THE ROLE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN DEVELOPING STUDENT'S COMPETENCES

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Abstract
In the context of the previously described theoretical evolutions, the necessity to develop competences in the educational process is accepted nowadays as indispensable in most educational systems. Formative assessment provides feedback during the instructional process, while learning is taking place, and while learning is occurring. Assessment measures if and how students are learning and if the teaching methods are effectively relaying the intended messages. The purpose of this study is to identify some efficient evaluation forms, with emphasis on formative assessment, in terms of development of student's competences (communication in mother language/foreign language), in accordance with the key-competences.

Keywords: skills/competences, communication competence, formative assessment,

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The introduction of the skills as finalities for the school curriculum in preschool - by redefining the curricula and in primary education - by their explicit formulation in terms of general competence/specific competence, accounted for school education not just an opportunity for methodological innovation. The new approach of the National Curriculum generated another type of curricular culture characterized by centering the educational process on objectives of competences and skills training. (Korka, 2000).

The concept of skill/competence is an integrator concept, which identifies the skill as a result of learning, stresses the importance of student learning process, the focus on the process less than on outputs, on the customization of the learning in relation to the individual potential. (Cucoș, 2014) Rey (1996) develops the issue of skills approach by underlining their desirable and predominantly transdisciplinary character, of the close ratio between skills and learning contents, on the one hand, and between skills and their evaluation, on the other hand.

In the context of the approach by competences was required a change in the concept of knowledge, which are no longer merely theoretical information acquisition, the knowledge involve also the necessary abilities for their application, as well as redevelopment capacities of the information in new contexts. (Voiculescu, 2011)

Regarding the evaluation of skills/competences, we present some views of Romanian schoolmasters:

"To evaluate a competence is, first, to determine in detail all its components allowing it to be understood (...). Between the risks that add to the difficulty of using evaluation tools, appears, besides the confusion of activity and competence, the risk of considering each subcompetence, or a series of subcompetences. (Vogler, 2000)

Marin Manolescu (2010) analyzes evaluating competences as an alternative to knowledge centered education that would be required to consider in developing a new concept of school results evaluation. "Competence-based education is an alternative to traditional education focused solely on knowledge, on the assimilation of information". (Manolescu, 2010) Competences evaluation will consider the distinction competence versus performance: the skill is expressed in performances, it is manifested by performances. The competence it’s not measured (it can’t be measured) it’s described and appreciated. Performance is the expression of competence, its form and manifestation in the personal plan. According to Chomsky’s assertion, "the performance is for the competence what is attitude for the character". (in Manolescu, 2010) The school competence includes abilities and capabilities that has or is capable the student. "To know" turns to "become capable of solving life situations, professional or not, by mobilizing all things learned" And „to learn” consist in the capacity, gradually, to resolve problem-situations increasingly complex. (Gerard & Pacearcă, 2013)
The competence assessment it is evaluating in terms of processes and procedures concerning the measurement of learning outcomes, the activity assuming progress, adjustment, self-adjustment etc. (Petrache, 2011) The competence being a complex finality, result of the student implication in his own training, the competence assessment encompasses the obtained result, the degree of formation and use of cognitive capacities, and also the motivations, the assumed attitudes and behaviors exhibited by student in the learning approach. In this context, the skills evaluation it's a complex approach, which links the formative evaluation results with those various evaluation methods used in school.

The formative assessment it’s „an assessment that aims to guide the student in school activities. It seeks to identify its difficulties to help him discover the procedures, modalities which enable him to progress in learning.” (Cardinet, 1989) The formative assessment allows the student to rectify errors and shortcomings immediately after her appearance and before the onset of a cumulative process; it provides a rapid feedback, adjusting on the go the process; it offers the possibility of differentiated treatment, and develops the students self-evaluation ability; reduces the time required for extensive evaluative documents, making more time for learning; detects the critical points learning. The extended formative assessment is the process which is achieved along the entire process, initially, during and at the final stage. (Meyer, 2000).

The assessment of competences must be a formative assessment, which requires the direct involvement of student, he has the learning initiative and also the evaluation one. She plays the role of regulation and self-regulation of the activity with the support of both partners in the educational action. The formative evaluation it’s seen as an effective way of achieving self-regulated learning. These concepts establish evaluation as a means of student instruction and allows observing the evolution of its competences. (Manolescu, 2005). The assessment is made predominantly formative, continue, it’s a process evaluation aimed at identifying and overcoming difficulties. The evaluation it’s focused on the way in which it is learned, on the comprehension level, on the performances wanted from the individual/group.

2. DESIGN OF RESEARCH

2.1. The Purpose, objectives and hypothesis of study

The purpose of this study is to identify some efficient evaluation forms, with emphasis on formative assessment, in terms of development of student's competences (communication in mother language and foreign language), in accordance with the key-competences. This study aims to make skills-profile of the student at the end of primary school in what concerns the communication skill. We started from the hypotheses that the subject perception, on the formation and evaluation of the communication skill, it’s different according to the level of school in which they teach (preschool/primary).

2.2. Participants

The sample of subjects consisted of 20 people. The sample was made up of 10 teacher for primary school and 10 for preschool, 4 men and 16 women, with big teaching experience (over 30 years: 6), medium (15-30 years: 8), small (under 15 years: 6).

2.3. The Methodology of Research

The study was built, respecting the requirements of developing, it was made focus-group targeting the following objectives: identifying some components of the communication in mother language and foreign language competence which are evaluated in the school curriculum.

3. THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

For analysis the two competences it was take into account their description into knowledge, abilities and attitudes. The communication in mother language competence refers to the capacity of the individual to express and interpret concepts, beliefs, feelings and opinions, both orally and in writing, as well as willingness to interact with others in an appropriate and creative way. (Mândrut & Ardelean, 2012)

The communication in foreign language skill is based on the capacity to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions, orally or in writing (listening, speaking, reading and writing),
into a corresponding number of social and cultural contexts (in education and training, work, home and free time), according to a desire or a necessity. (Mândruț & Ardelanean, 2012)

3.1. Item: The identification of communicative competence components that are evaluated by teaching activities

The components of the communication in mother language competence that have been identified are expressed as:

Table 1. Components of the communication in mother language competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Habits/ skills</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>oral/ written communication in a variety of situations</td>
<td>positive attitude for constructive dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional grammar</td>
<td>monitor and adapt their own communication to the requirements of the situation</td>
<td>appreciation of aesthetic qualities and a desire to promote them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functions of language</td>
<td>search for, collect and process information use resources - dictionary, books formulate and express oral and written arguments</td>
<td>the interest of communicating (interact) with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of the main types of verbal interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>awareness of the impact of language on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literary and nonliterary texts (primary school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>characteristics of different styles and registers of language (primary school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the variability of the language and of the communication in different contexts</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The components of the communication in foreign language competence that have been identified are expressed as:

Table 2. Components of the communication in foreign language competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Habits/ skills</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>the ability to understand oral messages the ability to initiate, sustain and conclude conversations</td>
<td>appreciation of cultural diversity (primary school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional grammar</td>
<td>comprehension and production of written texts appropriate to the needs of the individual language learning in an informal way</td>
<td>interest and curiosity for languages intercultural communication (primary school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>main types of verbal interaction of language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>societal conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the cultural aspect and the variety of languages</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Item: Identifying some curricular contents that develop communication competence

The communication in mother language competence it is evident in the curricula of other disciplines, as specific skills the ability to communicate using the specific language (mathematics, history, etc.). It customizes in other disciplines by following issues proper use of specific language of mathematical terms/ historical/ geographical/ plastic language etc., selecting the relevant information, presentation of the solution or method used in the event of a problem-solving situations, the argument of resolution options, etc.

The development of communication in mother language competence is highlighted in the curricula for education by their specific competencies:

- at mathematics through specific skills: quantitative or qualitative mathematical expression of the characteristics of a concrete situation for processing it; analysis of mathematical characteristics of a problem situation;
- at science through specific competencies: oral and written communication using the correct terminology;
- at geography through specific competencies: using the specific language in the presentation of geographical reality;
- at the arts education through specific competencies: knowledge and use of visual language;
- at music by specific competencies: knowledge and use of elements of musical language;
- at physical Education through specific competence: valuing and understanding body language to express ideas, aesthetic and emotional states.

For the communication in a foreign language, her didactic approach to pre-school level is not direct, studying languages being optional. In the primary school, once with the introduction in curricula, since the preparatory class, of foreign languages, is intended the formation of the competence to communicate in a foreign language. During the primary, the curricula of other subjects not explicitly identify this competence.

It exist the possibility of customization this competence in informal contexts by carrying out activities such as: exchanges of experience with students from another country/ bilingual, watching media programs/ movies/ listening to music in foreign language etc., these types of activities facilitating skills training to communicate in foreign languages (even if, at this age is done intuitively, not conceptual). Also, one can identify intercultural
elements of foreign literature through optional subjects where students have contact with foreign writers, specific expressions, etc.).

The development of communicative competence in a foreign language is highlighted in the curricula for education through a specific competence – the proper use of proper names and terms in foreign languages.

3.3. Item: The analysis of formative evaluation ways for communication competence

The professor Marin Manolescu makes a correlation between the two key skills and generic competencies from the Romanian education system and presents a model of derivation for general competence formulating for this performance descriptors.

General competence: the use of means of communication, in romanian language, mother tongue and in at least one foreign language in a variety of situations.

3.4. Performance descriptors:

- efficient and proper utilization of languages (codes, conventions, etc.) belonging to different fields of knowledge (language of science, technology, arts, etc.);
- work with a variety of verbal and nonverbal messages, to receive and transmit ideas, experiences, feelings and opinions in private, educational and professional;
- monitoring its own communication and adapting it to different social, professional and cultural contexts and at different categories of audiences;

Based on these performance descriptors, teachers were required to identify tasks that can evaluate the communication competences. To assess the two key-competences, teachers identify a variety of shapes and evaluating situations that can be used formal or non-formal and are focused on the use of means of communication in Romanian language/ mother tongue in a variety of situations.

Activities with high potential for training and development of communicative competence are those in which learning tasks take one of the forms listed:

- to cope with problem situations;
- to exploit the various resources - personal or made available to students;
- interact with students, teachers and others;
- to integrate various personal resources (to secure new acquisitions and articulate precedents).

Examples of learning activities that develop a teaching approach focused on developing communicative competence:

- case studies, simulations, problem situations;
- project-based activities in which students and test hypotheses states, formulate questions and make optimum use of available resources creatively seek relevant information drawn from various sources;
- activities that stimulate students to compare, make decisions, to discuss solutions to communicate arguments etc.;
- interaction based activities in which students are faced with different opinions, cognitive conflict exists;
- activities which raise “the tasks of reflection”, explains what students have done, reflecting on the resources mobilized and the effects of activities undertaken;
- activities focused on capacity self-assessment, where students learn to analysis their errors, advantages and limitations of own shares;
- activities in which students practice personal learning strategies (memorization, active listening, note-taking).

In formal or non-formal educational activities, the teacher can use a wide range of functional tasks that can be recommended to students within educational approach focused on developing communicative competence (which are still accessible from pre-school):

- a text on a given topic or departing from a poorly structured requirement (to imagine a dialogue with linguistic structure which students were recently informed by the hour);
- a problem with exploratory (write someone a reply message using recently taught knowledge);
- an observation activity outside school-at the beginning or end of a set of related activities;
- a complex task in a specific context (to achieve a model, to devise an information campaign);
- a lab activity (selection or construction work tools, etc.);
4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The pupil’s competence profile at the end of the fourth grade in terms of training/development of communicative competence involves:

- correct and efficient use of the mother tongue/Romanian;
- operation with verbal and nonverbal messages available to age, development and delivery of messages in expressing ideas, experiences and different feelings;
- coordinating their communications in order to adapt them to different school contexts, social and correct relationship with people who are in contact and taking on roles in school and society;
- use of appropriate communication techniques in various contexts.

Achieving this profile means addressing a communicative-functional model in the educational activities through an integrated approach to sub-disciplines read/reading, writing, grammar, communication, and using a technical system integrative, complementary to other disciplines to help fixation of knowledge, skills and abilities, leading the student to inductive reasoning.

5. REFERENCES