

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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This article was published due to the project KEGA 012TTU-4/2021 "Integration of the usage of distance learning processes and the creation of electronic teaching materials into the education of future teachers".

Abstract: Schools must keep up with the tempo of rapid technology improvement. Based on the assessment of social changes schools must gain a new form of education. This new form of teaching should be considering how people learn, and how they effectively use the technology of 21st century. Students, who come to university, have abilities and knowledge about Information and Communication Technology, however the standards are different on every type of secondary schools. That's why universities must accept new conditions and teach the knowledge, which they don't possess. The goal of this work is to demonstrate the importance of information and communication technologies in the process of education as one of the most important tools enhancing the quality of tuition. The aim of education will shift to improve the skill of learning, critical thinking of the learner, improve the ability to communicate and work with information and communication technologies as well as gathering, analyzing and using information effectively and efficiently. Information literacy competency extends learning beyond formal classroom settings. Different forms of media and electronic sources of information will gain broader space

Keywords: Key competences, standards, activating methods, information literacy

1 Introduction

Nowadays quality is a dominant feature in every aspect of life. After joining the European Union, quality should be based on needs and requirements of the European Union regarding quality assurance.

The primary purpose of each school should be created based upon the requests of the labor market not based on teachers experience and intuition. It needs regular feedback (students' attitude toward learning, school, assessment of students' talent and ability). One way to increase the quality of education is to develop the system of quality management at secondary schools according to ISO 9000 standard and the TQM (Total Quality Management) philosophy. Emphasis should be placed on the quality of educational process, so that the graduates would be prepared and meet the requirements of their future employers' expectations.

2 Standards

In the most of countries in the world there is a national trend to create the requirements on the work results of schools, so-called Standards, that are regularly monitored. The most of products are required to meet a predetermined standard whereby meeting of the requirements are strictly controlled. However, it has not been provided in educational system. Nobody has basically guaranteed that the graduate has mastered the required knowledge, skills, attitudes etc. The idea of Standards in education has begun to be promoted during the last few decades according to the example of the industry (Bendíková, 2020).

The term "Standard" means the degree of perfection required for a particular purpose or accepted for preapproved model (pattern, standard, rate) by which the real objects and processes of the same category are being compared or measured. The Standards are therefore required and binding characteristics of quantitative or qualitative properties of a particular object or phenomenon.

Nowadays, multiple kinds of standards are currently discussed in the educational system. For example, the pedagogical literature distinguishes these types of standards in the United States (National Standards for Civics and Government. Draft for Review and Comment. Center for Civic Education. Calabas 1994): Students' Standards have dual form: content and performance. Content Standards are requirements that define what students should know or can do.

The content and scope of the different subjects are defined by the curriculum. The subject matter is represented mainly by appointing the knowledge to be made available to students. In the context of rapid scientific and technological development an explosion of information has begun, thus resulting in an overdimension of the curriculum. The overdimension can also be caused by the fact that the allocated number of teaching hours for the teaching of certain subjects it was reduced whereby the curriculum content remained essentially unchanged. The only way to remove overdimension of school curriculum is to reduce the effort to teach the maximum amount of information, i.e., to determine basic teaching material.

Performance Standards are detailed elaboration of the Content Standards and contain the level of achievement that is expected of them. There are three levels of achievement standards: basic, intermediate, and advanced. They are also called target standards.

Teachers' Standards: They essentially contain the detailed qualification requirements for teachers to help students accomplish the performance standards.

Schools' Standards: They include criteria for schools. Their fulfillment is to ensure an equal opportunity for all students to achieve the content and performance standards.

State and Local School Authorities' Standards: They contain criteria to assess the success of the state and local school authorities in fulfilling their mission in education.

Performance and Content standards form the Educational Standards. Each Content Standard should be determined by elaborated Performance Standards and vice versa. Both standards correspond to each other.

Evaluation Standards: They are an essential building block in the development of educational programs. Evaluation Standards define the set of criteria, organizational and methodological procedures for verifying the achievement of learning outcomes or professional competences. In relation to the acquisition of qualifications they must be based on qualification standards (Hrmo, Turek, 2003).

Evaluation standard includes:

- a) evaluation criteria for each general and professional competence. They determine how to establish the evidence that learning has been completed and demonstrated for the required competence. They must be linked to learning outcomes. Since the competences determine what a person must know and perform within a given qualification or employment, the criteria determine whether these competencies are acquired. The criteria must be specific, clear, objective, and relevant in relation to the particular competence. They must relate to only one competence.
- b) the means and methods of evaluation - defining ways and means of verification of particular competences
- c) organizational and methodical guidelines - for the course of tests. These are the different rules and regulations for final exams and school leaving examination which are part of the valid legislation (Marks, Lajčin, 2017).

3 Quality of education

In the field of education quality may be understood as a normative category, which may be expressed by the following indicators: quality of educational processes, quality of educational institutions, the quality of the educational system It can be prescribed to certain conditions (e.g., educational standards), and therefore be objectively measured and evaluated (Hrmo, Podaril, 2013).

Another tool which affects the quality of education are media. With the help of the media, it is possible to achieve a better efficiency of the teaching process and a higher language

progress of the student only thanks to good didactic management and planning. (Godiš, 2022)

Factors determining the quality of education:

- The curriculum,
- Teaching methods, procedures and means implemented in the educational process,
- Forms of knowledge verification,
- The independent creative activities of students and their involvement in research,
- Internationalization of education,
- Personal, spatial, and informational assurance of the educational process,
- Securing the study literature for subjects of the study, and more (Kaščák, Pupala, 2007)

Using the concepts quality and efficiency are indeed very frequent, but often, without a clearer definition. Especially with the introduction of globalization, the concept of quality occurs in virtually all areas of human activities, including education. Education is a service provided by an educational institution. First and foremost, it is important to note to whom this service is intended and what its purpose is. Furthermore, it is imperative to understand that learning cannot be clearly considered from an economic standpoint. The level – quality of education may be evaluated, but more subjectively, qualitatively than objectively and measurably, continuously, and long term. The specific of higher education is its 'optional nature (Marks, Lajčin, 2016).

In education the term quality (quality management) refers to several elements, for example:

- The educational system: the basis is the quality of the country's (region's) educational system, its goals, philosophy, educational content, the structure of the educational system, principles of management and financing of education, incorporation of children, youths and adults into the educational system, the ability to achieve qualification, flexibility, and openness of the educational system. To increase the quality of the educational system in a certain country, international comparability of its performance is needed through international surveys, such as PISA, TIMSS etc.
- School (school facility): We explained above that the degree of quality is the key to survival (existence) of schools. Each school ought to develop its own quality management system, which would apply to all ongoing school processes and furthermore would include all school staff as well.
- Teaching process: The teaching process is the most important of all processes at school and therefore its quality is a crucial element for the quality of schools. The quality of the teaching process in the subjects they teach can also increase the teacher individually (group of teachers) if the school has still not implemented quality management.
- Learning of pupils and students: The quality of learning of pupils and students is the culmination of efforts to increase the quality of education. The aim should be to make pupils, students acquire rational ways of learning - learning competences, to be aware of their preferred learning style and implement it, as well as metacognition and also metalearning to implement an in-depth approach to learning. The result should be a strategically focused student, someone, who wants to take the responsibility for their learning management, is able to manage his own learning and is able to optimize his learning process in school, out of school and after school years. Such pupils and students have the greatest chances of success in the current, constantly and rapidly changing world, because they will be more successful in lifelong learning (Kissné Zsámboki, 2021).

3.1 Quality of the Educational Process

The concept of TQM, even though it is based on industrial management processes, is also applicable in the field of

education, and it only requires a certain degree of adaptation. Among the most common management systems focused on quality management in Europe is the ISO 9000. The possibility of application of this standard in education is limited because it has been developed for manufacturing processes in electronics and engineering. EFQM model is also applicable in terms of education, however in the afore mentioned model the emphasis is mostly on internal assessment of the organization. TQM is primarily a philosophy which aims to ensure quality. Quality models based on the philosophy of TQM are concentrated on the human resources as the main bearer of quality and value (Marks, Lajčin, 2017).

Based on the TQM model, the following four elements are the most important features of the quality of the educational process (Pavlov, 2018):

- focus on customer satisfaction,
 - focus on the learning process,
 - continual improvement of the educational process,
 - creation of a suitable climate for teaching.
- Focus on Customer Satisfaction

The quality of teaching process is based mainly on the achievement of the teaching goals, meeting the educational standards and requirements of third parties, particularly the achievement of student and parent satisfaction. At the beginning of the school year the teacher should find out through an anonymous questionnaire or interview, how and what students want to be taught: what methods, forms, and material resources they prefer, what should be the relationship like between teacher and students, what climate should be in the classroom, which topics of the curricula they are interested in the most, and so on. As often as possible during the school year (preferably at the end of each teaching unit) the teacher should give students a short questionnaire for the assessment of the teaching unit. From time to time the teacher should have a short chat with students on „What do you suggest to improve the quality of my classes.“ Students should fill out an anonymous questionnaire for the assessment of teaching at least once each semester, which includes an assessment of personality of the teacher. (Bendíková, 2014).

- Focus on the Teaching Process

If unsatisfactory results of teaching are found first and only after that the correction are made, it is usually too late. It is much more effective to prevent shortcomings than to correct them additionally. Therefore, in TQM and also in other quality management systems the focus on the quality of the teaching process is advised. Teachers should be familiar with the latest information, trends, innovations in pedagogy, psychology, methods of teaching of particular subjects and other scientific disciplines, and of course in content of subjects they teach and apply these innovations in education. This requires systematic and regular further training of teachers, their professional and career development. (Pavlov, 2018).

Teachers should have access to the latest information; thus, they should ensure to have enough literature and magazines. It is necessary to remove overdimensioned curriculum and determine what the basic curriculum is for subjects because less is usually more. It is necessary to respect the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary approach. (Porubčanová, 2018) In the learning process it is necessary to apply humanistic approaches towards students, because humanistic education is based on trust in the abilities of the students, their self-realization and creativity.

- Continual Improvement of the Educational Process

To improve the teaching process teachers should constantly think, analyse, and evaluate their own work and try to improve it. An essential part of their work should be a systematic approach called PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle.

The aim of the continual improvement of certain steps and activities is a good and reliable process, because if all the steps and activities are carried out properly, then it is assumed that the entire process will meet the expectations of customers. If a service (eg. learning process) does not meet the expectations of partners, despite well-performed steps and activities, then there is nothing else left but to schedule a new process (Szókö, 2016). An essential part of the teacher's work should be a systematic approach called PDCA cycle (Pavlov, 2018). This cycle consists of four stages:

1. Planning activities which are essential for education improvement.
2. Realization of the plan.
3. Evaluation of the realized plan with adequate methods.
4. Analysis of the results during the creation of new plan. (Turek, 2014)

An important aspect of the PDCA cycle is the integration of newly tested and proven methods into the standard course. This integration must happen after the innovation test.

- Creating favorable climate in teaching

The classroom climate is the atmosphere and mood that prevails in the classroom. According to Kissné Zsámboki (2021) the concept of climate means typical human relationship, the modes of interrelated communication, that influence participants' feelings and intuitions.

The classroom climate significantly influences students' motivation. In successful schools, teachers are interested in their own subjects. The climate is demanding which means that the teachers require the best from their students, and the students can achieve that. Students are dominantly taught in this demanding way, because the teachers expect that the results of students will become better (so called Pygmalion effect). Newer researches imply that this effect is overestimated. (Raudenbush 1984). Still a lot of teachers believe in it. It is important that the teacher creates conditions to raise motivation (with the help of suitable education materials and tools).

In learning process teachers should create an environment in which students would not be scared, nervous or bored. They should allow the student to experience success, support and develop their personality, have expectations which meet the students' individual abilities.

Climate in the classroom is influenced by:

- Communication and teaching methods,
- Students' participation in the classroom,
- Preferential attitudes and teachers' expectations towards students,
- Climate of the school. (Kaščák, Pupala, 2010)

To improve the climate in the classroom is possible through:

- 1) Improve the relationship between pupils: trying to increase the feeling of being part of the same team, organizing events in and out of school. Making use of pair work, group work a eliminate of bullying, aggression, and humiliation in the classroom.
- 2) Increase students' interest in teaching: make teaching more interesting, insert tasks, which show practical use of the curriculum, motivate students to do some work outside the class, help increase the need of students self-determination, self-realization.
- 3) Keep order and calm in the classroom: teaching process can be fun, but it is necessary to prevent intentional interference. (Belz, et al, 2001; Hrmo, et al., 2003)

4 Modular system of education

Quality is the measure of the perfection, preciousness, usefulness of the education and learning, fulfilling of requirement and

expectations of the schools' clients: pupils, students, parents, employees, citizens of the country. Quality of the education can continuously rise without consideration of the actual level.

It is possible to study computer science at the university in a modular way. This means that students can only study those topics that they do not know. Students who apply to IT universities have different knowledge of the given field, as they studied at different high schools according to different standards. The different level of students' knowledge has an impact on the students' further study.

Students entering their first year at university usually do not reach the necessary level of information skills of a senior according to existing standards. The reasons of these differences are different. One of the reasons could be the kind of secondary school or the level of ICT (information and communication technology) education. Furthermore, not every student has the same connection with ICT, hence they have lower motivation. The previously mentioned reasons of student knowledge differences stem from the external factors of education. These external factors encompass the material and technological preparedness of the specific schools and the level of student preparedness. The material and technology tooling of the education is impacted by the financial abilities of the specific subjects. These can be changed in a short timeframe through cooperation with state authorities. The level of student preparedness is not so easy to equalize. It could be possible, that the different knowledge of the students, coming to universities, will be a problem for a long time. One of the solutions for this issue specifically aligned with informatics subject can be the modular system of education.

To ensure sufficient informational knowledge on single education levels, the educational programs contain basic and special subjects oriented for informatics and ICT.

5 Offer for the content and aim of single modules

To avoid redundancy in the education process, and that all students could make connection between the present and previous studies about informatics the modular system of education for this subject was created.

Individual modules have a defined structure: introduction, objective, content, and effect standard, learning material, summary, self-test, conclusion, supplementary literature, and bibliographic references.

The modular system of education contains 5 modules. These 5 modules are taught during two semesters. The first 3 modules are available in first/winter semester and the last 2 modules are available on second/summer semester. These modules contain approximately 20 hours of classes. Altogether the modules contain 104 hours. At the beginning of the first semester the students have to pass an entering test and based on the outputs they sign up for the specific module.

Educational support of modules is divided and structured with the goal to make the teaching of the participants maximally effective. The effectivity is primarily in that the participant can concentrate on the content of learning, because the study text contains element which accelerates auto regulation. After the sign up to the subject (course) the participants get the study material.

The input diagnostics of the module: lector with the help of diagnostic dialog and cloak test evaluate the knowledge and ability of the student. If it is needed, the lector defines individual tasks which the participant of the course solves and send back to the lector in electronic form for evaluation. This method provides the lector with enough information to find out if the successfully absolved the course.

6 Type of testing

The type of testing where students are allowed to use any literature and aids (open-book exam) is also widespread. Such testing is focused mainly on higher cognitive processes such as analytical or critical, creative thinking, the ability to solve problems, the ability to acquire and use information, etc.

At present, authentic learning and the authentic evaluation of students is a very current trend. The teacher organizes the teaching process in a way so that it could be comparable to the real world and life as much as possible and students could apply the subject matter of instruction meaningfully, for example creating something that brings joy to themselves, their parents, friends, or other loved ones. With authentic evaluation the artificial school task is not assessed (e.g., the exercises of an achievement test), only the student's performance, which is meaningful even outside teaching, out of the school. For example, it is not enough if the student describes the general phenomena of the electromagnetic field, but he is able to design an operating front doorbell. With authentic evaluation it is not sufficient that students merely reproduce the curriculum, but on the contrary, they must search for information, interpret them, analyze, produce, create, explore, and solve problems related to the subject (Porubčanová, 2018).

The students could also be involved as partners in the evaluation process. For example, they can correct and assess educational tests themselves according to predetermined criteria which can be formed with their and the teacher's involvement. Such a procedure has an educational impact as well, forming various character traits of students, such as honesty, fairness and persistence. It is also appropriate from time to time to carry out a discussion with students focused on testing, evaluation and marking. One of the current trends is also students' self-assessment and their assessment of other students, called peer evaluation. Both of these evaluations are taken into account in the final evaluation. For example, a student will first evaluate his response alone (essay, oral report etc.) then it is assessed by his classmates and eventually by the teacher who compares and considers the student's self-evaluation, his/her own and the evaluation of classmates. Students thus learn to evaluate themselves, to value other people, objects, processes and the phenomena of the surrounding world and to receive and reflect on the evaluation of their person from others.

The formative evaluation of students is advised to use in a much greater extent. The aim of formative evaluation is feedback, acquiring information on how students learn, detecting and diagnosing weaknesses, mistakes, difficulties and their causes in the process of learning in order to eliminate them and make students' learning activities more efficient. For the teacher, feedback helps to choose the optimal teaching practices. Formative assessment was not used to be associated with the marking of students. Formative assessment is often identified with students' continuous testing and evaluation. This is a mistake because in continuous evaluation the subject matter of one or more lessons is assessed, the causes of deficiencies are not detected and the student is not usually informed of these deficiencies, nor on how to eliminate them and make the learning process more efficient (Zapletal, ez all, 2022).

Verbal evaluation of students is also widely used complementing the marking process or even replacing it. It is very difficult to assess students' attitudes, interests, their value system, talents, skills and core competences with a mark. The biggest disadvantage of verbal evaluation is that words can be ambiguous. Verbal evaluation is more laborious than the evaluation with a number, as the teacher must invent a verbal assessment for each student, plus pay attention to avoiding its repetition. Therefore, the tendency is to combine number-based evaluation with verbal evaluation. Verbal evaluation should include in particular:

- the student's interests, special skills, talents,
- the quality of the achieved results,

- moral and personal characteristics, diligence and conscientiousness,
- activity and independence,
- the understanding of spiritual values,
- the level of the student's key competences (how he can study independently and rationally, what his relationship is to learning, the ability to solve appropriate problem tasks, the level of critical and creative thinking, communication skills, personal and interpersonal competences, e.g. the willingness to help others, respect, courtesy),
- the level of knowledge and skills of the student,
- behaviour, respect for educational and social requirements,
- aesthetic expressions and aesthetic sense,
- the protection of material values (Zapletal, Hanuliaková, 2015).

In vocational training there is a tendency for testing and focusing evaluation on acquiring the relevant professional and key competences, and achieving the appropriate standards. Evaluation is often external. Not only teachers evaluate students, but vice versa, students also assess the quality of teachers' work through anonymous questionnaires. The humanization of students' evaluation is based mainly on trending towards the progress in their development, detecting and evaluating changes in their attitude, skills and knowledge, compared to a previous state, and the students themselves at the time. It is thus about the individualization of the student's evaluation. Comparing the student's performance with the standard is subordinate here and is implemented through tests to verify the achievement of the required educational standards. The aim of the humanistic-oriented evaluation of students is to develop their self-assessment skills (Lajčín, Porubčanová, 2021).

In our research paper we conducted a cloak test in the first semester of ICT classes. We want to analyse the success rate of students in modular system of education. This analysis was conducted for number of informatics hours optimization. By making the modules not required for the people able to pass the tests we expected that the overall number of informatics hours will drop down significantly.

7 Results of the experiment

The number of students, who have worked out the cloak test in the first semester, was 181. Students must reach minimally 60% on the test, to finish the module.

Total claim of students on the faculty - first year

Table no. 1 Result of the formula in the first class

Modules	Above 60%	Below 60%
Module 1	107	74
Module 2	99	82
Module 3	52	132
Module 4	20	161
Module 5	0	181

Those who were able to pass the cloak tests were not made to take the informatics hours. Hence the overall number of hours dropped.

Table no. 2 Number of needed groups in weeks in the first semester

Weeks	1-5	6-9	10-14
Need	74	82	132
Don't need	107	99	52
Number of groups in week	3	3	5

Without our modular system 6 group were expected to be created for the informatics hours. That would make 336 hours of informatics per semester. From the table no. 2 we can conclude that the number of groups differed during the first semester from the expected value. For the first 9 weeks only 3 groups were made and for the last five weeks 5 groups were created. Therefore only 208 hours of informatics were held. These

altogether concluded in an overall change of -38% in hours. The final exam from the informatics class had to be made by all students even if they have not participated in specific modules of the subject.

8 Conclusion

In today's society, the use of various forms of information and communication technologies as well as working with information is a daily activity. The amount of information available to humanity is growing at an enormous rate, therefore it is important to know how to search for it, select it, sort it, process it, assess its relevance, and use it. Hence it is necessary that foremost the university-educated people are information literate.

Although informatics is taught in secondary schools, not all students come to university with sufficient knowledge and skills in this area. It remains the task of universities to ensure that during their studies the students acquire the level of knowledge in this field required by society, as well as adequate skills in controlling computer equipment.

However, the school's capacities are often limited, both in terms of the number of computer laboratories and the number of teachers. Therefore, we tried to find a way to limit the number of teaching hours. The presented module system made it possible to reduce the number of teaching hours, while the success rate of passing the course improved. The system is acceptable for both students and teachers. Students don't have to be bored in classes whose content they have mastered and have more time to devote to new parts of the content. On the other hand, educators can focus on students with weaker knowledge of the given area to achieve the necessary level of knowledge.

We know that schools must keep up with the rapid progress of technology and be part of social changes. It is necessary for an educated person to know what processes are taking place in a given society, what events are happening in it, in order to be prepared for the changes that development brings. Knowing the society, we live in is important not only for future teachers who will prepare the new generation for life in the information society, but also for economists and managers who will manage this society. Only schools that use new forms of education based on the results of pedagogical research and effectively use modern technologies of the 21st century can prepare them for this.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AM