

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CLASSES AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

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Abstract:

The evaluation process plays a decisive role in the educational trajectory of the student, guiding and directing their learning activity, fostering a strong motivation toward learning, and providing the opportunity to assess the extent to which school tasks have been accomplished and educational objectives have been achieved. However, all these aspects depend on the teacher's skill in designing and implementing a modern form of assessment in the classroom—one that inspires confidence in the student and cultivates their motivation for knowledge. Alongside teaching and learning, assessment represents a major component of the educational process. It is a systematic approach to determining the relevance and value of teaching and learning practices, as well as of students' performance and behaviour, by referencing a set of performance indicators - namely, predetermined criteria and standards- with the goal of making informed decisions for their improvement.

Keywords: evaluation, school, pedagogy, assessment

Rezumat:

Procesul de evaluare joacă un rol decisiv în traiectoria educațională a elevului, ghidând și orientând activitatea acestuia de învățare, cultivând o motivație puternică spre învățare și oferind oportunitatea de a evalua măsura în care sarcinile școlare au fost îndeplinite și obiectivele educaționale au fost atinse. Cu toate acestea, toate aceste aspecte depind de abilitatea profesorului de a proiecta și implementa o formă modernă de evaluare în sala de clasă - una care inspiră încredere elevului și îi cultivă motivația pentru cunoaștere. Alături de predare și învățare, evaluarea reprezintă o componentă majoră a procesului educațional. Este o abordare sistematică a determinării relevanței și valorii practicilor de predare și învățare, precum și a performanței și comportamentului elevilor, prin referire la un set de indicatori de performanță - și anume, criterii și standarde predeterminate - cu scopul de a lua decizii informate pentru îmbunătățirea acestora.

Cuvinte cheie: evaluare, școală, pedagogie, evaluare

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The quality and effectiveness of the educational process depend on rigorous pedagogical planning, on the selection of the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies, and on the implementation of a fair and effective assessment system. Such assessment should contribute to the student's psychological development, enable the interactive adjustment of teaching and learning, and offer the student opportunities for self-analysis and self-monitoring of their own learning in relation to the intended objectives. At the same time, it allows the teacher to tailor and adapt instruction to the student's intellectual abilities and specific needs.

In conclusion, assessment provides valuable information to the student, teacher, parent, and school regarding academic progress, individual capacities, and the performance levels achieved by each learner. This process has a motivational character and serves as a mirror of the activity carried out both inside and outside the classroom by the teacher in collaboration with the students.

Over time, the evolution of the concept of assessment has been shaped by several perspectives:

- **Comparative assessment**, whose main function was to compare students and rank them based on their levels of achievement;
- **Objective-based assessment**, which aims to provide functional information by enabling students to position themselves in relation to the achievement of common objectives and offering ways for improvement;
- **Corrective assessment**, whose goal is to offer students additional information based on identified difficulties, thereby facilitating learning;
- **Awareness-based assessment**, which enables students to take part in their own educational development by becoming aware of their own difficulties and knowledge gaps.

In the pedagogical literature, three categories of definitions have been identified, derived from these perspectives. The first category includes definitions that equate the act of measuring students' academic results with assessment (*assessment = measurement*). The second category includes definitions suggesting that assessment should determine the degree of congruence between students' performance and pre-established operational objectives (*assessment = congruence with operationalized educational objectives*). The third category consists of definitions that focus on making value judgments about both learning processes and academic results, based on qualitative criteria (*assessment = the expression of value judgments*).



Contemporary definitions of school assessment converge toward the following formulation: To assess means to make value judgments regarding the process and product of student learning, based on pre-established qualitative criteria. I.T. Radu states that assessment is both “a component of the pedagogical act of instruction and education of students” (Radu,I.T.,1981,p.15.) and *a process that intertwines organically with the other elements of the didactic act, performing an essential-formative function, expressed through informing and supporting decision-making aimed at improving educational activity as a whole.*(Radu,I.T., 2007, p.42.)

V. Popescu defines assessment as *a socio-pedagogical operation that accompanies and integrates into the instructional-educational action, serving as both the starting point and the premise for the continuous self-regulation and improvement of this activity and of the education system as a whole.*(Mircescu,M. 2015,p.21.)

According to Adrian Stoica, *assessment concerns the entirety of processes and products that measure the nature and level of performance achieved by students in learning; it evaluates the extent to which learning outcomes align with the intended educational objectives; it provides the necessary data to support optimal educational decision-making.*(Stoica,A., 2003,p.14.)

In conclusion, assessment should increasingly focus on student learning, on the student's cognitive processes, and on the regulation and self-regulation of knowledge. Based on these principles, school assessment must become dynamic, centered on the learner's mental processes, fostering self-regulation and self-reflection, and replacing the traditional view based on control, examination, and sanction. (Geantă, A. E. , 181-189)

The Relationship Between Assessment, Teaching, and Learning

Considered as a process, education involves the alternation of teaching, learning, and assessment activities. Thus, teaching, learning, and assessment are interdependent processes that mutually condition one another: teaching initiates the learning process. Once learning occurs, and throughout its course, assessment is employed (as the educational process is one that involves both regulation and self-regulation). Therefore, the results of assessment are directly dependent on the quality of learning, which, in turn, is dependent on the quality of teaching. Teaching is “the organization of learning experiences that provoke desirable changes in students' behaviors. In practice, teaching makes sense only to the extent that it triggers and sustains appropriate learning efforts from students, thus initiating and maintaining their learning activity.”(Potolea,D.,*ibidem*, p.206)



Learning is *an intellectual and physical activity carried out systematically in order to acquire knowledge and form skills necessary for the continuous development of one's personality.*(Potolea,D.,*ibidem*, p.206)

Assessment refers to the teacher's activity of verifying, measuring, and evaluating the results of the student in relation to pre-established educational objectives. The assessment process should be carried out in a way that supports and stimulates teaching and learning, highlighting both successful aspects and critical aspects that need to be addressed later. Understanding the relationships between assessment, teaching, and learning is intended to facilitate the regulation of the teacher's activity by providing information on the quality of teaching and on how the content of instruction is determined, organized, and delivered. Therefore, *assessment refers to the activity through which information about the state and functioning of a system, as well as its results, are collected, processed, and interpreted. This activity leads to the evaluation of these results based on predetermined criteria and influences the system's evolution.*(Radu,I.T., *ibidem*, p.208.)

Functions of Assessment

The range of assessment functions at the primary level is complex.

In the *Guide to Assessment – Romanian Language and Literature*, developed by the National Assessment and Examination Service, four general functions of assessment and two specific functions are highlighted:

- **Diagnostic Function:** This function identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, providing the primary school teacher with the opportunity to establish methods for improving, remediating, or correcting the identified shortcomings. This function is particularly valuable in the case of initial evaluation tests, when the teacher seeks to form an understanding of the student's intellectual capacities at the beginning of a school cycle or academic year.

- **Prognostic Function:** This function contributes to determining the teaching strategies necessary for achieving future student performance, establishing what students should know and be able to do.

- **Certification Function:** This function establishes the skills, abilities, capacities, and performance levels students have achieved by the end of a learning unit, semester, or educational cycle.

- **Selection Function:** This function enables students to gain access to a higher level of education or to obtain classifications in various school competitions (such as writing contests, recitation contests, etc.).



• **Motivational Function:** This function is extremely important in Romanian language and literature classes. It focuses on motivating students, awakening their interest in study, and fostering a positive attitude towards learning and assessment.

• **Career and Educational Guidance Function:** Through assessment of student performance, this function helps teachers gather information about students' aptitudes and their interest in the subject, providing an opportunity to identify and cultivate talents, which are crucial for shaping the student's professional trajectory.

In primary education, teachers must pay special attention to assessment, as it is the stage where students first encounter different forms of evaluation, receive grades, and have their work assessed based on clearly formulated criteria, which can motivate them in their school preparation. With pedagogical tact, teachers should familiarize students, starting from the first grade, with assessing their own activity, measuring themselves objectively, so that they become aware of the role of assessment and the measurement of results, ultimately developing a positive attitude towards learning and evaluation.

A major change in Romanian primary education is the replacement of the traditional numerical grading system with the system of evaluation through grades, based on performance descriptors. Assessment through grades is a qualitative evaluation with a formative character, aiming primarily at activating the student as a participant in their own development, as well as making the student aware of the performance level achieved and the paths they must follow in learning. *Thus, the student will come to make conscious efforts to acquire capacities, competencies, and skills that will allow them to operationalize knowledge and information in such a way that the instructional process becomes effective for them.* (Matei Cerchez, 1999, p.9)

In the context of curricular reform, assessment in primary education means transitioning from assessing memorized knowledge to evaluating skills, abilities, and intellectual capacities acquired during the instructional-educational process. Such an evaluation requires a balance between oral and written assessments, which more easily highlight the students' personality traits, allowing for the selection of the most appropriate evaluation methods based on the psychopedagogical characteristics of each student. It also demonstrates the development of capacities and competencies, fostering a higher level of interaction between the teacher and student.

Assessment and evaluation through grades require the development of performance descriptors, which indicate the level of competency achieved by each student in a specific subject, according to



the reference objectives of the curriculum for that grade. These objectives indicate the expected learning outcomes.

In the assessment process, the reference objectives of the curriculum are transformed into performance descriptors, expressed in terms of achievement. Performance descriptors represent the qualitative and value-based dimension of evaluating a competency and provide the quantitative and qualitative benchmarks for assessing the product produced by the student in direct correlation with the given competency.

In his work *Assessment in the Teaching Process*, Ion T. Radu identifies four levels corresponding to the indicators or performance descriptors:

- The grade "Very Good" or the level of full learning expresses the acquisition of the required knowledge, the ability to work with what has been learned, autonomy, and learning.

- The grade "Good" level corresponds to the situation where the student possesses well-acquired knowledge and is capable not only of recognizing them but also of using them in similar situations, offering the guarantee of progress, which is why they are given "credit."

- The grade "Sufficient" , the minimum acceptable, implies the acquisition of a certain amount of knowledge and the formation of abilities that allow the student to approach the next stage with a chance of success.

- The grade "Insufficient" or the "Unacceptable" level sanctions failure and necessitates remedial measures.(Ion T.Radu,*ibidem.* ,p.274.)

In Romanian language and literature lessons, the aim is to measure the results obtained through varied assessment methods, specific to the intended goal; assessing results based on performance descriptors, correction and grading rubrics, and formulating conclusions based on the interpretation of the obtained results, in order to make appropriate educational decisions. (Mihai Stan , 2001, p.6)

According to Constantin Cucos, the act of assessment includes two distinct moments: measuring and evaluating school results. By measurement, he understands "the operation of quantifying school results, that is, assigning exact symbols to cognitive components that are inherently qualitative. Measurement implies an objective determination, rigorously capturing acquisitions, and does not involve making value judgments [...]. School evaluation or the assessment itself constitutes the issuing of a value judgment, signifying an observable or measurable result within a reference axiological framework."(Constantin Cucos, 1998, p.173.)

The evaluation process is highly complex, and the teacher must determine what they wish to assess: the results obtained by the student



after a preparatory stage, their progress (for example, a student who was previously unable to formulate a main idea to create a simple outline, after the teacher's explanations, is now able to complete the required outline), the product of the student's work, or the process (the steps taken to reach that product), and the method by which a specific result is achieved.

Pedagogical objectives serve as the foundation for choosing the type of assessment. Thus, assessment types are classified according to different criteria:

1. By the amount of information or experience the students can incorporate:

- Partial assessment, which checks cognitive elements or sequential behaviors (through ongoing listening, extemporaneous exercises, current practical tests);
- Global assessment, which checks a large quantity of knowledge and skills obtained through accumulation (through exams and competitions). (Constantin Cucoș. p.180.)

2. By the "author" of the assessment:

- Internal assessment – conducted by the person directly involved in the teaching-learning process;
- External assessment – carried out by individuals or institutions other than those who have conducted the teaching process.

Internal assessment involves the primary school teacher measuring the results obtained by the students in Romanian language and literature, using various assessment methods, evaluating these results based on the correction rubric, and formulating conclusions to find solutions for improving learning outcomes.

External assessment in Romanian language and literature refers to evaluation carried out during inspections by inspectors from the county school inspectorate, subject-specific school inspectors, and general inspectors from the Ministry of Education.

3. By the moment when the assessment takes place or how it is integrated into the teaching process, school assessment can be:

- o Predictive or initial assessment,
- o Formative or ongoing assessment,
- o Summative or final assessment.

Initial or Predictive Assessment

Initial (predictive) assessment is carried out at the beginning of a teaching cycle, school year, semester, chapter, or even a lesson, as well as when a teacher is working with a group of students for the first time. The main objective of this form of assessment is to diagnose the level of



preparation, in order to understand where students are starting from, what they know, what gaps exist, what they are capable of learning based on their previous capabilities, their ability to work independently, and their learning difficulties. Initial assessment also serves a prognostic function because it provides the teacher with an understanding of the prerequisite conditions for the new curriculum, its content, and its prior results. Students' motivation for learning, along with their learning capacity and previous preparation, are important markers that allow each teacher to orient their work and adopt the most appropriate pedagogical strategy for a given situation. (Grecu, M. V., 203-209)

Continuous or Formative Assessment

Formative assessment involves checking results throughout the teaching process, broken down into small segments. By assessing students after each instructional segment, formative assessment allows the teacher to identify weaknesses, shortcomings, and areas in need of improvement after each segment of instruction. Measures of remediation can be taken for some students, and the overall process can be enhanced. The evaluation results are compared with specific operational objectives. This form of assessment is an effective means of preventing failure situations.

Formative assessment sequences can be incorporated at any point during the lesson, depending on the targeted objectives. For example, if the goal is to evaluate how well the student has identified the message of an audio text, the formative assessment can be introduced immediately after the text is heard. If the goal is to assess the student's ability to use orthograms, the assessment should occur after the teaching and learning of the respective orthograms.

Formative assessment requires a different attitude towards the teaching-learning process. Both the teacher and the student are actively involved; the teacher guides and motivates the student to learn, and the student gains confidence in themselves and their own abilities.

Final or Summative Assessment

Final (summative) assessment is conducted at large intervals, usually at the end of completing a unit of learning, at the end of a semester, school year, or educational cycle. It offers the opportunity to evaluate how well the projected objectives have been achieved at the conclusion of the process aimed at meeting them. Through final assessment, the progress made by students during various stages of their education is observed. At the end of an educational cycle, summative assessment serves an important social function: it provides information



on the extent to which graduates possess the necessary skills/competencies for the socio-professional activities they are aiming for.

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