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Education Across Borders

1st International Conference

EDUCATION ACROSS BORDERS

Florina 5-7 October 2012

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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PREFECTURAL ADMINISTRATION OF FLORINA

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Layout: Elias Indos

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I am pleased and honored to present the e-book edition of the 1st International Conference entitled: **"Education Across Borders"**, held in Florina on October 5- 7, 2012, as part of the educational/scientific cooperation of the three neighbouring Faculties of Education:

a. Florina Faculty of Education of the University of Western Macedonia (Greece)
b. Korca Faculty of Education of Fan S. Noli University (Albania)
c. Bitola Faculty of Education of St. Kliment Ohridski University (FYROM)

The conference was planned in 2011, after an exchange of visits by delegations of academic staff of the three institutions, with the purpose to establish harmonious neighboring relations and scientific cooperation, as well as to strengthen the bonds with neighboring universities aiming at the cross border scientific and cultural development.

During the conference, the syllabi of the Faculties of Education of the three Universities were presented, some scientific ideas and views were exchanged and suggestions were made about prospective collaboration at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

In the opening-day plenary, some selected papers related to cross-border educational cooperation were presented, while in the second day of the conference presentations and lectures as well as round tables were held, which covered the following thematic strands:

1. History and Culture
2. Information and Communications Technology
3. Language and Literature
4. Mathematics and Science
5. Pedagogy and Psychology

In total, 149 abstracts were submitted to the conference, having been prepared by 247 authors (155 authors from Greece, 43 from Albania and the 49 from FYROM). The total number of presented papers was 119, with 72 papers from Greece, 18 papers from Albania and 29 papers from FYROM.

Drawing attention to the successful outcomes of the conference that were achieved, we highlight the valuable opportunities provided with, for making future exchanges and collaborations between academics of the three Faculties of Education. In this context, the Korca Faculty of Education of Fan. S. Noli University will host the 2nd Conference, which will be held on October 2014.

It is my hope that this institution will be established and the targets, which were set, will be achieved.

Prof. Charalampos. Lemonidis
Dean of the Faculty Of Education

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DIAGNOSTIC AND INFORMATIVE FUNCTION OF ASSESSMENT IN THE TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract

Assessment of students' achievements is a necessary part of a teaching process, i.e. teaching of a teacher and learning by students. As a component of teaching assessment is based on certain principles, and at the same time through its implementation various functions are carried out. The correct realization of these functions governs the changes in teaching and learning. In the paper both the diagnostic and informative function of assessment and their realization in the teaching practice are stressed out, taking into consideration teacher-parent relation. Through surveys and informal conversations with teachers and parents, the paper examines the way these functions are realized in practice, as well as how much this realization affects the promotion of teaching and learning.

Keywords: *assessment, diagnostic and informative function*

1. Introduction

Assessment of students' achievements[1] is a complex phenomenon, an integral part of the teaching process, i.e. of teachers' teaching and of students' learning. In order to fulfill its functions[2] and to promote the principles[3] which come out from the theoretical basis of teaching, assessment, among other things, primarily, should be planned, regarding the time it will be realized, the type of assessment (ex., diagnostic - DA, formative - FA, summative etc.), the goals that need to be achieved (ex., assessment of students' competences for written expression), as well as the criteria and indicators for efficiency that are connected to teaching goals.

It is pointed out that parents' participation in teaching process is a key component in improving the teachers' practice[4] and advancing the students' achievements. The parents have a relevant role in providing information which the real and successful realization of DA and FA

[1] Achievements on cognitive, psychomotor and socio-emotive plan (types of knowledge, abilities, skills and other competences), s. К. Поповски, 2005: 51-61
[2] Influence that assessment has on teaching and learning, s. Поповски, 67-76
[3] Rules and directions that guide teacher in assessing students' achievements, s. Поповски, 91
[4] The terms teachers' practice, teachers' work and teaching refer to teaching activities in class realized by teacher

depends on. Therefore, there is need to examine the character and nature of parents' involvement in the teaching process, and to what extent the educational process is organized in a way that provide parents' influence upon the nature, character and quality of the diagnostic and formative function (DF and IF), i.e. parents' role in their realization in practice, as well as parents' role in promoting the quality of teachers' practice, improving students' achievements and the quality of the educational process.

1.1. DF of assessment

DF of assessment is closely related to DA which is of a great importance primarily for the teacher and which, as other types of assessment, should be planned and connected to teaching goals. In the vocational literature there are different opinions on what DA[5] is. According to our perception, every type of assessment of students' prior knowledge[6] is diagnostic, regardless of the time it is realized, through which teacher gathers relevant information about the character and quality of this prior knowledge in order to effectively and precisely estimate[7] the extent to which students would be able to master the content he teaches about, and on the basis of this estimation to change, modify or adjust his further work, i.e. to take corrective measures.

In order for the teacher to be able to make a proper estimation and successfully to change, modify or adjust his work, the diagnosis should be thorough, i.e. to take into account various aspects of students' personality. Therefore, the teacher should use information about a student obtained from various sources, f. ex., from other teachers, the pedagogical-psychological service, the parents, etc., aiming to provide conditions for optimal development of students' personality.

1.2. IF of assessment

IF is connected to F, which is constituent of FA[8] and a continuous, constant exchange of information between the teacher and the students. Our researches for the implementation of FA in practice[9], confirm that the goal of F is improvement of students' achievements and promotion of teachers' work through changes, modifications and adjustments towards aspects identified from F which refer to the change of the way the teacher teaches (implementation of various techniques, strategies and activities for teaching and assessing, additional teaching after teaching for a certain concept, change of vocabulary) etc.

For efficient realization of IF, as well as for a thorough and precise F for a given aspect, the exchange of information between teachers and parents is also significant.

1.3. DF and IF relation

DF is closely related to IF. In the teaching process they are complemented and upgraded – information from DA would not have sense unless shared, primarily with students, and then with others involved in the teaching process and then with their proper interpretation and implementation to improve the teachers' work, students' achievements and quality of the educational process in general. As a result of this connection, the difference between the two of them in the teaching practice is often neglected.

2. Methodology of research

Regarding the goals of this research, a survey has been carried out and informal conversations with high school teachers (from gymnasium and vocational schools) (HST), primary school teachers from 1-3 grade (T1), primary school teachers from 4-9 grade (T4) and with high school students' parents (HSP), primary school students' parents from 1-3 grade (P1) primary school students' parents from 4-9 grade (P4) have been made. We assume that through the questions from the survey we will get a picture of parents' role in realization of these two functions in teaching process in the two levels of education, as well as of nature of their participation in teaching, through the prism of teachers and parents from the three groups mentioned above. Collected data are compared

[5] DA as a sub type of FO, s. s. http://slackernet.org/assessment.htm
[6] Prior knowledge as previous achievements, s. f. 1
[7] Various methods, forms, techniques, activities teacher can use to detect students' prior knowledge are not being analyzed
[8] Assessment while students are still in process of learning, s. Поповски, 174-178
[9] Research carried out within the project „Modernization of education", s. V. Janusheva, M. Pejchinovska, 2011

in order to see whether there is a difference between the teachers' and parents' opinions from the three groups about this issue. The answers which show relevant deviations regarding the three groups are pointed out and analyzed.

3. Data analysis of survey for teachers and discussion

- Teachers from all three groups, depending on their needs, realize DA in different periods of time, mostly in the beginning of the school year, in the beginning of the class, after teaching for a new teaching content. None of the teachers realize DA according to a previously made plan and that is a clear indicator that the character, function and nature of DA need further explanation.
- Most of the teachers from the three groups on the basis of the previously diagnosed situation will change their previous plan for teaching and will make a new one which will include changes, modifications and adjustments regarding the diagnosed difficulties, unclearness etc. A small number of teachers will not make a certain change, modification or adjustment[10] and will teach the teaching content according to their previous plan. Teachers from all three groups, who will teach without changing, modifying and adjusting the plan, still show an effort to stress out the difficulties, unclearness etc. so that students can master the content that should be taught to a large extent.

It is a fact that the teacher teaches students that have different prior knowledge and who differ according to their individual capabilities and competences, so diagnosed weaknesses will be also different. According to that, regarding the changes, modifications and adjustments the teacher undertakes in his practice to fulfill the needs of all students, the individual approach towards teaching students is stressed out, and this brings up the question of the individual approach towards assessment. This is a difficulty especially taking into account the number of students in a class which can be relatively large, as well as the competences of the teacher to organize and realize individual teaching.

- Most of the HST, share the results from DA with students, parents and other teachers, and a small number clearly perceive the difference between DA and FA. The situation with T1 and T4 is opposite. This, on one hand, shows the need to increase the competences of teachers for DA and its function, because it is clear that the results from DA are primarily meant for teachers, so they can promote their practice, and that if the results are shared with students, teachers and parents, f. ex., the IF of assessment is realized. On the other hand, teachers who perceive the difference between DA and FA will probably realize DF in practice more successfully.
- Conversations with other people, directly involved in the school and the after school life of student, in order for the teacher to take into consideration different aspects of students' personality (different type of knowledge, abilities, competences, attitudes, interests, character, behavior), and to make as precise an estimation as possible which will be a base for the modification of teaching practice is very relevant. Most of HST, talk with the pedagogical-psychological service at school, where the students took their previous education and only with some of teachers who taught them in the previous level of education. A small number of teachers from this group seek information for various aspects of students' personality from parents. Most of T1 and T4 talk with parents, (this is normal in T1 - because of students' age in the initial period of education, parents are the only source of information), a small number, besides parents, talk with all the teachers that taught them in their previous education, with some teachers that taught them in their previous education, and few teachers, besides parents, talk with the pedagogical-psychological service at school they study in.

[10] For changes, modifications and adjustments teachers can realize, s. V. Janusheva, M. Pejchinovska, 2011

None of the teachers will use information from all the factors, mentioned above, that can provide them with valid data of students' personality. This is a strong indicator that the teacher should be very careful in his own estimation of the extent to which students will be able to participate actively in teaching process with the diagnosed prior knowledge, because insufficient information may lead to wrong estimation, and this could affect teachers' work and, at the same time, students' achievements.

- The character of the information about the student, which the teacher seeks from those involved in the teaching process and which he gets from parents for different aspects of students' personality and would help teachers' estimation is of great importance. This information, according to teachers from the three groups, refers to: students' previous success, behavior, responsibility, agility, discipline, the students' interest, attitudes towards the subject, learning, and classmates, behavior at home, in the society and at school, student's emotional and health condition, the way of learning, motivation, time spent on learning, curiosity, perception they have for the student, habits for independent work and learning, help he would eventually need to master the teaching content, problems in learning, regular attendance, the way he answers, work habits, efforts etc. A small number of information refers to the causes, f. ex., for unsatisfactory success in the previous education, or why students prefer written expression to oral.

The type and character of the information, to a great extent, depends on the particular situation and particular needs of a teacher regarding his practice, on the particular needs of parents to inform about aspects of students' pe rsonality, as well as on their possible involvement in the educational process and teaching. It is obvious that teachers ask questions which they think will be informative enough regarding their estimation and that parents offer necessary information to enclose students' personality. It can be said that the correct estimation and teaching in accordance with it, need more detailed information on causes that bring out a certain aspect of student's personality.

- Most of T1 assume that parents' information is authentic and it supports their primary estimation of students' achievements (this is understandable knowing the fact that in the initial period of education, contacts between teachers and parents are frequent), however, a small number of HST and T4 disagree with this. Most of the teachers, from the three groups, in order to get information on students, talk with parents every time they feel the need for it. The number of teachers who get information at parents' meetings at least twice a month is smaller. This indicates that teachers, from the three groups, to a large extent, have abandoned the previous practice, according to which contacts with parents were reduced to parents' meetings that were not in function of DA, but mostly had the character of informing about students' success. Parents' participation in educational process, in this period, was not of current interest.
- Small number of HST and almost all of T1 and T4 take into account information from parents to make changes in their practice which refer to: change in approaches of teaching and assessing, change of criteria for the assessment, modification of the teaching plan, adjustments of the teaching style to students' individual characteristics, etc. A bigger number of HST and a smaller number from the other two groups do not take into account this information. The previously mentioned teachers' opinion is being questioned, because it is not clear why teachers ask for information from parents if they do not plan to take them into consideration while estimating the efficiency which students will participate in the teaching with, and in accordance to this estimation to promote their practice. Even assuming that they do not really take this information into account, still, changes mentioned above indicate that parents' information have to lead to

changes of teaching practice. The reasons why teachers do not take into consideration the information asked from parents need further analysis.

- Teachers, from all three groups, share information about students' achievements through combined F with parents. A small number of teachers prefer oral feedback. Most of the teachers give parents F at individual parents' meetings initiated by the teacher, or parent, which refers to: students' success, behavior, relations with others, skills, discipline, efforts, everything that the teacher thinks one student will need and use in teaching, judgments, reactions, level of acquired knowledge, behavior in class, grades, interest, understanding etc. A smaller number of teachers give F at a group parents' meetings, which refers to students' competences, f. ex., reasoning, conclusion etc. This type of F is of a great importance because it contributes to complexity and thoroughness of F and stresses F for, so called, process skills[11] which the understanding of various aspects of students' personality are especially important for. F for efficiency reduced to a number, brings up questions about successful realization of IF.
- A larger number of teachers from all three groups inform parents about teaching goals for a certain class of education, generally, in the beginning of the school year, in the beginning of the second trimester, at a group parents' meetings. A small number of teachers introduce parents to teaching goals in details, and small is the number of teachers who inform parents at group parents' meetings. A small number of teachers from all three groups do not inform parents about teaching goals. Part of them does not list the reasons and part of them locates reasons in parents' indifference and incompetence. It should be pointed out that a very small number of teachers display teaching goals on a poster in the classroom. Still, the answers do not clearly show the aim of informing the parents about the goals and also they do not imply to parents' participation in teachers' teaching in order to improve his practice and students' achievements.
- Most of the teachers, from the three groups, introduce parents to the criteria for assessment of students' achievements, in general, at individual parents' meetings, in the beginning of the school year, at group parents' meetings, and smaller is the number of teachers who introduce the criteria to parents in details. A small number of teachers do not introduce parents to the criteria, but they do not list the reasons for it. Also, a small number of teachers introduce them with criteria only if there is a need for it, but they do not specify what they mean by this. A small number of teachers do not inform parents about criteria. The reasons cited are parents' indifference and incompetence, as well as teachers' opinion that this type of activity is unnecessary. Again, teachers' statements do not show the aim of introducing parents to the criteria and nothing implicates a certain parents' participation in teachers' teaching.
- A very small number of HST, ask parents to take part in their work, mostly at group parents' meetings, but they believe that parents are not interested in participation in their work. Expectedly, most of the teachers do not invite parents to take part in their work and to give opinions and suggestions, and the reasons are parents' incompetence and indifference. T1 and T4 show opposite attitudes and the number of teachers who ask for parents' suggestions and opinions in their own work, at group parents' meetings, when there is a need for it in the teaching process, on students' participation in project activities etc., is bigger, and a smaller number of teachers do not do this because they claim that parents are not interested or competent and that there is no need for such activities. Some of these teachers do not list reasons.

[11] s. В. Јанушева, 2011

Attitudes mentioned above show that there is a difference in teachers' perception regarding parents' participation in their work. The syntagm *teachers' work* is perceived too broadly. Though it is clear that it refers to teachers' teaching, it implies more on parents' participation in the schools' work, teaching process and not in teachers' teaching. F., ex., parents' participation in project activities show that it is a question of parents being informed about project activities the school or the student is involved in, maybe about parents' real participation in project activities, not about parents' participation in teaching. This is confirmed by our long year practice and by the further analysis.

- Most of HST, think that parents should not participate in teachers' work and that they cannot help the teacher to change or modify his teaching practice. The reasons are: the unfamiliarity of parents to the organization of teaching and educational processes, and their incompetence. A small number of HST, do not agree with this.

Most of T1 and T4 believe that parents should be involved in teachers' work and that they can help them modify the teaching in order to improve students' achievements through various activities: involvement in various segments of teaching; suggestions, opinions and propositions; F for work and students' knowledge, attitudes which can change teachers' approach; participation in practical work etc. A smaller number of T1 and T4 claim that parents should not participate in teachers' work and that they cannot help the teacher modify his work in order to improve students' achievements. Again, the reason is parents' incompetence. But, once more particular activities are not listed and there are no implications of parents' participation in teachers' teaching. The contradiction with attitudes mentioned above is obvious and this brings up the opinion that parents' participation is not a result of teachers' conviction about parents' involvement in teachers' work.

3.1. Data analysis of survey for parents and discussion

- Most of HSP and P4 emphasize that teachers share information with them about students' prior knowledge when: it is a question of competitions, teachers feel that there is a need for certain information, during and at the end of the school year. A smaller number have chosen the alternative partially. Most of T4 assume that teachers share such information with them partially. For the parents from the three groups, the difference between DA and FA is unclear. The identical teachers' and parents' attitudes confirm that teachers need to have more profound knowledge of the nature of DA.
- The largest number of parents from all three groups, claim that the information they give to teachers is genuine and that teachers discuss with them about various aspects of students' personality which refer to: learning and improvement, students' independence when doing homework, using different sources of information, friendship, efforts, similarities and differences in the behavior at home and at school, honesty related to events at school, hobby, attendance at additional classes, interest and motivation for a certain subject, participation in competitions, projects etc. This shows that teachers really try to take into account different aspects of students' personality in the teaching and assessment. The number of parents, who believe that the teacher informs himself whenever there is a need for it, is bigger and smaller is the number of those who claim that this practice occurs regularly at parents' meetings.
- Half of HSP claim that they do not have any idea whether their information is taken into account from teachers in order to change something in their practice. A small number of teachers believe that the information is taken into account and as a proof they list the measures that teachers undertake as a result of the information: greater dedication to every student to master the teaching material, initiatives for improving the efficiency etc. A small number of parents claim that information is not taken into consideration, but they do not list reasons. All P1 assume that teachers

take into account the information and list their measures: increasing communication with student, the number of tests etc. Most of P4 claim that teachers do not take into consideration their information in order to change something in their practice. A smaller number of P4 believe that teachers take into account their information, and as a proof they mention: initiatives for improving students' efficiency, imposing additional classes for all students, more regular assessment etc.

Parents' attitudes differ, but teachers' effort to change their practice based on the information from parents is evident. This also shows that parents are not able to clearly differentiate teachers' activities based on parents' information, from those which are considered a regular activity. F. ex., additional teaching is a teachers' obligation and not a measure used as a result from parents' information, which might be a sign that parents' participation is not sufficient and the need for activities, through which the parents would gain knowledge about the teaching process, is implied. In that sense the increasing role of the parents' board should be stressed.

- Parents from all three groups receive combined F from teachers which refer to: efficiency and discipline, various aspects of teaching, but those aspects are not listed, the achievements, level of understanding the certain teaching content, results from oral and written assessment. The number of parents from all groups who are informed about students' achievements at meetings initiated by teachers or parents is bigger, and a smaller number of parents are informed about students' achievements at group parents' meetings. This F shows possibilities for successful realization of IF.
- Most of the parents from all three groups are informed about teaching goals for a certain class, once a week and in the beginning of the school year. The number of parents who claim that they are not informed about teaching goals is smaller. They do not list reasons. Still, it can not be seen how this information is useful for parents so they can improve teachers' work and students' achievements.
- Most of HSP and P1 are generally informed about the criteria for assessment, mostly on trimester, in the beginning of the school year, at parents' meetings and when students show more or less satisfactory results. A smaller number of parents from these two groups, who claim they are not informed about the criteria, locate the reason for this in the teachers. A smaller number of P4 are informed about criteria in the beginning of the school year. The number of parents from this group who are not informed about these criteria is larger, and again, the reasons are located in the teachers. Attitudes differ, but it cannot be realized how much these criteria introduction is relevant and useful to parents and whether it helps them somehow, f. ex., to follow students' achievements a lot easier, to be more objective regarding students' efficiency etc.
- Parents from all groups want to be informed about aspects of teaching and there is almost no parent who does not want to be involved in teachers' work with his suggestions, opinions etc., but smaller number of them are asked to take part in teachers' work in the beginning of the school year, along with the teaching plan, when additional subjects are chosen; when project activities are introduced. A very small number of parents, who want to be involved in teachers' work and be informed on aspects of teaching, are not invited. They say that the reason is that they are not familiar with activities related to informing parents and have no need for it. Some of these parents do not list reasons.

Inconsistency of parents' and teachers' attitude is obvious. The received data are not informative regarding parents' participation in the teaching process. Parents' attitude does not imply that they are involved in teaching. Their participation refers to activities they should and

have to be informed about. F. ex., for the choice of additional subjects, it is necessary that parents are informed, because students, especially those younger are not capable of independent decisions, although the older students, as well as those in high school, may need suggestions from their parents. We believe that there is no parent who would not participate if it contributes to improvement of his child's achievements.

- All HSP and P4 believe that they should be involved in teachers' work. P1 claim that this participation should only be partial. They think they can help the teacher to change, modify or adjust his practice and they will do it by suggesting him different methods from the ones he implements, favoring individual approach, informing him about the students' abilities, character, way of learning, relation to teaching etc., choosing content they believe that should be stressed out, informing him about students' wish to expand their knowledge, etc. A smaller number of parents claim that they are not capable of helping and say that the traditional way of teaching is the reason.

4. Conclusion

Many aspects of the analysis show that educational process is organized on a solid base which provides conditions for a successful realization of DA and FA and that parents have a certain influence upon their successful realization in practice. In a great extent, this could be seen in their involvement in the teaching process through regular communication with teachers about various aspects of students' personality, their achievements and ways of their improvement, as well as through meetings with teachers on a regular basis where different segments of the teaching process can be discussed, f. ex., project activities, excursions, participation in school boards etc. Even though the analysis implies that this type of parents' involvement is not a result of teachers' conviction of its benefit, still this is a confirmation of the fact that DF and IF efficiency and in that sense, the promotion of teachers' work and students' achievements, in a great extent, depend on parents' involvement in the teaching process.

However the analysis confirms our presumption that the question of parents' participation in teachers' teaching in order their work and students' achievements to be improved, with a goal of realizing these two functions more successfully in their practice, is a complex issue. Analysis does not imply this type of involvement. Regarding this, there is a need for more precise determination of parents' role in teaching related to many aspects: it should be planned, the domains and segments of teaching related to this participation should be determined, the level to which this participation should be realized should be determined, and the particular benefit from such activities for all subjects involved in the teaching process and many other questions. We believe that the absence of the parameters mentioned above would seriously disorganize parents' and teachers' role in this process, and this will reflect on the realization of DF and IF. For illustration, parents' attitudes that they could help teachers to improve their work by suggesting new teaching methods or which segments of the teaching material should be particularly stressed are debatable.

It is indicative by the analysis that further knowledge is needed regarding the fact that DA and FA should be a result of planned and continuous teacher's activity related to objectives and criteria, should be closely related with the diagnosed aspects and refer more to causes for certain aspect as well as to higher cognitive processes. This enables teachers to make more precise estimation and more successful realization of DF and IF. Attention should be paid on the thoroughness of information and an opportunity for more realistic estimation of students' prior knowledge is given. Also, it is necessary to analyze why some teachers do not take into consideration the information asked by parents within DF and IF, as well as teachers' aim of introducing parents to teaching objectives and goals.

Knowledge achieved by this analysis cannot give a very precise picture of the complex issues related to assessment functions, but it is certainly an indicator of the current situation in teaching practice regarding DA and FA referring DF and IF realization. This achieved knowledge is a very significant starting point of further research in this area which would lead to more

precise definition and realization of DA and FA as well as their functions through a clear determination of teachers' and parents' activities.

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