

ASPECTS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ACADEMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The main objective of this article will lead us to a descriptive approach to formative assessment, along with a number of essential characteristics of this concept. Formative assessment is a continuously evolving process. This is an important concept in the field of education and focuses on the ongoing assessment and feedback during the learning process, in order to improve students' performance and comprehension. The basic idea is that assessment should not be just a moment when grades are given, but should be an integral part of the learning process.*

Key words: *assessment; formative assessment; students.*

We find assessment presented in the form of an act of comparison by reference to a set of rules, a subject, respectively an object or an activity. (Voiculescu, 2010)

This is an essential component of the educational process, along with teaching and learning. This is determined by the fact that any educational act involves assessment directly or indirectly, in an organized or unsystematic way. (Papuc, Bocoş, 2017)

Assessment represents „ a complex action of collecting a set of relevant, valid and reliable information on the relevance and value of processes, performance, skills, educational or didactic behaviors and examination of the degree of adequacy between this set of information and a set of criteria established in correspondence with the objectives pursued and fixed beforehand. ”(Bocoş, Răduţ-Taciu, Stan, 2016, p.127)

The concept of formative assessment was launched by M. Scriven in 1967 with the publication of the debates on the presentation of the concept of assessment as an activity that must be carried out in an operative and continuous way throughout the instructive-educational process. (State, 2017).

We find the idea of formative assessment incorporated in the educational process through which feedback is provided to both students and teachers, and which by observing the errors, allows the correction of gaps that can occur in the process. Formative assessment is performed in small stages of actions, resulting in a higher frequency of checks and

at the same time a swift correction of errors that are identified.(Pachef, 2008)

At a significance level, formative assessment is a continuous evaluation that strives for an uninterrupted verification within the instructive-educational process, but also for surpassing the continuous assessment through the process of a specific verification and by including feedback in the educational flow.(Roman, 2014)

Meyer G. describes formative assessment as the type of evaluation that is performed throughout a pedagogical approach, is frequent, regarding the temporal aspect in which it is done and aims to correct and improve the errors encountered by students. Formative assessment will not rank a student at a certain step, but rather will compare the performance obtained by him/her to a threshold of accomplishment that was established beforehand.(Meyer, 2000)

Gérard Scallon, a renowned specialist in assessment, defines formative assessment as follows: „ formative assessment is a continuous assessment, its main objective being to ensure the progress of each formable in the learning process, with the intention of changing the learning situation or the pace of progress, in order to improve or correct certain aspects.(Scallon,1988,p.155)

Jacques Tardif argues that the student has to be regularly informed about the cognitive learning model about his/her evolution, but also about the level of knowledge and skills that are targeted. The role of formative assessment being to provide students in a systematic way with information about their progress, regarding the results obtained at a given time and its previous results.(Tardif, 2006)

Manolescu presents a number of essential characteristics of formative assessment:

- it represents the assessment that is based on learning objectives;
- it symbolizes the fact that assessment is a part of the instructive-educational process;
- the student's failure is not considered a weakness, but it is rather seen as a moment in solving a problem;
- it intervenes in each learning task;
- it reveals the teacher as well as student what is the degree of mastery of the objectives;
- it supports a regulation of the student training processes so as to offer him/her an adaptation of the learning tasks;
- it is a component of the instructive-educational process, it is continuous and focused on the learner;
- one of the purposes of formative assessment is to overcome the difficulties that appear during the learning process.(Manolescu, 2010)

In addition to the information provided by Manolescu about the characteristics of formative assessment in his work „The Assessment of Competencies”, Roman suggests the following characteristics:

- first of all, the findings will be made starting from the analysis of the reasons that led to various errors and failures;
- errors are considered mandatory stages in the learning process;
- the student is a partner of the learning process;
- the student is a partner of the educational project in order to know the planned objectives, to be aware of the difficulties that can intervene along the way and to develop an approach to an autonomous progress;
- the concept of assessment is part of the learning process;
- the concept of assessment is open to guiding actions in order to increase the efficiency of education.(Roman, 2014)

Cizek G. indicates a series of characteristics of the formative assessment:

- it requires students to be responsible for their own learning process;
- it transmits and presents clear and specific learning objectives;
- it focuses on objectives that mark valuable educational outcomes with applicability beyond the context of learning;
- it mentions the students’ current competencies and the necessary steps to acquire the predetermined objectives;
- it requires plans to target the desired objectives;
- it motivates students to self-monitor the evolution towards learning activities;
- it presents examples of learning objectives including rules that will be used to assess students’ work;
- it establishes frequent assessment moments, including self-assessment;
- it includes feedback related to learning goals and provides opportunities for students to see and improve their work products;
- it supports metacognition and students’ reflection in connection to their individual work.(Cizek,2010)

Formative assessment is understood as a process of collaboration and communication between teachers and students, one of the important roles being that of providing feedback. In this relationship between teachers and students, feedback is a didactic communication tool, the

teacher having here the purpose of supporting students' progress. On these conditions the essence of the formative assessment has a series of characteristics:

- „ it is constantly and operatively integrated throughout the teaching process and it intervenes during each learning task;
- it allows the teacher to know at any given time what level the students are at and guides them in the learning process, making them aware of their own training;
- it provides students stimulation to resort to metacognition, causing them to modify their learning behavior during the learning process;
- it allows students to clearly analyze their own learning approach;
- it regulates "on the fly" the teaching process;
- it involves a diagnosis of factors that create learning difficulties for students;
- it stipulates the comparison of students' performance with a level of success established beforehand;
- it develops students' capacities for self-assessment and mutual evaluation.”(Bîrnaz, Spînu, 2016, p.82)

Formative assessment is diversly presented in the vision of the researchers, but the common aspects are limited to its character of diagnosis, remediation and correction of the training process.

In academic education, formative assessment includes in its center of interest a series of key moments: specifying and presenting the formative assessment methodology; the adaptation of methods to the activities of formative evaluation; supervising the students' individual work; self-assessment and last but not least, obtaining objective, positive feedback.

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