

THE SELF-EVALUATION AND QUALITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Prof. Snezana Mirascieva PhD

Faculty of Educational Sciences, University "Goce Delcev" Stip, Republic of Macedonia

smirascieva@gmail.com

Summary: The development of each individual and the progress of the community as a whole are based on the quality of knowledge. One of the dimensions of knowledge quality is its level of operation. The level of connection between theoretical and practical knowledge speaks about how functional and operational knowledge is. There are many ways to improve the quality of knowledge expressed in appropriate instructional strategies of teaching and learning through the stages of the teaching process: preparatory, operational and verificational. We focused on the third stage in which various methods of evaluation can be used, and one of them is the method of self-evaluation. This paper will focus on the ways and possibilities of application, as well as on the reflection from the application of the self-evaluation method on the quality of knowledge.

Key words: quality, knowledge, evaluation.

САМОЕВАЛУАЦИЈАТА И КВАЛИТЕТНО ЗНАЕЊЕ

Проф. д-р Снежана Мирасчиева

Факултет за образовни науки, Универзитет „Гоце Делчев“ Штип, Република Македонија

smirascieva@gmail.com

Резиме: Развојот на секоја индивидуа и прогресот на заедницата во целост се темели на квалитетот на знаењата. Една од димензиите на квалитет на знаењата е степенот на оперативност. За тоа колку едно знаење е функционално и оперативно говори степенот на поврзаност на теоретските со практични знаења. Постојат многу начини за подобрување на квалитетот на знаењата изразени во соодветни наставни стратегии на поучување и учење, низ фазите од наставниот процес и тоа препаративната, подготвителна, оперативната и верификативната. Ние се фокусиравме на третата фаза во која можат да се користат различни методи на евалуација, а еден од нив е методот на самоевалуација. Во трудот ќе стане збор за начините и можностите на примена како и рефлексивната од примената на методот на самоевалуација врз квалитетот на знаењата.

Клучни зборови: квалитет, знаење, евалуација.

1. INTRODUCTION

Emphasizing and defining the specific weaknesses of subjective checking and assessment make the issue of evaluation in the educational process very current. The problem of evaluation has deep social roots. Namely, both human knowledge and the system of work and the system of evaluation are socio-economically and historically conditioned. Each era of development has a hierarchy of values which is structured according to the level of development of production which is analogous to the structure of social relations.¹ The historical reality determines both of these systems, the system of work and the one of work assessment. At the same time it determines the objectives of work and ways of evaluation. Hence, the nature and the manner of evaluation are associated with the current existing system of social values, with educational objectives and tasks, with specific concepts and specific strategies, tools, forms and methods of teaching. Therefore the concept of the evaluation system has a flexible character, i.e. it changes or rather it should be changed in accordance with the changes in society. Evaluation is a relatively independent stage of the teaching process and it refers to validating, measuring, monitoring and evaluation of results achieved in teaching. Given the fact that both teachers and students participate in teaching, it is quite logical that checking and assessment apply equally to teachers and students. That way we get feedback on the work results obtained which is reflected in the subjects' behavior in the future and in the overall process. Today, changes in society, the progress of science and the invasion of technology set new goals and requirements before the educational system, and, this means changes in the evaluation system as well. In this sense society today sets new requirements before educational institutions, ranging from objectives through contents to strategies in teaching and results. That is why we talk about quality in knowledge or competences that a young person needs to develop in the educational system today in order to be an active citizen in society. The most frequently set objectives a young person should aspire to are: acquisition of competences and motivation for lifelong learning in different areas; encouraging criticism,

¹ Vilotijević, M. *Vrednovanje pedagoškog rada škole*, Beograd: Naučna knjiga, str.6-7.(1992).

creativity and flexibility of thought among students; developing communication skills using technology; developing awareness and care for oneself and the environment for sustainable development, developing life and professional skills. Namely, in the UNESCO documents among other things it is stated that Quality education includes: Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, peace and collaboration; Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. This definition allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context. It is important to keep in mind education's systemic nature, however; these dimensions are interdependent, influencing each other in ways that are sometimes unforeseeable. Systems that embrace change through data generation, use and self-assessment are more likely to offer quality education to students. Continuous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learners, learning environments, content, process and outcomes.² The reflection of UNESCO documents charts the path to quality knowledge, referring to constructivist theories not only in the preparatory and the operational phase of the teaching process but also in verificational stage which is of concern in this paper. The constructivist view of these theories relates to the way students learn in school and considers it as important, or even more important than how the teacher transfers knowledge (teaches). The way students learn is "responsible" for the result, i.e. for what we finally recognize as a change in the student. Moving the emphasis from teaching (what the teacher does in class) to learning (students' activity in class) sheds new light on contemporary teaching. It confirms the view that mere innovation of the curriculum in education is insufficient, but that changes are necessary concerning the very nature of the school. Constructivism focuses on the construction of knowledge rather than on the repetition of knowledge because an individual creates his/her knowledge through activities based on personal experience, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events. Indeed, our view of the outside world differs from that of others because of our own experiences acquired.

2. CONCEPT AND ESSENCE OF EVALUATION

The clear and precise terminological distinction is a prerequisite for effective and efficient evaluation of teaching and thus of a more realistic picture of the situation in educational institutions. The improvement of the system of evaluation is primarily associated with understanding and knowledge of the place, role and functions of the evaluation process. The following section will point out several determinations of the term. According to Vilotijevic, evaluation is a French word and it is used to denote the evaluation process, the determination of the value of something. In didactics, this term is used to denote the process of assessing teachers' and students' results.³ Evaluation is a process in which three components are recorded: checking (monitoring), measuring and evaluating, and, according to Stevanovic⁴, evaluation is an integral part of every well-organized and conducted activity. With evaluation individual and collective achievements are checked, assessed and recorded. The more the system of monitoring and evaluation is efficient, the better are the results. Authors Black and William (Black and William, 1998) use the term assessment to designate all those activities undertaken by teachers and their students in their self-assessment, providing information to be used for a flashback in order to modify instruction and activities in learning, and they point out that "anything a student does can be used in assessment."⁵ This determination of assessment is directed to: providing information to students and their parents about the students' progress in acquiring knowledge, developing skills and forming attitudes; providing support to teachers to modify teaching and strategies; providing information to other relevant structures that make decisions about educational policy that addresses students. From such assessment guidelines it may be concluded that assessment is an integral part of the teaching process. There is a close connection between teaching, learning and

² Colby, J.& Witt, M. *Defining Quality in Education*. New York: Education Section, Programme Division, UNICEF, pp.4-5, (2000).

³ Вилотијевић, М. *Дидактика 3*, Београд: Учитељски факултет, стр.127-130, (1999).

⁴ Stevanović, M. *Didaktika*, Rijeka: Digital point, str.303-305, (2003).

⁵ Black, P.&William, D. *Assessment and classroom learning*, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, vol. 5, Issue 1, pp. 7-74. March 1998

assessment, i.e. between the objectives and the content of instruction and assessment (what is learned and taught and what is assessed). According to V. Poljak⁶, the program of checking and assessment stems from the basic objectives of teaching. These are permanent tasks: material (acquisition of knowledge), functional (development of physical and mental abilities), educational (adoption of educational values). Hence results the subject of the assessment, and that means the volume and quality of the acquired knowledge, the level of development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and the quality of the established educational values in students. In the psychological domain, according to Andrilovic and Cudina⁷ educational objectives should be closely related to the field of learning (cognitive, affective and motor). Speaking of assessment in education Rajston and Dzhaston⁸ say in their research that the main objectives in education that should be assessed should not cover only the quantum of knowledge, understanding, and skills, but they should also include capabilities for acquiring attitudes, interests, developing critical thinking, students' personal and social adjustment in the teaching process. The teacher should be concerned with the overall development of the student, not only with his/her intellectual and academic development. This understanding is the basis of the evaluation system in Macedonian education. Although not fully developed, it is on the first link in its dominance. It is a characteristic of the modern understanding of assessment. This leads to the improvement of the educational process, thereby achieving the fundamental function of teaching: promotion of education. Certain objectives of evaluation in teaching result from the goals and purpose of achievement assessment. The quality of assessment is very important in teaching and it is the bridge to students' knowledge. Research shows that regular monitoring and providing feedback and assessment should be an imperative for any teacher, as they affect the improvement of student achievement. An objective assessment of student achievement is a constant task and the need of every teacher. The tasks that should contribute to students' better success in the assessment process arise from the complexity of this problem. Today several basic tasks of assessment are differentiated, such as: real objective determining of the level of effort and commitment invested in the realization of the set program contents in all areas of the educational process; constant encouraging students to work independently in order to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and habits; creating conditions for rapid development of each individual student; timely insight into the causes of standstill and failure in educational work, and taking timely and appropriate pedagogical measures to overcome weaknesses in teaching and extracurricular activities; to continuously inform students of their progress or weaknesses by continuously monitoring and evaluating the their work with timely provision of feedback on the success achieved and the resulting grade. Thus the teacher has insight into his/her work and the parent has insight into the work and progress of the student which is of great significance for the entire outcome of the educational process in school and beyond. Another important task, beside the acquisition of knowledge and struggle for a good grade, is to develop in students other motives for working and learning such as: the motive of curiosity, accuracy, neatness, preciseness, objectivity, the motive for achievement, for mutual and self-helping, for socializing and developing of the person in the community and for the community. Assessment of student achievement has a practical side to the task determined in the direction of training students for real and accurate assessment of their own work and the work of their classmates. Thus we actually enable students to appreciate their own work and the results of it, they are being trained to appreciate material goods that human labor has attained. Thus creative personality traits are encouraged and developed. On the other hand, students should be prepared for work in practical life, better problem solving, not only in regular teaching but also beyond it. Specifically, students need to successfully apply their theoretical knowledge and skills in life. The above tasks of the assessment process relate to raising students' culture, and accomplishing higher quantity of work in school. It is actually a powerful weapon in the struggle to achieve lasting and profound knowledge, skills and habits. With students' continuous educational activities through real assessment of their work we can encourage work habits and development of cognitive interests and convert these into common interests while raising the quantity and quality of students' knowledge to a higher level. In this way the student will prepare for practical involvement in life situations and for tasks he/she will successfully perform working individually. Assessing one's existence primarily in teaching is in the function of: continuous and regular analysis of student achievement during the teaching process, taking into account individual characteristics and abilities of each student in the class; directing attention to the working conditions of the student, family, school, socio-economic structure of the family; systematic and continuous monitoring of progress and work habits, and results for all students in all the stages in teaching; leveling the practice of premature giving negative marks because it negatively affects students,

⁶ Poljak, V. *Didaktika*, Zagreb:Školska knjiga, 137-142, (1991).

⁷ според Попоски, К. *Училишна докимологија*. Скопје: МИС, стр.91-109, (2005).

⁸ според Попоски, К. *Училишна докимологија*. Скопје: МИС, стр.91-109, (2005).

especially those who progress slowly. Assessment should address all aspects of a student's personality development. In that case constant monitoring and recording the development and progress of the student are needed. Only in this case assessment will realize its formative function. In teaching, formative assessment refers to frequent and interactive evaluation of student achievement and understanding of the learning needs as well as adjusting teaching methods according to students' needs.

3. STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT

One of the elements of formative assessment is self-assessment, i.e. active involvement of students in the assessment process. Teachers should be constantly involved in the monitoring and collection of information about students' learning process by providing timely and clear feedback. The goal of self-assessment is to guide students to develop their personal skill for learning (metacognitive strategies). They use their own knowledge and resources for learning and are more willing to adapt and use these skills for solving problems in everyday life; they strive to find answers and to develop strategies to tackle the problem that is very close to them. In other words, they develop both self-control and learning strategies. The student who is aware of his/her manner of learning is better able to set, develop and achieve goals and use different learning strategies, thus controlling the learning process. Modern concepts in education that refer to autonomy, cooperation, meaning, emotional maturity of students and development of critical thinking skills could be incorporated into the process of checking and evaluating with an additional explanation that the process of assessment and teaching should complement each other as complementary aspects of the learning process. Self-assessment is defined as assessing the quality of their own work by the students themselves, which is based on evidence and explicit criteria in order to improve students' achievements.⁹ Gojkov sees self-assessment as a powerful tool for self-control of the learning process that allows students to influence their own work by seeing weaknesses and overcoming them in the learning process, thereby increasing the intrinsic motivation that encourages students to be active. Formative assessment supports the use of assessment during classes in order to improve student achievement. It promotes the idea that students will work best only if they understand the purpose of their knowledge and only if they are an inseparable part of the process of learning and teaching. According to Clark¹⁰ "Assessment for learning helps students know what to do to move from their current position to the final learning goal. To meet learning goals, students must participate fully in creating the goals, analyzing assessment data, and developing a plan of action to achieve the next goal (Clarke, 2001). Effective assessment of learning happens constantly during classes and it includes: sharing learning objectives with students; helping students to recognize the standards they aspire to; giving feedback that guide students how to improve; belief that every student can improve in terms of his/her previous achievements; joint review and discussion of achievements and progress of a student with the teacher and the student; enabling students to use the techniques of self-assessment to discover in which aspects to intervene in order to improve; involving students as active partners in the process of evaluating their achievements; improving students' motivation and confidence by using effective assessment techniques one of which is self-assessment. Self-assessment is a powerful tool for encouraging students to cooperate effectively in groups. Formative interaction is a necessary condition for successful learning, but it must be implemented in such a way that it will be supported to operate in accordance with the objectives and planned activities. Self-assessment is defined as assessing the quality of their own work by the students themselves, which is based on evidence and explicit criteria aiming to improve achievement. Students should gradually become involved in the process of assessing their own results, and in the process of peer review, by sharing objectives, tasks, and introduction to the curriculum. The teacher should involve students more in the process of monitoring, through informal observations, asking direct questions, allowing them to participate in the discussion about the grades obtained and the results shown. This dialogue form provides a multitude of useful information for the student and his/her learning process. Self-assessment by students is essential to their development as independent and responsible individuals. This also requires students to have a clear understanding of the objectives and the criteria by which their work should be evaluated. The ultimate goal is to turn students away from depending on teachers so that they independently direct their own learning, i.e. to take responsibility for it. Informal self-assessment consists of a continuous process of reflection on their own knowledge, which is an everyday part of the curriculum. (What have we learned? How have we achieved it? What do I do when I do not know a particular word? Has each member in our group performed his/her task?) Teachers can ask such questions through a variety of contents, such as conversations about reading and writing, conversations in the classroom, reviewing the set objectives, literary texts etc. At the end of each teaching unit it is necessary to make a summary of the set learning objectives and the results achieved using simple checklists

⁹ Gojkov, G. *Dokimologija*, Vršac, Triton, str. 78-80,(2003).

¹⁰ Clarke, S. *Unlocking formative assessment*. London: Hodder and Stoughton (2001).

such as: I know and how much I know. Thus the student clearly recognizes his/her good and bad sides and has meticulous insight of where he/she should work more. Numerous studies show that self-assessment plays a major role in the improvement of the learning process. When students self-assess themselves in a positive and correct way, it encourages them to set higher goals and to use more personal sources or effort to achieve them. This combination of objectives and effort is equal to success. This success results in self-criticism and self-control and the question of to what extent I have achieved my goals is asked. The result of self-criticism is the reaction or response of a student to the question about how he/she feels in relation to an issue. Objectives, effort, achievements, personal self-assessment, and personal reaction can be combined to affect a student's self-confidence in a positive way. In other words, self-assessment is a combination of self-criticism and personal response which in itself affects the progress of students in the learning process. When students are involved in the evaluation of their own learning they become stronger students. Reflection of their learning leads students to increase control over the learning process, i.e. puts them in the role of constructors of their own knowledge. That is why we talk about constructivist self-assessment platform, which in turn results in higher quality of knowledge.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Contemporary theory and practice pay great attention to evaluation in teaching in order to improve the system for checking and evaluating the application of new methods and forms of assessment, including self-evaluation. Innovations in the field of evaluation promote a new approach in evaluation in terms of overall changes in students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions, development of cognitive skills or preparation for life and work in the community. Constructivism and holistic platform are fundamental theoretical tenets of self-evaluation. Finally, it should not be forgotten that quality indicators were not always the same, but changed with the changes in teaching and its function in the development of students. One of the indicators is the position of the student in teaching as an object, subject or both object and subject. Nowadays a new indicator is being looked for in the third model and the process of self-evaluation is further proof of that. Quality is expressed through the entirety of teaching and the personality of an individual student, through the holistic approach to students' success, and through the process of cognition, model of interaction and communication, needs and motivations, and style of the teacher's work.

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