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The Contribution of Didactical Self-analysis to Professional Development

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Abstract. *The continuous training of the teachers is an extremely important process, which ensures the success of their didactic activities. Their self-assessment realized by teachers regarding to each sector of the teaching activity has positive effects on the quality of the educational activities organized in the school space. Thus, a teacher concerned by his professional development uses effective teaching strategies and provides students with authentic learning opportunities. It also provides constructive and effective feedback and systematically uses efficient didactic strategies. The self-analysis of the didactic activity is based on value judgments regarding the efficiency of the design and the lessons the achievement of the operational objectives, the quality of the results obtained, etc. Through this approach, the teachers' pedagogical skills are developed. The self-analysis process is based on active involvement and authentic desire for self-improvement. This is a process that should be realized with carefully selected tools (such as reflection journals, self-evaluation instruments, etc), which reflect the level of involvement, knowledge, and professional development. The main objective of this study was to establish effective strategies that can be used by teachers in the self-assessment process, in order to achieve success and excellence in their teaching activity. The results of the study outline the importance of the self-assessment processes realized by the teachers.*

Keywords: "Self-analysis", "Reflection", "Professional Development", "Progress", "Values", "Tools".

Introduction

A reflective teacher is concerned with the quality of the teaching actions performed. Reflective thinking has a positive impact on professional and personal development of teachers. The main objective of this study was to establish the efficiency of a program through which teachers were encouraged to make daily exercises of reflection regarding their teaching activities. Our research is very important, because in the context of using distance learning it is more difficult to receive and offer efficient feedback, and at the same time the communication between school and family was considerably affected.

Paper Rationale

Recent studies have revealed the importance of self-assessment processes realized in order to establish the efficiency and the quality of the teaching activities realized by teachers. It is known that feedback offered by pupils, parents, school leaders, or teachers who teach the same school objects, generates positive changes in teaching, learning, and evaluation processes. At the same time, the reflection exercises realized by teachers,

based on their observations are also extremely important and could be used to enhance teachers' competencies and their performances.

Study theoretical foundation and related literature

Our study starts from the premise that self-analysis of the didactical actions contributes to a great extent to teachers' professional development. According to S. Nurfaidah, "a reflective teacher is said to be able to consider problems in new and different ways. He/she is also open to new ideas and thoughts that come from others. Therefore, he/she should be ready to listen to and welcome more opinions than one. Additionally, as an active listener, the reflective teacher should be prepared and able to hear contrary view and also be able to admit that his/her previously held belief may in fact be wrong."¹

Self-assessment is an action with positive effects on the teaching activities carried out by teachers. "Teacher behavior research has shown that teacher behaviors and characteristics, as well as specific teaching strategies, make a difference with regard to student achievement".²

Reflection exercises on the taught curriculum, on the events that occurred in educational contexts, and on the feelings generated in the learning process contribute to obtaining positive performances in the teaching activity. „In a word, reflective teaching is a process with cycles of reflections, modifications, and evaluation during the teaching processes across time”.³ The teacher's reflective thinking approaches can be associated with improved professional skills and significant progress in teaching. "Effective teachers are in the habit of constantly reflecting on how well they are getting through to their students and searching for better ways of teaching those who are not responding as well as extending those who are achieving well."⁴

An important role in order to increase the quality of teaching activities is played by inter-evaluation, collaboration with other colleagues, and requesting feedback from all educational actors. "We believe that both the mentor and the schools' managers should help the beginning teachers, in

¹ Nurfaidah, S., "Three Attitudes of a Reflective Teacher" in *Research and Innovation in Language Learning*, 1 (2018), no 1, p. 40.

² Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J., "Instructional strategies to facilitate learning" in *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6 (2011), no. 4, p. 9.

³ Lan, Hua, M. H., dan Kai-Ping Wang, W., "The Effects of Reflective Teaching on an Intensive Teacher Training Program" in *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3 (2013), no. 1, p. 83.

⁴ Nkechi, E. E., Ewomaoghene, E. E., Egenti, N., "The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1 (2016), no. 2, p. 45.

order to have an efficient and coherent activity, not only to offer them support when conflictual situations occur."⁵

Educational institutions make significant efforts to increase the quality of teaching activities undertaken and to provide students with relevant and appropriate learning opportunities to their knowledge interests. Policies adopted at the institutional level can influence teachers' decisions regarding their training. "A democratic managerial style has benefic effects on the entire activity of the educational institutions, and the valorization of the efforts made by all the educational partners ensures a positive climate and effective interpersonal relationships."⁶

Reflecting on the efficiency of their actions, teachers will learn from their own mistakes, interact more effectively with parents, support their students more effectively in the learning process, and contribute to the well-being of their students. "Teaching profession is based on vocational and personal skills and competencies, involves professional and ethical standards and models, and entails a continuous process of professional development."⁷

The well-being of teachers and the sense of self-efficacy felt by teachers can influence their decisions regarding their professional development. "Job satisfaction could be defined as positive emotional estate which results from personal opinion of an employee concerning his work and working climate."⁸

Methodology

Through this research, teachers conducted reflection exercises on the quality of their teaching activities. Through this study, we aimed to establish how important is the constant application of reflexive exercises and their positive effects on the teachers' work. The present research took place at the level of an educational institution in Romania. The sample of participants consisted of 29 teachers. The study has started from the following research questions:

- How important are, from the teachers' perspective, the reflection exercises on the didactic activities carried out previously?

⁵ Meseșan, N.-E., & Marin, D.-C., "Aspects that could be Enhanced during the Initial and Continuous Training of the Primary School Teachers from Romania" în *Educația 21 Journal*, 20 (2021), p. 93.

⁶ Marin, D.-C., & Macri, C., "Ways to improve the Romanian teachers' occupational prestige. A systematic literature review" în *Educația 21 Journal*, 16 (2018), p. 115.

⁷ Bentea, C.-C., & Anghelache, V., "Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Professional Activity", în *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 51 (2012), p. 167.

⁸ Mărgărițoiu, A., Eftimie, S., "Pre-university Teachers' Professional Satisfaction", în *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 78 (2013), p. 111.

- What tools do teachers prefer to use with the purpose to solicit feedback from parents and students?

Results

During the experimental program, teachers were encouraged to systematically perform, every day, reflection exercises on their teaching activity. Teachers most often analyzed the following aspects of their didactic activity: aspects that can be improved, strengths, current opportunities, and obstacles that may arise in the future and can affect the teaching activity. In collaboration with the teachers involved in the program, the following reflection sheet was conceived to be used by teachers (see Figure 1).

The reflection sheet consists of four vertically stacked sections. Each section is defined by a blue arrow-shaped header pointing downwards, which contains a specific reflection prompt. To the right of each header is a large, empty, rounded rectangular box for writing.

- Section 1:** Header: "Strengths of my teaching activities".
- Section 2:** Header: "Aspects that can/could be improved." (Note: "can" is in red).
- Section 3:** Header: "If I have the opportunity to go back in time, I would change ...".
- Section 4:** Header: "Positive thoughts or lessons learned, which will help me in my didactic activity".

Figure 1. Aspects that were considered relevant by teachers

Both the strengths of the activities and the aspects that **can** be improved were analyzed by teachers. Thus, teachers received support in the

process of self-assessment of their activity, both from parents, students, and other colleagues in the school (see Table 1).

Table 1. Tools that facilitate the self-assessment process

<i>People who have been asked for feedback</i>	<i>Tools used</i>
Parents	Questionnaires
Teachers	Observation Sheets, Reflection Diary
Students	Class diary, interview guide

At the end of the experimental program, the opinion of the teachers on the frequency with which they will perform the self-evaluation of their teaching activity was investigated. All the teachers who participated in the study are intending to request more frequent feedback regarding the efficiency of their teaching activities.

The study has revealed the positive effects of self-analyses realized by teachers regarding their didactic activities. Most of the teachers mentioned that this type of exercise is very constructive, and could offer them the privilege to correct the dysfunctionalities that can occur in the teaching process (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Examples of issues that occurred during the period in which the distance learning processes were organized*

<i>People who have been asked for feedback</i>	<i>Aspects that could be enhanced</i>
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quantity of time required to complete homework and the complexity of the work tasks, being necessary to be taken into account the individual particularities of the students; - The level of the pupils' motivation for learning
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quality of the communication between teacher and pupils; - The mode that pupils' activity is organized (pupils have desired to be involved more frequently in group activities). - The quantity of time required to complete homework and the complexity of the work tasks, being necessary to be taken into account the individual particularities of the students;
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The degree of the attractiveness of the lessons; - The quality of teacher-student or student-student communication; - Absence of individualization of work tasks, depending on the individual particularities of the students; - Absence of immediate feedback - The quality of time management, - - The variety of the didactic means that are used.

The systematic request of feedback concerning the teachers' activity, had positive effects on the degree of openness of both pupils and parents. Teachers have received more frequent positive messages, such as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Examples of positive feedback provided by students and parents

Through the interviews with teachers involved in the program we have discovered that, from the perspective of all educational actors, effective strategies for optimizing teaching activities are: using more frequently the interactive teaching methods, diversifying teaching strategies used, choosing attractive teaching aids for students, individualizing training, more frequent use of teaching, capitalizing on students' previous experiences, paying more attention to formative assessment, creating a warm atmosphere and giving high importance to strengthening the emotional relationship with students, making frequent inter and intradisciplinary connections, paying more attention to the development of children's creativity, etc.

Discussions

Teachers said that in the context of using distance learning, they had new experiences in the use of digital media and tools. Teachers' answers highlight the need for teachers to self-evaluate, as often as possible, their activity, through reflection exercises. From the teachers' perspective, the systematic exercises in which they participated had positive effects on the evaluation processes, the content of the didactic activities, the didactic strategies used.

Conclusions

The self-analysis of the teaching activity supports the professional development of the teachers, through the awareness of the unproductive behaviors, the repetition of the positive practices and experiences, the optimization of the teaching-learning-evaluation processes. All participants in the study paid a high degree of attention to teacher-student communication, this being more difficult to achieve in the conditions of using distance learning. Self-reflection exercises support the creation of a positive learning atmosphere, the selection of effective work strategies, the choice of appropriate teaching strategies, the optimization of teaching activities. The results of this study emphasize the major role that self-reflection has on professional success.

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