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EVALUATION IN THE EDUCATION AND LEARNING PROCESSES
- KEY DIDACTICAL QUESTION

Summary

In this paper authors problematize the key didactical question, and that is the question of evaluation in the process of teaching and learning.

The question (problem) of evaluation in the process of education and learning is an old didactical question that is still seeking its «best answers». This paper is just another attempt of answering the question of evaluation in the process of education and learning, but also a way of pondering and asking new question.

Both education and learning processes end with certain results. If we conceive education and learning as a process directed towards a certain goal, control (observation and evaluation) of goals is needed. These processes of observation, verification and evaluation are called evaluation processes (fr. Evaluation). In etimological sense of word, evaluation processes are directed towards the assessment of feasibility of education (teaching) and learning goals and tasks.

So, it is possible to say that evaluation processes are directed towards the establishment of relations between the set goals and tasks of education (teaching) and learning and feasibility of set goals and tasks. It is generally believed that evaluation processes are primarily directed towards the assessment of feasibility of educational and learning from the aspect of student's success and achievement in cognitive, affective and psychomotorical development, i.e. these processes are a mean of ascertaining student's success as a result of process of education and learning and student's developmental possibilities. In evaluation processes aspects of assessment of conditions, techniques, methods and technologies of teaching and learning are neglected due to a better organization and realization of process of education and learning.

Evaluation finds its own meaning in ascertaining of feasibility of goals and tasks of education and learning that are transformed into qualitative and quantitative changes in the development of a student (student's developmental achievement), but at the same time in the conditions analysis and improvement of the teaching process. Teaching and learning are based on the specific preassumptions and follow certain goals.

In that sense W. Schulz speaks of anthropogenous, i.e. individual and sociocultural preconditions and consequences of all stages of the teaching process, and especially learning process. Evaluation of the education goals rolls on in a way of establishing increase of learning (changes caused by the process of learning and other processes of student's development).

In the assessment of established in the everyday of education and learning subjective experiences and criteria are exerted, and the assessment of feasibility of achieved always refers to the student as an individual which helps us in the assessment of every individual's position in the group and adequately follows the assessment by the usual schemes. This evaluation of feasibility of education and learning goals and tasks can be a selective factor that could possibly set aside pedagogical tasks of improving conditions and processes of education and learning.

Success and failure in the process of education and learning determine the social rise of an individual, while the methods of assessment have a socially discriminating function. Based on the weakness of accomplishing goals and tasks of education and learning, pedagogically based and responsible assessment and evaluation points out to student's «good» and «bad» sides, his possibilities and values, points out to positive and good, but also to what needs repairment and perfecting in the process of educational and teaching. The assessment of accomplishing tasks and goals has a motivating role, it stimulates processes and contributes to the rise of promptness of completing the set goals of education and learning. The assessment of feasibility of education and learning goals is socially relevant as long as there exist highly technological societies and at the same time working societies.

Evaluation in the process of education and learning is a cognitive activity in which, on the basis of set standards, the results of learning and student's work, processes of teaching and learning are estimated, process of activity is ascertained, the forthcoming activity and its results and puts all of this in relation with the set standards.

Evaluation follows the process of education and learning in all of its stages and levels.

Therefore, the process of evaluation and the results of that process (estimation and evaluation of the teaching and learning results) set the ulterior process of learning in the sense of setting new tasks and contents of education and learning. Results of evaluation process point out to successes in the process of learning, but also omissions and the need for additional activities that would undo the made mistakes and in that way improve the process of learning.

Evaluation processes want to inform a student and a teacher on accomplishments (results of teaching and learning processes) and on the conditions in which these results were accomplished. Evaluation is directed on the ascertaining of the present and the past state of student's development, comparing that state and the plan of student's development (expected results) and the collimation and perfecting of the education and learning process and the feasibility of optimally possible student's development.

In that sense evaluation is not just a final act of education and learning process, it is necessary in all stages of pedagogical processes.

At the beginning of education and learning it is necessary to set stages and steps for realization of the set learning tasks and according to that gradually evaluate the quality of steps realizing in the learning process. At the same time this means coordination of learning

processes, but at the same time this kind of continuing evaluation represents a feedback for a student and a teacher so they could gradually approximate the set goal (expected results) and it represents a stimulus for a student (mean of motivation) to move towards a certain goal.

Evaluation is a final act as well, a phase of education and teaching process. It is a mean of evaluation of learning results in relation to the set goals and tasks from the aspect of student's accomplishment and development, but from the aspect of teacher's work and conditions in which the learning process went on as well. In that sense, evaluation should go on in the process of teaching and learning, not just after the learning process. In that way students are informed of their results which show them what they have accomplished and what they could accomplish with the right activity and conditions.

Letting the student know what their momentary accomplishments are (and in right conditions possible accomplishments) can significantly motivate a student to strive for more, not to be satisfied with the achieved but at the right time strive for an optimal resumption of set goals and tasks of education and teaching.

The process of evaluation in education and learning is based on a systematic observation and verification, i.e. gathering information, indicators of how the students approach the wanted, expected goals and tasks that are set in educational and teaching.

Gathering indicators is done in many different ways (oral, written, observation of psychomotoral operations, practical works etc), and gathered information serve as a basis for control of learning goals. Results of testing in the process of evaluation still don't have to, and by the rule are not a subject of grading. They serve to a student and to a teacher, primarily, as a corrective, as a regulator for achieving a greater, wanted accomplishment.

Grading is classifying, sorting out the results of work and learning into specific categories, i.e. sorting into a system of different accomplishment levels. Grading in the process of education and learning is a specification of a complex situation. In demonstration, pronunciation of a grade, a lot of complex learning and teaching process components and complex functions and relations are expressed. Even though the process of grading is basically a certain qualitative and quantitative analysis in which a classifying criterium is a level (quality and quantity) of achieved teaching and learning goals, grading is still not devoid of those components that result from education (teaching) and learning as a communicative process, i.e. learning and teaching as a certain affective context.

Grading individuals and groups is based on questioning (oral, written, practical) or is based on observation of students work, reactions and behaviour in the educational and teaching process. When speaking of that, it is usually considered that grading can, but doesn't necessarily need to, involve conditions in which results have been made. If grading involves conditions in which individuals and groups (teachers, students, pedagogical institutions, pedagogical agencies, parts or wholes of educational system...) realize educational result, then that process is called evaluation, valorisation. When we speak of grading in the learning and teaching process, i.e. when the level of accomplishment is being estimated and appraised, i.e. the quality (quantity) of goal feasibility of teaching and learning task, we find it necessary to look at grading as based on feasibility of teaching and learning process with paying respect to the conditions in which the results were made.

Grading always represents a certain act of judgement, whether it refers to the grades resulting from the qualitative or quantitative indicators. So, grading (and estimating) is basically, as a judgement of student's accomplishment, a human act in which we do not only grade student's knowledge, skills, habits, abilities...but student's complete behaviour and reaction.

In that sense, with all the complexity of subjects of evaluation of student's accomplishments. Development and techniques that are applied in those processes, grade demonstration in the education and learning process always shows a human relationship between the student and the teacher and always involves ethical dimensions and aspects. So, in the process of grading we have to bear in mind that the techniques, methods and instruments and their objectivity and credibility are in the function of ethical and human goals of educational and learning. In order for negative aspects of grading to «decompose» or at least diminish, and to maximize motivation and perfect confidence and selfevaluation of students, it is very important to set the evaluation process «as a hope for success, and not the fear of failure».

Grading and grades as a result of that process have multiple functions in teaching and learning. So, the most commonly mentioned functions of grading and grades: informative, motivational, prognostical, diagnostic, selective, classifying and promotional. Informative function is manifested in a way that the grade informs the student of his/hers accomplishment and success, of his/hers «good» and «weak» sides in the teaching and learning process. The grade informs the teacher of student's development and advancement. It is at the same time an indicator of how the student organized and led the teaching and learning process, it is a corrective for enhancing the process of learning.

Informative function has a wider meaning. The grade informs all the interested for student's success and accomplishment in the process of education and teaching.

Grade as an assumption and a mean of motivation in the education and learning process has a significant motivational function. It can induce, maximize the interest and motivation for the teaching and learning process. The grade can also be a mean of demotivation in the process of teaching and learning, especially if it's deduced nonobjectively and unargumentatively.

Grade has a prognostic and diagnostic function. It can serve as a mean for diagnosing the initial stage, source basis in the process of teaching and learning, diagnosing the quality and the level of student's accomplishments and development, which factors condition that quality and the level of accomplishment. Grade as a prognoser serves as a preassumption for the future development and student's advancement. These two functions enable the control of teaching and learning goals and estimation of these goals in the sense of exposing preassumptions, conditions and reasons for success and failure of a student and a possibility of overruling failure and enhancing education and learning process.

Considering that grading always represents a process of sorting and classifying into categories, the grade as a result of that process has its own classifying function. It is always determined by norms of differentiating that takes into consideration individual norms of relation, that always presupposes collation with achieved results of others, but comparison with personal accomplishments and results as well.

Grade is a preassumption and a mean of advancement, promotion, within the system of teaching and grading and within the system of schooling and wider social context of advancement and promotion of individuals and groups.

The complexity of situation of education and learning and multiple function a grade has in those processes presupposes that all participants of teaching and learning, especially teachers and students, should be included as subjects in the process of evaluation. Including students into a process of grading is not directed to taking teacher's his/hers pedagogical and didactical competence and responsibility. It's just the opposite. In that way the student is involved into a process of evaluating his work and activity which helps him nourish his responsibility for his personal development and advancement. This also nourishes teacher's competence and responsibility.

If we suppose that grading can never be objectivized and fully humanized, there is always a chance that teachers and students are permanently interceding and «fighting» for it.

Complexity of grading process, its character and nature are followed by many difficulties, weaknesses and shortcomings. Problems and difficulties in the grading process come from the complexity of grading subject and incompleteness of an adequate instrument for delineating the grade that would integrally comprise all the components of grading subject.

When we speak of grading subject, we think of complex of components and factors of modality that come out from the process of educational and learning (knowledge, skills, habits, capabilities, attitudes, beliefs...). All the aspects of grading subject and all the components have a different meaning, different place in the hierarchy of what is comprised within the grading subject.

Let's take for example curriculum as a basic landmark for work in teaching and learning. The relation towards the curriculum and its interpretation is different. The difference is in attitudes and thoughts of what is important in the curriculum and significant for a student and a teacher and in what way should the curriculum be interpreted and realized. From that difference of understanding the curriculum students get different kinds of knowledge of the same subject. Teachers that understand the curriculum literally, as something that in a specific volume and level needs to be «transferred» and as a requirement set to students not taking into consideration differences that are there between the students on the cognitive, affective and psychomotorical, but also sociocultural plan, find themselves in a situation in which they require equal requirements for every student, are objective and just towards every student, and because of that are «nonobjective and unrighteous» and don't pay respect to difference between students.

Grading and grades are not just estimation and reflection of facts of quantity and quality of requirements feasibility which stem from program goals, tasks and content of education and learning. It is an activity directed towards the whole process of reaching results and so the grading is accompanied by series of affectively willing and other components which come out from education and learning as a communication process.

When it comes to grading there are always specific teacher's characteristics who grades the student who accepts the grade and sees it in a special way. It is known that those characteristics which are shown in the process of grading significantly affect student-teacher relationships. Teacher's characteristics and personality structure, his attitudes and beliefs, his «personal philosophy», «personal equation» significantly affects the grading of accomplishment and student's success.

These differences in teachers' personalities are nothing unusual or new in the whole work of teachers in teaching and learning and in processes of evaluating student's accomplishments and development. However, what is important in the process of grading in education and learning is necessity for a teacher to be conscious of his own personal properties than can sometimes be a distractor in teaching and learning, especially on the plan of verification and grading student's accomplishments.

How complicated the process of grading can be seen in the questions that every student and teacher ask in the process of knowledge evaluation (what is actually being evaluated, what knowledge and on what stage). In that sense questions of decomposing components are asked (memory, reproduction, understanding, critical analysis, examples...).

Far more complex is a situation with grading other components of evaluation subjects (skills, habits, capabilities, attitudes, motivation...). These components are sometimes exactly what stands out in students in the process of learning and teaching (capabilities of critical and creative thinking and creative relation towards the teaching and learning in general) and can cause problems and obstacles in the communication with the teacher, and just because of that critical thinking can be undergraded.

In the process of evaluation other difficulties can come to light connected with the teacher's vision of «subjects and procedures» of evaluation process. Except for already mentioned «personal equation» which is manifested in teacher's tendency to take into consideration the same components of grading subject and the same criteria for grading, as a source of mistakes and difficulties in grading «hello-effect» is mentioned. It's a tendency (and a source of mistakes) in grading by which an individual is graded according to teacher's personal impression of a student and previous results and information. Based on that picture of an individual, all of his next results are evaluated, positively or negatively. «Hello-effect» makes mistakes and «unreal picture» of student's grade because the «general impression» and a grade delineated from that impression is based on knowing inadequate number of student's qualities, work and advancement in the process of education and learning.

In the process of evaluation, a teacher can apply different criteria, depending whether the class is better or worse. In that case, a grade is not a result of accomplished but belonging to a specific group, class. Grades gotten in that way are not equally worthy, nor are appropriate for comparison.

Grading can also be affected by teacher's «affection» or «unaffection» towards students, sex stereotypes, classifying classes as «important», «unimportant», and this classification is not in accordance with the complex structure of a class, but is determined by teachers and their «personal equation».

Since the grade expresses, with all its subjective touch, estimation of students achievements and at the same time opinion about him, it provokes antagonistic relations between the teacher and the student, student and parents, student and other students and relations in which a student establishes interpersonal relations and by that provokes many difficulties in student's development.

The grade becomes a mean of satisfying expected results in the process of teaching and learning (primarily parents who expect and demand good grades even when a student is not capable of doing so). It becomes a mean in the series of privileges, a mean of promotion and a mean of preservation and maximization of student's personal reputation. In those circumstances grade is a must, it is its own goal and not a mean in the function of getting knowledge, capability development and other characteristics and properties in student's personality development. In those circumstances of «fighting for a grade» a student is more focused on developing strategies for getting a good grade and is less focused on the process of learning in which a grade will be a necessary consequence of learning and student's work.

When we speak of problems and difficulties in grading a lot of questions and dilemmas pop out. Those are, as we said before, questions on complexity of grading subject, teacher's questions and his role in those processes, student's questions, methodology questions (subjectivity and objectivity of methods applied in the process of grading student's accomplishment and work in the process of teaching and learning).

When it comes to methodology of questioning, we should point out that, in spite of endeavor to, besides «subjective» ones (based on oral, written, practical or observation of student's behaviour and reaction...), present objective, objectivized approaches, «instruments» (knowledge tests, ability tests, act tests, scales of valuation, scales of judgement, personality tests and other «objective instruments and methods»), questions of comprising qualitative and quantitative side of teaching and learning effect on student's accomplishment still remain unanswered.

Sometimes grades just represent more a quantitative side of knowledge and student's accomplishment in general, and less a qualitative aspects of learning and teaching (abilities, motivation and interest, work...), that is, the attention is directed to cognitive and psychomotoral and less to affective field of personality development in the learning and education (teaching) process.

The beginning of the learning process and its quality depend on the affective characteristics of an individual. Modern system of evaluation supposes that grading and evaluation of student's accomplishment is a process in which the grade is an indicator of some work's value (e.g. knowledge) that stems from series of factors of student's psychostructure and sociostructure (will, persistence...) and factors that stem from impacts and contributions of sociocultural preassumptions, conditions of the environment the student is coming from. In order for all components and factors of modality of evaluation process in teaching and learning to be considered, it is necessary to categorize didactical goals of teaching and learning and to perfect methods and techniques of evaluation in teaching and learning as a communication process and complex interpersonal act.

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