EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 6a: Pedagogies, teaching and assessment methods

Models of assessment for Democratic Citizenship:

Assessment, self-assessment, evaluation and feedback

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Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment is related to learning progress and their results. Learners' performance, achievement and proficiency are what should be assessed in educational systems and, therefore, in schools and classrooms. Although there are a numerous effective assessment approaches and methods, not all are compatible with Democratic Citizenship teaching and learning. It is apparent that the separation of students to weak and stronger ones cannot be the aim of assessment. On the contrary, it is perceived as a highly individual process with transparency, respectful to the learner's personal integrity and future prospects, aiming to influence positively his/her future learning progress and the motivation for further learning.

Of course, assessment is related to the legal and educational system of each country where there are different forms, standards, schooling and teaching cultures, educational scopes and opportunities. In every case assessment helps educators recognise their teaching results in order to develop the intended learning outcomes. It is more than important for them to know if and to what degree their teaching has the intended results, in order to re-think the lesson plan, if necessary and to plan the next steps in their teaching.

Assessment is related to the evaluation which could measure the effectiveness of

a) the educational system,

b) an educational institution,

c) an educational programme (a course of study) and

d) a lesson (a series of lessons or a single one).

The results of the measurement and description of a learner's level of proficiency or achievement which depict what exactly assessment is, can be used in evaluation. Evaluation therefore should not be confused with assessment, as much as assessment should not be used as synonymous with testing. It is more of a feedback to the learner, regardless of whether it is conveyed with a grade. For that reason, it is an activity that should happen during the teaching at a number of stages. It takes therefore several forms such as:

a) Inductive. At the beginning of the course to recognise each learner's level of knowledge and understanding.

b) Formative, during the lesson to establish that each learner follows what's being taught and is making expected progress so as the educator may inform his/her teaching throughout the lesson,

c) Summative. At the end of the lesson to determine that each learner achieves the intended learning outcomes and especially learners with difficulties who should be supported in their learning progress and outcomes,

d) Deductive. At the end of the course to measure whether the learners have gained the intended learning outcomes and the teaching plan has been effective in supporting all the learners.

Types of assessment can be described using general characteristics (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. Vo.III, 59) albeit quite useful:

High-stakes (e.g. national examinations)	Low-stakes (e.g. confidential portfolios)
Achievement (e.g. end-of-course test)	Proficiency (e.g. test in a real-world context outside the school)
Norm-referenced (e.g. examinations for selection to next stage of education)	Criterion-referenced (e.g. portfolio demonstrating a profile of competences)
Summative (e.g. end-of-course examination)	Formative (e.g. mid-course assessment)
Objective (e.g. computer-based test)	Subjective (e.g. observation of behaviour)

In any type of assessment, Democratic Citizenship, moreover, focuses on the empowerment of all learners as active citizens. This should be reflected in the teaching, learning and assessment activities, processes, and contexts which should deliver meaningful experiences in the classroom for all the learners, regarding democracy and assess their learning outcomes as well. This means that teaching, learning and assessment should be a coherent process in which each democratic competence should be developed by appropriate teaching methods and techniques and the competence should be an integral part of the assessment. For example, to assess the development of co-operation skills, learners should be involved in learning activities which enable co-operation among them during the lesson e.g. decision making or solving problem contexts. Simultaneously they should be assessed in activities in which co-operation skills can be displayed. Additionally, teaching and assessment methodologies should be coherent. At the end of a lesson, such as the above, learners are asked to reflect individually, in peers and collectively on their achievement of the outcomes, experiencing the assessment as a group process feedback within a mutual and respectful environment. Such a kind of reflective procedures enable learners to recognise the way they achieve knowledge, their learning processes (meta-cognitive skill) in order to use these processes to develop the democratic competences further and to actively control them in relation to their own learning (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. V.III, 53-54).

Finally, assessments should be acceptable to all the stakeholders (Curriculum designers, school leaders, teachers, parents and above all learners). To this end, a set of principles should be followed:

1) Validity regarding the accurate description and measurement of the level of proficiency and achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The descriptors in the CDC Model (Council of Europe, 2018, p. Vol.II) are useful to ensure the validity

and the fairness of an assessment. The context in which can be used is important since competences can be expressed differently in different contexts. The aim is the descriptors to assess the proficiency and progress of the learners with assessments that can capture profiles of clusters of competences as these are dynamically mobilized, applied and adjusted across multiple contexts (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. Vol.III, 65).

2) Reliability regarding the outcomes which should be consistent and stable and also replicable when the assessment is repeated to the same learner but by different assessor.

3) Equity regarding the people who are assessed who should have an equal opportunity to display the results of their education with no exclusion or favour.

4) Transparency regarding the information that the learner receives about the assessment. Assessment should be comprehensible to learners. They should receive in advance explicit, accurate and clear information about the aim, the outcome, the type and the criteria of the assessment.

5) Practicality regarding the demands on the resources, time and conditions which should be feasible.

6) Respect regarding the learners' dignity and rights, especially the rights of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, of expression and from discrimination (European Convention on Human Rights and Convention on the Rights of the Child). RFCDC, moreover, addresses a number of rules that should be followed in order an assessment to be respectful to learners' dignity:

   − *Learners should not be placed under continual stress by being constantly assessed.*
   − *Learners have a right to privacy and confidentiality, especially in relation to their values and attitudes.*
   − *There is a need for sensitivity when revealing assessment results to learners.*
   − *Feedback to learners from assessments should focus on positive rather than negative outcomes, mainly on learners' achievements rather than their deficiencies.*
   − *There may be cases and issues where assessments should not be conducted because the issues or topics are too sensitive for the learners concerned.*
   − *Special precautions should also be taken where the outcomes of an assessment will be used to decide if a learner can continue to the next level of education.* (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. Vol.III, 57-58)

Assessment and self-assessment

An assessment related to democratic culture combines the external assessment (by teachers, educators, trainers, etc.) with the internal (by one's own person). That enables learners to get a realistic picture of their achievement especially when democratic

competences are about to be evaluated. The feedback that they obtain in both cases help them evaluate their learning outcomes and set realistic new goals that can be achieved. Self-assessment, moreover, helps them develop their autonomy and act more independently in relation to the teachers' feedback. In Democratic Citizenship is crucial to educate independent people, responsible citizens in the society, capable to act and recognize the results of their actions; people with a realistic image of themselves, who feel secure and do not always depend on external praise and recognition. That means that they will have an ability to perceive themselves based on their own experience knowing that this perception does not necessarily coincide entirely with the perception of oneself by others. As a complementary procedure, the objective is to bring the two perceptions of oneself together as closely as possible and gradually to come to an agreement between the external and internal assessment to be greater as possible (Berner, Ister, & Weidinger, 2018, pp. 242-3).

In reality, reflection in discussion cycles in the classroom or within face-to-face talks with the educator, peer evaluation for mutual feedback and joint discussions; also personal learning journals regarding the performance achievements as well as the knowledge and learning processes (meta-cognition) can enhance the way learners assess their competences. In this procedure it is important to recognize if the approach of the assessment develop particular democratic competences theoretically and practically that are related to the objectives of the lesson/course (see the use of descriptors below and in Session 6a/Lesson A).

Working with portfolios is an effective and democratic assessment procedure that enables self- assessment, students' involvement and peer evaluation. Students assemble personal portfolios documenting their learning experiences and achievements. These include dated and chronologically organized items as notes, assignment sheets, class worksheets, homework, forms of self-assessment and peer evaluation; also reflection on the class work or the service work, educational materials also contributions made by them or their teams as posters, displays, models, records, communications etc. They can be designed in different ways regarding the students, the subject, the goals, the theme of the work, the available period of time etc. Of course, it is important that the educator carefully considers and understands the reasons and the objectives of using portfolios, because it is difficult to use them with big numbers of students. In addition, they should carefully consider the content or the standards should be clear to the students and their parents, anticipating problems and reactions (Kellough & Kellough, 2008, p. 277). Content can be structured in categories as follows (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2020):

What we did in the classroom

What I did at home

What I have learned to do well

What I have learned to say well

What I have learned to do and say that is totally new

What I found surprising and I should do more for/with that.

Involvement of the students in assessment procedures reinforces their democratic competences, while at the same time increases their motivation to learn. Educators have various possibilities to involve them with various results for example (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005, p. 16):

- to recognise what is good for them by identifying strong and weak samples of their performance,
- to identify the strengths and weaknesses concerning their specific work before a discussion or a talk with the educator or a peer,
- to use criteria to evaluate by practicing repeatedly assessments of their work or others' work,
- to peer evaluate in order to anonymously contribute to improve others weak work,
- to write a report about the process of their work and detail in the processes and the problems they confronted and how they solved them,
- to develop tests according to the intended learning outcomes and their understanding of them,
- to write and answer questions tracing their learning processes before a test (e.g. "why we are taking the test?", "What is testing?", "What do I need to study?"),
- to review and reflect on their work over a certain time by asking themselves "what I used to say and do in (Maths, Literature etc.) were….but now I……" and summarising their learning outcomes and setting new goals "I have learned to….and I need to work on….."
- to select and evaluate samples of their work for the portfolios.

Moreover, teacher can arrange *items on a test according to specific learning targets, and prepares a "test analysis" chart for students, with three boxes: "My strengths," "Quick review," and "Further study." After handing back the corrected test, students identify learning targets they have mastered and write them in the "My strengths" box. Next, students categorize their wrong answers as either "simple mistake" or "further study." Then, students list the simple mistakes in the "Quick review" box. Last, students write the rest of the learning targets represented by wrong answers in the "Further study" box.* (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005, p. 16)*.*

Finally, peer assessment is participatory and more objective assessment that may eliminate on a certain degree the subjectivity in assessment. It requires time and effort from all the parts in order learners to have great stake in their learning and feedback from their peers in their own language and figures of speech. Shirley Clarke (Clarke, 2011) indicate three stages in peer assessment:

Develop: The educator sets the framework of the peer assessment and the process for undertaking it. It is important the criteria to be clear and known to all stakeholders.

Establish: The educator provides the criteria to the learners asking for their agreement about the process of the assessment.

Enhance: Both educator and learners cooperate to identify the appropriate criteria and assessments according to the intended learning outcomes.

It is obvious that democratic principles of assessment such as transparency, reliability, equity, and respectfulness are respected and valued in peer assessment process. Thus, peer assessment could further learners' motivation.

Practicalities in a classroom are also essential to be agreed:

- Assessment comments should always focus on the presentations and individual's work not on the individual.

- The procedure should take place in a quiet place.

- Learners should agree who presents and assesses first and then they change roles.

- Written notes should be taken and written assessments should be provided from both peer assessors in order to provide evidence related observed items

- An agreement to start with something positive first should be prescribed.

- Suggestion for improvements should be the way a negative assessment could be expressed. (Berner, Ister, & Weidinger, 2018, p. 254).

- The 'sandwich' method is suitable in peer-assessment. Both should agree to start off with positives continue with some suggestions for improvements and finish up with more positive remarks.

Finally, peer assessment can be harnessed in teacher assessment. Teacher to teacher application involves performance application from peers especially within an action-research process. However such an assessment needs to be organised within a democratic context, according to the principles above, in order for it to flourish.

Feedback

Constructive and powerful feedback, which is clear and honest about strengths and areas for improvement rendering transparent criteria in achieving the intended learning outcomes, is at the heart of assessment within a democratic culture.

Researchers address basic elements of feedback:

Listen: What learners say and feel about their performance should be listened by the educator.

Inform: The educator should respond actively in order to confirm that he/she is listening and understands what they say. Next he/she should summarise the key points that have been made and after that he/she should provide his/her view agreeing or disagreeing with their points.

Discuss: The educator should focus on particular points and/or specific incidents and discuss the positive points and the developments that are needed.

Ask: It is more effective if the educator uses questions during the discussion; even when he/she provides statement of assessment, he/she should trigger students to reflect on his/her key points of the statement.

Agree: Both parties should agree and record what further action is necessary from the learner to improve his/her performance.

Valerie Shute (2008) and John Hattie and Gregory Yates (2014, pp. 64-70) suggest several principles in giving effective feedback that enhances learning:

Be specific and clear basing on specific features in manageable units and keeping it simple and straightforward so to avoid to overwhelm the learner.

Focus always on the task by differentiating between goals and performance, of the learner and not on the learner.

Be explicitly objective and unbiased.

Provide repeated feedback at the end of any task educating, therefore, learners can set challenging learning goals and identify short-term and long-term outcomes through receiving feedback.

Use feedback to identify deficiencies in teaching processes in order to proceed to improvements.

Do not confuse praise with the process of feedback. Of course a modicum of praise enhances the positive climate in the classroom and the relationship between the educator and the assessor.

Criteria in assessing Democratic Citizenship

Competences for democratic culture and their descriptors (Council of Europe, 2018) can be used for assessment purposes because they provide a set of positive descriptors of observable behaviours of the level of proficiency in each competence. Since they are formulated as learning outcomes they can be used in planning lessons, schemes of work, interventions etc. in order to focus on democracy as a topic of activities and as descriptors of the proficiency and progress of learners. It is more related to a qualitative assessment of the outcomes and not a quantitative or a summative assessment. That means that competences and descriptors should not be used as a checklist.

To illustrate the utilization and mobilization of the competences and descriptors in assessment the Reference Framework of Competences For Democratic Culture (RFCDC) provides a useful example (Council of Europe, 2018, Vol. III, pp. 71-73). This example contributed by Manuela Wagner and Fabiana Cardetti, University of Connecticut, USA.:

"Contemporary mathematics education promotes an understanding of mathematics that moves beyond the rote memorisation of facts and procedures that was common in the 20th century. The focus is now on the development of learners' mathematical proficiency and habits of mind necessary to work collaboratively with others in analysing authentic world problems with mathematics. The ability to engage in mathematical discussions and arguments is crucial to making progress in problem solving, as well as in the interpretation and presentation of results.
An example of this approach is a project in which learners use mathematical reasoning to explore local and global water issues (e.g. accessibility, shortage, pollution or others). Learners use and improve proportional and algebraic reasoning skills, enhance statistical knowledge, and expand their understanding of mathematical representations. Starting with their personal water consumption, learners calculate the "water footprint" generated in each individual's home, in the homes of a group of learners, and in the homes of the whole class. These are then compared to discover patterns and potential problems. Groups of learners then investigate water issues in their communities and choose a specific one to study in more depth at national and global levels. Based on their findings and supported by well-founded (mathematical) arguments, learners develop solutions for the chosen local water issue.
Learners may also conduct experimental testing of their solutions (in class or on-site), presenting results to the community, taking action to raise awareness and advocate for solutions to the specific water issue they investigated.
Throughout the process, CDC are activated. For example, to participate in discussions, learners need to be able to express their mathematical reasoning so that others can follow

their thinking, seek out other perspectives on approaching a problem, be open to thinking about what others have to offer, and ask questions that help them clarify someone else's rationale. They activate the following competences:

– Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
– Skills of listening and observing
– Tolerance of ambiguity
– Co-operation skills
– Communicative skills.

Exploring and finding solutions to new problems involves comparing and relating different perspectives, developing new understandings to interact with new material and negotiating the content with others. They activate the following competences:

– Analytical and critical thinking skills
– Respect
– Conflict-resolution skills.

Learners learn to make critical judgments based on explicit criteria. They learn to support judgments with arguments that use mathematically sound insights and are backed by their interpretations and interactions with the relevant issues surrounding the problem. They activate the following competences:

– Knowledge and critical understanding of culture, religion and history
– Civic-mindedness
– Self-efficacy
– Autonomous learning skills
– Analytical and critical thinking skills.

As both CDC and other subject-specific competences are involved in this second example, a mixed-methods assessment approach could be applied. Learners could work on specific assignments covering different elements of the competence clusters throughout the project, and they could reflect on their learning process in a learning diary. At the end of the project, both the subject-specific skills and knowledge and some CDC could be assessed through presentations, oral or written examinations. Self-assessment, peer assessment and/or co-assessment could be used. Based on their observations and the learner reports, teachers could give learners formative feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, and on development opportunities. Alternatively, or additionally, the teacher could use a dynamic assessment approach to encourage learners to attain a higher level of achievement or proficiency. Once again, the products resulting from all of these activities could be incorporated into a larger portfolio that is compiled over an extended period of time."

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