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(SELF) EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN STUDENTS' POPULATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MACEDONIA

Abstract: Students' assessment, in general, observed through a socio-historical prism, has always been treated as an extremely sensitive, current, significant, indicative and continuously present phenomenon. In that respect, what is especially relevant is that for a very long time didactic procedures and their effects have been focused on following only the primary and secondary schools' student population and they were expected to be an integral part of the teachers' professional practice. But, when the first book on evaluation in higher education appeared in the UK some 30 years ago, there were some fierce reactions to it. Thus, Hounsell (2003) points out that this topic has become so controversial, frightening and even offensive for many university professors. However, today it is considered that a good practitioner is the one who reviews his own practice and who evaluates the teaching process from the learners' perspective (Brown, Fry & Marshall, 2003). Therefore, the underlying motivation for conducting this research was the fundamental issue of students' self-evaluation of their achievements.

The main objective of this study is to determine whether there is compatibility of the students' self-assessment of their achievements with the professors' evaluation of students' achievements. To that end, we applied a transparent procedure for collecting information involving a self-evaluation sheet and an interview technique in the context of the following university courses: general psychology, developmental psychology and social psychology.

The preliminary results point to a high percentage of correspondence between the students and professor's evaluation. The expected outcome of this research is to promote this type of evaluation approach and to turn it into a common practice in higher education as it can contribute greatly to amplifying the quality of students' self-assessment on the one hand, and the teachers' interest in bettering the existing modes of students' evaluation on the other hand.

Keywords: evaluation, self-evaluation, assessment.

Introduction

Pupils and students' assessment, i.e. assessment in general is one of the subtle didactic issues that with its multidimensionality preoccupies the attention of numerous experts in modern theory and practice. Gojkov (2003) states that assessment traces its roots in the medieval church schools and that to this date its implementation causes many different polemics to emerge which result in diverse pedagogical modifications of the

assessment procedures. What this paper specifically aims to highlight is the need to treat with special care the feedback received from the students as a relevant indicator for the quality of the realization of the evaluation, i.e. of the evaluation system in general. The famous author Hounsell (2003) lists a few sources of feedback in which he particularly stresses the students' notes and their self-evaluation of their own achievements. Hounsell (2003) also points out that the quality of teachers' evaluation of students' achievements can be checked by means of evaluation papers, questionnaires, structured interviews and other techniques which are part of the methodological structure of this paper as well. Brown, Fry & Marshall (2003) believe that this leads to encouraging students to think about the teaching process, the process of self-evaluation, and to adopt a critical approach towards the evaluation and self-evaluation. In that way the students become critically-oriented friends who provide feedback about the quality of certain didactical procedures which are monitored from different perspectives (Costa & Kallick, 1993). It is a way of creating relations whose purpose is to promote the teaching process and which result with further reflections and improved interaction in the teaching process (Day 1999). According to Costa and Kallick (1993) the students should be treated as (the most) important reflexive indicator in the teaching process. According to Achinstein and Meyer (1997) this means friend's support, but a critical reflection too. Though teachers' motives for getting feedback from their students are of an intrinsic nature, still they serve to strengthen the confidence and self-confidence of the student population. By asking students to provide their feedback, teachers strengthen their internal motivation (Hounsell, 2003).

Basic terminology

The term 'evaluation' comes from the French word 'évaluation' which means determining value, assessment and achievement. Also we use the term valorization - which also means determining value. Evaluation as a phenomenon and pedagogical term is well known in pedagogy, psychology, and other scientific disciplines, despite the fact that there is a difference between philosophy and practical education (Jordan, 1953; Matijević, 2004 <http://www.eurydice.org/> <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>). Evaluation can be defined as collecting information so that we can make the right decision in the process of education. Assessment is the process with which we determine what is improved and what areas still need improvement. The term 'self-evaluation' is an English term which means self-assessment. Self-evaluation represents monitoring the progress made, the development and learning and determining what has improved and what is to be improved in the future. Self-evaluation offers an opportunity for people so that they can understand their weaknesses and strengths. Self-evaluation is defined as a process or instance of self-assessment and measurement of one's own achievement and development (Dexter Petley, White Lies, 2003).

Self-assessment could mean that students simply check off answers on a multiple-choice test and grade themselves, but it involves much more than that. Self-assessment is more accurately defined as a process by which students 1) monitor and evaluate the quality of their thinking and behavior when learning and 2) identify strategies that improve their understanding and skills. That is, self-assessment occurs when students judge their own work to improve performance as they identify discrepancies between current and desired performance (McMillan, James H.; Hearn, Jessica (2008).

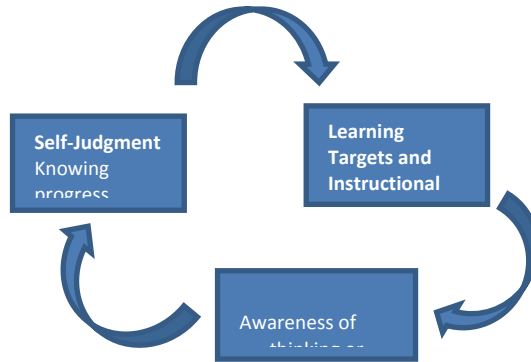


Figure 1. Student Self-Assessment Cycle

Thus, self-assessment is conceptualized here as the combination of three components related in a cyclical, ongoing process: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and identification and implementation of instructional correctives as needed (see Figure 1). Essentially, students identify that their learning and performance strategies provide feedback to themselves based on well-understood standards and criteria, and determine the next steps or plans to enhance their performance. McMillan, James H.; Hearn, Jessica (2008). Finally, self-assessment identifies further learning targets and instructional strategies (correctives) students can apply to improve achievement.

Research methodology

The main **issue** which is in the focus of this study is student's self-evaluation in the higher education.

The **aim** of the study is to determine whether there is any discrepancy between the quality of the teacher's evaluation and the students' self-evaluation. The purpose is to examine to what extent the teacher's evaluation of students' knowledge is compatible with the students' self-evaluation, will be used to determine the quality of students' assessment.

Research sample. This sample includes 200 students from different teaching departments at the Faculty of Education in Bitola.

Hypothesis. This particular research rests on the hypothesis that the practice of examining the quality of assessment via students' self-assessment of their achievements is not sufficiently widespread, despite the fact that it presents a really significant source of information and an indicator of changes in university teachers' evaluative style.

Special hypotheses

Special hypothesis 1: Students are expected to display a high level of objectivity in the self-evaluation of their achievements.

Special hypothesis 2: There is a high level of compatibility between the professor's evaluation and students' self-evaluation.

Special hypothesis 3: There is a significant statistic difference in the quality of self-evaluation in terms of gender in the student population.

Special hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the quality of students' self-evaluation depending on the academic year they are in.

Special hypothesis 5: The level of students' self-evaluation depends on students' knowledge of the correct answers to the questions in the test they are taking.

Methods and instruments of research

The research makes use of a self-evaluative sheet for the students, a structured interview and a questionnaire which uses both open and closed questions to collect data. The tailor-made self-evaluative sheet (ELSE) is used for collecting information about the students' opinion regarding the expected results from the test of knowledge they take.

The **statistical analysis** of the data includes descriptive (percentage, analysis of the differences in arithmetic mean, SD) and t - test etc.). The SPSS program is used in this analysis which is found in the international database.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

The research results concerning data teachers' evaluation and students' self-evaluation in terms of their knowledge of subjects: psychology, developmental psychology and social psychology. The presented results are concerned differences in gender, study, and differences between the teacher evaluation and self-evaluation of students.

H2: There is a high level of compatibility between the professor's evaluation and the self-evaluation of the students

Hypothesis 2	N	Mean	SD	T	p
professor's evaluation	200	25,7200	8,82673	-2,638	0,9
self evaluation	200	26,8945	7,5894		

The data has shown that the survey included 200 respondents. The average performance of the test self-evaluation among respondents $M = 26.8945$ with variability $SD = 7,58946$. The average achievement test given by the professor is $M = 25.72$, and the variability is $SD = 8,82673$. t - test for significance of arithmetic means ($t = -2,638$ with $p > 0,05$) shows no statistically significant difference between the results of the test for self-evaluation. That means that the results of self -evaluation match the professor's evaluation.

H3: There is a significant statistic difference in the quality of self-evaluation and a gender in the student population

Hypothesis 3	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	51	24,2157	9,05829	-2,98	0,03
Female	149	27,8176	6,80640		

The research involved 51 male students and 149 female examinees. The average performance of the test for self-evaluation among female respondents is $M = 27.8175$ with variability $SD = 6,80640$. Among male sex average achievement of self-evaluation is $M = 24.2157$ and variability is $SD = 9,05829$. t - test for significance of arithmetic means ($t = -2,98$, at $p < 0,05$)

shows a statistically significant difference of achievement test scores for self-evaluation of male and female students. The average scores of female students are higher than male.

H4: There is no significant difference in the quality of self-evaluation in relation with student's academic year.

Hypothesis 4	N	M	SD	t	P
First year students	100	26,7778	7,75591	-0,215	0,830
Fourth year students	100	27,0100	7,45829		

The survey involved 100 first-year students and 100 students from the fourth year. The average performance of the self-evaluation for students from first year is $M = 26.7778$ with variability $SD = 7.75591$. The fourth-year students average achievement, self-evaluation is $M = 27.0100$ and variability is $SD = 7.45829$. t - test for significance of arithmetic means ($t = -0.215$, at $p > 0.05$) shows that there is no statistically significant difference of scores achievement self-evaluation test for first and fourth year students. Further, we will present a table in which are shown the results of the conducted survey.

Matrix of research results of evaluation and self- evaluation *

Respondents	Gender	Max. scores	Min. For positive grade	Total score	Self-evaluation	Deviation	rank
1.	F	40	21	32	35	+3	4
2.	F	40	21	22	22	0	1
3.	M	40	21	13	/	/	/
4.	F	40	21	25	22	-3	4
5.	M	40	21	6	15	+9	10
6.	F	40	21	16	29	+13	14
7.	M	40	21	30	30	0	1
8.	F	40	21	6	10	+4	5
9.	F	40	21	17	20	+3	4
10.	F	40	21	30	30	0	1

*Example of conceptualization of research results

Discussion

The overall objective of this study was to examine the relationship between evaluation among self-evaluation, i.e. the difference between evaluation of teacher and self-evaluation of students on their prior knowledge related to the difference of the gender, study program, and their prior knowledge. This research has shown that the assumptions about their test scores that the students were almost the same with the results that the teacher scored them. However, very interesting and illustrative fact is that female respondents have more objective assumptions about their knowledge and expectation than male respondents. When considering gender differences in self- evaluation process research findings are inconsistent with the hypothesis 3. Further analysis has shown that if students know the right answers in that case they will give closer assumptions about the scores they get. This is a very important fact for all educational systems, especially for higher education. Moreover, the data obtained are instructive for educators because they clearly suggested that there is a need for promoting self- evaluation for students in higher education.

Brown, Fry & Marshall (2003) encourage students to critical thinking as well as give an assessment for their own achievements and self-evaluation.

Conclusion

We believe that student self-assessment, defined as a dynamic process in which students self-monitor, self-evaluate, and identify correctives to learn, is a critical skill that enhances student motivation and achievement. In the current era of high-stakes accountability there is considerable pressure to focus only on student performance and to minimize the extent to which self-assessment is taught, experienced, and encouraged. Self-assessment represents a process that every teacher can emphasize. As we have indicated, ample research and theory document the importance of self-assessment. When students set goals that aid their improved understanding, and then identify criteria, self-evaluate their progress toward learning, reflect on their learning, and generate strategies for more learning, they will show improved performance with meaningful motivation. Surely, those steps will accomplish two important goals—improved student self-efficacy and confidence to learn—as well as high scores on accountability tests. Reflection is a critical part of the self-evaluation process. Reflection helps students think about what they know or have learned while they identify areas of confusion, so they can create new goals. Evaluating what they learned, what they still need to work on, and how they can get there can all support deeper understanding rather than superficial knowledge. Students benefit from explaining their work and their own evaluation of quality through reflective activities such as conferences, written correspondence with parents or peers, and written self-reflections or checklists. To help teachers implement student self-assessment in the classroom, Rolheiser (1996) identifies four stages of teaching student self-assessment. Finally, findings of this study should be considered with caution given the relatively small sample size and the fact that the analysis was conducted on data that were obtained by the students' self-evaluation.

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Biographical notes:

Ljupcho Todor Kevereski, PhD, was born in Velgoshti, Ohrid, on 25th of April, 1959. He attended the Primary school in Velgoshti, and later on, continued his education in the "Kliment Ohridski" Gymnasium in Ohrid. In 1985, he graduated from "St. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, on the Faculty of Philosophy in the Psychology department thus being awarded with the title '*Graduated Psychologist*'. He spent the entire school year of 1987/88 working as a Professor of Psychology in "Vancho Pitosheski" in Ohrid. Afterwards, in 1989, he started working as a School Psychologist in the "Grigor Prlichev" Primary School in Ohrid and continued to work there up until 2008. In 1977, in the Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, he defended the thesis on "Diagnosing the mental models in the system of treatment of gifted students" thus getting an *MA in Human resource management*. On the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, in the Psychology department, he also got an *MA in Psychology*.