

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNER-CENTERED ASSESSMENT IN PEDAGOGICAL REQUALIFICATION STUDIES

Rima Bakutytė, Lidija Ušeckienė
Šiauliai University, Lithuania

Dzintra Illiško
Daugavpils University, Latvia

Abstract

The article presents the results of two empirical researches conducted in 2010 and 2015 with the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies. Referring to the analysis of the data of scientific sources and factor analysis the approaches of student-centered assessment have been emphasized, the results of both researches have been presented and referring to them the dimensions of student-centered assessment are highlighted. It has been stated that in the university under investigation, according to the graduates, student-centered assessment is becoming more and more predominant. Moreover, having performed a correlative analysis it has been shown that the respondents' age and working experience did not have significant influence on their opinion about student-centered assessment.

Keywords: learner-centered assessment, assessment for learning, university students.

Introduction

In the recent decades the attention towards students' assessment in a higher educational institution has grown. Especially in Europe it can be related to the development of the Bologna Process, where the ensuring of study quality is especially emphasized (Torres & Leite, 2014). However, mostly it is to be related to the development of a learner-centered paradigm not only in high school but also in higher education institution, which obliges, according to Pratt (1992), a teacher to perform the role of a student's assistant in the process of his/her mental development and the development of the autonomy of the personality. Such attitudes are intensively developed in the context of the constructivist paradigm, where it is noted that a student produces his/her knowledge and skills in active learning activity (Bar & Tagg, 1995; Illisko, Skrinda, & Mičule, 2014).

Huba and Freed (2000) define assessment in a learner-centered approach as “an activity, assigned by the professor that yield comprehensive information for analyzing, discussing, and judging a learner's performance on valued abilities and skills” (p. 12). Such assessment, according to them, sets high requirements for learning environment, respects the diversity of talents and learning styles, helps students generalize their learning experiences and promotes

coherence in learning by providing data to direct curriculum development and revision processes. The proofs of the assessment under discussion can be the diversity of written and oral presentations and group works, assessing which teachers provide constructive feedback emphasizing the extent, to which learning outcomes have been achieved.

In scientific literature in order to highlight a student-centered approach, several classifications of assessment have been presented. In one of them, focusing on the predominant paradigm, constructive and reproductive assessment is distinguished (Postareff, Virtanen, Katajavuori, & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). The reproductive assessment conception focuses on the perception of a study module by learners memorizing the information and knowing its application in a real life situation. The constructive conception presupposes deeper perception that refers to reflection and argumentation. In another, the most popular classification referring to the criterion of the assessment function formative assessment or assessment for learning and summative assessment or assessment of learning are distinguished (William & Black, 1996; Black, & William, 1998; Broadfoot, 2007). Assessment for learning conception is focused both on student's learning and learning processes that are treated as closely overlapped in the real context. It presupposes a close interaction between a teacher and a student, among the learners themselves striving for the interaction between the revelation of meaning and knowledge (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this process in order to achieve the learning aims formative feedback that can teach students to be more self-regulated is important (Pintrich, 1995; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). From this it is evident that such assessment emphasizes the development of personality. Meanwhile assessment for learning is focused on the level of the achievement of the learning outcomes by students. As Cizek (2012) notices, any procedure of collecting information is summative assessment, if it meets two criteria: 1. It is performed at the end of the learning unit (e.g., semester, academic year); 2. Its essential purpose is to categorize learners' achievements or system, i.e. to obtain the measure of the assessment of the achievements, which becomes the basis for the decision to give a certificate, to select, to control individuals or institutions. It is acknowledged as important, however rather on social level than by the individual himself/herself.

According to Webber (2012), a student-centered approach is now considered a highly-valued practice in higher education pedagogy. On the other hand, as the aforementioned scientist notices, still there is a lack of researches that would show how the assessment in higher education institution had been changing since the end of the previous century, i.e. since the beginning of the discussions about the learner-centered study process.

Aim of the study – to distinguish the parameters of learner-centered assessment significant in the context of the Lithuanian teacher training, to identify, referring to the graduates' opinion, how the implementation of learner-centered assessment in pedagogical requalification studies had been changing in five years and to show how students' opinion about assessment in the study process was influenced by their age, work experience and having a job according to the obtained qualification.

Object of the study: the development of student-centered assessment in pedagogical requalification studies.

Methodology and sample of the research. When conducting the research the following methods were used: the analysis of pedagogical scientific literature and the documents of education was applied in order to substantiate the set tendencies; questionnaire survey for graduates was used in order to obtain the results of the research; the factor analysis was applied in order to measure the reliability of the scale and distinguish the essential indicators

of the assessment in the study process, descriptive statistics – to characterize the current situation; correlative analysis was employed while identifying the differences according to the demographic data. All results were analyzed with the software package SPSS Statistics, version 19.0. Statistical analysis was performed and the significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

The research was conducted in one of the universities of Lithuania in two stages. The first stage took place in 2010. Meanwhile referring to the analysis of the documents of education (*Provisions of the National Education Strategy for 2003-2012* (2003), *Teacher Training Concept* (2004)), national scientific research (*generalization of the results of the project "Development of Teacher Training"* (2008), *Methodology of Teachers' Requalification Programs and the Methods of Implementation* (2007), *Teacher Training in Higher Education Institutions of Lithuania in the Context of the Sustainable Development of Education* (2006)) and the analysis of the scientific resources focusing on student-centered approach, assessment for learning, i.e. representing the constructivist approach, also bearing in mind that usually persons who already have the experience of professional activity requalify, the research instrument has been prepared and the survey of the graduates of 2010 has been conducted. Referring to its data the essential categories of a teacher's assessment have been distinguished. During the second stage of the research using the same instrument the research was conducted in 2015. By this research it was not only attempted to identify the current situation but also to compare it with the situation which was five years before and identify the tendencies of change. In the questionnaire the graduates could mark their choice on a 3-point scale from 1 (almost never) to 3 (very often). Evaluating the research data the criterion of frequency allowing estimating the stability of the expressions of the dimensions of the evaluation process was chosen.

During both researches the graduates who had graduated not earlier than two years before were interviewed. During the first stage of the research closed-type questionnaires were sent by email to 140 persons (out of them 81 filled in questionnaires returned; the return quota is 57.9%), meanwhile during the second one they were sent to 128 persons (out of them 110 filled in questionnaires returned, the return quota is 84.4%).

The majority of the persons who participated in the research both in 2010 and in 2015 were from 31 to 40 years old (39.5% in 2010, 41.7% in 2015), a slightly smaller number of the graduates of requalification studies were 20-30 years old (28.4% in 2010; 40.7% in 2015) or 41-50 years old (23.5% in 2010, 15.7% in 2015). The smallest number of the respondents who graduated in both periods was of pre-retirement age, i.e. 51-60 years old (7.4% in 2010; 1.9% in 2015). In 2010 one graduate was over 60 years of age (1.2%). In 2015 this age group was not interviewed. Having reviewed the statistical data according to age it can be seen that in 2015 more younger teachers graduated successfully than during the first stage of the research, nevertheless it confirmed that during both researches the biggest number of persons who requalified were of middle age.

Comparing the data of the respondents from the aspect of work experience different tendencies have already been noticed. In 2010 persons, whose work experience was 6-15 years were usually requalifying (44.4%), a smaller number of the respondents had 16-25 years of work experience (27.2%) or only 5 years or less (19.8%). Only a small number of the graduates who answered to the questions of the research questionnaire (8.6%) had work experience of over 25 years. Meanwhile in 2015 the biggest number of the graduates of requalification studies had less than 5 years of work experience (63%), a smaller number of men and women had 6-15 years of work experience. As in the previous period in 2015 there was a small number

of the graduates of requalification studies who had 16-25 years of work experience (5.6%) or over 25 years of work experience (1.9%). This tendency of decreasing work experience having compared the age of the graduates can be related both to a younger age of the respondents and to lower employment opportunities of younger teachers because of a relatively small change of teachers and because the respondents after graduation from their primary studies realized that they had chosen a profession that was not in great request in the labor market.

The absolute majority of the respondents of 2010 (88.9%) and 2015 (83.3%) were working at the educational institution; almost two-thirds have a permanent job according to the gained specialty (64.2% in 2010; 63% in 2015). During the research it was also asked to indicate gender as well but data analysis according to gender was not conducted because the absolute majority of the respondents of the questionnaire were women.

Analysis of the results of the research

In order to distinguish the essential parameters of student-centered assessment during the first study the factor analysis was applied. Its results have shown that all the parameters of the students' assessment in the study process are statistically significant, because none of them had a value lower than 0.62. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.821, meanwhile, Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.834. It shows that the reliability of the scale is high. Taking these statistical scores into account it was decided to further investigate the data of the factor analysis in more detail. This analysis, having applied the principal component analysis method, distinguished two factors, the first of which explained 47.94% of variance, meanwhile the second one – 18.71 % of variance. The data about the opinion of the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies obtained after Varimax rotation created the preconditions to present the model of student-centered assessment of the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies, which has been presented in Table 1:

Table 1. The model of the assessment in the study process by the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies

Dimensions of assessment	Components	
	1 st factor	2 nd factor
1. Sets requirements clearly	0.79	-0.02
2. Presents clear assessment criteria	0.81	-0.04
3. Acknowledges student's efforts	0.71	0.260
4. Explains what is good in student's work and what is to be improved	0.77	0.17
5. Teachers substantiate their assessments	0.77	0.24
6. Teachers acknowledge student's creativity	0.64	0.56
7. Teachers acknowledge the inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material	0.01	0.92

The present analysis has shown that only one dimension (acknowledge the inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material) can be attributed to the second factor, therefore, further in the research the assessment in the study process was not categorized.

Later it was aimed to distinguish the opinions of the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies about how student-centered assessment is applied and compare these data (Table 2).

Table 2. The change in the opinion of the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies about the frequency of students' assessment (frequencies)

Parameters of students' assessment during the study process	Frequency of application					
	Often		Rarely		Almost did not apply	
	2010 N=81	2015 N=110	2010 N=81	2015 N=110	2010 N=81	2015 N=110
1. Sets requirements clearly	75.6	87.3	23.9	12.7	0.5	0
2. Presents clear assessment criteria	73.2	85.5	24.4	14.5	2.4	0
3. Acknowledges student's efforts	68.9	85.5	29.7	12.7	1.4	1.8
4. Explains what is good in student's work and what is to be improved	67.5	63.6	32.0	32.6	0.5	1.8
5. Substantiates his/her assessments	59.8	62.7	38.3	33.7	1.9	3.6
6. Acknowledges student's creativity	59.8	72.7	37.8	25.5	2.4	1.8
7. Acknowledges the inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material	64.5	80.0	33.1	14.5	2.4	5.5

The results prove that during both researches, according to the graduates, teachers usually set the requirements clearly, presented clear assessment criteria, because about three-quarters or even the absolute majority of them admitted that it was quite a frequent phenomenon during their studies. However, less frequently, according to the respondents, the teachers explained what was good in the student's work and what was to be improved, substantiated their assessments, acknowledged student's efforts, creativity and inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material, because a slightly smaller part of the respondents stated that they had noticed it often during studies. Moreover, while discussing the change in the opinions it has also become clear that the graduates who were interviewed in 2015 had more favorable attitude towards the assessment in study process in general than those who were interviewed in 2010. In particular, a bigger number of them than during the first research admitted that teachers set requirements clearly, presented understandable assessment criteria, acknowledged students' efforts and creativity, and especially the inclusion of practice into theoretical material. However, in other cases there were no bigger changes after five years because it has been noticed that the opinion of the respondents of both researches about how often the teacher explained what was good in the presented work and what was to be improved, substantiated his/her arguments, remained similar. Referring to these results it is possible to make a conclusion that in 5 years positive although rather small shifts towards the implementation of student-centered assessment in pedagogical requalification studies at the university were recorded.

Correlative analysis that was performed with the data of both researches has shown that the age, work experience, having or not having a job according to the gained qualification had little influence from the aspect under investigation because statistically significant relations have not been found.

Conclusions

The student-centered paradigm, that is nowadays predominant in Europe in Lithuania, emphasizing the necessity to take students' mental development and the development of the autonomy of the personality into account, enables to apply a constructive, personality-focused assessment conception in university studies.

The results of the empirical research have revealed that the model of the student-centered assessment in the study process by the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies consists of: setting clear requirements for students, presenting clear assessment criteria, acknowledgement of student's efforts, explanation what is done well in student's work and what is to be improved, substantiation of teacher's assessment, acknowledgement of student's creativity, assessment of the inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material.

The results of two quantitative researches with the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies have shown that in 5 years positive although rather small shifts towards the implementation of student-centered assessment were recorded. During this period it was attempted to take into account students' creativity, their efforts while striving for results, inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material, as well as set requirements clearly and present assessment criteria. However, as in the previous period teachers often did not tend to explain what was done well in student's work and what was to be improved and to substantiate their assessments. It has also been identified that the age, work experience, employment according to the gained qualification has little influence on the graduates' opinion about assessment in the study process.

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Summary

Rima Bakutytė, Lidija Ušeckienė, Šiauliai University, Lithuania
Dzintra Illiško, Daugavpils University, Latvia

In the recent decades the attention towards students' assessment in a higher educational institution has grown. Especially in Europe it can be related to the development of the Bologna Process. However, mostly it is to be related to the development of a learner-centered paradigm not only in high school but also in higher education institution. The implementation of a learner-centered paradigm sets high requirements for learning environment, respects the diversity of talents and learning styles, helps students generalize their learning experiences and promotes coherence in learning by providing data to direct curriculum development and revision processes. On the other hand, still there is a lack of researches that would show how the assessment in higher education institution had been changing.

Aim of the study – to distinguish the parameters of learner-centered assessment significant in the context of the Lithuanian teacher training, to identify, referring to the graduates' opinion, how the implementation of learner-centered assessment in pedagogical requalification studies had been changing in five years and to show how students' opinion about assessment in the study process was influenced by their age, work experience and having a job according to the obtained qualification.

Methodology and sample of the research: analysis of pedagogical scientific literature and the documents of education; questionnaire survey of graduates; factor analysis, descriptive statistics; correlative analysis. All results were analyzed with the software package SPSS Statistics, version 19.0.

The research was conducted in one of the universities of Lithuania in two stages. The first stage took place in 2010. Meanwhile referring to the analysis of the documents of education and the analysis of the scientific resources focusing on student-centered approach, assessment for learning, also taking into account the fact that usually persons who already have the experience of professional activity requalify, the research instrument has been prepared and the survey of the graduates of 2010 has been conducted. Referring to its data the essential categories of teacher's assessment have been distinguished. During the second stage of the research using the same instrument the research was conducted in 2015.

By this research it was attempted to compare the results of the research with those obtained five years before. During the first stage 81 graduates and during the second stage 110 graduates of various age groups, work experience, working and not working according to the obtained qualification, who had graduated not earlier than two years before the conduction of the research were interviewed. The analysis of scientific resources has shown that the student-centered paradigm, which is nowadays predominant, emphasizing the necessity to take students' mental development and the development of the autonomy of the personality into account, enables to apply a constructive, personality-focused assessment conception in university studies.

The results of the empirical research have revealed that the model of the student-centered assessment in the study process by the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies consists of: setting clear requirements for students, presenting clear assessment criteria, acknowledgement of student's efforts, explanation what is done well in student's work and what is to be improved, substantiation of teacher's assessment, acknowledgement of student's creativity, assessment of the inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material. The results of two quantitative researches with the graduates of pedagogical requalification studies have shown that in 5 years positive although rather small shifts towards the implementation of student-centered assessment were recorded. During this period it was attempted to take into account students' creativity, their efforts while striving for results, inclusion of practical examples into theoretical material, as well as set requirements clearly and present assessment criteria. However, as in the previous period teachers often did not tend to explain what was done well in student's work and what was to be improved and to substantiate their assessments. It has also been identified that the age, work experience, employment according to the obtained qualification has little influence on the graduates' opinion about assessment in the study process.