

Formative Assessment and Educational Benefits

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Evaluation in education is a complex and multifaceted process, linked to teaching and planning. It represents a powerful tool for regulating behaviors, refining actions, and adapting educational interventions to the specific context in which they are implemented. In this evaluation framework, the work aims to highlight the educational value of assessment, considered a moment in which both the teacher and the student are involved in the teaching-learning process. In particular, formative assessment allows you to find essential information to understand the progress of the actions implemented, highlighting strengths and weaknesses to intervene in educational planning. In this sense, it becomes a valid support for both teachers and students as it allows them to monitor the progress of the teaching/learning process. The work is divided into two parts: the first is theoretical, in which the transition from the assessment of learning (summative) to the assessment for learning (formative) is presented; the second is focused on formative assessment and feedback practices. From a methodological perspective, the literature review emphasizes the potential of assessment that involves students both as recipients and active participants through peer assessment. The paper highlights potential and challenges aimed at improving and experimenting with ways to enhance evaluation competence, which prepares students for professional life.

educational evaluation

formative assessment

feedback

self-regulated learning

Evaluation involves recognizing a situation by gathering information to make a judgment that informs action and change. As a result, the evaluation process impacts individuals on personal, relational, and social levels ^[1].

In the docimological field, evaluation is not a decontextualized action, but a process consisting of two moments: the detection phase and the expression of judgment ^[2]; the first corresponds to measurement and the second to the evaluation itself ^[3].

Evaluation represents an essential moment of the training process; it allows you to reflect and reconsider the planned intervention, understand the progress made along the chosen path, and adapt the training environment in light of the established objectives.

Evaluation allows you to reflect and rethink the planned intervention, understand the progress of the path undertaken, and how to adapt the training setting, taking into account the established objectives. Educational evaluation is an integral part of the planning process and serves different purposes depending on the timing of its implementation. There are three phases of evaluation to consider: ex-ante evaluation, which has a diagnostic function; in-itinere evaluation, which takes place during the formative process; and ex-post evaluation, which has a summative function.

The ex-ante evaluation provides a snapshot of the starting situation in terms of formative needs. From the results collected, the educational intervention will be designed, the activities will be prepared, specific tools and materials will be adopted, and the moments and aspects of the path to be implemented will be defined. The in-itinere evaluation that takes place during the implementation of the educational intervention performs a dual function of monitoring and orientation. This moment provides information related to the objectives set for all parties involved. The ex-post evaluation, which is carried out at the end of the design process, has the purpose of verifying the correctness of the procedures and the correspondence between the results obtained and the objectives set. These phases are linked by a circular relationship that suggests an integrated and dynamic vision of the evaluation process. Evaluating in education means investigating multiple factors: individual and group in terms of motivation, expectations, and roles; on methodological and organizational aspects [4].

About the objects of evaluation, there are various factors involved in the training process to be considered and, in this articulation, the terminological distinction between evaluation and assessment falls: one intensely focused on determining the quality of systems/processes concerning explicit criteria; the other focused more on the products of learning, on the performance of knowledge, skills, and competences [5].

There are four distinct forms of assessment based on the primary actor responsible for the evaluation process: self-assessment, teacher assessment, peer assessment, and group assessment [6]. Summarizing what Trincherro [6] declares, the characteristics of each typology are explained below. Self-assessment, or sharing assessment criteria with the reference community, allows students to emancipate themselves from the cognitive sphere. Although not pursuing strictly didactic objectives, this assessment instance aims to make students aware of the work and objectives achieved; it trains metacognitive capacity, understood as the ability to reflect on one's cognitive strategies and to adjust them appropriately, and affects the sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem. On the other hand, several critical issues related to self-assessment can be identified. One concern is that students may feel isolated during the process, since they often look to their peers as role models. Furthermore, students may not fully understand the assessment criteria provided. There are also motivational factors to consider: many students are not used to self-assessment, since the school system typically educates them to be assessed by teachers. As a result, they may have difficulty recognizing the value of self-assessment as a practice. Reflection on a product (short essays, multiple choice essays, a paper, etc.) or the activated process aims to recognize the objectives achieved compared to those expected, the difficulties encountered, the errors committed, the strategies implemented, and their effectiveness.

The teacher assessment is carried out by a teacher and/or tutor who is assumed to have in-depth knowledge. The evaluation can traditionally be carried out "manually" or through automatic tools. This form of assessment allows students to verify the achievement of objectives and, where necessary, to orient themselves towards remedial activities. In addition to focusing on the contents of knowledge, teachers and tutors must also pay attention to the social and motivational aspects of learning.

Peer assessment involves having one or more students evaluate a learning product. In this case, the student assesses the work of his classmates, based on criteria shared by the whole group, and at the same time receives

an assessment from his peers. By involving more assessors, there is a reflection on a product or process from more points of view, with the possibility of highlighting more specific aspects and receiving more critical insights and suggestions for improvement (self-assessment by comparison). By involving assessors who participate in the same experiences, it is possible to grasp aspects that an external assessor might not. The active involvement of students significantly enhances motivation and increases their sense of responsibility. Additionally, when students assess the work of their peers, they gain valuable insights to improve their work. Among the disadvantages of the practice are the workload required of students and the risk of poorly objective evaluations. A helpful tool from this perspective is the rubric, which is defined as a grid of predefined criteria. The peer assessment leads to the establishment of positive dynamics for learning, such as, for example, comparison with the class's work can bring out aspects of the problem and resolutions not considered by the student, and the student acquires awareness of the plurality of answers to the problem.

In group assessment, a reference group assesses the objectives achieved and the processes followed by individual members and the entire group. This evaluation may be conducted in person or via technology, such as focus groups designed for evaluation purposes. Key benefits of group evaluations include gaining diverse perspectives, understanding relationship dynamics, and encouraging members to share their work with the group. However, a potential disadvantage is the emergence of negative group dynamics. This may arise from issues related to leadership and subordination, as well as unconstructive criticism, which can lead to demotivation, particularly among quieter members.

This breakdown encourages us to reflect on the complex nature of assessment. This complexity arises from the different actors involved in the processes and outcomes, including students and teachers. Furthermore, teaching encompasses pedagogical, didactic, methodological, relational, and communicative dimensions that contribute to this intricate nature.

References

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