

"EVALUATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL AND LEARNING PROCESSES - KEY DIDACTICAL QUESTION"

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Summary

In this paper authors problematize the key didactical question - 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 at answering the question of evaluation in the process of education and learning, but also another way of asking and pondering over new questions.

Key words: Evaluation - Processes of Education and Learning - Educational and Learning Goals and Tasks - Evaluation Criteria - Student Achievement – Grading - Negative Effects of Grading – "Hello-effect"

1. INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM

Both educational and learning processes end with certain results. If we conceive education and learning as a process directed towards a certain goal, the control (observation and evaluation) of goals is needed. These processes of observation, verification and evaluation are called evaluation processes (Fr. Evaluation). In etymological sense of the word, evaluation processes are directed towards the feasibility assessment of educational (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 educational (teaching) and learning goals and tasks and the feasibility of these goals and tasks. It is generally believed that evaluation processes are primarily directed towards the feasibility assessment of education and learning from the aspect of student success and achievement in cognitive, affective and psychomotor development, i.e. these processes are means of ascertaining student success as a result of educational and learning process and student developmental possibilities (Lavrnja, 1998). In the evaluation processes some aspects of assessment are neglected, like the assessment of conditions, techniques, methods and teaching and learning technologies, for the purpose of achieving an effectively organized educational and learning process.

2. EVALUATION IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING- KEY DIDACTICAL QUESTION

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

In that sense W. Schulz speaks of anthropogenic, i.e. individual and socio-cultural preconditions and consequences of all stages of the teaching process, and especially the learning process. The evaluation of the educational goals normally includes establishing the increase in learning (changes caused by the process of learning and other processes of student development).

In the assessment of everyday education and learning, subjective experiences and criteria are exerted. The feasibility assessment of the 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 feasibility evaluation of educational and learning goals and tasks can be a selective factor that could possibly set aside pedagogical tasks of improving educational and learning conditions and processes (Bežen, 1991; Bognar, 1993; Grgin, 2001).

Success and failure in the educational and learning process determine the social rise of an individual, while the methods of assessment have a socially discriminating function. Based on the weakness of accomplishing educational and learning goals and tasks, pedagogically based and responsible assessment and evaluation points out to student "good" and "bad" sides, his possibilities and values, points out the positive and good, but also what needs to be repaired and perfected in the educational and teaching process. The assessment of tasks and goals accomplishment has a motivating role; it stimulates processes and contributes to the rise of promptness of completing the set educational and learning goals. The assessment of feasibility of educational and learning goals is socially relevant as long as there exist highly technological and 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 work, teaching and learning

processes, the process of activity, the forthcoming activity and its results are all evaluated and put in relation to the set standards.

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

Therefore, the evaluation process and its results (estimation and evaluation of the teaching and learning results) further determine the process of learning in the sense of setting new educational and learning tasks and contents. The results of the evaluation process point out the success in the learning process, but also the omissions and the need for additional activities that would undo the mistakes made and thus improve the learning process.

Evaluation processes inform both the student and the teacher of the accomplishments (results of teaching and learning processes) and of the conditions in which these results were accomplished. Evaluation is directed towards the ascertaining of the present and the past state of student development, comparing that state with the plan of student development (expected results) and towards guidance and enhancement of the educational and learning process and the feasibility of optimally possible student development (Kramar, 1993; Lavrnja, 1999; Pongrac, 1980).

In that sense evaluation is not just a final act of the educational and learning process, but it is necessary in all stages of the 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 also that this kind of continuing evaluation represents a feedback for the student and the teacher, so they could gradually approximate the set goals (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 educational and teaching process. It is used for evaluation of learning results in relation to the set goals and tasks from the aspect of student accomplishment and development, but also from the aspect of teacher's work and the conditions in which the learning process went on. In that sense, evaluation should be carried out 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 educational and teaching goals and tasks (Vrcelj, 1996; Pastuović, 1999).

The process of evaluation in education and learning is based on a systematic observation and verification, i.e. gathering information, indicators of how students achieve what they want, expected goals and tasks that are set in education and teaching.

Gathering those indicators is done in many different ways (oral, written, observation of psychomotor operations, practical works etc.), and gathered information serve as a basis for the control of learning goals. The results of testing in the process of evaluation still do not have to, and normally they are not a subject of grading. They serve students and teachers, primarily, as a corrective, as a regulator for achieving a greater, wanted accomplishment.

Grading is classifying, sorting out the work and learning results into specific categories, i.e. sorting them into a system of different accomplishment levels. Grading in the process of education and learning is a specification of a complex situation. In awarding 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 criterion is a level (quality and quantity) of achieved teaching and learning goals, grading is still not devoid of those components that result from educational (teaching) and learning as a communicative process, i.e. learning and teaching as a certain affective context (Matijević, 2004).

Grading individuals and groups is based on questioning (oral, written, practical) or is based on observation of student 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, valorization. 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 accomplishment, a human act in which we do not only grade student knowledge, skills, habits, abilities...but complete student behaviour and his/her reactions.

In that sense, with all the complexity of the evaluation of student accomplishments, development and techniques that are applied in those processes, grade demonstration in the educational 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 education and learning.

In order for negative aspects of grading to "decompose" or at least diminish, and to maximize motivation and perfect confidence and self-evaluation 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 are: informative, motivational, prognostic, diagnostic, selective, classifying and promotional. Informative function is manifested in a way that the grade informs the student of his/her accomplishment and success, of his/her "good" and "weak" sides in the teaching and learning process. The grade informs the teacher of student 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 concerned with the student success and accomplishment in the process of education and teaching (Bežen, 1991; Jensen, 2003).

Grade as an assumption and the means of motivation in the educational and learning process has a significant motivational function. It can induce and maximize the interest and motivation for the teaching and learning process. The grade can also be a means of motivation-reducing in the process of teaching and learning, especially if it is deduced in a lack of objectivity and argumentation.

The grade has a prognostic and a diagnostic function. It can serve as a means for diagnosing the initial stage, source basis in the process of teaching and learning, diagnosing the quality and the level of student accomplishments and development, which factors condition the quality and the level of accomplishment. The grade as a prognosticator serves as a presumption 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 presumptions, conditions and reasons for success and failure of a student and a possibility of overruling failure and enhancing educational 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 which take into consideration individual norms of relation, that always presupposes the comparison with achieved results of others, and the comparison with personal accomplishments and results as well.

Grade is a presumption and a means of advancement and promotion, within the system of teaching and grading and within the system of schooling and the wider social context of advancement and promotion of individuals and groups (Anderson, 2001; Kyriacou, 1998).

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

If we assume that grading can never be objectified and fully humanized, there is always a chance that teachers and students are permanently interceding and "fighting" for it. Complexity of the 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 (Lavrnja, 1998).

When we speak of grading subject, we think of the complexity of components and modality factors that are the result of the educational and learning process (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.

Take for example curriculum as a basic landmark for work in teaching and learning.

The relation between 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 in the same subject. Teachers that take 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 the differences between the students on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor, but also socio-cultural aspect, find themselves in a situation in which they expect equal requirements for every student, are objective and just towards every student, and because of that are "nonobjective and unrighteous" and do not pay respect to the difference between students (Matijević, 2004).

Grading and grades are not just estimations and reflections of facts of quantity and quality of requirements feasibility which stem from program goals, tasks and educational and learning content. It is an activity directed towards the whole process of reaching results.

Grading is thus accompanied by series of affectively-willing and other components which stem from education and learning as a communication process.

When it comes to grading there are always specific characteristics of teachers who grade students who then accept his/her grade and see it in a specific way. It is known that those characteristics affect student-teacher relationships. Teacher characteristics and personality structure, his attitudes and beliefs, his "personal philosophy", "personal equation" significantly affects the grading of accomplishment and student success.

These differences in teacher personalities are nothing unusual or new in the work teachers do while teaching and learning and in processes of evaluating student accomplishment and development. However, what is important in the process of grading in education and learning is the necessity for a teacher to be conscious of his own personal properties than can sometimes be a distracter in teaching and learning, especially in the field of verification and grading student accomplishment.

How complicated the process of grading is can be seen in the questions that every student and teacher ask in the process of knowledge evaluation (what is actually being evaluated, which knowledge and on what level). 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 evident in the process of learning and teaching (capabilities of critical and creative thinking and creative relation towards the teaching and learning in general) can cause problems and obstacles in the communication with the teacher. Because of that, critical thinking can be under graded. In the process of evaluation, other difficulties connected with the teacher's vision of "subjects and procedures" of evaluation process can come to light. 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, the "halo-effect" as a source of mistakes and difficulties in grading is mentioned. It is 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. The "halo effect" causes mistakes and an "unreal picture" of students' grades because the "general impression" and a grade delineated from that impression is based on knowing inadequate number of student qualities, work and advancement in the process of educational and learning. In the process of evaluation, the teacher can apply different criteria, depending whether the class is better or worse. In that case, a grade is not a result of accomplishment but belonging to a specific group, class. Grades acquired 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 is an expression, with all its subjective touches, of the estimation of student achievement and at the same time opinion about them, 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 development. The grade becomes a means 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 means in the series of privileges, a means of promotion and a means of preservation and maximization of student personal reputation. In those circumstances the grade is obligatory, it is its own goal and not a means in the function of getting knowledge, capability development and other characteristics and properties in student 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 work. When we speak of problems and difficulties in the process of grading and evaluating, we encounter various questions and dilemmas. Those are, primarily, as we have already pointed out, the questions of the grading subject complexity, of the teacher and his role in those processes, of the student, his/her characteristics and capabilities and taking that into account in the grading process, of methodology (subjectivity and objectivity of the methods and procedures applied in grading student accomplishment and work in the teaching and learning process). When it comes to evaluation methodology, we should point out that, in spite of the endeavors to, beside "subjective" ones (based on oral, written, practical or observation of student behaviour and reaction...), present objective, objectified approaches, "instruments" (knowledge tests, ability tests, act tests, scales of valuation, scales of judgement, personality tests and other "objective instruments and methods"), questions of how does qualitative and quantitative teaching and learning effect student accomplishment still remains unanswered. Sometimes grades more represent a quantitative side of knowledge and student accomplishment in general, and less a qualitative aspects of learning and teaching (abilities, motivation and interest, work...), i.e., the attention is directed to cognitive and psychomotor and less to affective aspect of personality development in the learning and educational (teaching) process.

3. EVALUATION AND PRINCIPLE OF SUCCESS

Effect or success is considered to be the basis of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are organized and are performed for student's success and advancement sake. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure student's success in cognitive, psychomotoral and conative field.

In that sense, the principle of effect or success ensuring has been affirmed. It is especially evident in the historical development of teaching when the principle of success knocked down class and socioeconomical privileges in education. In spite of that, favourizing of the success principle as a leading principle today is questionable because of the fact that the complete orientation to the success principle means putting school in the function of students selection without the possibility to influence mechanisms of social preselection and postselection. Complete orientation on the success principle can anticipate "fear and competition" and in that way disagree with pedagogical principles of student's "educational and developmental maximum" achievement. The success principle in teaching and learning is to be observed in the context of "optimal" development demand of each individual in accordance with his individual properties and conditions in which the process of teaching and learning is performed.

The success principle has its basis in the fact that education towards critical aptitude is needed for success, i.e. in the teaching and learning process "success for itself is not required, but it is critically evaluated why and to what purpose is the student's success needed" (Aebly, 1979, pp.54). This means that the success principle sets motivational factors as a chance for success, and not a fear of failure. Forms of competition are suppressed in favour of cooperative actions, student's individual characteristics in the process of teaching and learning are taken as an example. Evaluation of success and achievement of a student can be efficient if the student's activity is completely observed and evaluated. It does not apply only to results of teaching and learning, but also to processes, especially to processes of ability, skills and values development.

Principle of success and achievement should not be based only on the estimation of a process (quantity and quality of learned, applied methods, means and alike), but also on the ways of improving these processes so the students could achieve better results, better success. The estimations of student's success in the teaching and learning process should be based on the subsequent and continuing observation. Concurrent evaluation of results and processes is the preassumption for the possibility of achieving student's optimal success. Subsequent evaluation of success and achievement of a student is inefficient and unreliable, because the results of teaching and learning can be influenced by different factors that do not depend on the teaching and learning process. The success principle in teaching and learning is directed towards the motivational-corerelative function. By observing a student we can ensure a feedback on student's work, studying, motivation, activity, effort and possible ways of improving work, creating better assumptions and criteria for efficient learning.

4. THE CONCLUSION

The beginning of the learning process and its quality depend on the affective characteristics of the individual. The modern system of evaluation presupposes that grading and evaluation of student accomplishment is a process in which the grade is an indicator of the work value (e.g. knowledge) that stems from series of factors of student psycho structure and socio structure (will, persistence...) and factors that stem from impacts and contributions of socio-cultural presumptions, conditions of the environment the student is coming from. In order for all components and factors of the 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 a complex interpersonal act.

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