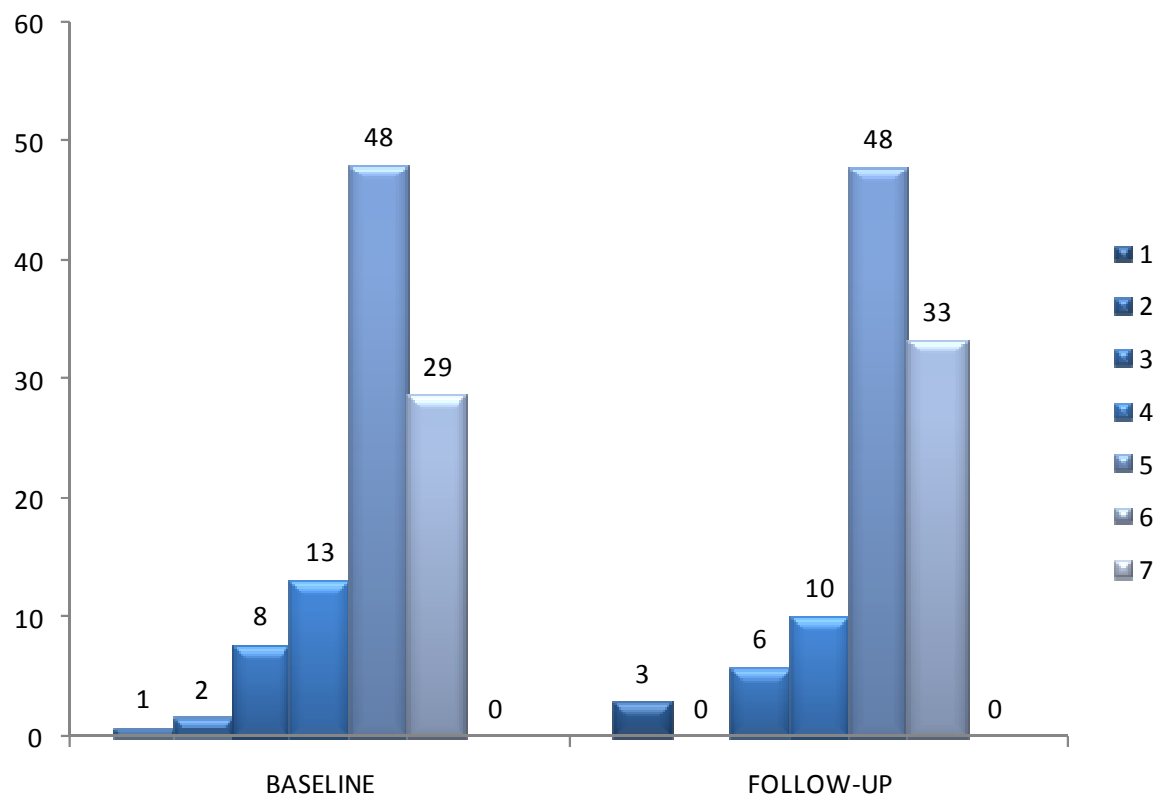


The pupils in my group or class

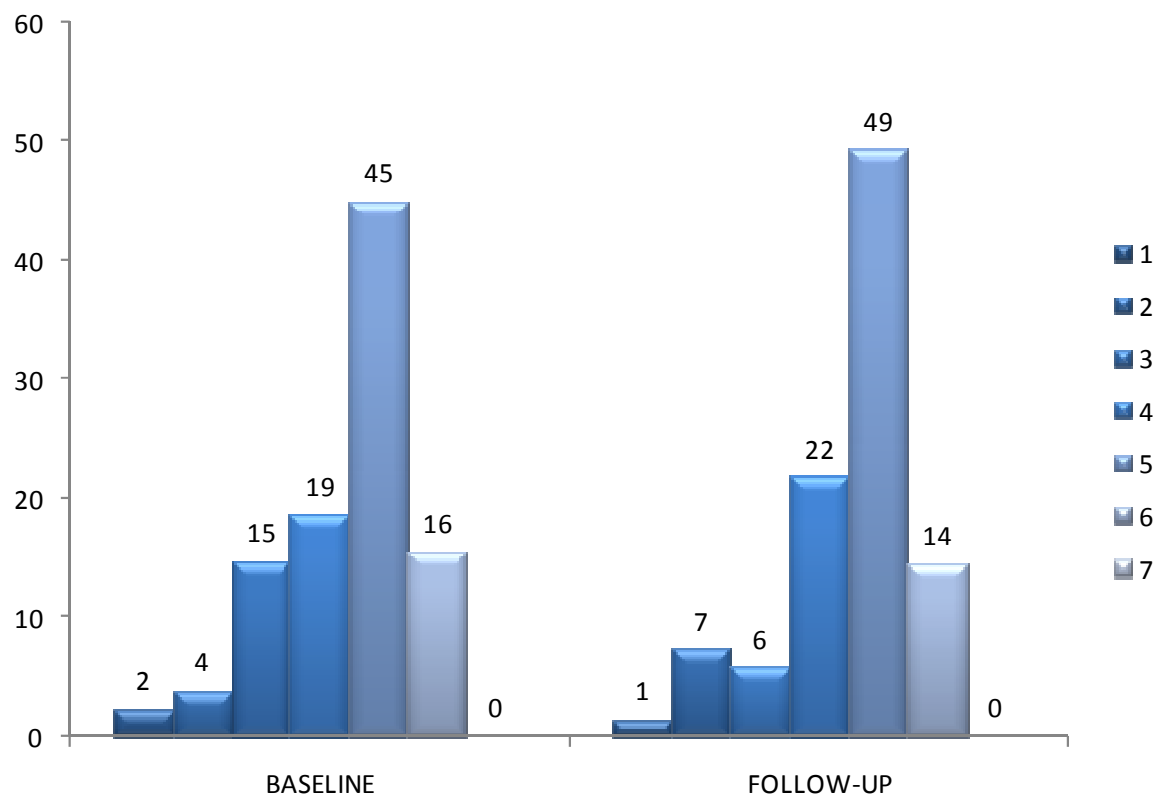
49. enjoy their music lessons



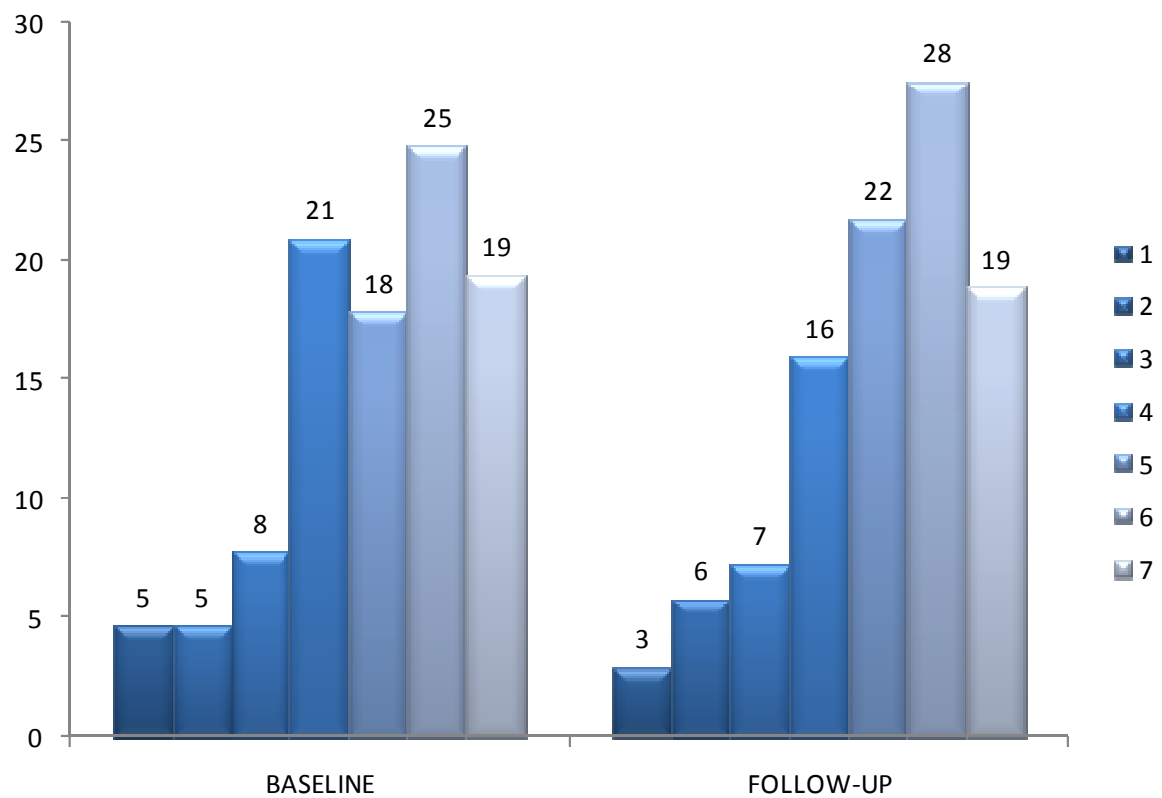
50. enjoy singing



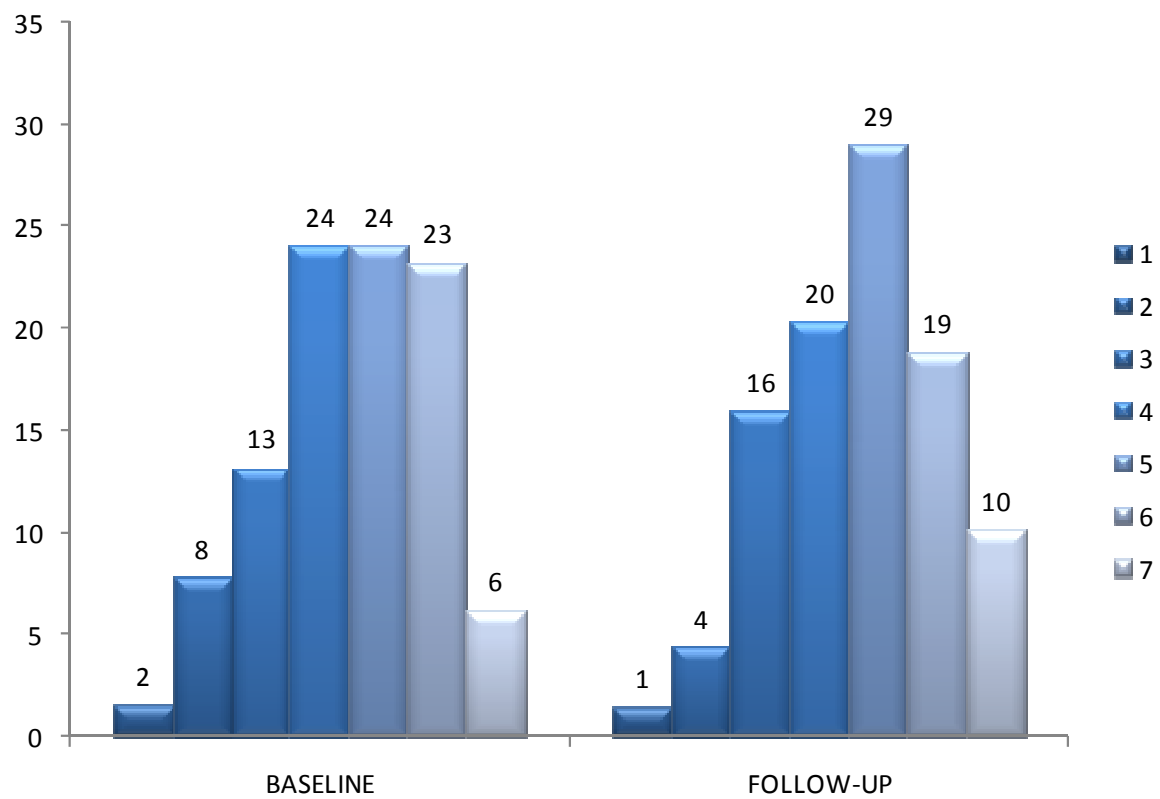
51. are confident in their music lessons



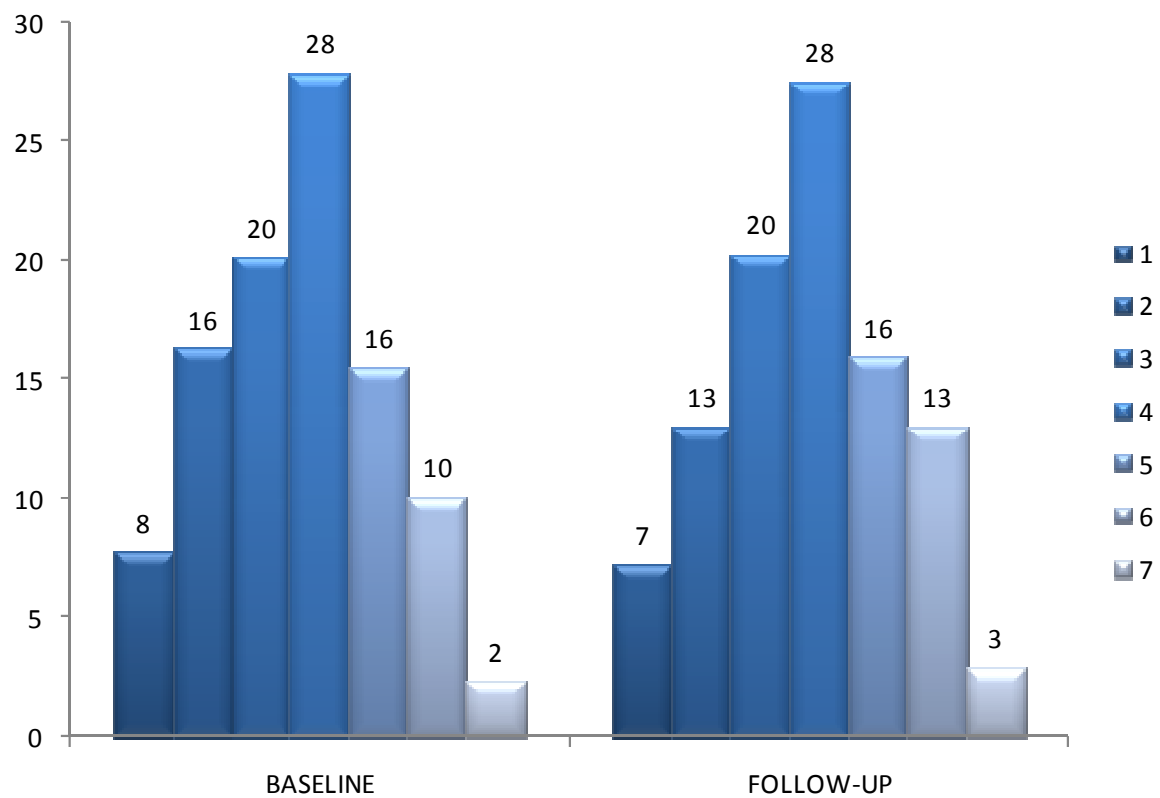
52. take part in extra-curricular musical activities



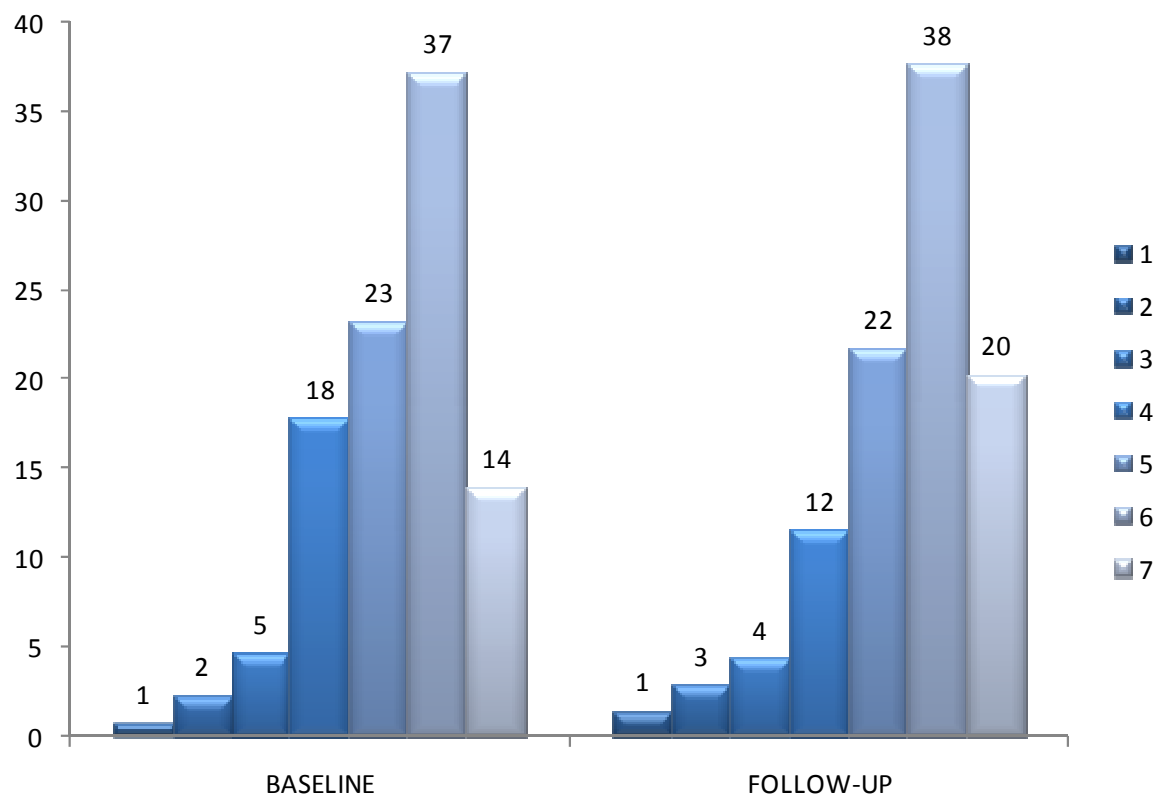
53. have a range of well developed musical skills



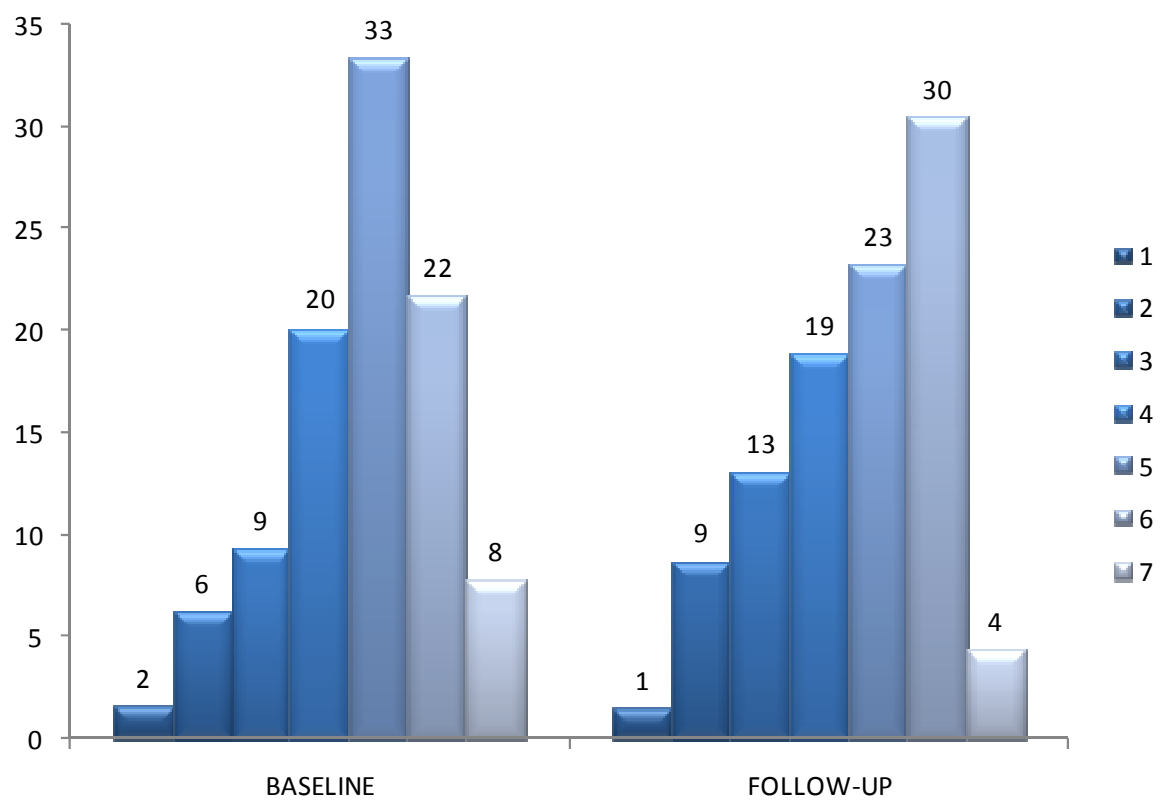
54. have a well developed range of strategies for composing



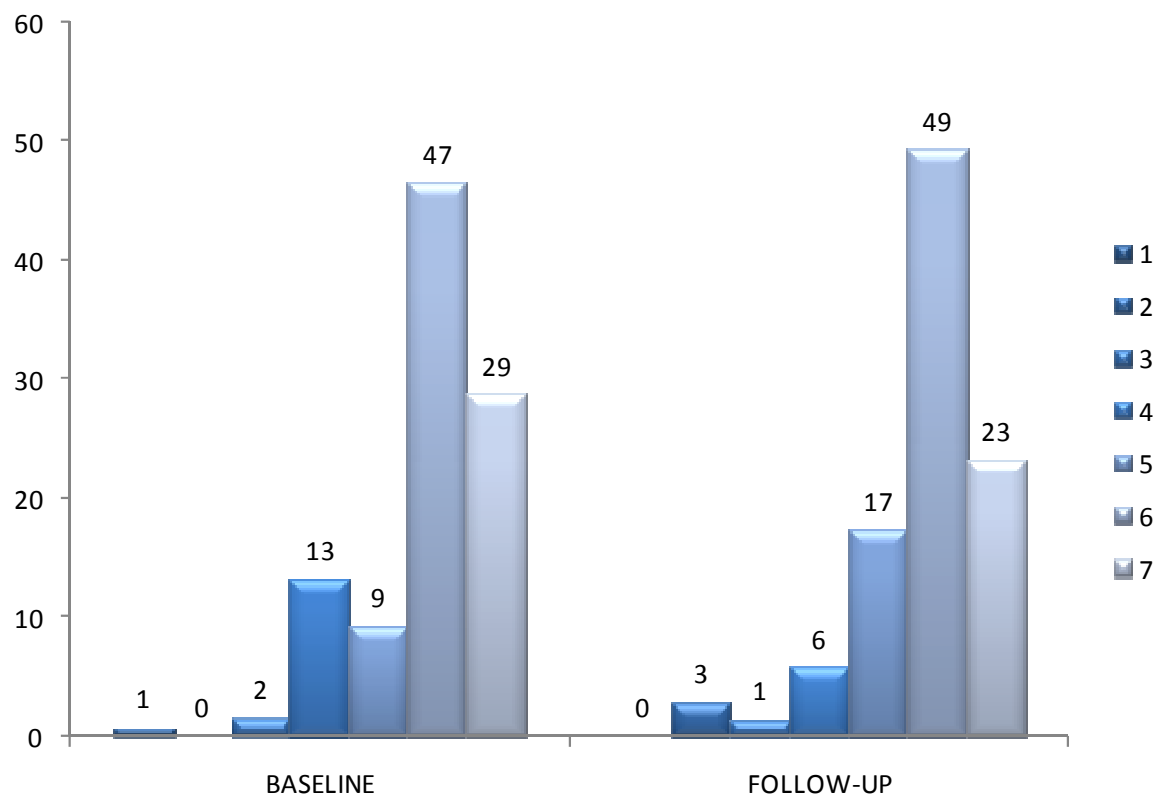
55. perform well



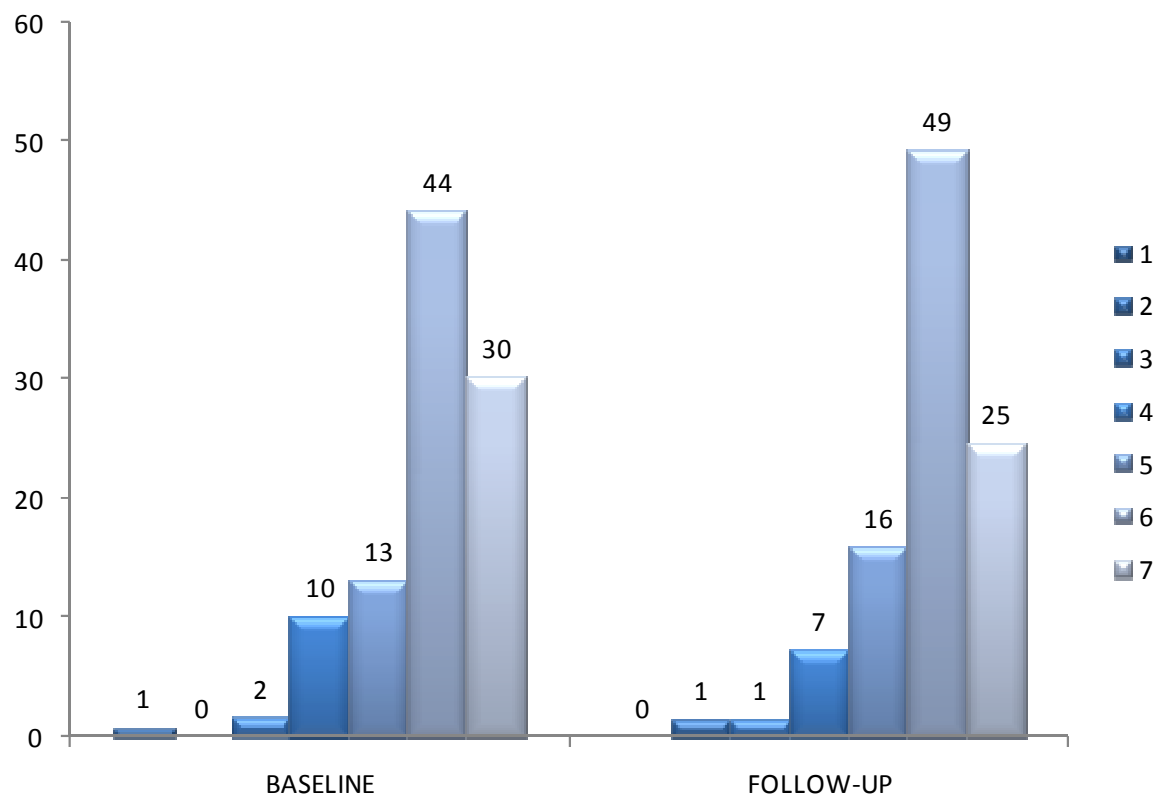
56. have well developed listening skills



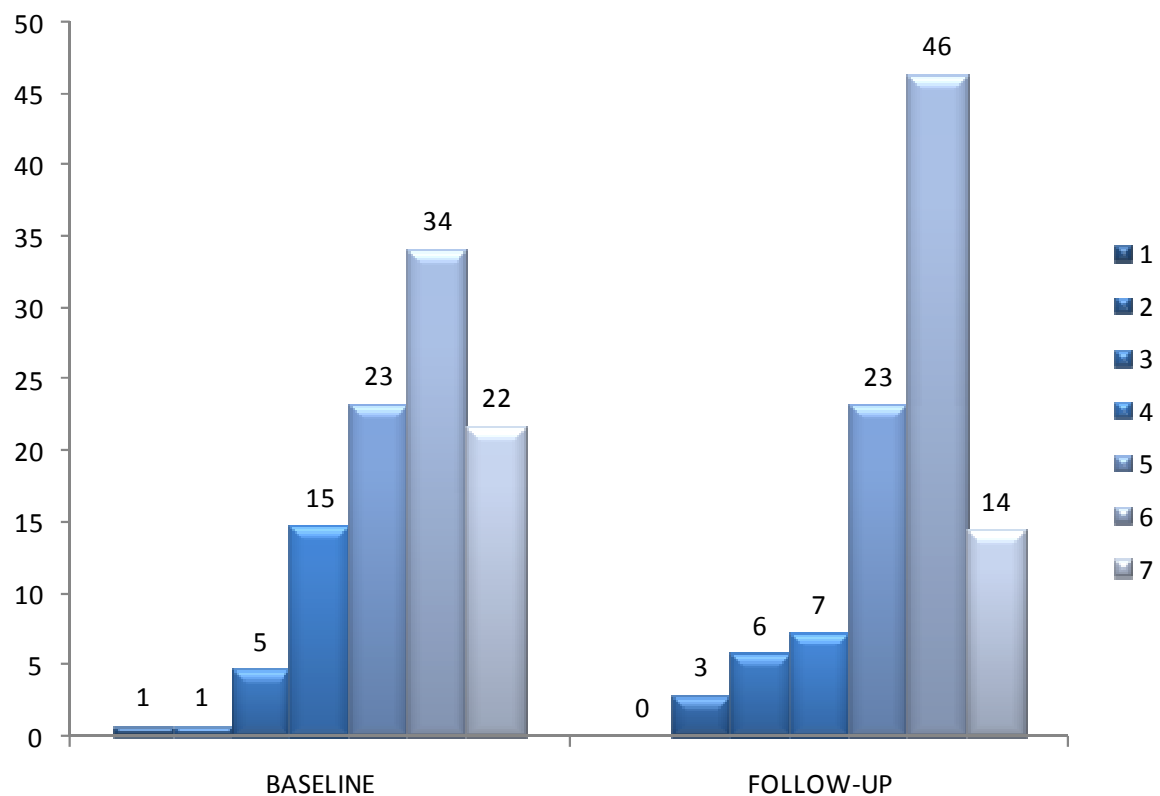
57. love music



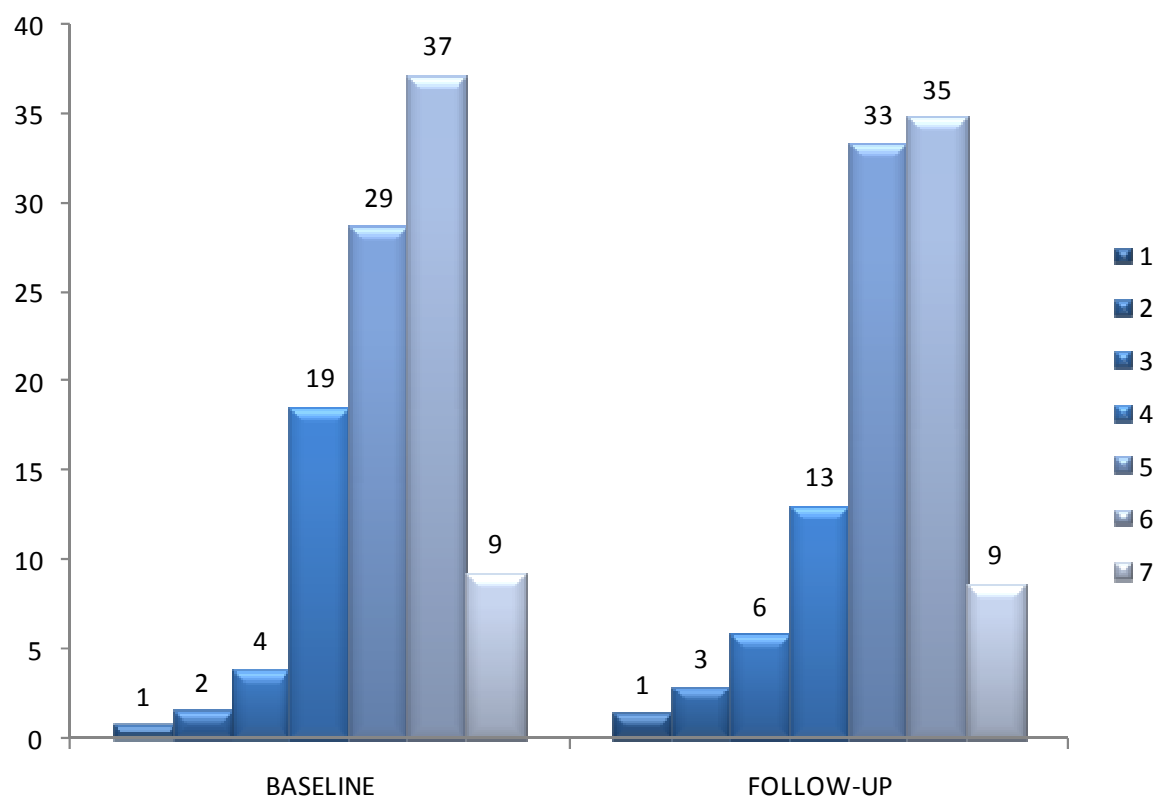
58. have positive attitudes towards music



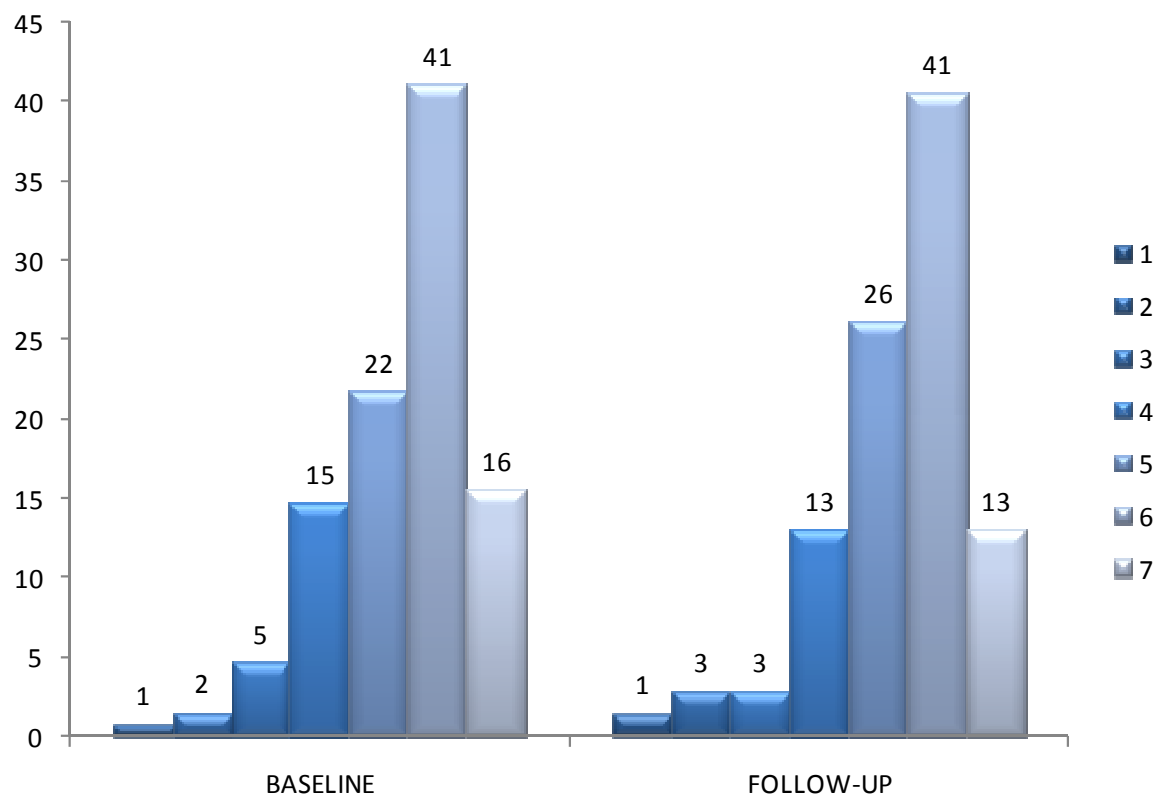
59. are generally well behaved



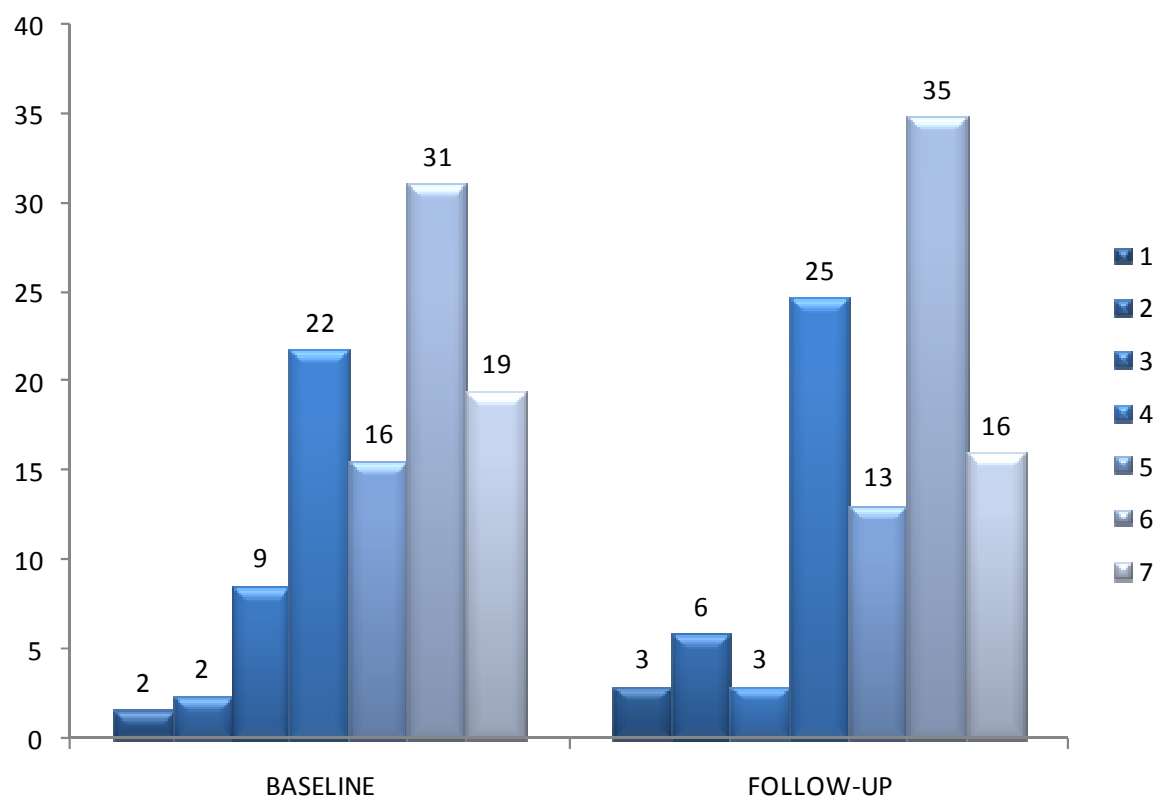
60. are able to concentrate on their work



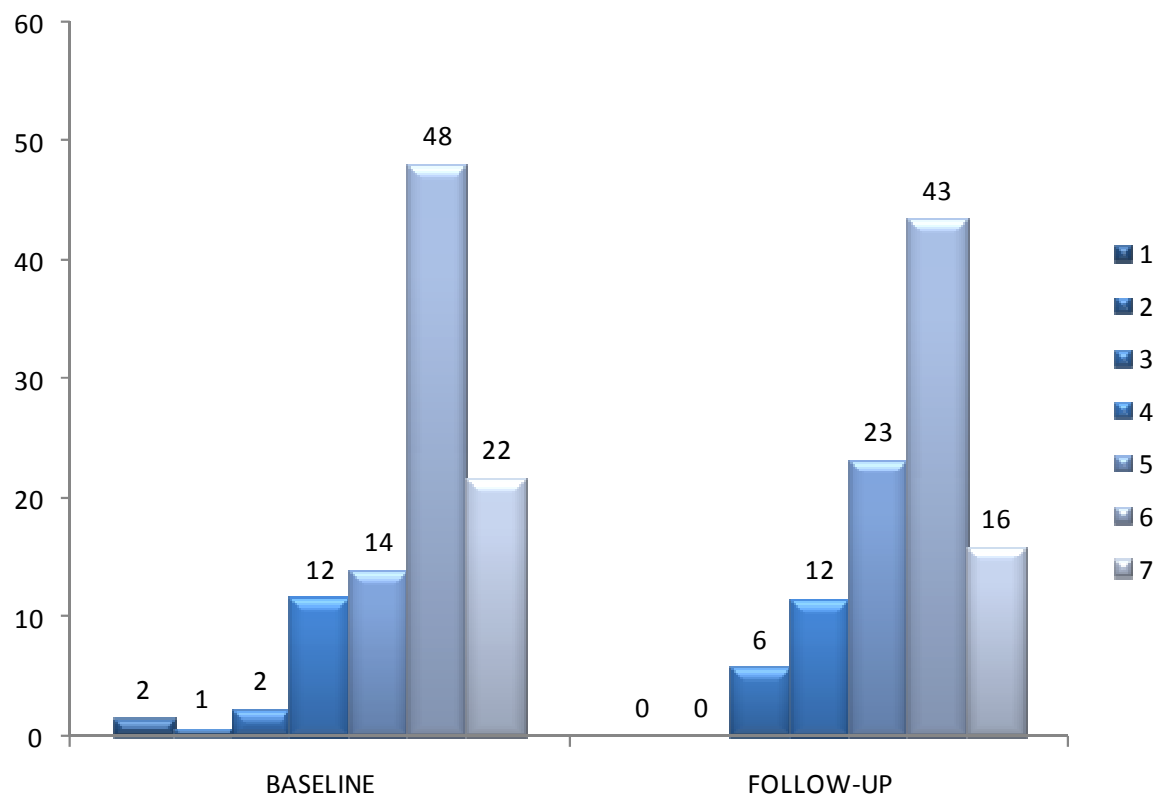
61. help each other



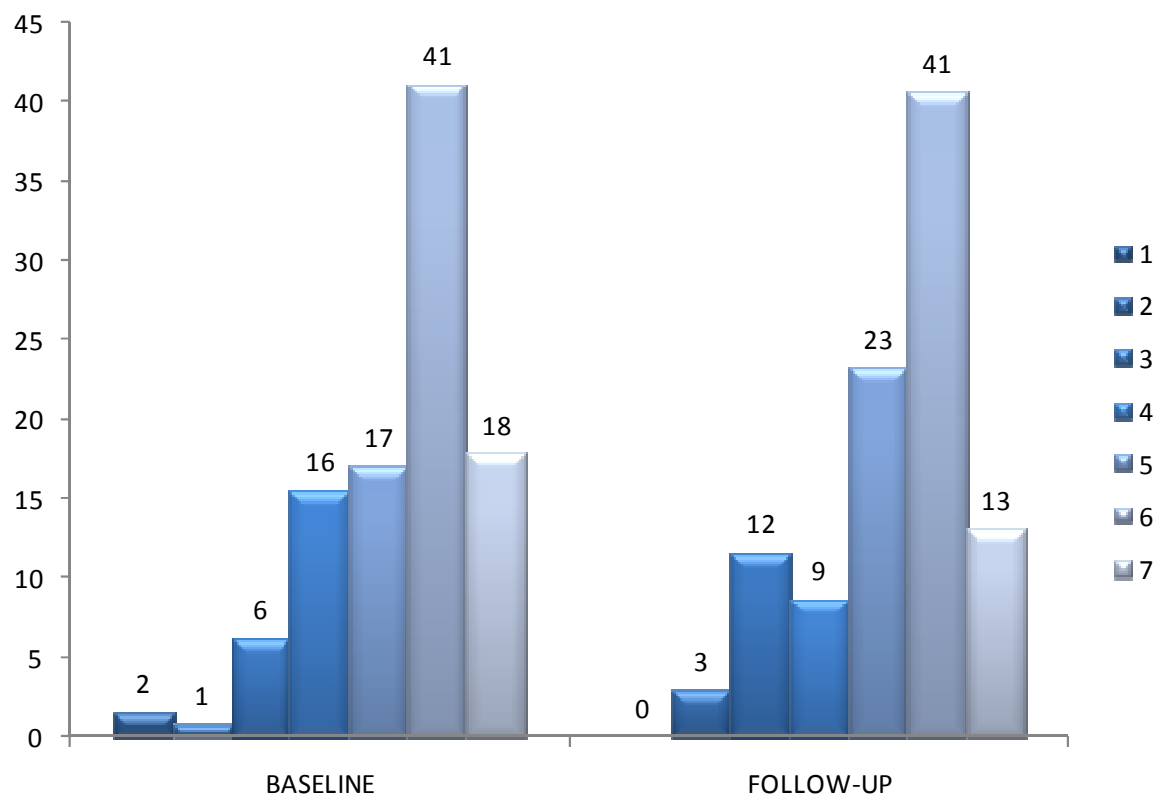
62. are on time for school



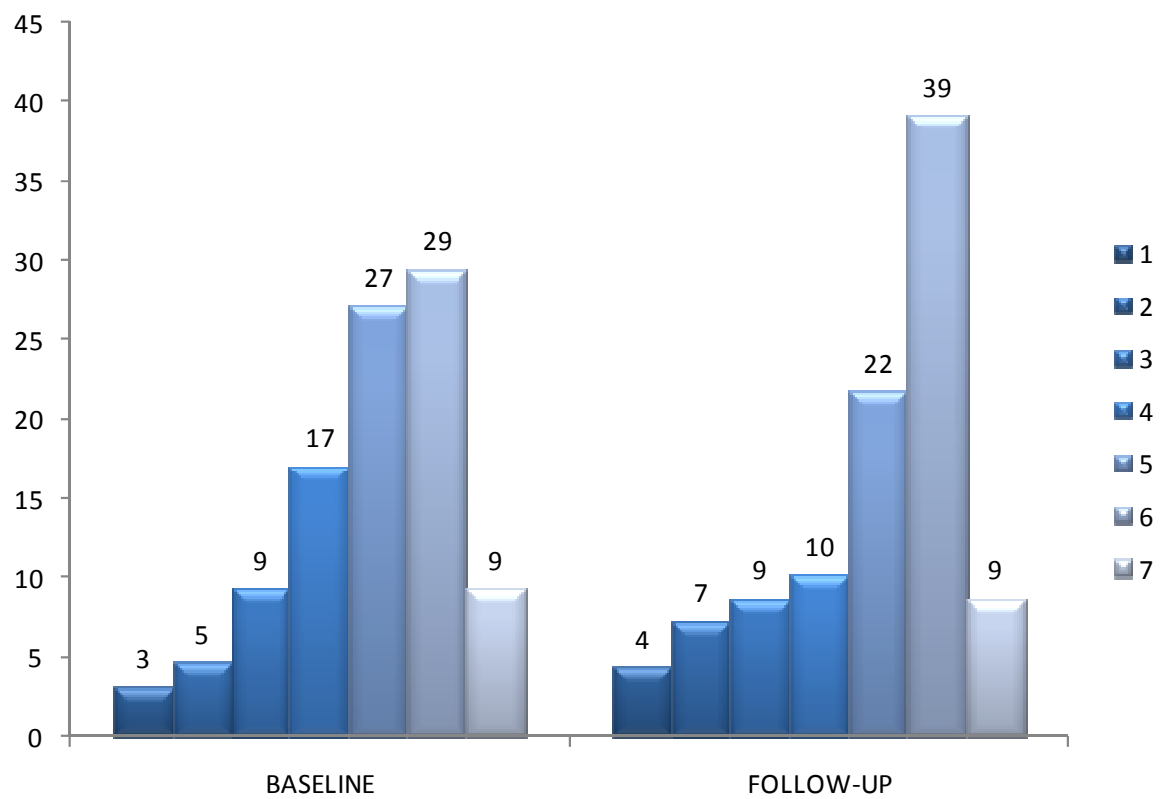
63. enjoy learning



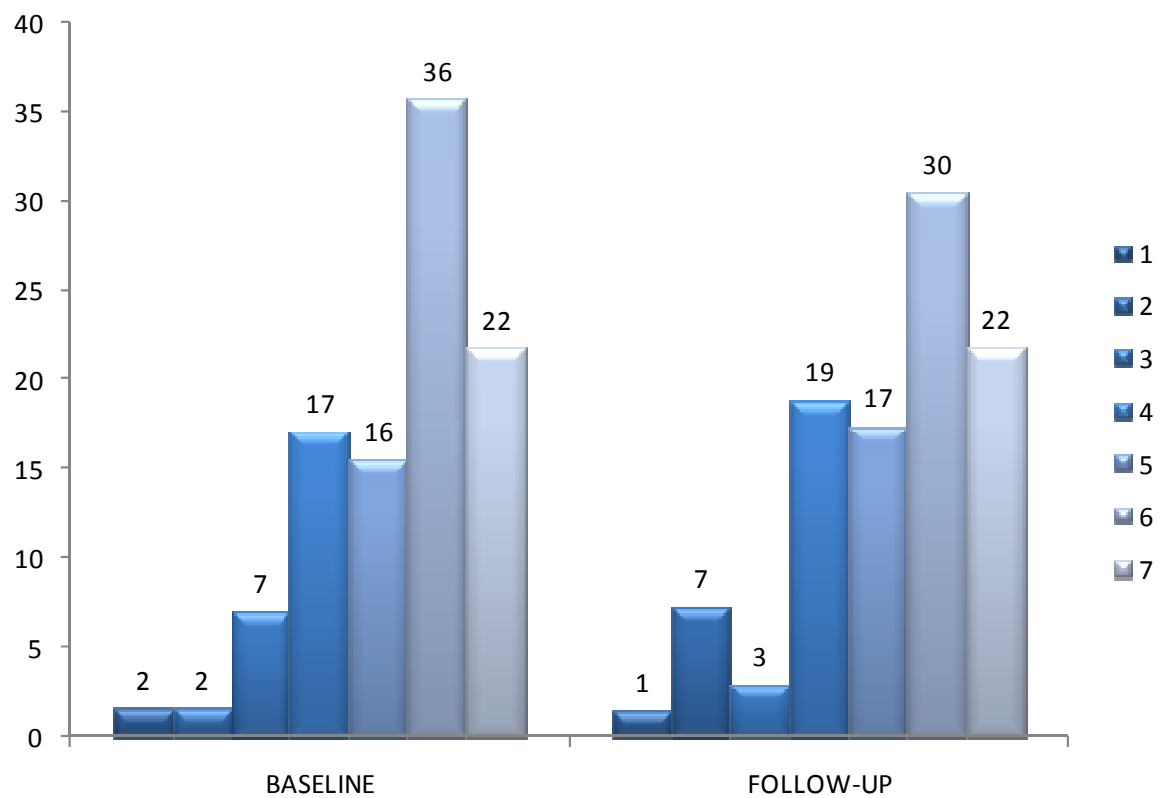
64. are well motivated



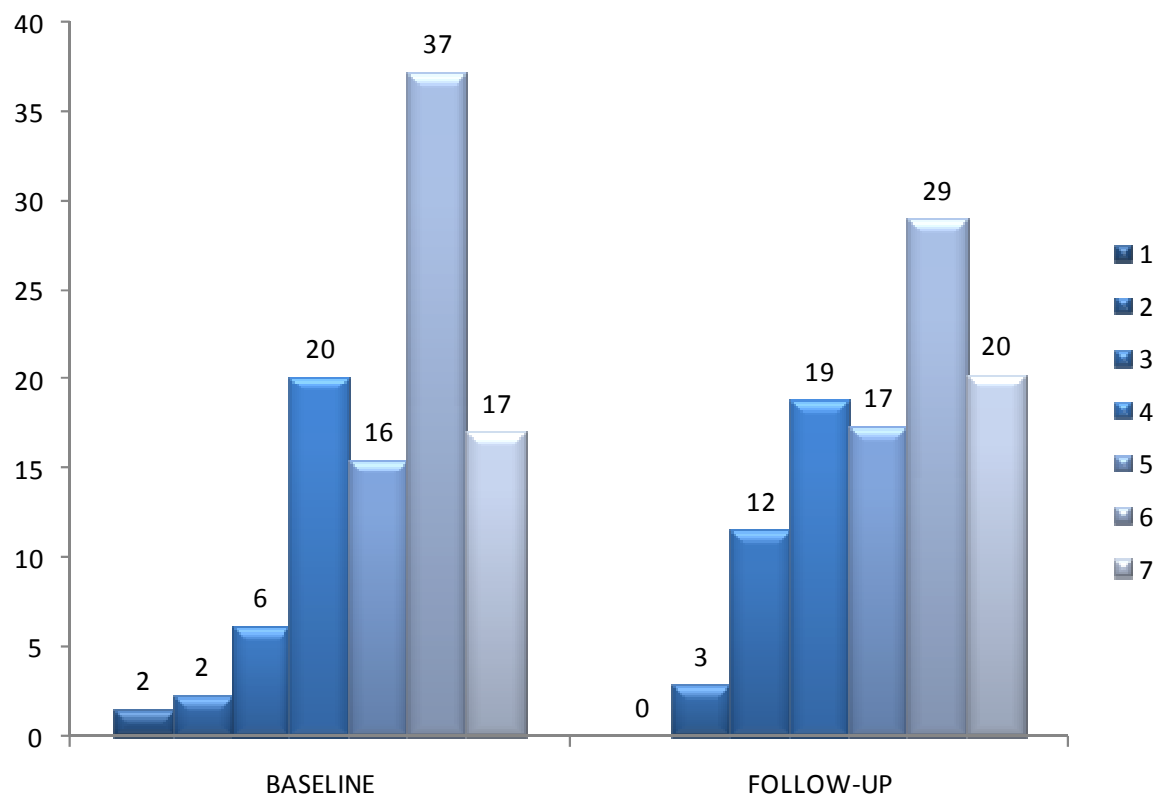
65. generally have high levels of self-esteem



66. attend school regularly

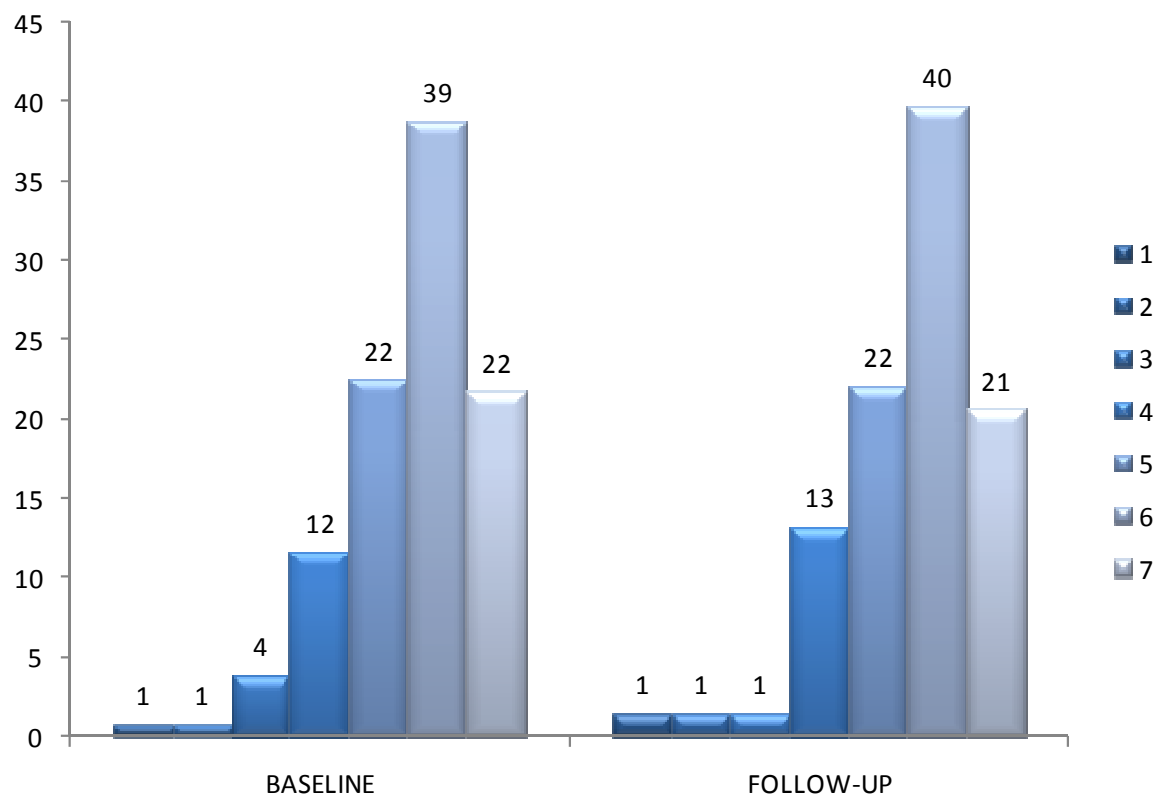


67. are not involved in bullying

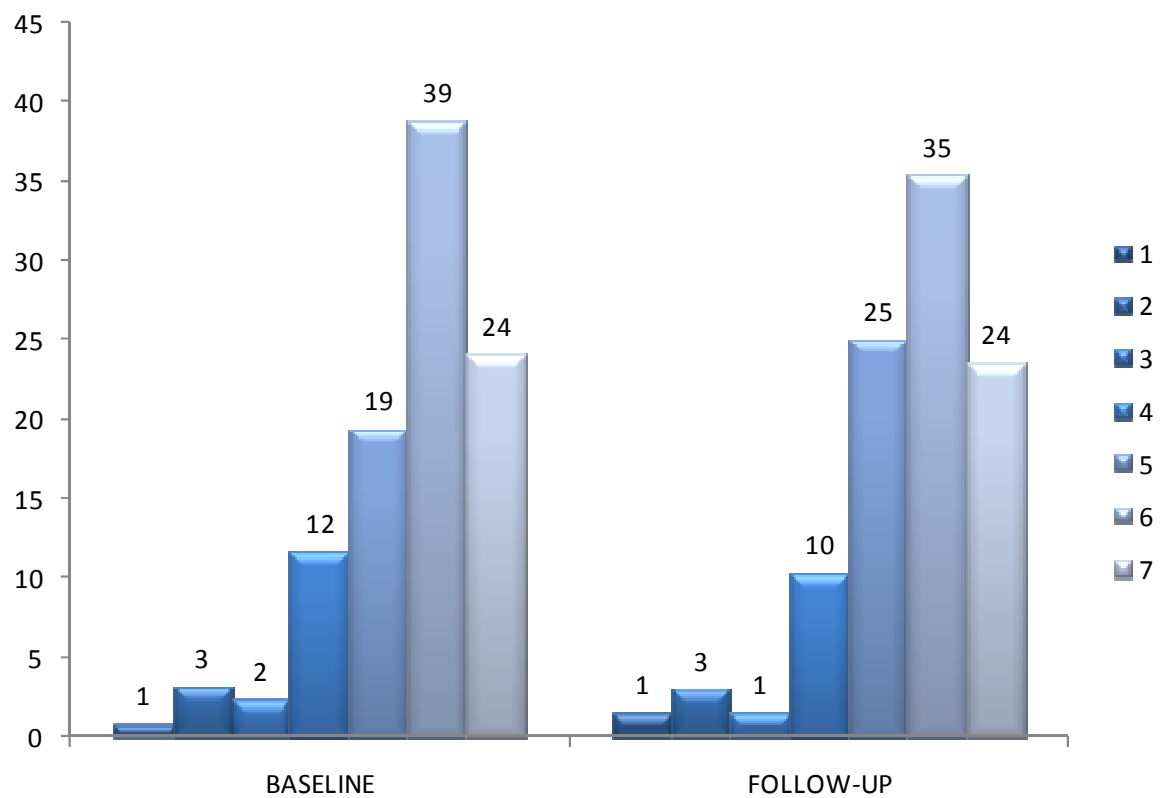


My teaching and my singing leadership

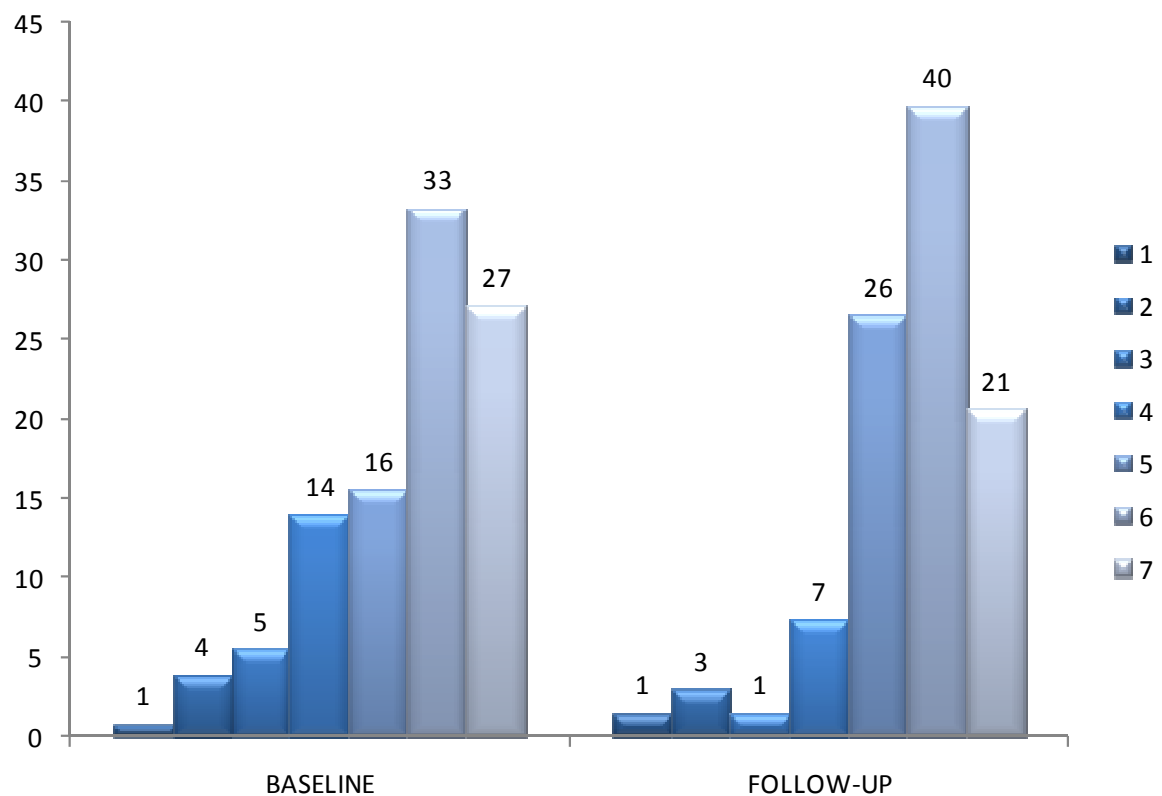
68. I am an effective teacher/leader



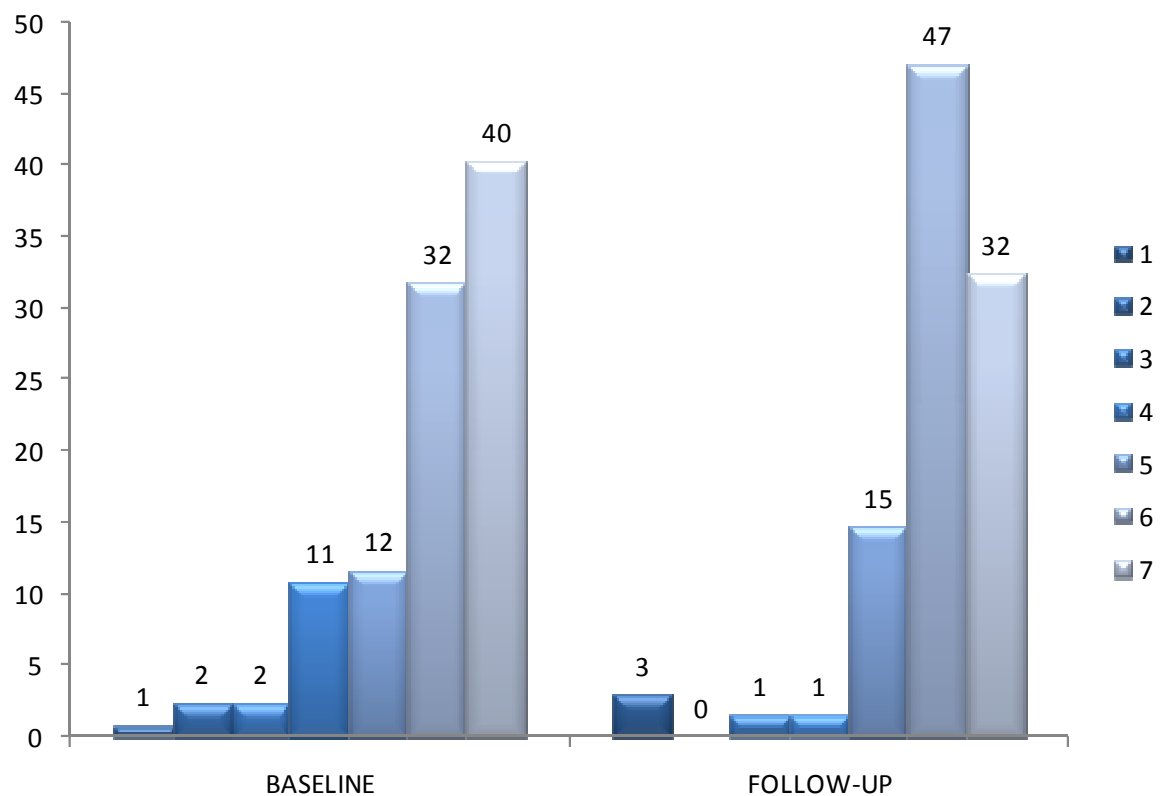
69. Generally, I am confident about my teaching/leading



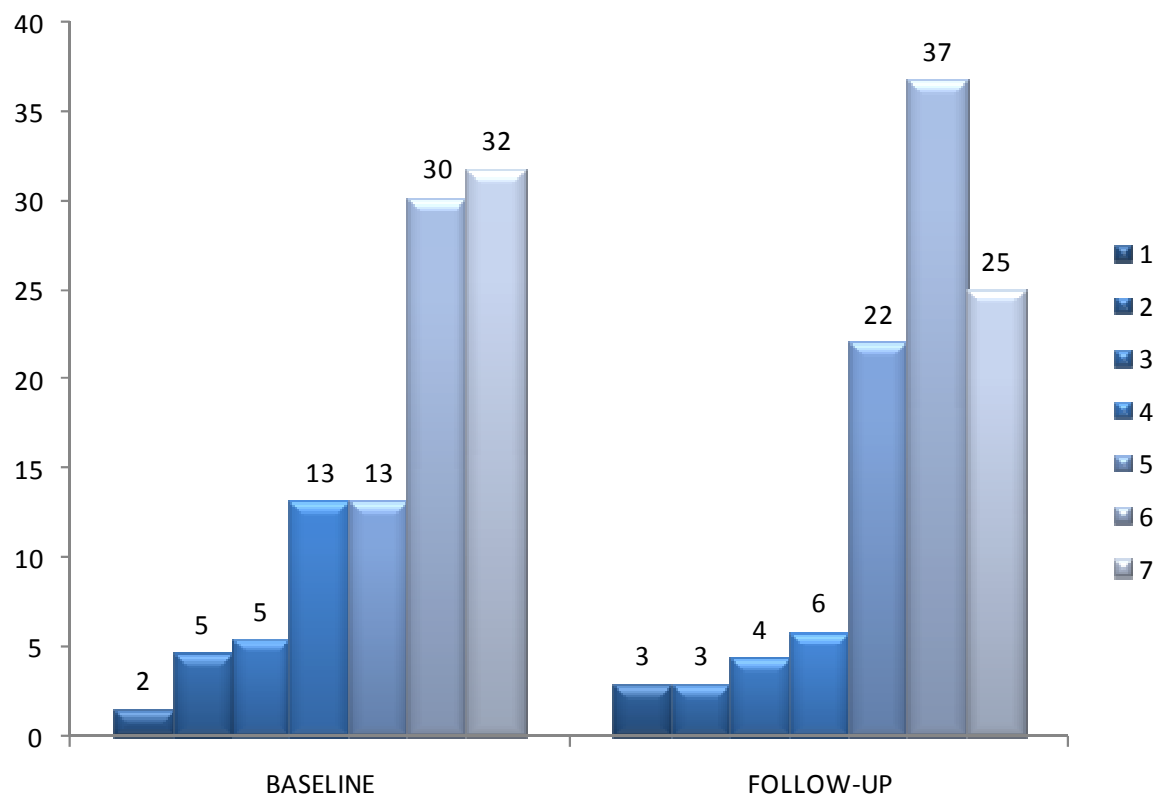
70. I am confident about teaching music to my group/class



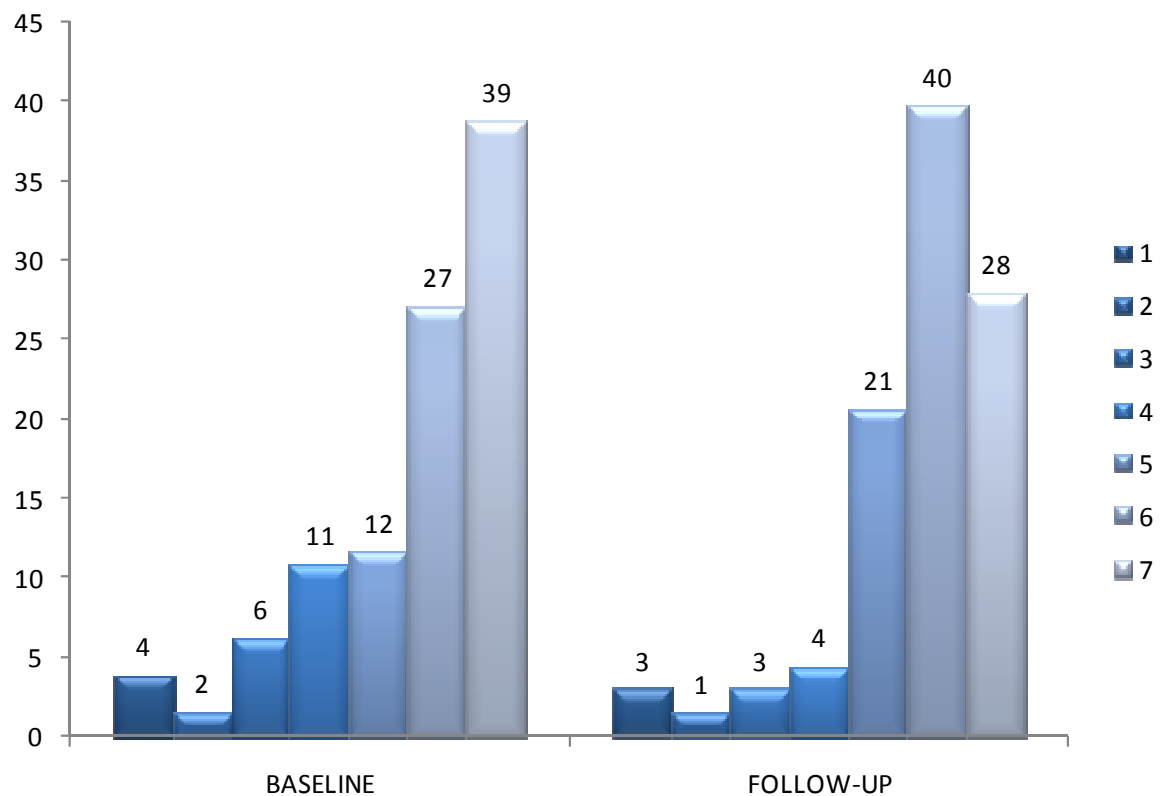
71. I enjoy teaching/leading music to my group/class



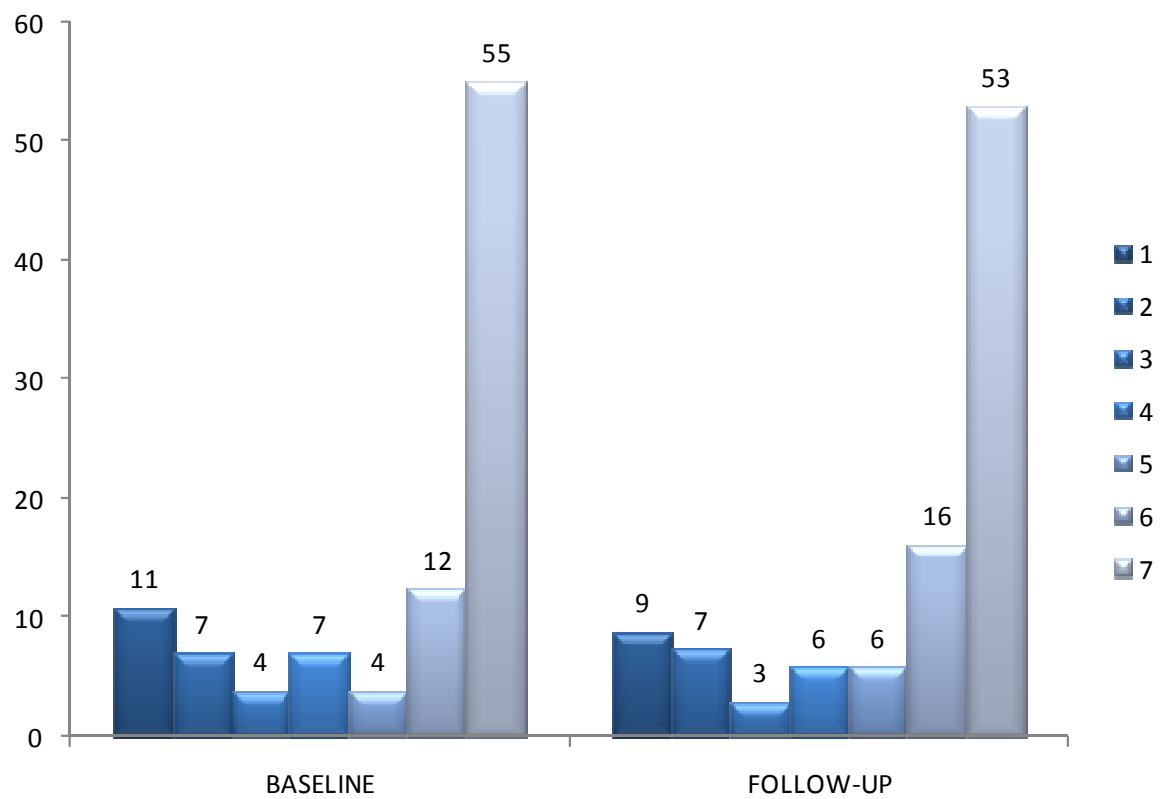
72. I am confident about teaching/leading singing to my group/class



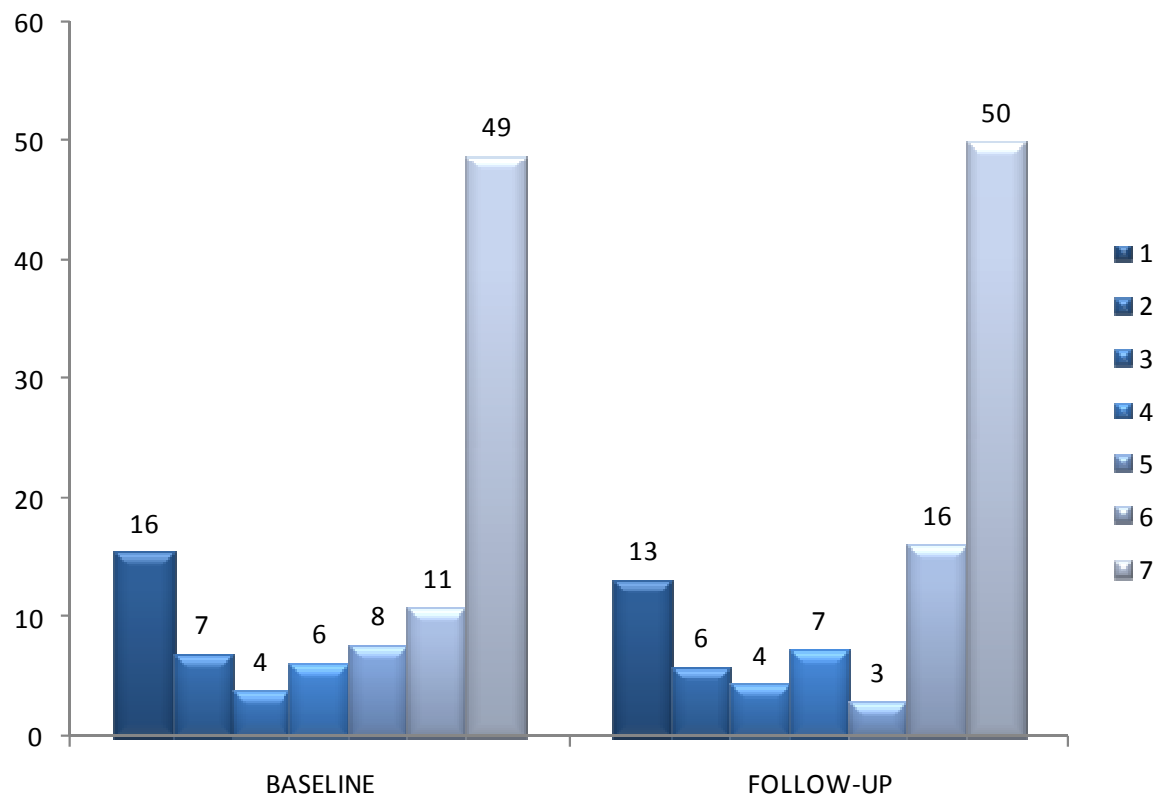
73. I am confident that I can sing well enough to teach/lead my group/class music



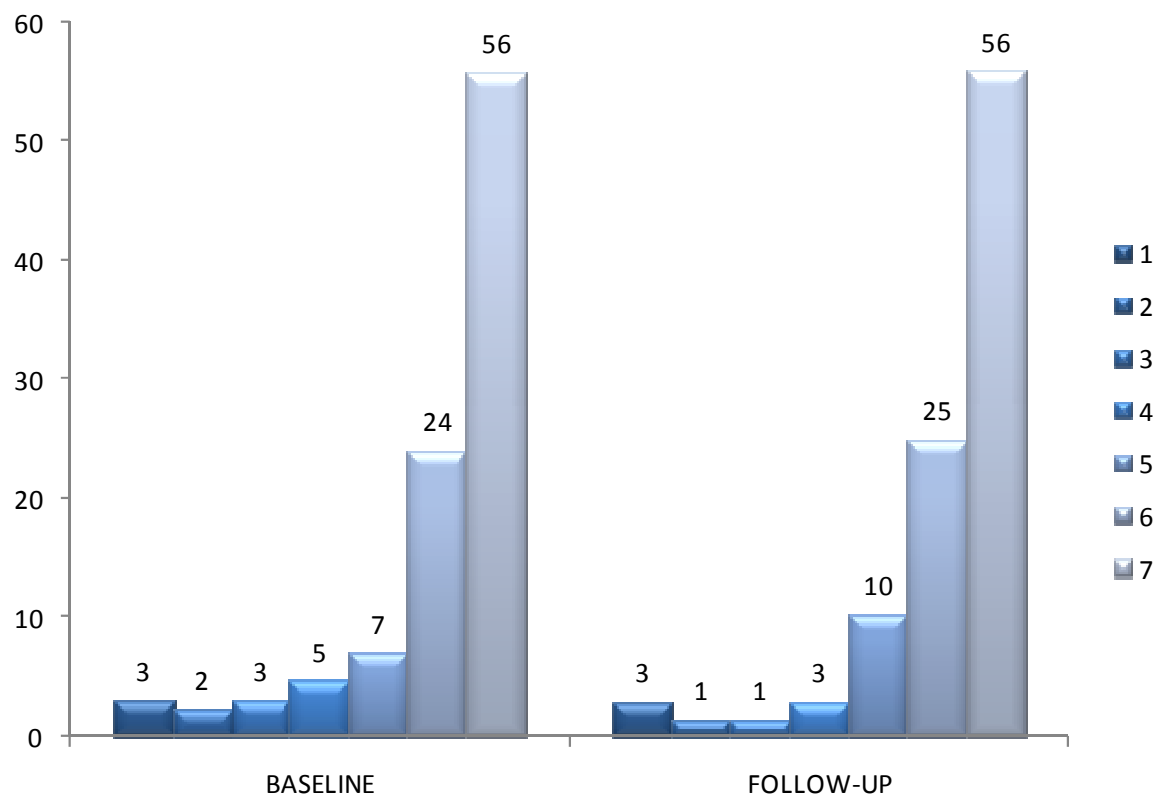
74. I am able to read music



75. I am able to play a musical instrument sufficiently well to use in music lessons



76. I like teaching/leading music



77. I think that specialist music teachers/leaders should teach/lead music in primary schools

