JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
SOCIETY & MULTICULTURALISM

https://doi.org/10.2478/jesm-2023-0011

Modern assessment methods in primary education

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Abstract

This article aims to identify the degree of effectiveness of modern assesment methods in motivating learning in the discipline of Romanian Language and Literature, in the 4th grade. In order to test the effectiveness of the assessment tests (traditional and alternative), the research was carried out in two classes of students, one experimental, where the project was applied as an alternative assessment method, and one control, where the assessment was carried out through a traditional written test. The research found better results in the experimental class as opposed to the control class.

Keywords: assesment, alternative methods, project, progress, written test.

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1. Introduction

The issue of assessment in education is a topic of major importance both for theorists and for us future teachers. Each of us is looking for ways to direct the educational process in such a way that we are able to achieve a higher level of performance and to improve and optimize educational results. Considering the major changes in society, which have a strong impact on the development of individuals, there is a need to focus our attention on this aspect. The significance, but also the topicality of this theme comes from the theoretical perspective through which school evaluation is approached. Current theories on school assessment emphasize the interdependence between it and the other components of the educational process. In the specialized literature, the most common evaluation purposes are: regulation and performance.

The concept of assessment in its evolution has acquired various interpretations. Manolescu (2010) identifies three types of definitions, namely: "old" definitions, through which the concepts of assessment and measurement intertwine (evaluation = measurement), definitions through which evaluation is closely related to operational objectives, and more recent definitions that present school assesment as the issuing component of value judgments with reference to what the learner managed to acquire during the educational act. The decision to choose the methods by which the assessment will be made, whether we are talking about the traditional or the alternative type, involves a great responsibility on the part of the teaching staff, given the fact that he must take into account certain factors, but more take into account the opinion of the students regarding the method by which they wish to be evaluated.

2. School assessment and alternative assessment methods

School assessment, one of the three vital elements of the education process, is most often considered a delicate subject in any educational system, given the fact that its repercussions are felt not only intrinsically, within the education system, but and extrinsic, in most existing levels in a society (Albulescu I., Catalano H., 2019).

The evaluation guarantees the conditions according to which the teaching and learning processes will be carried out in an adequate

way, in such a way that they facilitate the performance of the students, but also their development at all levels. Their interdependence and the relationship that is created between these procesaseși determines the appearance of an uninterrupted, circular circuit.

The mutual functioning of the elements of this triad: teaching - learning – assessment, is determined by the fact that a didactic strategy can be applied in each of them. Thus, teaching will be found in learning, and these two together in assessment. In this context, assessment has the role of revealing the results of the teaching and learning processes. From this point, the assessment process can determine a new action plan for the future, which is the moment when the teacher analyzes his teaching method, its results, as well as the changes necessary to improve it. The objectivity of the assessment is absolutely necessary because only this can determine beneficial changes and achieve performance. When the teaching staff evaluates correctly and objectively, even if it is a failure, this process can be considered a success, a process that generates progress. Only in the case of a correct assessment, the improvement proposed by the teaching staff will have the expected effects.

For a long time, traditional didactics presented the teaching and learning processes separately from the assessment process. Modern didactics proposes the inclusion of this process within the instructional-educational process, given the fact that this is the one that provides the information on the basis of which the actions of the teaching staff and students are guided towards achieving performance, contributing in a fundamental way to the smooth development of the processes of teaching and learning, with which they are in relationship.

Checking the results of the actions of the actors participating in the educational act, whether we are talking about the results of the efforts made by the teaching staff or about the knowledge, skills, behaviors that the student demonstrates, has major repercussions on the educational process, repercussions that can be beneficial if the evaluation is carried out properly and objectively or disruptively where objectivity and fairness are affected.

In the specialized literature we find two types of evaluation methods: traditional and alternative.

The assessment of students through traditional methods can be done by:

- oral assessment, this being the oldest and most frequent assessment method used in the instructive-educational activity. This consists of a dialogue between the teacher and the student, through which the former seeks to obtain information regarding the quantity and quality of the knowledge the student possesses as well as his ability to operate with it;
- through written assessment, which represent an economical way of checking, because they allow the performance of a large number of students to be checked in a relatively short time. One form through which the written evaluation can be materialized is the docimological test. The docimological test includes a grouping of questions or statements called items, which cover a topic, a chapter or a larger part of the program;
- through practical tests, this method being used with the aim of discovering and analyzing the capacities to use the acquired information in practice, as well as the degree of possession of the skills and abilities related to the creativity of those evaluated (Constantin Cucoș, 2008).

Student assessment can be done, as I mentioned before, by using alternative methods. These methods can be:

- systematic observation of students' activity and behavior towards learning, an assessment technique that provides the teacher with a series of useful, diverse and complete information, difficult to obtain otherwise through traditional evaluation methods;
- the portfolio, representing an assessment method through which the teacher has the opportunity to track the student's cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal performance/progress in a discipline over a longer period of time;
- the investigation is an activity that the student carries out in one hour in order to solve a complicated situation, based on precise instructions. It starts, unfolds and ends in the classroom. It can be carried out individually or in a group;
- the project is a much more complex activity than the investigation. It starts in the classroom and continues outside

the school (individually or in a group) and can last several days or weeks. It also ends in class by presenting a report or the products made;

- self-evaluation helps students to develop their self-knowledge capacities, to value both their knowledge and attitudes and behaviors. Students need to know themselves. This will give them self-confidence and motivate them to improve their school performance (Romanescu, 2017, Anghel, 2017).

From the variety of alternative assessment methods, those presented previously are used both as assessment methods and as learning methods with a formative value worthy of consideration, given the fact that they increase curiosity, interest, investigative and capitalization capacities of knowledge in new situations, but especially the ability to cooperate in solving tasks.

3. Research methodology

This research aims to identify the degree of effectiveness of modern assessment methods in motivating learning in the discipline of Romanian Language and Literature, in the 4th grade.

3.1. Objectives

O1. Analysis of the importance of alternative assessment methods in motivating schoolchildren to learn;

O2. Identifying some traditional and alternative assessment methods in order to establish their contribution to increasing the efficiency of the activities of checking students' knowledge and to increasing the motivation for learning, in the discipline of Romanian Language and Literature;

O3. Application of the project as an alternative method of assessment in the experimental class.

3.2. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1. If for one week the project will be applied as an alternative method of assessment, within the discipline of Romanian Language and Literature, then the activity of checking the students' knowledge will be more effective, compared to the application of the written test as a traditional method of assessment.

Hypothesis 2. If for one week the project is applied as an alternative assessment method in the Romanian Language and Literature discipline, then the motivation for learning of schoolchildren will

increase, compared to the application of the written test as a traditional assessment method.

3.3. Sample

50 students and 2 teachers participated in the research, from 4th grade A and 4th grade B, from a rural secondary school. Given that the research is of an experimental type, the research subjects (students) constituted two groups:

- the experimental class, IV A, which was made up of 26 students, of which 14 girls and 12 boys, aged between 10-11 years;
- the control class, 4th B, which was made up of 24 students, of which 14 girls and 10 boys, aged between 10-11 years.

3.4. Methods and research tool

In order to carry out the research, the instruments used were the questionnaire and the observation grid (Anghel, 2017).

The questionnaire was structured on 13 items, using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 meant never, and 5 always. The questionnaire was addressed to the students and aimed to identify their attitude regarding the assessment process.

The observation sheet was structured into two categories of indicators: indicators for the effectiveness of knowledge verification activities (complex and scientifically correct answers, increasing self-esteem, developing creativity, increasing the degree of cooperation, developing critical thinking) and indicators for learning motivation (increasing the degree of interest, active involvement, participation with pleasure), being completed by the teaching staff of the two classes.

4. Analysis and interpretation of the research data

This experiment had three stages. In the pre-experimental stage, a questionnaire was applied to the students in order to diagnose their attitude towards the assessment process. In the experimental stage, the independent variables were introduced: the project method in the experimental class, while in the control class the assessment activity was carried out under usual conditions by applying a written evaluation test. The experimental class had to complete a project in the Romanian Language and Literature discipline in one week, which consisted of making a book about childhood. This project was a group

project, each group consisting of five and six students respectively, each with a very well established role. In the control class, a written test was applied to the same subject, which contained three subjective items. In the post-experimental stage, the results of the observation grid completed by the teachers for each student were centralized.
Following the use of the project method, the students in the experimental group obtained the following qualifications:

- 15 students obtained the qualification Very good
- 9 students obtained the qualification Good
- 2 students obtained the qualification Sufficient

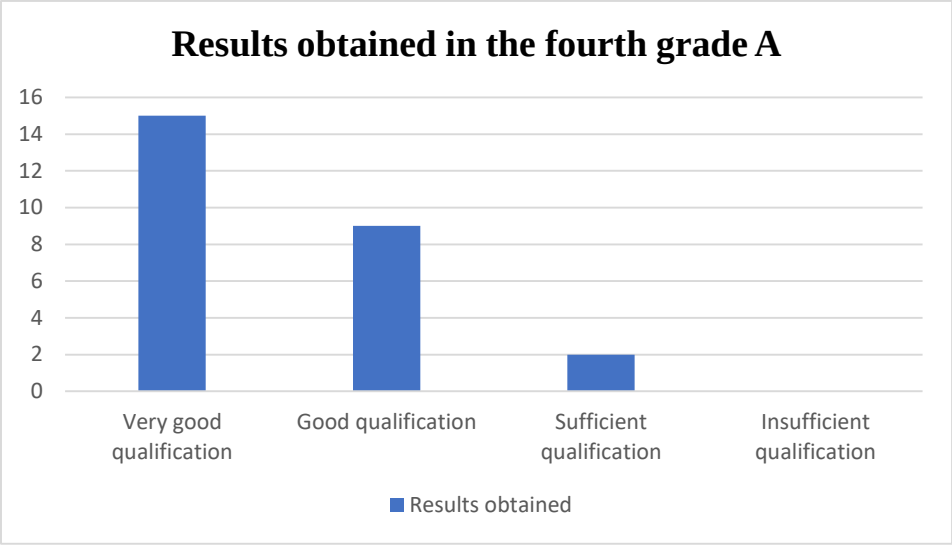


Figure no. 1. *Evaluation results obtained in the experimental class*

After applying the written test to the control group, the students obtained the following qualifications:

- 10 students obtained the qualification Very good
- 8 students obtained the qualification Good
- 4 students obtained the qualification Sufficient
- 2 students obtained the qualification Insufficient

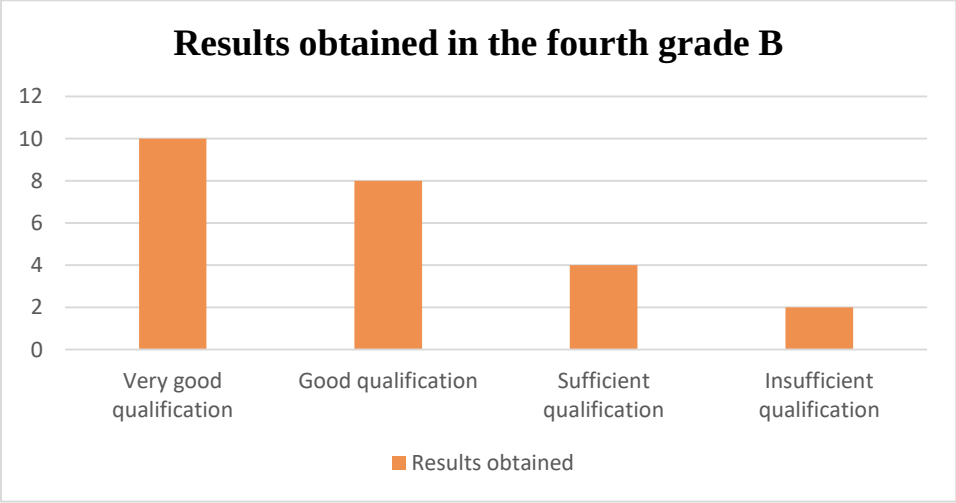


Figure no. 2. *Evaluation results obtained in the control class*

From the analysis of the observation sheets completed by the teaching staff from the experimental class, where the project was used as an alternative assessment method, it was found that:

- 15 students gave complex and scientifically correct answers;
- 24 students had increased self-esteem;
- 20 students demonstrated creativity;
- 26 students cooperated in order to fulfill the work tasks;
- 18 students argued the choices made, showing critical thinking;
- all the students were on time, showing interest in solving the work tasks;
- 20 students were actively involved in carrying out the tasks;
- all students participated with pleasure in completing the tasks.

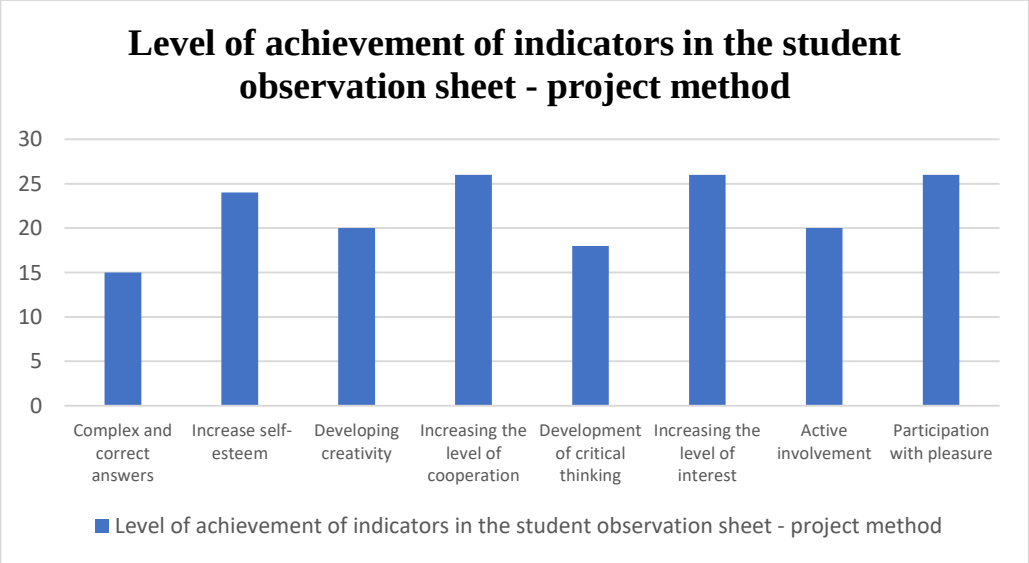


Figure no. 3. *The results recorded for each indicator in the observation sheet*

From the analysis of the observation sheets completed by the teacher from the control class, where the written test was used as a traditional assessment method, it was found that:

- 10 students gave complex and scientifically correct answers;
- 7 students had increased self-esteem;
- 10 students demonstrated creativity;
- no student cooperated in order to fulfill the work tasks;
- 10 students argued the choices made, showing critical thinking;
- 20 students made it in time;
- 15 students were actively involved in solving the written test;
- 5 students participated with pleasure in solving the written test.

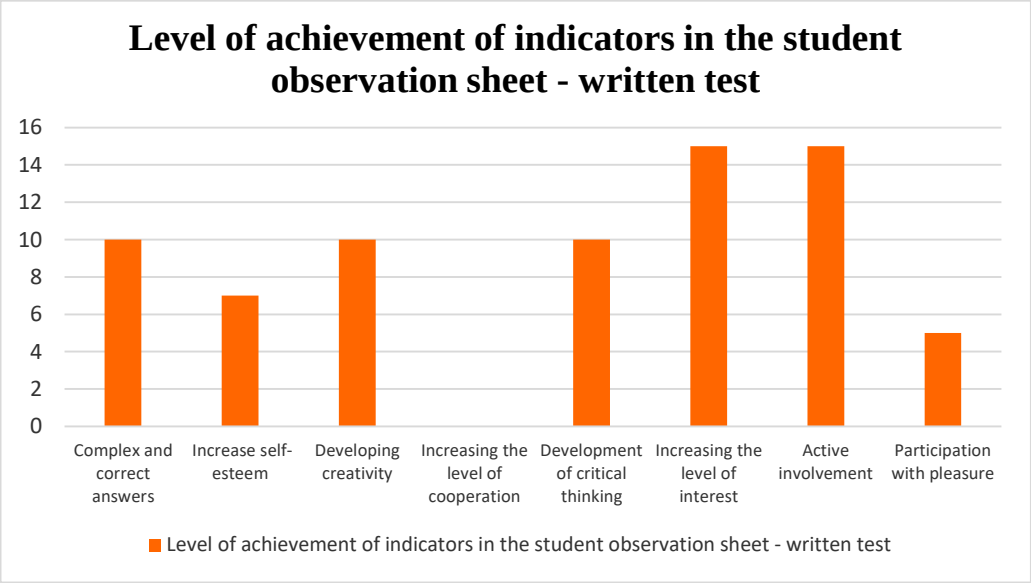


Figure no. 4. *The results recorded for each indicator in the observation sheet*

Following the experiment from the analysis of the results obtained by the students in the two assessment samples, it emerged that better results were obtained in the class of students where the project was used as an assessment method.

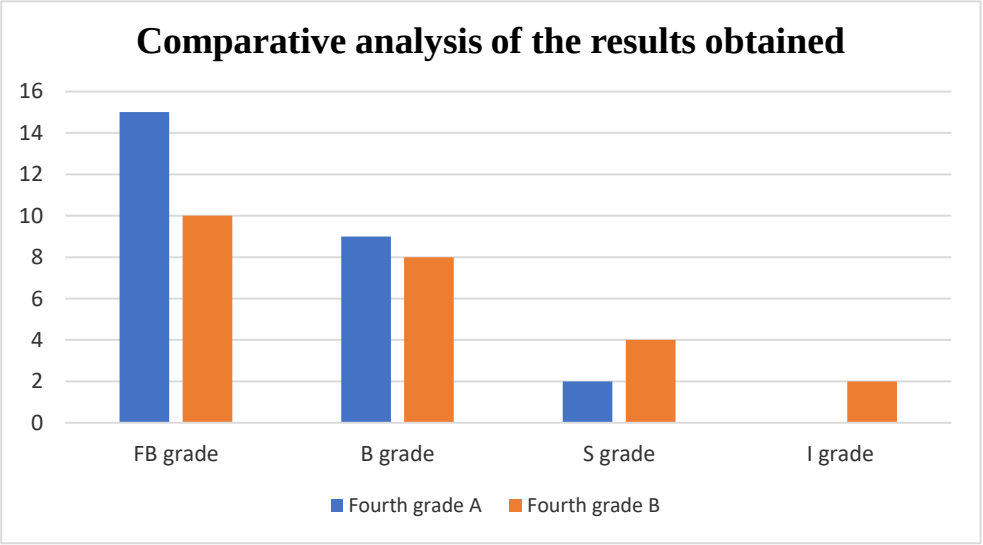


Figure no. 5. *Comparative analysis of the evaluation results in the two classes*

By comparing the data collected from the student observation sheets during the assessment tests, it was found that the degree of achievement of the indicators for the efficiency of knowledge verification activities (complex and scientifically correct answers; increasing self-esteem; developing creativity (initiative, ideas and new proposals); increasing the degree of cooperation; developing critical thinking) and motivation for learning (increasing the degree of interest (setting time to complete each task); active involvement (correct selection and processing of information); participation with pleasure (joy and enthusiasm) was higher in the experimental class, where the project was used as an assessment method.

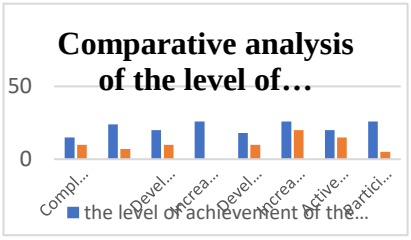


Figure no. 6. *Comparative analysis of the level of achievement of indicators for the efficiency of knowledge verification activities and indicators for learning motivation*

The comparative analysis of the obtained results highlighted the gains obtained by the students from the experimental class, where the project was used as an alternative assessment method. Thus, the attitude of the students in this class towards the assessment process has changed. If, after applying the questionnaire, we found out that the students were anxious during the assessment tests, they offered partial answers, they could not show their creativity and most often the motivation for learning was extrinsic, now, after applying the alternative assessment method, the students get involved with pleasure, come up with new ideas, provide complex answers, use their critical thinking, cooperate with other colleagues and have increased self-esteem.

5. Conclusions

The assessment methods chosen in the student assessment process play a very important role. These methods must stimulate students to learn, but also to understand the information learned. Many times traditional methods stop at just learning, and the student fails to store

them properly because they don't pass them through the filter of their thinking and learn them as they were taught. In order for the assessment to be effective, and the student's effort not to be in vain learning information by heart that will be forgotten over time, alternative assessment methods that can lead to a visible progress of the student come to complement them. It is precisely for this reason that teachers have a wide range of assessment tools and methods to choose from.

At the present moment, traditional assessment methods are predominantly used by the majority of teaching staff. This is mainly due to the fact that they are well known by them, which determines an easy application of these methods. We can also say that the students are also familiar with these assessment methods, a fact due in particular to the previous experiences of parents, siblings or other relatives in the school setting that were told and the student learned about them. These findings do not necessarily determine the fact that traditional methods are sufficient in training students. On the contrary, a complementarity between these methods and the alternative ones we talked about is nothing more than a thing to be preferred. A wide range of alternative methods can be used in the assessment process, so that each student is valued; the assessment methods used in the classroom should also be chosen according to the students' preferences, and the use of alternative assessment methods should be extended to other subjects.

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