

**EDU WORLD 2022**

Edu World International Conference Education Facing Contemporary World Issues

**PEDAGOGICAL FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT  
COMPETENCIES**

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**Abstract**

Self-assessment in academia can be described as the students' capacity to generate relevant judgments regarding their own academic achievement, either by reference to the educator's teaching objectives, previous academic achievements, or the academic outcome of their peers. The development of such self-evaluation competencies is greatly influenced by a number of both inner and outer psycho-pedagogical components, such as: learning motivation, level of cognitive development, academic performance, type of school assessment promoted by teachers, teacher's didactic style, student's family, social and group status/membership, etc. Beginning from here, the aim of this research was to identify how students' academic performance can influence their self-assessment skills expressed by the level of objectivity of this process. The research sample consisted of 56 students, currently enrolled in the courses of the Training Program in Psychopedagogy and Methodology. Having undergone several self-assessment tests over the course of their academic years, the students were asked to self-assess their own exam-readiness while taking exams in two disciplines of academic study. The research results showed that students with high academic performance have a better capacity for didactic self-assessment, an aspect with major connotations in terms of their professional and personal development.

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*Keywords:* Academic performances, objectivity, self-assessment competences, teaching strategies

## 1. Introduction

In accordance with the established specialized literature (Stan, 2000), academic self-assessment targets the student's capacity to formulate relevant judgements regarding their own academic skills and achievements, and furthermore, overall, about themselves. Namely, didactic self-evaluation refers to the connection set up between the student's cognitive, emotional and practical competencies, which promote the attainment of academic performance as an expression of carrying out a certain learning task. These two aspects are, nevertheless, not always in direct relation. At times students may carry high availability, which nevertheless does not become actualized in performing an academic task at its optimal parameters. A reverse situation is also a possibility, wherein students achieve outstanding academic performance, while possessing low skills/competencies for that endeavour. In such instances, the role of didactic self-evaluation is to reflect precisely the actual level of their academic skills in order to promote the attainment of expected performance (Bradea, 2014).

Attempting a possible explanation for integrating self-assessment into the structure of the teaching act, Blândul (2014) estimates that the point of maximum confluence in the teacher-student relationship is represented by the latter's actual academic performance. Thus, the teacher teaches by virtue of achieving educational goals and assesses the scope of their fulfillment according to the students' actual performance. On the other hand, the students' learning activity is fulfilled by accomplishing the academic performances they are qualified for and through continuous self-assessment. In the event of discrepancies between the educational goals and the results obtained, there will be adjustments made by the teacher in what regards the act of teaching/assessment, and in what the student is concerned regarding the act of learning/self-assessment. What follows from here is that didactic self-assessment is a process mediated both by the teacher's assessment and by the efficiency of the student's own activity in order to achieve the desired academic performance.

## 2. Problem Statement

According to specialized literature (Kiss, 2018), the means of achieving the instructional-educational process (expressed by the positive interdependency between teaching, learning and assessment) can play a significant role in building students' self-assessment skills of academic progress. Therefore, in the following paragraphs we will analyse how the implementation of the three aforementioned didactic processes can support students' self-assessment in the most objective way possible.

Without intending to compare them, Maier (2014) complementarily tackles a few modalities of teaching competencies and organizing teaching activities. On the one hand, there is the direct teaching/training in which the training events are „established”. Such a form of organization is best suited to a direct, traditional type of assessment. This comes to be a special point, in its own right, which takes on the form of summative assessment and uses, „classical” methods (oral questioning, graphic or practical tests, didactic tests, etc.). On the other hand, the author mentions a series of patterns of organization of didactic activities in which the students' role, in terms of their active involvement in the teaching act is considerably increased. These are mentioned as follows: „holistic” training, cooperative learning,

constructivism, „cyclical” themes etc. They are distinguished by the fact that students can acquire useful learning strategies and information which they can then apply to concrete situations. Most likely, in the second case scenario, the traditional didactic assessment will be rounded out with alternative forms, of which an important place could belong to academic self-assessment (Bradea, 2015).

As in the case of teaching, there are two trends that stand out when approaching theories about academic learning: a traditional one in which the teacher acts as an instructor and the student is merely a passive receiver of information, respectively a modern one in which the student is actively and responsibly involved in the learning activity with the teacher fulfilling the role of a mediator (Marian, 2018). The modalities of evaluating academic performance will be as follows: in the first situation it will be possible to use traditional methodology (which seems the most efficient when the student is regarded a mere „object” of teaching/learning), but it will be absolutely necessary to use an interactive self-assessment/ inter-assessment when students actively and consciously participate as „subjects” of the instructive-educational process.

As it has been shown, the main activity of the teacher (teaching), respectively of the student (learning) is carried out by virtue of achieving the predicted academic performances. These are assessed by the teacher according to pre-established educational goals, based on a well-defined set of criteria and using a series of didactic strategies (assessment methods and related tools). By respecting the constitutive steps of this process, didactic assessment materializes into a grade, a characterization or a qualifier, elements with resonance in the cognitive and affective sphere of the student (Blândul & Bradea, 2022). The student’s interpretation of the results obtained can be materialized into the acceptance or non-acceptance of the decision made by the teacher after the didactic assessment, a fact mediated by a series of factors such as: the degree of objectivity and exigence of the teacher, subjective factors that can influence the didactic assessment, the value of explaining the results of the assessment, the concordance between the expected academic performances and those actually obtained, etc. Following the interpretation of the teacher’s decision after assessing the actual academic performances (process corroborated with self-assessment of these achievements), the student can accept – or not – this decision. In the first case scenario, the student will own and internalize the decision, reconfiguring his behavior in the direction desired by the teacher. On the contrary, in case of non-acceptance of the teacher’s decision, the student, even if he follows the teacher’s instructions by virtue of the deontic authority wielded, could activate a series of defense mechanisms in order to adapt to the newly created situation: contesting the teacher’s decision, denying its validity, developing a reaction of aversion to that specific teacher or to the study subject they teach, minimizing the importance of that decision to the point of even ignoring it or retaining only the aspects that place it into a favorable light, etc. Regarding the teacher, there is the possibility that the student imputes procedural flaws to the realization of the didactic assessment, to a certain degree chalking up to those its unsuccessfulness. All of these manifestations are aimed at the student’s desire to avoid devaluing too much his self-image, a predictable phenomenon in situations of lack of success. Restructuring one’s behavior and self-image will lead to a different approach to teaching and, implicitly, to new academic achievements and the cycle will repeat itself, this time at another level („spiral” evolution). Thus, the internalization of the teacher’s assessment and its transformation into self-assessment can lead to the optimization of the student’s academic performances (Neacșu, 2011).

The formation of self-assessment competency is not a process that can be achieved „by itself” through the mere accumulation of didactic and social experiences. The crucial role falls upon the educator who serves as a role model to his students, who then select the behavior demonstrated in a certain context and gradually internalize it, through imitation. Practically speaking, while watching the teacher in an examination situation, the student will monitor the latter’s technique (their intended goals, the criteria according to which they guide themselves in formulating assessments, the methods and tools used, etc.), converting these sensory experiences (based on memory correlations) into experiences that are structured and unified at a greater cognitive level, manifested consequently into responses which are applicable to similar situations (becoming capable to adopt the comportment of an evaluator for oneself or for others). In fact, the teacher’s assessment, internalized thereafter by the student becomes self-assessment. Building upon the assessments made by the teacher, students can become aware of the criteria as well as of the academic requirements utilized, subsequently adjusting their aspirations and behavior in order to meet these. Furthermore, teachers’ evaluations are also reflected in the manner in which students are perceived by their peers. Progressively, by personalizing these norms, the students will become able to get to know themselves better as well as more adequately settle themselves within the group they belong to (Marian, 2018). Hence the overwhelming importance the most accurate assessment of students’ achievements has on their further development. In order to be a more effective model for the formation of self-assessment skills in students, it is necessary for the teacher to embody the highest possible moral authority, provide them with clear-cut instructions as well as imitable behaviors that are well within their grasp (Blândul, 2015).

### **3. Research Questions**

In this context, the formation of self-evaluation skills in students is becoming a high priority. Among the benefits sincere self-evaluation can have on the person in question are the accurate linkage of their own performances to those internalized through the training objectives and to those of others, increased self-confidence, self-awareness and proper use of one’s own abilities, respectively the minimization of one’s own limits, responsibly owning up to one’s own status and role in the community, building up a positive self-image, etc. (Pop, 2017). The importance of developing such qualities is paramount not only for the students concerned, but also for their future students, provided they will become teachers. It is well known that the best strategy for teaching others is by personal example, and an educator who is confident may develop into an inspirational leader for their students (Blândul, 2015).

Based on the previous paragraphs’ findings, it can be noted that one of the main elements of interactive didactic evaluation is the schooling of students’ self-appreciation and self-assessment competencies. In order to do this it is needed to supply them with criteria (benchmarks) which they are able to comprehend and internalize through communication (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020). The changeover from assessment to self-assessment is not immediate, the entire process being a lengthy one and necessitating the engagement of all educational actors (Marinescu, 2021).

Consequently, this research aims to analyze some of the most important components of the university curriculum, which can contribute to the development and the formation of students’ self-evaluation skills, the role of the teacher as a mentor along these lines, as well as the impact the entire

process may have on the academic performance of the students involved. The answer to these challenges can help university educational agents optimize their teaching styles in order to increase the efficiency of academic performance and ensure an adequate insertion into the academic environment.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this research was to identify how the curricular components of the teaching act (particularly academic performances) can influence the development of objective self-assessment skills of academic progress in students. The main objectives of the research were the following: (1) the analysis of students' ability to correctly assess their own academic performance while taking an exam in a given study subject; (2) establishing possible correlations between students' didactic self-assessment and their academic performances in the relevant study subject, respectively (3) identifying how the administration of curricular components in a certain way may influence the formation and development of students' self-assessment skills. One may conclude that the holistic approach of the research in light of the three objectives stated can offer a more complete image of the investigated phenomenon.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The research sample consisted of 56 students (N=56) from the Baptist Theology Faculty, currently attending the courses of the Training Program in Psycho-pedagogy and Methodology Level I, at the Emanuel Christian University in Oradea. The group of subjects had the following structure: Series 2019 / 2020 (32 students enrolled in the Program in September 2019), respectively Series 2020 / 2021 (24 students enrolled in the Program in September 2020). 84,4% of the first series were females, while in the second series 87,5% were females. All students were between 20 and 23 years of age. The reason for selecting a sample made up of two series of subjects was the intention of conducting a longitudinal research in order to see how, over time, different students self-assess their own academic performance in reference to their actual academic performance.

In order to understand the way the research was designed and conducted, it is important to outline the structure of the Training Program in Psycho-pedagogy and Methodology, Level I. Thus, according to the nationally approved curriculum, in the first semester of the first year of study, students take „Psychology of Education”, following it in the second semester with – „Fundamentals of Pedagogy. Theory and Methodology of the Curriculum”, with other educational subjects coming up for study in future academic years. These were, in point of fact, the two study subjects included in the research. Both series of students making up the sample were enrolled in their first year of study at the time of their selection. The research design involved the completion of two main stages. In the first (carried out during the weekly course meetings over the course of the two semesters), the teacher insisted on clearly conveying the predetermined educational objectives, presenting useful and relevant teaching content, using highly interactive teaching strategies, respectively requesting consistent feedback from the students. In the second stage (carried out on the occasion of the exam session assessment for the two study subjects stated), the teacher insisted on promoting a highly objective didactic assessment (carried out by means of competence tests with predominantly objective and semi-objective items, having clear assessment scales

and criteria, previously made known to the students). Students were also asked to self-assess the grade they felt they would receive after completing the didactic tests and give reasons for their choice. At the end, the academic results obtained were discussed with each student in turn. At the end of the first year of study, all participating students completed a 4-step Likert scale („Never”, „Seldom”, „Often” or „Always”) (in which they were asked for their opinion on how the teacher should design and carry out the courses, with a focus on indicators such as: clarity of the formulated educational objectives, relevance and usefulness of the taught informational contents, the interactivity of didactic strategies used in teaching/learning/assessing, as well as promoting an interactive didactic assessment. The quantitative interpretation of the research results was carried out by calculating the statistical frequency of instances in which the students underestimated, objectively assessed or overestimated themselves, students’ point averages of grades in the two study subjects, respectively the frequency of students’ answers to the items of the questionnaire administered.

## 6. Findings

The research results are presented comparatively between Series 2019 / 2020 and Series 2020 / 2021 in the following tables.

**Table 1.** Comparative analysis between self-evaluated academic grades and grades received by the Baptist Theology students, series 2019 / 2020, respectively series 2020 / 2021

Study Subject	Student series	Underestimation	Objective assessment	Overestimation
Psychology of Education	2019 / 2020	75%	25%	-
	2020 / 2021	40%	46,67%	13,33%
Fundamentals of Pedagogy	2019 / 2020	50%	37,5%	12,5%
	2020 / 2021	33,33%	60%	6,67%

The values presented in Table 1 lead to some extremely interesting findings. First, there is an obvious polarization of the 2019 / 2020 Series students’ options towards underestimating their own academic performance, regardless of the study subject taken into account, with a more pronounced emphasis in case of „Educational Psychology”, followed by a slight improvement in case of the other subject. On the contrary, for students belonging to Series 2020 / 2021, the highest frequency of responses seems to be around the option that indicates objective assessment, a much more obvious polarization being noted in case of „Fundamentals of Pedagogy”. It can also be noted that, for both groups of subjects, the objective self-assessment competencies of their own academic performance have increased as training progressed and students became familiar with the teacher’s didactic style, respectively to his requirements with respect to academic assessment. Another very interesting element is that relatively few students in these two series tend to overestimate themselves, in comparison to those who underestimate themselves, regardless of the study subject analysed. Such an occurrence could be explained by lacking self-confidence in one’s own abilities, due to delays in adapting to the teaching requirements of the university environment, or being uncertain in what regards the retention validity of the content learned. Under such circumstances, it is very likely that students with better academic results have objectively

self-assessed, while their peers who were less confident in the study subject and scored less on their tests may have underestimated themselves.

**Table 2.** Comparative analysis between statistical point averages of self-evaluated academic grades and grades received by Baptist Theology students, series 2019 / 2020, respectively series 2020 / 2021

Study subject	Student series	Statistical point average of	Statistical point average of
		self-assessed academic grades	grades received
Psychology of Education	2019 / 2020	8,25	9,37
	2020 / 2021	9,12	9,40
Fundamentals of Pedagogy	2019 / 2020	8,75	9,25
	2020 / 2021	9,26	9,60

The values presented in Table 2 are also extremely interesting and they confirm the tendency to underestimate of a substantial part of the group sample included in the research. The discrepancies are obvious for students from the 2019/2020 series, given the fact that, for the subject, „Psychology of Education” the gap is of 1.12 points, but drops to 0.50 points for the „Fundamentals of Pedagogy”. It follows from here that the students in this series have significantly developed their academic progress self-assessment skills, which is demonstrated, on the one hand, by an increase in the proportion of those who self-assess objectively, as well as the narrowing of the gap between the statistical point average of self-evaluated grades, respectively grades given by the teacher. The tendency to predict lower academic grades than actual ones remains even when it comes to students from the 2020/2021 series, along with a few observations. In the first case, the gap between the statistical grade point averages of the two categories of academic grades is much smaller, compared to their peers in the previous series. Secondly, both point average categories are higher than those of their peers. This may indicate the presence of self-worth awareness in these students who are cognizant of their level of preparedness and act in accordance with it. This fact is also demonstrated by the higher proportion of students who self-assessed objectively, a percentage that reached 60% in the „Fundamentals of Pedagogy”, given the fact that the point average of grades received was 9.60. It follows from here that well-prepared students who become aware of their preparedness level can develop a very good competency to self-evaluate their own academic achievement against the background of a high degree of self-confidence.

**Table 3.** Comparative analysis of students' opinion on the design and development of the subjects studied

Indicators:	Student Series:	Frequency of responses:			
		Never	Rarely	Often	Always
Teaching objectives communicated to students are clear	2019/2020		5%	20%	75%
	2020/2021			42%	58%
Content taught is considered interesting	2019/2020		9%	38%	53%
	2020/2021		16%	50%	34%
Content taught is considered useful	2019/2020			28%	72%
	2020/2021		9%	75%	16%
Didactic strategies used in teaching are interactive	2019/2020		12%	41%	47%
	2020/2021		16%	25%	59%

<b>Didactic student evaluation is considered objective</b>	2019/2020	4%	32%	64%
	2020/2021	16%	42%	42%
<b>A series of self-assessment/inter-assessment strategies are used</b>	2019/2020		28%	72%
	2020/2021		25%	75%

The first observation that emerges from the analysis of Table 3 is the polarization of the 56 research subjects' responses toward the higher values of the administered scale. There are, however, a few differences between the two series' student options for some of the investigated indicators. Thus, if the students belonging to series 2019/2020 are more categorical in selecting responses, preferring in most cases the option „Always”, those in the next series have more nuanced opinions, oriented towards the „Often” or „Rarely” options. Therefore, each course's educational objectives are clear and understandable to all students, even when the polarization of responses is more obvious for students belonging to the 2019/2020 series. Students in this series find the taught information content more interesting than useful, while their peers from the following series have a slightly different view, considering that what they are taught in Educational Sciences will be more useful rather than attractive. Students belonging to the 2020/2021 series appreciate, instead, the degree of interactivity of the didactic strategies used for teaching the information content. A much clearer opinion comes from students from the 2019/2020 series in what regards the objectivity of the didactic assessment, in comparison to their peers from the following series, while they all agree that self-assessment and inter-assessment are frequently used and necessary in the instructive-educational process. The analysis of these indicators (which express in fact, the curricular components present also in university teaching) suggests the idea of courses taught in an interactive manner, which implies the student's involvement in the process of their own professional and personal development, being conducive to the development of their self-assessment/inter-assessment skills.

One of the possible limitations of this research is given by the heightened degree of subjectivity of academic assessments carried out through the application of online tools. Indeed, both common sense as well as some specialists in psycho-pedagogy (Ceobanu et al., 2020; Guțu & Vicol, 2014; Marinescu, 2021) notice that both high-school and university students examined through the use of online strategies, have the tendency to overestimate themselves. The main justification brought forward is the fact that the educator can't control the identity of the person actually solving the assessment task, nor under what conditions this process was completed. Other authors (Kaur et al., 2020; Moffitt et al., 2019) bring into discussion a number of psycho-individual factors that can influence student performance when it comes to distance assessment. Some of these are: the person's state of mind at the time of solving the evaluation task, the time of day the assessment took place, preference for this type of evaluation resulting from the heightened degree of psycho-emotional comfort experienced by students at the time of taking the test, etc. One can also add that the test was not carried out in identical conditions by all the students, each one of them having the liberty to determine when and for how long they are willing to devote themselves to this activity (Petrovan, 2015). As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the 56 subjects that took part in this research were assessed online, with the exception of the 2019/2020 series of students, who in the „Psychology of Education” study subject were assessed by means of traditional oral examination strategies. As such, the subjective influence of the stated factors cannot be neglected, and the effects are



given by the undeniably superior scores of students who took part in the courses, respectively were assessed online. Nevertheless, one should not disregard the fact that students belonging to the 2020/2021 series (who carried out didactic activities exclusively online) demonstrated superior academic performances during the weekly classes, as well as a much more involved carriage in the learning process as opposed to their previous series' peers. In addition, the increased degree of self-assessment objectivity in what regards one's own academic performance is a reality, a fact which could mitigate suspicions pertaining to the subjectivity of online teacher assessment.

## 7. Conclusions

Based on analysis of the results of this research it can be acknowledged that the level of academic performances achieved by the students plays a particularly important role in the development of their objective self-assessment skills. It was found that students who achieve superior results in specialized exams possess a better ability to correctly anticipate their academic grades, and conversely, students with a high level of didactic self-assessment skills can optimize their academic performance level. However, it is very important that the process of self-assessment skill development remain constant over time and be carried out in as great a number of study subjects from the academic curriculum as possible. In order to support teachers interested in promoting such educational practices, the following recommendations can be made (Blândul, 2014):

- √ Starting self-assessment skill development as early as possible, in the first year of academic study;
- √ Continuous formation of self-knowledge/inter-knowledge skills;
- √ Initial presentation (given at the beginning of the activity) of assessment objectives students have to achieve, as well as the criteria forming the basis of assessments;
- √ Use of interactive teaching-learning-assessment strategies;
- √ The administration according to current didactic practice of certain self-assessment/inter-assessment strategies;
- √ Encouraging communication between students in solving different learning tasks;
- √ At the end of a work task: complete questionnaires which include questions that assess students' own academic performances according to a series of previously stated criteria (for example, steps taken in solving the given task, teaching methods used, progress achieved, difficulties encountered, optimization methods, etc.).

Under these conditions, rounding off the teacher's didactic assessment with the students' self-assessment is considerably simplified. Given the fact that the three components of the teaching act are inextricably connected to one another and co-evolving, the use of a certain type of assessment is conditioned by the way in which the teaching or the learning was done. Therefore, in order to develop self-assessment competency in students, one may conclude that the most appropriate form of teaching is that which is based on elements of critical thinking, which will promote active-participatory learning, and – as already shown – the assessment will not be focused exclusively on content. This will create the premises for a responsible student involvement in the instructional-educational process, elements which, corroborated with age or personality traits will lay the foundation of fair self-appraisal in relation to their own performance and that of others.

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