



Evaluation. Theories, Design and Practices in Primary Education

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Abstract: Evaluation represents a fundamental component of the educational process, with a significant impact on teaching effectiveness and pupils' learning outcomes in primary education. Contemporary assessment paradigms emphasize the transition from traditional, summative-focused evaluation toward formative, learner-centered approaches that support learning and development. This paper examines the theoretical foundations of educational evaluation, the principles of assessment design, and the practical implementation of evaluation strategies in primary education. The study highlights the role of alignment between learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment methods, as well as the importance of feedback in fostering pupils' motivation and self-regulation. By integrating theory-driven assessment design with effective classroom practices, evaluation can function as a tool for improving teaching quality and enhancing pupils' academic progress in primary education.

Keywords: educational evaluation; assessment theories; assessment design; formative assessment; primary education; feedback and learning

1. Introduction

In contemporary educational systems, assessment is no longer perceived exclusively as a classification or selection tool, but as a mechanism for regulating learning. In

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primary education, this paradigm shift is all the more relevant as the early school age period represents the stage in which basic skills are formed – reading, writing, mathematical calculation, communication and critical thinking.

Effective assessment must be organically integrated into the teaching process and provide relevant information to both the teacher and the student. Thus, it becomes a tool for guiding and supporting individual progress.

2. Theories of Educational Evaluation

2.1. Psychometric Paradigm

The traditional model of evaluation was based on measurement theory, in which the emphasis is on objectivity, standardization and comparability. Written tests, objective items and rigorous scales are the expression of this approach. The main advantage is to ensure fairness and validity, but the major limitation is to reduce the evaluation to the quantitative dimension.

The psychometric paradigm represents one of the oldest and most influential orientations in the field of educational evaluation. Based on measurement theory and the development of statistics applied to education, this perspective conceives of evaluation as a process of objective quantification of student performance. The emphasis is placed on reliability, validity and comparability, and the main goal is to obtain measurable and replicable results.

The psychometric model was developed in the context of the emergence of standardized tests and the need for selection and classification in modern educational systems. The assessment is built on well-defined items (multiple choice, short answer items, completion, matching pairs), which allow for objective correction and reduce the influence of evaluator subjectivity. Rigorous scales and clearly structured scoring schemes ensure uniformity in assessment and facilitate the comparison of results between students, classes or institutions.

A major advantage of the psychometric paradigm is the increase in the fairness of the assessment. Standardization of instruments minimizes variations determined by the individual interpretation of the teacher and provides a transparent framework for assessment. This approach also allows for relevant statistical analyses to be carried out to substantiate educational policies and to monitor performance at a systemic level.

However, the limits of this paradigm become evident in the context of primary education. Reducing performance to numerical or qualifying scores can lead to ignoring qualitative dimensions of learning, such as creativity, critical thinking, individual progress or motivation. Assessment focused exclusively on measurable results risks transforming the educational process into a competition oriented towards final performance, to the detriment of the harmonious development of the student.

Furthermore, in the primary cycle, where differences in learning pace and style are significant, a rigidly standardized approach can generate premature labeling or discouragement. Children at the beginning of their school journey need support and constructive feedback, not just the quantification of performance.

Therefore, although the psychometric paradigm remains relevant for ensuring the objectivity and validity of assessment, its application in primary education requires balancing by integrating formative and qualitative dimensions. A modern evaluative culture does not exclude measurement, but complements it with mechanisms for regulating and supporting individual progress.

2.2. Formative Assessment

The evolution of educational theories has led to the emergence of the concept of formative assessment, focused on progress. Inspired by socio-constructivist theories, including the perspective of Lev Vygotsky, this approach supports the idea that learning is a dynamic process, and feedback plays an essential role in the development of skills.

Formative assessment provides immediate information about the current level of the student and the steps needed for improvement. The emphasis shifts from the result to the process.

Formative assessment represents a paradigm shift in the field of educational assessment, shifting the emphasis from measuring final performance to supporting the learning process. Unlike summative assessment, which has a predominantly certificative role, formative assessment is oriented towards progress, self-regulation and the development of skills. It functions as a continuous mechanism for collecting and interpreting information about learning, with the aim of adjusting the teaching intervention and supporting the student in achieving the established objectives.

The theoretical foundations of formative assessment are found in socio-constructivist theories of learning, which argue that cognitive development occurs through interaction, reflection and feedback. In Lev Vygotsky's perspective, the student's progress is facilitated by the support provided in the zone of proximal development, and feedback becomes an essential tool in this process. Formative assessment creates precisely this framework of gradual support, allowing the identification of the student's current level and orientation towards the next steps.

The defining characteristics of formative assessment include:

- continuous and integrated into teaching;
- use of descriptive feedback, aimed at improvement;
- active student involvement through self-assessment and peer assessment;
- emphasis on process and not exclusively on product.

In primary education, formative assessment is particularly relevant because it supports the development of fundamental skills in a positive educational climate. For example, in the process of writing an essay, the student can receive intermediate feedback on the structure of the text, the coherence of ideas and linguistic correctness, having the opportunity to revise and improve the final product. Thus, assessment becomes a dynamic learning process, not a simple statement of the level achieved.

Another central element of formative assessment is the transparency of criteria. When students know the criteria for success, they can self-regulate their work and develop metacognitive skills. In this sense, descriptive rubrics, checklists and reflection journals contribute to the awareness of progress.

Also, formative assessment favors the development of intrinsic motivation. By focusing on individual progress and effort, students develop self-confidence and perseverance. Assessment is no longer perceived as a sanction, but as an opportunity for improvement.

However, implementing formative assessment requires time, planning and professional competence. The teacher must design activities that include integrated evaluative moments and formulate clear, specific and action-oriented feedback. Without these conditions, formative assessment risks remaining at the declarative level.

In conclusion, formative assessment is a pillar of the modernization of educational practices in primary education. It complements the psychometric dimension of assessment by introducing a perspective focused on progress, reflection and continuous development, contributing to the formation of autonomous and responsible students.

2.3. Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is a modern orientation in the field of educational assessment, which emphasizes the relevance and functionality of student acquisitions. Unlike traditional assessment, focused on the reproduction of information and standardized responses, authentic assessment aims at

The foundations of authentic assessment are found in constructivist theories of learning, according to which knowledge is actively constructed through experience and reflection. The student is involved in complex, open-ended tasks that require critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and transferability. In this framework, assessment becomes an integral part of the learning activity, and the boundary between teaching, learning and assessment blurs. In primary education, authentic assessment can take various forms, adapted to the level of development of students. Projects are one of the most common methods, as they allow the integration of knowledge from several fields and the valorization of students' interests. For example, carrying out a project about a literary character, a story or an event from everyday life involves reading, analysis, written and oral expression, but also collaboration and creativity.

The portfolio is another specific tool for authentic assessment, which documents the student's progress over time. By selecting and analyzing their own products, the student reflects on their learning journey and develops their metacognitive skills. The portfolio provides a complex picture of their development, going beyond the one-off assessment of a written test.

Problem-solving tasks, anchored in contexts familiar to students, represent another form of authentic assessment. They require the application of knowledge in concrete situations, encouraging logical thinking and the transfer of acquisitions. In the assessment of Romanian language and literature, such tasks may include the writing of functional texts (messages, invitations, descriptions) or the interpretation of texts from the perspective of personal experience.

A major advantage of authentic assessment is that it increases student motivation and engagement. When assessment tasks are perceived as relevant and meaningful, students show increased interest and take responsibility for their own learning. At the same time, authentic assessment allows for the valorization of the diversity of learning styles and individual potential.

However, authentic assessment involves challenges related to the design of criteria and ensuring objectivity. To avoid subjectivity, it is necessary to use descriptive rubrics and explicit criteria, communicated to students in advance. The teacher must also have solid methodological skills to integrate authentic assessment into a coherent didactic design.

In conclusion, authentic assessment complements psychometric and formative assessment, providing a holistic perspective on learning. By focusing on applicability, reflection and meaning, this approach contributes to the development of skills and the formation of students capable of using the knowledge acquired in varied and relevant contexts.

3. Assessment Design in Primary Education

Assessment design in primary education is an intentional and systematic process of designing assessment situations, in accordance with the curricular objectives, the age characteristics of the students and the principles of competence-based pedagogy. Assessment cannot be conceived as an isolated stage, placed at the end of a learning unit, but must be organically integrated into the architecture of the lesson and the curricular progression.

A coherent assessment design implies, first of all, the constructive alignment between the learning objectives, the teaching activities and the assessment tools. This correlation ensures that what is assessed corresponds to what has been taught and what the students have actually practiced. In the absence of this coherence, the assessment becomes formal, and the results obtained do not faithfully reflect the real level of competences.

In primary education, assessment design must take into account the specifics of students' cognitive and socio-emotional development. Children at this stage are progressively learning to regulate their behavior and evaluate their performance; therefore, assessment must include explicit guidance and reflection components. Criteria must be formulated in accessible language, and examples of performance must be provided to clarify the standards of success. Another central element of

assessment design is the diversification of instruments. In primary education, competencies cannot be captured exclusively through written tests. It is necessary to combine oral assessment, systematic observation, projects, portfolios and practical activities. This variety allows for a holistic perspective on student development and reduces the risk of one-dimensional assessment.

The evaluation design also involves planning the stages of the evaluation:

- Initial evaluation, with a diagnostic role, to identify the starting level;
- Formative evaluation, integrated throughout the activities, to regulate learning;
- Summative evaluation, at the end of a unit, to assess the level achieved.

These types are not exclusive, but complement each other, each having a distinct function in the educational process.

An effective evaluation design also includes planning feedback. The teacher must anticipate the moments in which he offers support and formulate differentiated intervention strategies. Evaluation thus becomes a tool for pedagogical guidance, not just for observation.

In the current context, assessment design must also integrate the digital dimension. Educational platforms can facilitate rapid data collection, progress analysis and personalized feedback. However, the use of technology must be subordinated to didactic objectives, avoiding the transformation of assessment into an exclusively technical approach. In conclusion, assessment design in primary education requires coherence, diversity and a focus on progress. It reflects the professional competence of the teaching staff and contributes decisively to the development of an assessment culture oriented towards learning and self-regulation.

4. Assessment Practices in Primary Education

4.1. Digital Assessment

Digital technologies allow the use of interactive questionnaires and rapid feedback platforms. They can support progress monitoring and diversification of assessment tools.

Digital assessment is an emerging direction in contemporary educational practices, integrating technology into the process of collecting, analyzing and capitalizing on

information on student progress. In primary education, the use of digital tools must be carried out in a manner adapted to the developmental level of children and subordinated to pedagogical objectives.

Digital assessment is not limited to the transposition of the traditional test into an electronic format, but involves the use of interactive tools that facilitate immediate feedback, progress monitoring and active student involvement. Educational platforms allow the administration of self-correcting questionnaires, interactive exercises, quiz-type activities or tasks integrated into electronic portfolios.

A significant advantage of digital assessment is the speed of obtaining results and the possibility of detailed analysis of performance. The teacher can quickly identify problematic items, error patterns and the level of understanding of the class, adjusting the didactic intervention in real time. This regulatory dimension reinforces the formative nature of the assessment.

In teaching Romanian language and literature, digital assessment can include:

- interactive exercises to identify parts of speech;
- text comprehension tests with automatic feedback;
- writing texts in collaborative documents;
- using electronic portfolios to track writing progress;
- audio recordings to assess expressive reading.

Digital assessment also facilitates differentiation of instruction. The teacher can offer tasks with different levels of difficulty, adapt the working time or provide additional materials for consolidation.

However, implementing digital assessment also involves challenges. Unequal access to technology, digital skills of teachers and students or the risk of over-assessment through rapid tests can limit the effectiveness of this approach. In addition, it is necessary to maintain a balance between automated assessment and qualitative assessment, as certain skills – such as creativity or expressiveness – require interpretive analysis.

Another essential aspect is the ethics of digital assessment: data protection, responsible use of platforms and ensuring a climate of trust. Assessment must remain a tool of support, not excessive supervision.

In conclusion, digital assessment, integrated into a coherent didactic design, can significantly contribute to making the assessment process more efficient in primary

education. It supports the formative nature of assessment, facilitates the monitoring of progress and diversifies the tools used, provided that technology is used reflexively and balanced.

5. Conclusions

Evaluation in primary education is in a process of conceptual and practical redefinition, driven by curricular transformations and the new demands of competence-based education. Beyond its traditional function of measurement and classification, assessment is called upon to become a strategic tool for supporting learning, guiding progress and strengthening student autonomy.

Combining the rigor of measurement with the flexibility of the formative approach is the essential condition for a balanced evaluative practice. The psychometric paradigm provides the necessary framework for objectivity and comparability, but this must be complemented by formative mechanisms that value the process, effort and individual evolution. In the primary cycle, where cognitive and socio-emotional development is in full swing, the emphasis on progress becomes a priority.

A coherent evaluative design, based on the alignment between objectives, activities and tools, as well as on the formulation of explicit and accessible criteria, contributes to the transparency of the educational process. Constructive feedback, oriented towards improvement and self-regulation, supports the development of fundamental skills and metacognition. Students thus learn to analyze their own performance, identify strengths and establish directions for progress.

The transition from classification-centered assessment to progress-centered assessment involves not only methodological changes, but also a change in educational culture. Assessment must be perceived as an integral part of learning, not as a final or sanctioning stage. In this sense, the teacher becomes a facilitator of progress and a designer of evaluative situations that support the integral development of the child.

In conclusion, modernizing assessment in primary education does not consist in abandoning standards, but in using them in a reflective and formative framework. Only through balanced, coherent and development-oriented assessment can autonomous, responsible and lifelong learners be formed.

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