FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT, A FACTOR IN FULL LEARNING

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Abstract: Modern didactic assessment is a formative assessment that supports and values student learning and learning progress through an immediate adjustment made by the teacher, by highlighting the positive aspects of the entire learning process during the first stage and supporting formative learning. Formative evaluation requires checking the results throughout the entire teaching process, carried out in small sequences. This is closely related to the methodologies adopted by each teacher and also to his vision concerning the learning process. In this article we will be presenting a number of characteristics that put formative assessment in the forefront, as a factor in full learning.
Keywords: assessment, formative assessment, learning, full learning, students

Assessment is „an activity of collaboration, organization and interpretation of the data obtained through assessment tools, with the purpose of emitting a value judgment on the results of measuring and adopting an educational decision, based on the conclusions drawn from the interpretation and evaluation of the results"[1].

Assessment as a complex action of „collecting a set of relevant, valid and reliable information, in relation to the relevance and value of some processes, performances, skills, educational or didactic behaviours and the examination of the degree of adequacy between this set of information and a set of criteria established in correspondence with the objectives which are pursued and fixed in advance. Assessment involves creating evaluative processes, it is carried out in accordance with specific evaluative strategies and through appropriate methods, techniques and tools"[2].

Formative assessment is a „dynamic and instrumental assessment in the sense that it performs the function of operative feed-back in improving the educational process, being oriented towards its next sequence." „It is a continuous assessment in the sense that it is explicitly directed towards achieving educational objectives, involving the continuous concern of all those involved in the evaluated activity to receive the effects of the action"[3].

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[1] Tudor Marin, Luciana Maria Marin, *Pedagogie. Fundamentele pedagogiei. Teoria şi metodologia curriculumului. Teoria şi metodologia instruirii. Teoria şi metodologia evaluării. Problematica educaţiei contemporane [Pedagogy. Fundamentals of Pedagogy. The Theory and Methodology of Curriculum. The Theory and Methodology of Instruction. The Theory and Methodology of Assessment. Contemporary Educational Issues],* revised edition, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, 2023, p. 269.
[2] Mușata Dacia Bocoș (coord.), *Dicționar praxiologic de pedagogie [Praxiological dictionary of Pedagogy]*, Volume II, E-H, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2016, p. 127.
[3] Florea Voiculescu (coord.), *Ghid metodologic de pedagogie universitară [Methodological Guide to University Pedagogy]* Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2010, p. 325.

Formative assessment is possible only in „the conditions of a formative teaching, which will induce and direct a formative learning, self-generating new strategies, approaches, techniques, motivations, etc. In other words, formative assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process, aiming to regulate its conditions and, more concretely, the conditions of learning. Basically, formative assessment is a process that is inserted coherently from the beginning to the end of the teaching-learning sequence, allowing adaptations and improvements throughout its entire deployment"[4].

In modern didactics, assessment is perceived as a complex, continuous activity, conceived to take place in distinct but interconnected stages/moments, throughout the educational process. This is not limited to just measuring the knowledge that has been accumulated, but also involves a dynamic and flexible dimension, adapting to the needs and progress of each individual.

Assessment in modern didactics is oriented towards clear goals and objectives, which are well established at the beginning of the educational process. Thus, the educator can provide constant and targeted feedback, to support the development of the individuals' or students' skills and abilities, facilitating an active and continuous learning. This stepwise and flexible character allows for an individualised approach to assessment, where the focus is on the growth and development of each student/individual, not just on the final outcome.

This formative assessment will be found in academic education through our survey, work or independent work topics, as well as through various tests (I will customize the list of documents, papers where we can find formative assessment).

The general pedagogical purpose of formative assessment is the qualitative assessment of the progress made by each student in relation to his/her previous results. This implies the identification of the actual level of learning achieved, supported by the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, synthesis, application and verification, demonstrated by the level of learning and use of theoretical, procedural and attitudinal content. Formative assessment does not directly imply formal decisions for the purpose of comparison, a classification with a negative impact on the psychology of students.

In addition to analyzing the learning material and the pedagogical objectives, formative assessment also involves analyzing the learning conditions. From this necessity/need/requirement/demand/ arises the need to take into account the students' level of preparation and their attitudes and motivation towards the whole teaching process when developing assessment methods and techniques.

Seen as a whole, formative assessment changes the assessment action from a predominantly constatative process into a diagnostic one that supports the entire process of acquiring new knowledge, in other words, learning.

Assessment enables both the professor and the learner (the students) to monitor their entire process towards the achievement of the learning goal and objectives, and it should be noted that it can be approached in a variety of ways.

Assessment is indeed essential to the learning process, complementing the other two fundamental components: teaching and learning. This evaluative process is present in all educational actions, whether planned or spontaneous, and plays an essential role in

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[4] Ionel Papuc, Mușata Dacia Bocoș, *Psihopedagogie. Suporturi pentru formarea inițială şi continuă [Psycho-pedagogy. Supports for Initial and Continuing Training],* Bucharest, Cartea Românească Educațional Publishing House, 2017, p. 98-99.

the structure of educational activities. Assessment provides valuable information about both students' progress and the effectiveness of teaching activities, helping to adjust and optimize the teaching-learning process.

This verification process is necessary in any socio-human activity.

Formative assessment describes the type of assessment that we encounter throughout a pedagogical approach, it is frequent in terms of time, and its aim/finality is related to learning and the immediate improvement of some/many gaps.

Formative assessment involves constant monitoring of results throughout the learning process, thus ensuring progressive and well-structured learning in small sequences. With this approach, professors frequently assess each stage of learning before moving on to the next sequence. This constant checking allows professors to monitor students' progress in detail and to promptly intervene to correct or improve problematic aspects. This type of assessment stimulates a deep and sustained type of learning, encouraging continuous improvement in students' performance.

Formative assessment will not only assess the results of the learning activity, but will also relate to the process by which a particular outcome has been reached, allowing for future improvement. In formative assessment, we will be talking about more frequent testing during a period of preparing, learning, training and reducing the interval between testing and improvements in the whole process.

The practice (use) of formative assessment in academic education offers the possibility to achieve continuous learning objectives thus stimulating students' continued learning.

Formative assessment contributes to the development of cooperative relationships between professor and student and cultivates students' capacity for self-evaluation. It encourages them to become active participants in the learning process, increasing their responsibility and confidence in their own ability to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement.

In formative assessment a range of tools are used to identify misconceptions, difficulties and gaps in learning, supporting their improvement or elimination during the learning process. The entire formative assessment process is essentially a co-design practice of the whole learning process. Formative assessment encompasses a sequence of tools that are effective and helpful to students in taking responsibility for their learning, thus understanding that the purpose of formative assessment is improvement by its very nature. We therefore describe formative assessment as an integral and continuous part of an activity/lesson/course that aims to optimize/improve the achievement of learning objectives through various approaches that can support the specific students' needs.

The characteristics of formative evaluation revolve around five key words: process, integration, adjustment, interaction and participation:

- „in its continuous nature and its objectives, formative assessment is centered on the learning process and not on the product;
- formative assessment is distinguished by its integration into the structure and dynamics of the teaching-learning process, it is an integral part of this unitary process, it is itself a process (and not just a succession of separate moments), which instruments, through the specific ways of assessment, the other two (teaching and learning);

- the integrated nature of formative assessment is closely linked to the regulating function that this type of assessment exercises within the learning process. There are three ways in which formative assessment regulates teaching and learning: retroactive regulation, proactive regulation and interactive regulation.
- an important distinguishing feature of formative assessment is the direct participation of the student in the act of assessment and the involvement of self-assessment as an inseparable part of assessment"[5].

The concept of formative assessment emphasizes some aspects of a practice that is ideally seen and perceived and that has essentially a regulatory role. Jean Marie De Ketele asks: Why do we assess? To this question, formative assessment explains that during the learning process we will assess in order to adjust and adjust the learning action. So we will refer to two significant terms: adjustment and regulating. Adjustment will provide us with a link between two sets of characteristics, those of the trainees and those of the training system. When the means of training are adapted to the characteristics of the learner, through adjustment, assessment becomes formative. It should be noted that evaluation also aims to adapt learning to individual learning differences.

In psycho-pedagogy we find the theory of full learning, presented by researchers J.B. Carroll and B.S. Bloom. Full learning is presented for the first time in the study *Learning for mastery* by the American researcher B.S. Bloom, where the model of learning with elements of formative assessment is proposed and presented.
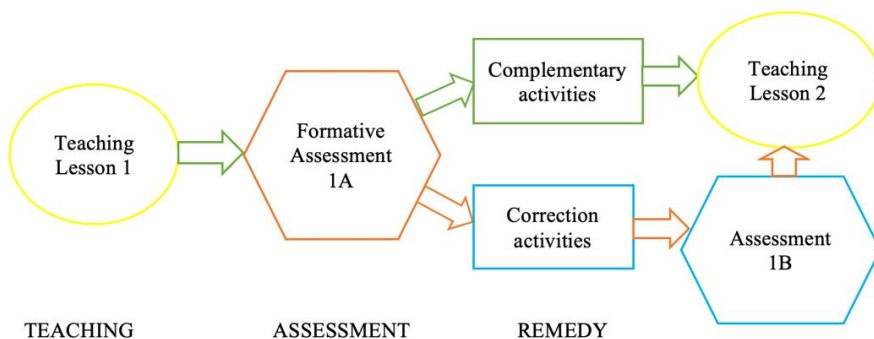

Image.1. The learning model with elements of formative assessment
(adapted from B.S. Bloom, 1971)

The model presented above describes the individualized instruction process to improve learning. According to the model, the information taught is preceded by an assessment of the students' answers. Formative assessment is followed by various extracurricular activities and remediation activities for students. More specifically, we mean that if a student has answered correctly to the questions posed/assignments received he/she will be included in various activities, on the other hand if the answer to the questions posed is incorrect/assignments will be wrongly solved, then students will be given additional activities after which they will be assessed again. Only after the activities proposed by the professor have been completed and a positive feedback from the students has been obtained, the next learning sequence will be moved to. Therefore,

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[5] Florea Voiculescu (coord.), *Ghid metodologic de pedagogie universitară [Methodological Guide to University Pedagogy],* Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2010, p. 328.

if professors would be more careful in providing adequate time and learning conditions, it is certain that a large number of students could achieve a high level of performance.

The principle of full learning, according to Bloom B. S. can be stated in the following way: „Given time and moving step by step, everyone can reach the level of performance according to the learning goals. Difficulty in learning is merely a matter of learning pace"[6].

A similar view is also presented by J. B. Carroll who states that „full learning is achieved if two factors are taken into account: the learning task, which sets specific and concrete pedagogical goals, and the unit of time, which reflects the time required to accomplish the learning task"[7].

In the view of both these authors, J.B. Carroll and B.S. Bloom, „instruction starts with the diagnosis of learning paces, continues with self-paced learning and ends with formative assessment. Thus, formative assessment is carried out with the aim of identifying any difficulties encountered by students, adjusting the pace of instruction and introducing the changes required by the results obtained"[8].

The educator will carry out a formative assessment respecting a number of defining elements:

- first, by announcing the learning objectives and the assessment method, so that students know the important elements they have to master during the training activity;
- second, by giving specific feedback after each teaching-learning sequence to limit learning difficulties;
- third, by providing tasks to remedy shortcomings or, on the other hand, additional tasks within a certain timeframe to develop certain skills;
- fourth, by involving students who have not achieved the set objectives in various activities aimed at remedying problems encountered in the learning process;
- fifth, by including the students who have achieved the proposed objectives in various additional activities in which the competences they have learned are used and included in new situations;
- last, we will focus our attention on present assessment in the form of progress tests to observe whether the information conveyed and learned has been understood and assimilated, and we will remedy or mitigate learning difficulties.

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