THE CONCEPT OF COMPETITION IN EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

[a]ISTVÁN SZŐKÖL, [b]GABRIELA GABRHEĽOVÁ

[a]Trnava University, Priemyselná 4, 918 43 Trnava, Slovakia
[b]DTI University, Sládkovičova 533/20, 018 41 Dubnica nad Váhom, Slovakia
email: [a]istvan.szokol@truni.sk, [b]gabrhelova@dti.sk

Abstract: The aim of the following study is to introduce the methods and the ways of pedagogical evaluation in harmony with the individual stages of the process of evaluation. We have divided the process of pedagogical evaluation in the following way: setting the goals, planning and organizing the pedagogical evaluation, collecting information, choosing the method, means and tools of evaluating the examined phenomenon of the pedagogical reality, evaluating and interpreting the results, deciding about the prognosis suggestion. The function of feedback in evaluation lies in the teacher's providing feedback to students on their performance, learning activities and the efforts made to perform the task. However, evaluation also fulfils an informative function, particularly in terms of providing study results to students and their parents. Evaluation in education sometimes functions to regulate student learning activities. If teachers formulate views on students, direct activities and draw attention to errors or incorrect procedures, they use the potential of the regulatory function of evaluation. In this paper, I introduce what is actually evaluated in education in terms of student performance or if their learning activities depend not only on the teacher's personal conception of the teaching itself, but also on some general concepts of education. The concept of evaluation gives a comprehensive view on the issue from the aspects of defining the process and applying the methods, means and results of evaluation.

Keywords: methods of pedagogical evaluation, ways of pedagogical evaluation, Educational Evaluation

1 Introduction

Educational objectives in most cases are general and vague, i.e. we cannot determine unequivocally the "ideal state" to be achieved. We do not know clearly what is to be regarded as the result of the education process: knowledge (i.e. memorizing and understanding information), skills (specific and non-specific transfer – the application of knowledge) or abilities as well, for example the ability to learn, or also the attitude, the student's effort, perseverance, etc.? If yes, then what should be the ratio of these elements represented in evaluation? We do not exactly know the answer to the question what to measure, therefore its validity (weight) is difficult to assess. Although marks are there at our disposition to evaluate students' performance, it is not clearly defined what two or three, etc. really are. In addition, student performance is not constant, but on the contrary, it is time-variable. We do not know how often to classify and evaluate the student for his or her assessment to be reliable (accurate). Thus, we do not know the correct answer to the question "How to measure it?" either. The consequence of these factors is the subjective evaluation of students.

If evaluation is subjective, it tends to be unfair resulting in the fact that the student does not agree with his or her assessment. In this case, the teacher's control and evaluation do not fulfil their functions, including that of educational, motivational and prognostic. It often happens that students who did very well at school do not succeed in life as much as their classmates with generally weaker results. One reason for this contradiction is the difference in evaluation criteria in school and practice.

The teacher's duty is to develop such skills of students which enable them to perform well in life, i.e. the ability to think for oneself, make decisions, take action and learn. Therefore, the teacher should not only examine the outcome of the learning process but also the learning process itself. After all, the development of learning skills should be one of the main aims of the school (Porubčanová, 2017).

It is known that many students prepare for the lessons (they learn) the way their teacher is going to test them. Many teachers, however, direct testing to a lower level, mainly to remembering information (facts, formulas, definitions, theories, etc.). The result is that students prefer memory learning.

The assortment of the functions of evaluation is far from being unified and complete. Therefore the classification of Smoleňáková-Bendíková (2017) was particularly inspirational for us, mentioning five evaluation functions according to the purpose they fulfil in the education process: the development-formative function, the function of feedback, the informative function, the function of greater efficiency and the differentiating function.

2 Pedagogical Evaluation

The evaluation is in the focus of attention of those who are involved because this is the area of the teacher's activities which concerns the students, their parents as well as the teachers themselves a lot. Furthermore, pedagogical evaluation as such influences the relationship the student is going to build to the subject, teacher and the school, how fair the students will consider the evaluation of the teacher.

For evaluating purposes in the school there are different ways from which the teacher can choose (he can vary and combine them too) after taking into consideration the aim of the lesson, the aim of the evaluation, situational factors, the student himself who is the focus of the evaluation. Last but not least the teacher has to consider the concrete stage of the teaching or evaluating process.

When evaluating students, the teacher is offered to use a number of ways from which he can choose the one that suits the aim of the evaluation, the individual personality of the student, the situation the best. By the different ways of the evaluation the teacher provides the results of the evaluation of the students' work.

The non-verbal ways of evaluation (smile, nod, mimics, gesture, tactile contact) exist on their own or they can also be the accompanying feature of the other ways of either positive or negative evaluation. The paralinguistic aspects of speech make the oral expressions audible. It is the volume of the speech, the speed, pauses, verbal emphasis, the colour of the voice, intonation, rhythm, acoustic filling of pauses. (Oberuč-Zapletal, 2017b). The simple verbal evaluation is about the teacher orally expressing the satisfaction (yes, good, nice, I agree) or dissatisfaction (careful, mistake, fault, no, I disagree) with the performance of the student. A typical example of the quantitative evaluation is giving grades according to the grading scale. The teacher can also evaluate the performance in points, percentage on the basis of the correct and incorrect results. Other, rather unusual ways of evaluation are various symbols, stamps, cards, which the teacher uses to express the level of the students' performances. The public evaluation of the students' performances are used mainly when the student has achieved some extraordinary success. Thus the student (his name and photo) can appear on the noticeboard of the classroom, on the board of honour of the school, web page or school magazine.

The basic rule of evaluation, regardless of the chosen method and way is to apply an individual approach, avoid the regular formulation, the standard phrases and classifying the students according to their results without considering them in their complexity. This kind of evaluation does not show the child's true self – loses its credibility and in fact is not really truthful. The evaluation should concretely contain what the student knows what he doesn't know, what his abilities are and how he uses them. For these criteria the verbal evaluation is the most suitable. One of its advantages is indisputably the fact that it is focusing on the positive support of the student´s improvement instead of the pressure on the performance, emphasizing the importance of cooperation instead of competition, it provides the students with equal possibilities rather than eliminating them and

it also provides individual support instead of the same frontal approach. Essentially the verbal evaluation should contain information about the student´s personal improvement, for example the difference between his work at the beginning and end of the evaluated period of time. As for verbal evaluation it is not suitable to use the words from the area of grading – excellent, very good, good, acceptable, not acceptable in order to avoid the confusion with grading. The spirit of the evaluation, however, should be stimulating. To start with, there should be some positive information, what the student is the best at, because a positive evaluation has a more motivating effect than a negative one. It is very important that the teacher should never compare the students with each other (Hrmo et all, 2016).

Every single evaluation is the expression of a certain quality, value. However, the degree to which we consider it important, responsible or fair depends to whom and what these expressions of the quality mean. The cybernetic view of evaluation is always about a certain goal, and the process within which it is about to take place.

The pedagogical evaluation, regardless of the type that we use should according to Marks-Lajčin (2017) consist of the following stages:

- setting the goals, planning and organizing the pedagogical evaluation
- collecting information, choosing the method, means and tools of evaluating the examined phenomenon of the pedagogical reality
- evaluating and interpreting the results deciding about the prognosis suggestion

3 The stage of setting goals, planning and organizing the pedagogical evaluation

The goals that were achieved we usually compare with the goals which had been set. Therefore it is essential to set goals which are possible to measure and evaluate. It is necessary to set the goals of the given subject (in general they are stated in the state education program), then come the goals for the individual cognitive (effective and psychomotoric) areas of performance and they are mainly expressed in an operationalized form. Operationalization means expressing a goal in a concrete form of the student´s performance, what he should know and on what level. This enables the evaluation of his performance. Planning and organizing the evaluation is inevitably a part of this stage. (Oberuč-Zapletal, 2017a). Planning is about deciding who is going to prepare and put it in practice how it should go and what organizational conditions it should meet. The interesting thing about this phase of the evaluation process is that it depends only on the teacher, he takes part in it, creates it, the student is not a part of it. It is therefore expressed by the activities of the teacher.

4 The stage of collecting information, choosing the method, means and tools of evaluating the examined phenomenon of the pedagogical reality

This stage of the evaluating process is characterized by the interactive relationship between the teacher and the student. Both the teacher and the student play an active role in it, the work of the teacher influences the work of the student and vice versa.

The stage of collecting information can be further divided into some other phases which are defined by Hrmo-Turek (2003). The first part of the stage of collecting information is specifying the tasks. Some features of the evaluation can already be seen in this stage by how the teacher specifies the task, what kind of task it is, how demanding the given task is. From specifying the task it is possible to see the evaluating competence of the teacher as well as his relationsip towards the student, his expectations from the students and last but not least the connection to the previous stage – setting the goals of evaluation. In the following microphase of the stage of collecting information, called the exposure of performance the students shows the knowledge that

is required, puts the concrete operation in practice, solves the task while the teacher is following and checking carefully whether the student is right. At this point if it is necessary there can be some correction. The teacher often uses one of the ways of evaluation. By the means of non-verbal communication (a stroke, mimics, an agreeing or disagreeing gesture, a smile) paralinguistic aspects of speech (the tone of voice, melody of speech, the colour, etc.) or by a simple verbal evaluation (yes, mistake) he shows that he agrees or disagrees with the student´s performace.

5 The concept of competition in educational evaluation

This view comprises the semantic essence of competitiveness and rivalry as an important and natural element of human life. In society, the individual strives for better job opportunities, career or salary advancement. The school as an educational institution prepares the individual for such society. The role of schools is to provide quality education. Education is viewed as an investment in the future and it is believed that caring for study results is entirely the student's business. Students are therefore considered to be solely responsible for their academic performance. The constant rivalry at schools is a preparation for what the student can expect to happen in life. This concept is based on the assumption that students can and mainly that they want to learn. Each student is considered to be intrinsically motivated, so motivation specifically is not attended to. It is assumed that to achieve good evaluation is the primary goal of each student and the sole fact that they are evaluated is motivating enough and it is not necessary to apply other instruments of motivation. The concept takes it for granted that individuals at schools make all the effort to achieve good scores, just like contestants do in competitions. Differences in performance are therefore considered to exist due to differences in students' abilities (Bendíková, 2017).

The concept of competition in terms of educational evaluation emphasizes results and the ranking of students based on their performance. The school must prepare students for the competition by creating optimal conditions and a fair environment. This can only be achieved if the teacher treats all students equally and adjusts the instruments of teaching accordingly. Therefore, the most effective teaching methods appear to be those where the teacher is dominant as the sole bearer of knowledge, transmitting information in a finished form to the students who are acquiring it. It can then be assumed that applying the concept of competition in educational evaluation is allowed primarily by the concept of the traditional type of educational process, based on the behavioural theories of learning (Hašková, 2020).

What is the point of competition in school conditions? It is particularly monitoring the process from a lower to a higher level of education. Competition therefore means preparing students to progress to the next stage of school and ultimately enrolling them for further studies.

How does the concept of competition appear in the techniques and methods of evaluation? The emphasis is on ensuring accuracy and objectivity. This is achieved firstly by establishing equal and strictly monitored conditions for all, secondly by the existence of such rules and evaluation criteria which ensure objectivity. This objectivity can be assured by objective evaluation tools, mainly by didactic tests. Their emphasis can easily be moved towards measurable performance, which in practice is often the case. Its consequence is that those areas of performance and skills that are difficult to measure are initially underestimated in evaluations, and later in the classroom as well. The concept of competition in educational evaluation is present whenever we want to create some sort of achievement rank of individuals. It may be believed that the preparation of students for higher-level schools follows an objective, external evaluation criteria expressed in the expectations and claims of the school related to the applicant. In reality, however, these expectations are relative and conditional upon the performance of the students

studying at the given school, so they are not the school's real expectations (Szőköl, 2016).

What are the problem areas of applying the concept of competition in educational evaluation?

1. It is not possible to consider the argument about students wanting and being able to learn as generally applicable. The expansion of education, the increase in the length of compulsory education and various demographic factors significantly reduce children's intrinsic motivation to achieve good academic results. Schools applying the concept of competition in educational evaluation are not able to support and positively affect such students.
2. Based on the above, it can be concluded that schools are attended by heterogeneous student, either in terms of skills, social composition or background. Whereas differences in the ability of students assume and cause differences in their performance as well, competition loses its meaning. And this is because the achievement rank of students gets created very fast and remains unchangeable.
3. Overexposing the nature of rivalry and the comparison of students to each other can easily lead to labelling and pigeonholing, which does not affect positively the psyche of the student.
4. Rivalry alone cannot be regarded as a generally motivating factor for each student. It is not correct to assume that each student likes competing and winning. The atmosphere of competition can have an utterly negative effect on students who are of introvert, timid and shy nature. The atmosphere of competition for them is the source of constant stress and affects their performance negatively.
5. The concept of competition in educational evaluation does not allow applying the holistic view (as a whole) of individual performances.
6. It is a mistake to believe that solely the students are responsible for their study results. This view distracts attention from the formative influence of the teacher's personality on student development. Teachers are thus placed into the arbitrator's position while the essence of their educational activity escapes them (Hašková, 2017).

This concept of evaluation is historically the oldest and widely used even today in our schools. During their undergraduate training and also in subsequent teaching activities, many teachers have encountered and applied solely or mainly items of the concept of competition in educational evaluation. Only recent research findings have prompted educators to rethink the concept of competition and enrich it with new elements.

5.1 The stage of evaluating and interpreting the results

In this stage too we can identify two sequences – partial phases of this stage. In one of them, in the final analysis of the performance, the teacher has to carry out a very demanding analysis of the student´s performance in a relatively short time. In this stage the overall performance of the student is evaluated. The teacher should approach it with responsibility and realize that the evaluation for the student is formative (it means that the teacher´s attitude to the evaluated student is going to influence his attitude to further studies and himself too) and for the teacher opinion forming (it means that on the basis of the attitude the teacher has towards the evaluation and the particular student will the rest of the class view him). Therefore it goes without saying that the teacher involves the other students in the evaluation (so the teacher uses the method of peer evaluation). It is not because of avoiding responsibility but because he wants confirmation about his concepts or on the contrary, the students´ opinions in the class will force him to change his mind. At this point the teacher can give space to the student to speak up, by which he applies the method of autonome evaluation.

The second microphase of this stage is about expressing the evaluation. To get the evaluation it is important to compare the current situation of the evaluated student with the past situation as well as with the required criteria (Turek, 2008/). For the teacher the main criterion is the norm given by the education program. The judgement can be communicated to the students by almost all ways of the evaluation. Most frequently it is by the way of quantitative evaluation, so by classification grades, simply by grades. This can be accompanied by comments, the explanations of the teacher. In addition there are the non-verbal expressions of the teacher which the student is very sensitive to and it multiplies the result (effect) of the evaluation.

5.2 The stage of deciding about the prognosis suggestion

This stage can be divided into three microphases. The first is expressing a certain recommendation, how to react to the result of the evaluation, how to improve and how to exploit the potentials of the evaluated student. The teacher can suggest certain pedagogical measures which not only him but the evaluated student or the whole class can take part in. A typical feature of a good evaluation is that it contains the assumptions for the student´s further development and this actually gets us to the second microphase of the final stage of evaluation. By expressing the prognosis the possibilities and ways of the student´s further improvement are revealed (Turek, 2008, p. 79). This stage according to Hrmo-Turek (2003, p.187) is completed by the microphase of realizing the possible consequences of the student´s evaluation. It is performed only by the teacher and it takes place by means of intracommunication (asking questions, answering them, looking for connections, stating reasons, arguments etc.). In order to see what the evaluation has caused where it got the student, the teacher needs to know him profoundly.

6 The function of building a positive self - image

Self-image tells what the student thinks about himself or herself. It can have positive as well as negative content. It is exactly the teacher's evaluation that matters greatly in moving the students' image of themselves in the correct direction. Students differ in perceiving themselves, and it appears mainly in their preference of different opinions, attitudes and values. According to research results (Lajčin-Porubčanová, 2021), students with positive self-image do not attach importance to those school situations which are less significant from the aspect of their preferences. Conversely, students with negative self-image overestimate failure at school, which only reinforces their negative perception of themselves. Students with a positive self-image and realistic self-evaluation demonstrate a higher degree of motivation; they overcome minor obstacles at school more easily, achieve better performance in cognitive areas and is cooperating. Negative self-image and negative self-evaluation makes it hard for the student to adapt to school and later to society, and are obstacles to the positive development of his personality. The primary school level here has an irreplaceable place, because at a later stage, when the student already has a clearer vision and value preferences, building or renewing a self-image is hard to start with and correcting a negative self-image is very difficult.

If the performance of the student meets the expectation of the teacher, the student achieves success, while if the performance is below average, he or she feels and experiences failure. The chain of these sequences will affect the creation of the student's motivational aspirations and self-esteem. Likewise, evaluation is also influenced by the level of the student's self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is thus at the same time the cause and consequence of success or failure, it predetermines what attitude the student takes (a favourable or unfavourable one) towards fulfilling the tasks and obligations of school.

6.1 The function of positive social reinforcement

Reinforcement means that positive assessment assumes the repetition of a student's good performance. Reinforcement can be internal or external. Inner reinforcement is characterised by the external factors not being in operation. Activities and their good outcome already carry an affirmative effect in themselves for the individual. External reinforcement (rewards, punishments) occurs when internal reinforcement does not work

or if there is a contradiction between the teacher's expectations and the values or performance of the student. Positive reinforcement (praise, recognition) in evaluation, when the teacher expresses satisfaction with student performance, is much more motivating than negative reinforcement. This may even have an impact on the social status of an individual in the group.

6.2 The function of motivation

Evaluation affects the motivation of students, their attitude to school, study obligations, the given subject or the teacher, and therefore it is one of the major motivating factors. It affects also the creation of students' learning styles. Barnová et ell. (2019) argues that the experience of success, expressed by the teacher's evaluation motivates students for further work and study. On the other hand, the student's failure expressed by the teacher's evaluation motivates him or her less towards further work, and he or she may even completely lose interest in studying.

The teacher must handle evaluation with caution. Unrealistic and undeserved over-evaluation, the use of positive evaluation including reinforcement can lead to false illusions of success in students, which is not justified and has no real basis. On the other hand, exaggerated negative evaluation destabilizes the position of the student as an active learner and prevents him from the feeling of success, which then discourages him. The teacher faces a difficult task: evaluate realistically, the real performances of students with the need to highlight positive aspects, point out weaknesses in the student's performance and suggest courses of action for improvement. By evaluation, teachers should primarily follow the development of each student's personality and abilities. Therefore, they should use evaluation as a means of increasing students' motivation to learn. This can help to achieve the student's increasing interest in learning, which is essential especially for the aims of self-development, permanent learning and self-improvement. The research results of Perry (according to Hrmo et all.,2016) show that in those classes where students' self-regulation and self-development is taken into account, and the teacher uses interactive assessment throughout the whole teaching process, the students' errors are interpreted as a tool to improve performance. On the contrary, the students of the class where stress is laid on the quantitative parameters of achievement levels or the mystification of correct and incorrect answers, where convergent tasks prevail and the performances are constantly compared not only to standards but also to other students, are not lead to self-improvement and evaluation cannot fulfil its developmental role.

The motivation of students is one of the determinants affecting the education process along with other factors that are likely to influence it, including for example the family background, the society and environment where students spend their free time, certain health conditions, etc. As it can be seen, there is indeed enough of these determinants, while each of them is capable of – either alone or in combination with other factors – affecting the intellectual and education process and hence the students' evaluation and marks.

The evaluation of learning results, classroom work, practical skills and habits acquired during practical instruction can be expressed not only by the teacher's giving a mark, but also by words, movements, gestures, facial expressions indicating acceptance, approval, satisfaction, praise, possibly disapproval, etc. The evaluation of practical performance, if it is a positive one, can enhance the student's confidence, but in case of negative results it can also help learners to correct their errors or deficiencies. The relationship between teachers and students within the evaluation process has a great influence on forming the students' self-esteem, self-confidence and not the least their character.

Evaluation of the results of the teaching process for individual students can be expressed also in the form of a mark reflecting the level of the students' knowledge, their habits and skills. In practice, the most attention is often drawn to the mark itself as it

can determine the position of the student in the class, the relation of parents not only to the achievements of the student, but in some cases also to the student himself or herself. For many, the mark is the main motivation for learning, its sole purpose.

It must be noted that an experienced teacher should arouse the students' interest in learning, in acquiring new knowledge and practical skills so that students would have pleasure and interest in learning while overcoming difficulties step by step and inventing new methods for learning. Such intense intellectual activity, and not only during the lesson, but also when doing homework, would bring them joy, satisfaction and encouragement to gain further knowledge and solutions for their problems. It can be stated that students' aroused interest in learning or the learning material is the best motivation for them to learn; when the role and importance of marks is moved into the background and the sense of learning is found in completing tasks and acquiring new knowledge, which in turn can lead to solving complex tasks that previously were considered unsolvable.

6.3 The model-serving function of evaluation

By his professional approach to evaluation the teacher should achieve that evaluation could serve as a model for students' self-evaluation (autonomous evaluation) and peer evaluation, that is the one from classmates. For this, clear criteria, rules, forms and methods of evaluation should be specified. Marking the student's performance has little and very relative information value. Although the student's performance is associated with certain classification, this is not indicative of his or her qualities concerning personality, motivation and attitude. This negative phenomenon can be opposed by verbal evaluation which gives teachers the opportunity to express (verbally or orally) the strengths and weaknesses of student performance. The teacher can point out the student's diligence, the progress in cognitive areas, changes in personality traits, and the expectations of the teacher can also be outlined. For students, however, this system of criteria must be clearly legible, by which the teacher as well as students guide themselves and which they follow when being evaluated (Lajčin-Porubčanová, 2021). The teacher's evaluation affects the overall perception of the classroom atmosphere. If students perceive that the teacher's evaluation is not objective and it arouses negative emotions in them, this is reflected also in the overall social atmosphere of the class, in the nature of human relationships. And this is because the teacher is focused on negative assessment, on pointing out the mistakes in student performance. Students tend to imitate the behaviour of their teachers, they are often overly critical and unfair to each other, even negatively tuned, which does not favour positive classroom atmosphere in any way.

6.4 The function of greater efficiency in educational evaluation

Evaluation results tell us whether the teaching, the school or the school system is successful and efficient. There are various parameters, criteria that tell us about the effectiveness and successfulness of teaching. Indicators of success may be the results of students in school-leaving examinations, the results of monitoring the knowledge and skills of students finishing the 4th and 9th grade of primary schools, the results of international measurements, etc. The wide application of achievement tests enables the comparison of schools with each other, based on the results of student performance, and if countries enter international measurements, the effectiveness and successfulness of the whole school system can be measured (Kissné Zsámboki, 2021).

As a rule, the effectiveness of a school is assessed according to the number of students accepted for further study, the students' prominent positions in various competitions and their results in national measurements. These are manifesting indicators which, however, may not be representative of the actual quality of the educational work. After all, schools with good image, schools

for which there is demand, schools with attractive study offers have no shortage of students. These students generally achieve not only excellent academic results, but are also engaged in various competitions more often and with good results. Latent, but no less important indicators of a school's successfulness are the added value of educational work expressed in the individual development of each student, the application of a uniform philosophy of education at the school, the cooperation of teachers in approaching students and following their development, the application of alternative and activating teaching methods to develop students' motivation and self-knowledge, and other factors.

To sum it up, it can be stated that the absence of clearly defined indicators measuring the quality of education both externally and internally also implies the inability to objectively evaluate schools which due to their specific conditions achieve outstanding results. A serious problem is also manifested in the lack of clearly defined rules of such educational measurements which would reflect not only the immediate and the current level of the learner's knowledge, but it could track the student' progress throughout the learning process. The question therefore arises whether external measurements (Monitor) assessing a state of knowledge in two years of primary school (4th and 9th grade) in two subjects (Mathematics, Slovak, possibly the language of instruction) are truly objective?

7 Conclusion

If evaluation is subjective, it tends to be unfair resulting in the fact that the student does not agree with his or her assessment. In this case, the teacher's control and evaluation do not fulfil their functions, including that of educational, motivational and prognostic. It often happens that students who did very well at school do not succeed in life as much as their classmates with generally weaker results. One reason for this contradiction is the difference in evaluation criteria in school and practice.

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