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ASPECTS OF THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The assessment processes fully reveal their feedback functions when the teacher and the students find themselves as partners in the educational process. This presupposes that each of the interlocutors is aware of the role they play in the level of didactic interaction and uses the partner's reactions to optimize their own behavior. Online assessment tools provide us with a wide range of assessment possibilities, sometimes the technique being much better prepared than we are willing to explore. The Internet provides evaluators with a set of standards and specifications for computer-assisted instruction. At the same time, the assessment must be correct. Online, the big problem is identity verification. Especially in free instruments that do not use institutional accounts. It must be complete, continuous and correct. And to be fair, everyone involved in the process needs to be aware of those things. In online contexts, involvement is essential and these tools need to create a deeper and more meaningful human interaction.

1. Introduction

As a first step, we must mention some aspects of communication, respectively of educational communication in the virtual space, a fact imposed by the pandemic situation in 2020. The need to continue the instructional-educational process, even if the presence in schools was not possible for a long time. Over time, the education system has adapted to new technologies, in particular, to improve communication and the transmission of new knowledge, to ultimately maintain existing emotional connections, and to create new ones. In this sense, the online environment has been taken by storm, even if, by 2020, there were schools, universities that used eLearning-type educational platforms, especially those that served distance or non-attendance education.

The modernization of a system, regardless of the field of applicability, is the essential factor in ensuring the quality of the activities performed. Modernizing the material base, by investing in the maintenance, refurbishment or acquisition of resources and ensuring an adequate work space, raising the level of training, training and motivation of employees, ensuring monitoring and control at the institution level, establishing and enforcing regulations to ensure compliance with ethics, equality and inclusion are the general coordinates of the evolution and efficiency of a structure (Pop, 2020).

Referring to the education system, a microcosm representative of the whole society, we can reformulate as follows: didactic communication cannot be produced efficiently without meeting certain conditions, such as ensuring adequate space for students and teachers, ensuring the means of education, improving staff maintaining a climate of collaboration between all participants in the instructional-educational process by ensuring good institutional communication, guaranteeing the principles of equality, fairness and security and of course, aligning, materially and professionally to modern trends of economic and social development (Kiss et al., 2021). It should be remembered that the pandemic caused by the infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, in 2020, generated chain dysfunctions in society, the education system being severely affected. The impossibility of conducting classes in schools has opened the way for its reorientation towards digitalization, digital communication being already defined, debated and applied in other environments, such as business.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Background

In Romania, the Covid-19 pandemic determined the transition from classical, face-to-face education to online education, as of March 11th, 2020. After June 2nd, 2020, the final grades (8th, 12th or 13th, for evening classes) moved to face-to-face education, in smaller groups of students. Romania schools have started the new academic year, 2020-2021, in one of three scenarios: face-to-face, online or face-to-face education or online only. This situation conducted to various issues and stress factors for undergraduate teachers. Firstly, the teachers were stressed about the uncertainty regarding the online platforms that should or can be used, whether new topics can be taught and whether students can be graded. We can also add here the difficulties of conducting online education, due to the limited knowledge or lack of knowledge regarding these online teaching tools, by teachers, and the lack of

necessary devices (laptops, tablets, graphics tablets etc.). The online education experience has led to the consensus that face-to-face education is superior to this form of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which parents play a very important role, especially for students in lower grades. In some situations, the relationship with parents has been very constructive, but there were also teachers who expressed their dissatisfaction with the uncooperative or even aggressive attitude of some parents. Notwithstanding all these difficulties and efforts to adapt to the new context, many teachers feared that salaries would decrease or even felt guilty that they were paid with the full salary, although they did not hold classes according to the schedule of face-to-face education (especially in kindergarten, where the teacher sends the files that the child solves with the parent). In the new school year, the second scenario (face-to-face with half the class and online with the rest of the class/hybrid system) of education raised even more problems than the face-to-face (Scenario 1) or online only (Scenario 3) education. Either teachers had to teach simultaneous, to both groups, without having the necessary technique, and struggling to manage the two groups, or they had to teach them at two different times, which doubled their efforts. We can also add that teachers feared, more than students, they could become contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 virus, especially since some students did not follow any health rules, especially outside school grounds. The worrying increase in the number of infected people has determined the National Council for Emergency Situations to decide to switch all schools in Romania to online education, starting with November 9th, 2020.

We consider that the experience of online education during the pandemic can be used as an example potential use of this type of education in other crisis situation, such as floods, snow, very low temperatures. Moreover, without online education replacing face-to-face education, the tools used during this period can be used after COVID-19 pandemic ends, as well, to ensure modern education, providing the necessary technical equipment and free and regular training courses for teachers (Blândul & Bradea, 2022).

3.   Research Questions

Are teachers able to evaluate correctly in the online environment? Which are the advantages and disadvantages of online assessment? How can teachers find the best methods of assessment in online learning environment?

The online education provides also a necessary evaluation system, a system which is not very clear, and in the same time, not very often done in the correct way. As we all know, the traditional or online assessment/evaluation must be continuous, complete and correct. But why do we need evaluation? A question whose answers can be found in many other questions, but especially in the functions of the process of evaluating the educational environment in its complexity. It considers that the evaluation is based on the following key questions: What is the evaluation for (what are its functions)? In relation to what is (what is the reference system, what are the evaluation criteria)? For whom (who are the recipients of the evaluation)? What is evaluated (behaviors, results, processes, evolutions)? With what tools and through what procedures is the evaluation done? And the most important questions are: how the online evaluation can give us a correct feedback or how is it possible that the online evaluation to be done in a secure and relevant way?

4. Purpose of the Study

The problem we identify refers to the ability of the undergraduate education system to absorb, adapt and use the components of digitization insofar as it guarantees a quality education, accessible to all students in the system from the perspective of didactic communication, the essential factor of validating the instructional process, educational, as well the evaluation system in online environment.

The theoretical approach is based on the information taken from the literature, making, in a first section, a definition, classification and conceptual explanation, from the perspective of the general theory of evaluation issues. The next data mark the transition from generalization to what we call didactic communication, following its objectives, characteristics, hypostases and finality, identifying its blockages and revealing ways of remediation suggested by specialists. The next section radiographs didactic communication from the perspective of educational mentoring, focusing on the nature of the relationships between communication factors. Later, we will present some aspects of the digitalization of education, fragmenting the didactic communication in the education system at administrative and didactic level, identifies the differences between face-to-face teaching and online or blended learning in a positive and negative aspect and offers a perspective on the regulatory regime of training programs (Bradea, 2021).

Applying quantitative methods to quantify the interest of teachers in the field of digital education and qualitative methods to describe the real way of teaching in a digital context, I wanted to emphasize that, although there are some inaccuracies, technical malfunctions, reluctance on the part of the human factor, however digital education is desired and practiced in schools across the country, but also that the online evaluation system remain an unsolved issue.

The assessment of pupils, students and learners in general has changed fundamentally, and although traditional methods still play a role, new technologies are evolving daily to assist teachers in this task. Qualitative assessments in the online environment help to determine the competence of students and their level of knowledge, using specific tools and methods (Blândul, 2020).

Assessment is simply the process of gathering information about what students know and can do, based on their educational experience. Assessment results are usually used to identify areas for improvement and to ensure that course content meets learning needs.

There are two basic types of assessments:

Formative assessments take place in an online course or lesson and are used to determine how well a student is learning the material. These are best when they are continuous, consistent and provide critical feedback to students.

Summative assessments are sometimes called final exams and measure what the student has learned after completing a course. They can validate how well the course content supports the general learning objectives.

Obviously, ratings are more than grades. When they are meaningful and well-built, they help students prepare for success by challenging them to reflect, interact, and apply their knowledge to answer questions, solve problems, and communicate information (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

5.   Research Methods

Given the fact that in the pandemic period the special inspections of the first grade for undergraduate teachers were carried out online, participating in many such inspections, we had the opportunity to *observe* and discover the ways, techniques used by teachers to assess students' knowledge. I often noticed an inefficient assessment due to the fact that the inspected teacher did not know or was not familiar with the digital tools for assessing students. Thus, we can say that online education did not have the expected results and that training and a deeper knowledge of everything that means online assessment means (Pop, 2019).

The courses attended by many of the teachers, involved in the educational activity, during the pandemic period, gave results at the end of the pandemic, but we cannot say for sure that we will continue to use them, taking into account their fragility. Online assessment is a step in the learning process that also takes place in the online environment. The first to learn in this context were the teachers. During the lockdown, there was an opportunity to learn new things and to bring about changes that would otherwise hold back and be much harder to achieve. At the opposite pole, uncertainties have arisen, different systems of expectations. In the first interaction with online education, it was necessary to know how it works, as well as what tools and techniques were suitable for students and teachers. This took time, which sometimes led to educational failure.

6.   Findings

Naresh and Reddy (2015) are turning our attention to the evaluation, and we should first note that the *course design process* is not static and that each course should be evaluated according to those to whom it is addressed. This is especially important in the context of online and blended learning, as reluctant colleagues and principals often ask, "Where is the proof that it works?" Student satisfaction surveys and peer review can help you better understand what works and what doesn't - and why - in the context of any course. To a large extent, a culture of innovation and excellence in teaching is built on the understanding of failures and mistakes, as they are the true source of the understanding needed for continuous improvement. *Open-ended questions* are one of the simplest qualitative methods of assessment in the online environment, and they encourage freedom of expression and creativity.

There are no right or wrong answers. Instead, online learners need to reflect on the topic and draw their own conclusions, the only downside being that open-ended questions are difficult to note. *Problem-solving case studies*, as a qualitative assessment technique, turn online learners into detectives so that they can solve the problem and display their knowledge. It all starts with a case study or a real world example, the ending is removed, then online learners are asked to provide a solution through the brainstorming technique. They also need to explain how they came to the conclusion and why they think it is the best approach. It is not about the solution itself, but about the thinking process, about the skills they used in their strategy and how they put their knowledge into practice (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007).

This type of assessment can take place through surveys, reflections on the analysis of online transcripts and journals, and student activity reports. Perhaps the best way to ensure that a course is continually improved is to embrace a culture in which the teacher is still a student. In this sense,

continuous development and quality improvement are a mentality to always seek to get the best personal performance.

Of course, it is important to keep in touch with those people with more formal knowledge of teaching. Being also an active participant in a larger professional community, where there is a link between teaching and research, helps by exposing yourself to new ideas and concepts (Bradea, 2021).

This assessment will be done through the platforms and applications available online, the road is wide open for various technologies useful in teaching and assessment, but what must come first is how the technology will improve the pedagogy used. So pedagogy first; then technology. Current experience helps us to understand that technologies are tools to be applied carefully and appropriately. The challenge for teachers is to move away from the notion of assessment as a Word document - that is, to simply replace a piece of paper with an electronic document - and use technology to help students become self-reliant in learning. Teachers looking for ways to integrate technology through task and assessment social networks have almost unlimited choices.

Blândul and Bradea (2022) present various principles for an efficient online evaluation, as follows:

i.   designing a student-centred assessment, which includes self-reflection

ii.   design and inclusion of markers for the evaluation of contributions to discussions, as well as for tasks, projects and collaboration itself

iii. inclusion of collaborative evaluations through public posting of papers

iv.   encouraging students to develop skills in providing feedback by shaping expectations

v.   designing a clear, easy-to-understand and appropriate assessment for the online environment

Some of the most used tools or resources in the online environment for the assessment methods, which we have been seen in our inspections in schools during the pandemic period, are:

i.   Google Classroom: here you can chat with students - Meet video chat is included for free now; homework can be corrected and direct feedback can be provided to each student, a feedback bank can be created for easier feedback based on the most common feedback you provide to students, etc.

ii.   Google Jamboard is a very easy way to view short answers - all students can see all the answers given on virtual post-its.

iii. Google Forms (allows you to create forms that can be used to get feedback, to send confirmations of participation in an event, but also to create written tests. The service allows the teacher to include images or videos for interpretation or as a reflection material for Students can receive both open and closed questions, with or without several answers.) The Quiz feature allows you to further provide prompt feedback. Students can immediately find out if they answered correctly in a test with answers of their choice. Here the teacher's skill is to build distractors (wrong answers, which result from an erroneous thought process, but often in students) as well as possible. Furthermore, we can include explanations for the wrong answer, explanations that the student will receive as soon as he has finished the test. In addition, students can retake the test.

iv.   Kahoot - the pedagogical basis of this application is that students become "teachers", building test items themselves.

v.   Wordwall - several types of activities suitable for assessment, especially in primary education.

There are also many animation programs that students can use to make presentations: Prezi, Animaker etc. Students can make Screencast-o-matic videos in which to capture both the image on the interface of their own device and their own voice.

In online contexts, involvement is essential and these tools need to create a deeper and more meaningful human interaction. Students' products are the best proof of educational quality, and the creativity that technology allows you to express is something that teachers in various parts of the world are constantly talking about in a positive way (Clark & Mayer, 2011). The purpose of the assessment is to determine (quantify) the extent to which the objectives of the training program have been achieved and the effectiveness of the teaching / learning methods. Online testing methods can be applied to all three traditional forms of assessment: initial, formative (continuous) and summative (cumulative), as self-assessment or examination methods.

In traditional education, many of the exams try to provoke students' creativity, through compositions, essays, case studies, discussions on a given topic, problems proposed for solution. Specifically specific to the humanities disciplines, these types of examinations / verifications are however difficult to evaluate objectively even in a traditional way, their implementation in an automatic evaluation system being difficult to achieve (Ceobanu et al., 2009). Communication between teacher and students via e-mail, Moodle discussion forums or video conferencing can also allow this type of examination to be organized. The most common way to take an online exam is through a quiz. These may involve Yes / No, True / False answers, or selecting one or more correct answers from several possible ones (single choice or multiple choices tests). Wrong answers may or may not be penalized, depending on the specifics of the subject or depending on the class teacher. Without emphasizing creativity, the quiz tests allow an assessment with a high level of objectivity, being applicable to any discipline, but requiring a considerable effort on the part of the teacher in preparing questions and answers that will challenge students to a look overall on the subject matter and increased attention to detect the wrong answers that seem correct.

Such a test may be assigned a limited overall time (allocated to all questions asked of the student) or a limited time interval for each individual question (for example, difficult questions may have longer allotted times).

Here are some ways to automatically evaluate quiz tests:

i.   quantifying the number of correct answers from the total number of questions;
ii.   searching for the wrong parts of an answer (penalizing each error in the answer with a negative score);
iii. searching for the correct parts of an answer (scoring each partially correct answer);
iv.   combined: punctuation of the correct parts of the answer and punctuation of the incorrect ones;
v.   Statistics: giving a positive or negative score to each question, depending on the proportion of correct / wrong answers.

The first thing that changed in online education was the learning environment. School no longer existed as a space, as did the whole relational ensemble. Changes have also been made in terms of communication. We all know that this is heavily filtered by technology, it is no longer so persuasive and

for this reason an extra effort is required to come up with a much larger baggage of resources to be invested. Learning routines have changed: preparation for school (going to school, the road itself has psychological effects on learning mobilization) and learning (information is no longer received in the same way, learning is not the same). In addition to traditional tests, teachers also use alternative assessment methods in the online environment: report, investigation, project, portfolio, self-assessment.

Online exam administration and assessment systems make it easy to provide a personalized learning experience for students, as their grades and performance are tracked in the centralized system. This system helps to centralize and streamline the administration and evaluation of exams; reduce the costs, effort and time required to manually evaluate the answer sheets; scanning and encrypting copies of answer sheets for fast and secure sharing; options for adding comments and feedback for student reference; automatic sorting features to reduce human error; easy retrieval of screen-prints in response to the request of students or teachers; tracking each student's results and progress over time.

Timely assessment facilitated by online platforms reduces waiting time and provides students with instant test results. With such an immediate feedback mechanism, a student can analyze his learning progress, strengths and weaknesses, quickly.

The online assessment process also frees up teacher time. Outcomes can be analyzed to identify areas of low performance so that teachers can focus on these learning gaps. Detailed reports help to create specific learning programs for these learners, which leads to better learning outcomes and increases student confidence. Online assessment systems simplify the task of manually gathering and correcting answer documents and sharing results.

7. Conclusions

In a world dominated by various forms of communication, from the simplest, most direct, to some extremely complex, indirect ones, among the extremely important competencies that we must have and pass on to our students is the ability to communicate and benefit from the effects of this process.

In the educational environment, a good teacher must maintain the quality of the teaching act regardless of the ways in which he transmits the information and evaluate it. There are many other forms of quality assurance in teaching and in promoting didactic interactions, especially in contexts where access to technology is difficult, sometimes even impossible.

In both learning and assessment we noticed that, each student's response involves a cognitive process, each at a different level. It is recommended to use an adapted taxonomy model, where only three cognitive levels are used: knowledge and understanding, application and reasoning. Also, in the online assessment process, teachers have given special importance to the design of the assessment, as follows: analysis of the critical reading of the programs, analysis of competencies, and creation of specifications associating taxonomic levels with contents and evaluation tasks, methods, tools, types of items, evaluation tasks. In online is very important if the tasks and content of the assessment tests are interesting, challenging and turn rigid assessment into an exploratory experience. This is based on the fact that any act of assessment is also an act of learning.

Therefore, it is important that home schooling does not only mean digital platforms, impressive in their technical performance. Telephone-managed or printed learning activities for students without

Internet access are just as important. The transfer of creativity from real-class to technology-mediated activity or in an informal environment is visible in the case of responsible educators. Education has to face a great challenge, the school being forced to adapt to the new reality and new forms of communication, teaching or evaluation (Ally, 2004).

Beyond digital technologies, empathy and humanity will always remain very important in the teacher-student relationship, even if we are online or in the classroom. The demands that education has to meet are not easy at all, both the traditional and the modern educational environment being forced to find methods and strategies that lead to performance in education through evaluation system.

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