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A Possible Methodology of Research in Scholar Evaluation. *Evaluation Theoretical and Methodological Approaches*

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Abstract

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Under the interest of educational research, as Theory of Evaluation, school evaluation, stage and important process of teaching approach has benefited from "change", "transformation", "rearrangement", "transfer", so that the "sample test", evaluation, criteria, grading result became components of a process whose analysis they matter in terms of refining, straightening the educational program and student further development. Therefore, acquisitions, academic progress, social implications are values pursued by the Evaluation Theory. Not just *what?* and *why?* (content), but *how?* and *what for?* (process).

Borrowing paradigm, contemporary school evaluation must take into consideration both actors of the process (evaluated and evaluator) – they speak about making co-responsible and accompanying the person who learns, but also relations between stages of pedagogical process (teaching, learning, assessment). We can talk about roles and relationships of those involved in evaluative process.

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1. Introduction

The axiological Component of the Evaluation Theory and Methodology (for the purposes of issuing judgments of value through the evaluation process), the complexity as a process (towards approaching the cognitive, affective and behavioural areas), an interlocking (perichoresis) of processes (teaching and learning) and reporting the contribution of each of the processes in explaining the results obtained in the evaluation function, feedback (feedback) function, dominant in the field of communication and information, but also to improve, optimize and intervention are the specificities and priorities that make the Evaluation Theory and Methodology a recent pedagogic branch, but with history, with its own methodology and areas of competence that need to be explored.

2. Value and Evaluation

Assigning a degree of utility and opportunity to an object, action or attitude or a person conceptually defines the *value* idea. The value is one of the most important human socializing criteria, defining the options system of each person or group. In the area of human interaction, the value is the dominant *criterion* for reporting and qualification. It determines *the purpose* of the individual, *means* of achieving and takeover *strategies* for the effects of achieving a goal. Value, as motivating reporting, characterizes the implicit *choice* from several possible alternatives, and as emotional state also locates a *subjective measure*. The individual can discern not only values, but also to rank them qualitatively.

Fact-value distinction is at the heart of epistemological debates on the possibility of objectivity in science and beyond.

"Observations made on human actions have led to the following: the more the activity is complex, the more the evaluative actions become necessary (...) and amplifies roles" (Radu, 2008, p. 9).

Observing the human interaction evaluation as an objective fact, Radu sees in the logic of things the "interest", during the activity, and finally, to the extent that it achieved its purpose and as "legitimate desire for achievement targeted goals and need to regulate the activity".

Evaluation is *a social and human systems own managerial action* that requires *the reporting* of results obtained in a certain activity to a set of criteria specific to the field in order to make an optimal decision. (Cristea, 1998, p. 203).

There is no *uniform* or universally accepted *definition* of evaluation, as in case of other terms the social sciences operate with. Instead there *is a great variety of interpretations of the concept*, depending on the targeted purpose and objectives, on methodologies applied or even on the understanding of some terms attached to evaluation.

Evaluation may include "determination of value or success in reaching predetermined targets", so reporting to what has been designed. It includes at least the following steps: formulating the objectives, establishing criteria for measuring success, determination and explanation the degree of success, recommendation for future activities" (Thomson, 1975, in Mățăuan, 1995, p. 65).

Sometimes evaluation can serve to "redefine the means to be used to achieve the objectives or even redefine certain objectives according to research results" (Mățăuan, 1995, p. 66).

In another context, the teacher D. Lawton said that "the decision involves *evaluating values*" (Lawton, 1981, p. 187). He regarded the time of the assessment phase as a step of the pedagogical approach, complex process carried out over time, being needed for other three specific features: "evaluation is there to provide information on the likely success or failure of educational programs (or persons); this information is or should *be useful* as a basis for *decision-making in education*; educational decisions should be taken in a broader context than the school or educational institution " (Lawton, p. 188).

In conclusion, Webster's Dictionary defines evaluation as "examining and judging the value, quality, quantity, significance, level or condition of something".

3. Evaluation Conceptualization in Education

Conceptually, *the beginning of school evaluation* is docimology, narrow-exams science or current-discipline studying evaluation system in school activities, and as process, evaluation has traveled stages as edumetria (Quality Measurement in educational evaluation), psycho-diagnosis, economy of education, educational planning, to the point of Theory and Methodology of Assessment.

Starting from the examination and scoring, it was agreed that the understanding of assessment as complex activity of knowledge and of "forms of value judgments about student learning process and product." (Manolescu, 2010, p. 17). The transition was made from the main objective of making a systematic study of examination practices and, more general, of evaluation to underline the role and importance of different factors. (Abernot, 1996, p. 59) that may affect results (docimology, a branch of pedagogy discipline that has as research object systematic study of examinations, especially scoring systems, the behavior of those who consider and review (De Landsheere, 1979, p. 67)), the "issue of integrative value judgments, according to some precise criteria, predetermined, in order to determine the efficiency / effectiveness of actions, processes, leading to educational decisions, with positive implications for personal, academic and social development "(Opris, 2010, p. 17).

Thus, evaluation in education is and will be within the transfer from the involved component analysis "concerned about the measurement and assessment in learning results value" (Manolescu, 2010, p. 19), to the understanding of logic governing the teaching process.

Knowing the mechanism / mechanisms of evaluative approach makes the transition to the Theory and Methodology of the Assessment.

Practice the evaluation proves that Theory is "super-ordered" to docimology, to be more specific to docimologic evaluation. We are seeing a "meta-order" as integrative (that it complements, supplements) and integrator (that it harmonizes various elements, structures throughout the process) of the word.

Thus, we are witnessing, as noted in a collective study by American researchers in educational and paradigmatic research, to the growing interest on *the status and position of qualitative research in education* in the context of an analysis, from the debate with multiple voices about the paradigms of educational research to the quantitative and statistical research promoted as a standard of government educational research institutions (Lather, 2006, p. 2), but also to the correlation between educational research paradigms represented by educational research world and the public policies making process.

At the macro level, sociological talking, there are to be pursued social effects of education by evaluating the education system, the curriculum, the processes of teacher training, learning products, responsibility that belongs to specialized institutions and individuals that are not directly involved in teaching students.

Influences on public policy generated by disputes and discussions on the paradigm had a direct implication on an aspect often neglected by the scientific community: *the utility of research* (Prodan, 2011, p. 63).

Starting from the idea of paradigm, not only because we live in "the era of paradigms" - M. Manolescu (2010, p. 20) proposes a *scale of the development of docimologic paradigm*, starting with "difficulties and pitfalls" (critical), to the attempted explanation of evaluation results (explanatory), to the concern stage to increase the objectivity of the evaluation degree (conceptual and technical contributions such as theory of generalizing), and currently in the evaluation stage conceived and understood as evaluative activity (meta-cognitive mechanisms and processes).

Research on docimology paradigm is considering approaches and uses "tools specific to research in the social sciences" ("art assessment" as called by S. P. Hayes), and as expressed by M. Manolescu (2004, p. 23), we should understand school evaluation as a process that interferes (overlap to compose and combine effects), remain interdependent (stay connected and condition each other), their cognitive correlates with the meta-cognitive (concept processes).

4. A Possible Methodology of Research in Scholar Evaluation

Gilbert de Landsheere sees the ideal in school evaluation as "legally accurate scientifically and morally fair" (De Landsheere, 1975, *Introduction*).

In Semiotics, talking about value, sign, meaning and significance, Fr. de Saussure meant two referential: position compared to other signs (signifier) and relationship with other signs (signified).

We can talk about roles and relationships of those involved in evaluative process.

Emil Păun (2006, pp. 3-13), speaking about rearrangement of teaching, which he saw as a construction process of knowledge, distinguished between *rearrangement of external teaching* ("process of transformation, interpretation and redrafting of scientific knowledge consists of different fields of knowledge, transposable not transferable")-anything else than popular science, the one which tries to make science more accessible, understandable to the public - and *internal didactic transposition* ("assembly of negotiated successive transformations suffered by the formal curriculum within the teaching-learning process, during teacher-student relationship ").

Approaching the reality of the problems the teacher is facing ("curriculum and class management, in terms of teaching"), the above mentioned author talks about context (specificity, particular theoretical and conceptual space and therefore it is not transferable!), contextualization (acc. to Astolfi and Develay), and de-contextualization (new curriculum meaning, which can be absolute, because it ignores the initial reviewer!).

This is what W. Pinar proposed by "curriculum empowered and emancipated to provide understanding and change".

Before him, with an academic approach, J. Dewey spoke about how can be "constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed the knowledge".

In terms of scientific research, both teacher and student are influenced by many variables: from the initial formation, meanings and significance that gives them the aims of education (the definition he gives) to the opinions of colleagues, the competition where the discipline he teaches stands related to other disciplines and included in the catalog, the teacher case and from the representation the students have in respect of their teachers, which, by the way, plays *the role of mediator* for the transformations suffered by the formal curriculum in schools, and to the idea of "assessment pursued utilitarian and pragmatic" (only subjects of final exam cycle are pursued, one that gives access to a higher cycle!).

Andre Levy, professor of social psychology at the University of Paris, concerned about being the way it is realized the rearrangement in the assessment process, said that "the assessment concludes that the effect of a mental operations of simplification and reduction and it translates as granting an unique grade, which is the result of an arbitrary compromise between several quality assessments of a different order (Levy, 2003, p. 16). (...)

This process, common in all areas, is particularly highlighted in education. Thus, a student will be judged differently if we consider his or her participation, the seriousness of his work, his efforts for progress, disordered behaviour or concentrated in the classroom, ease of speech, his intelligence, his activity and his results to different disciplines.

The closer he gets to the professional world and better understands his place in the hierarchy, his position in relation to other students indicates his "value" on the market.

To determine that, we must establish a *share* between different criteria (there cannot be occupied two places at once). How this share is conceived to some extent is at the discretion of the teacher, but the margin is narrow, largely determined by the *value system that prevails in society and in schools, in particular*.

Thus, each student is assigned and identified with its place in the classroom (in the physical sense) and tends to identify with himself. (...) The consequences of such labelling are particularly important that this place will be difficult to change throughout his student career because it influences decisions made about him and often confirms his behaviour."

Psychologist Levy notes the importance of the social function of evaluation:

"The evaluation carries a strong social dimension. Any grade given to a student gives him a "public character". Assisted by other grades, it (the mark) becomes qualified. Taken together into a completed and formalized course made official through an exam or competition, it contributes to obtaining a social status, an employment, a salary ... " (Enjeux sociaux de l'évaluation occultés).

It is equally interesting and equally important to assess cognitive processes and learning products remarks related to the existence in parallel of the *real curriculum*- knowledge to learn ("le savoir enseigne" according to Chevalard), of the *achieved curriculum*- the educational experiences negotiated, personalized curriculum ("le savoir appris et retenu", idem), and the *hidden curriculum*, hidden, invisible, instrumental, embellished (belonging to the "school ethos and habitus" acc. to P. Bourdieu).

Professor E. Păun identified a "didactic contract" (within the anthropological meaning of the word) when referring to the teacher-student relationship: "the agreement reflects a system of expectations" (the expectation being one of the most important forms of collective thinking, acc. to Mause).

The idea of pedagogic contract is developed by M. Manolescu (2002, p. 24) who sees school evaluation as an "educational relationship in which the student becomes a full partner", the high degree of transparency (in setting the criteria) helping the student to be aware of his evolution. This is because "school evaluation is a meta- process, it is addressed to a developing growing human being, who has not yet completed the process of development".

Within the educational psychology it is spoken about the *mechanisms* of extraction, reorganization and consolidation of knowledge (acc. to J. Piaget), and meta-cognitive knowledge is used to manage *their own mental processes* (acc. to J. H. Flavell, 1979, p. 89). There are the premises for school evaluation approach in terms of student self-assessment, student knowledge about his own knowledge also being very important (meaning "knowledge building and reconstruction" promoted by J. Dewey).

From the perspective of the other actor involved in the assessment, the assessor, it is important the role and function he chooses pregnantly: *formative assessment*, accomplished all through his teaching activities centered on the student, when the teacher encourages (direct and constructive feedback) supports "student performance compared with a pre-established threshold of success" (Meyer, 2000, p. 25), with adjustment function, information and confirmation, improvement, supporting the effort of self-evaluation (Manolescu, 2010, p. 62), and *formative assessment*, when the teacher becomes a learning facilitator, he suggests (using active listening, "to learn" instead of the verb "to memorize"), and the student is aware of the need to achieve the criterion of success and product (ibid). There must be evaluated all components of a learning outcome, not only knowledge!

Structural elements or school evaluation variables, "the evaluation radiography", can be operational by answering several key questions:

- What is the evaluation made for? (functions, what is the signification the assessment has?)
- reported to what? (references, criteria, standards assessment);
- for whom? or what? (recipient or subject to evaluation);
- how do we design and coordinate actions to ensure "success in accomplishing task" and "success to obtain a good product"? (acc. to J. J. Bonniol) (strategies); what are the steps to be followed? (stages-operations, evaluation actions);
- how are we going to evaluate? (methods, techniques, procedures, assessment tools).

A possible evaluation device:

- Planning assessment:
 - Describe how assessments will be applied – e.g. online, written or practical
 - Establish the assessment schedule
 - Establish learning performance criteria
 - Selection and establishing learning assessment tools
 - Check the assessment plan (pre-test)
 - Appreciating responses in accordance with the criteria
 - Feedback comments.

Establishing an evaluation strategy in education is equivalent to fix when evaluating, in what form, what methods and means, how you value the information obtained. "The reform of student achievement should occur towards achieving a comprehensive assessment, based on nationally uniform criteria for assessing student performance and not to revise and improve the traditional system" (Stoica, 2001, p. 70).

For this, "we cannot talk of a didactic sequence, where there is not an evaluative component" (Opris, 2010, p. 18). Therefore, modern teaching sees it as a fundamental function of the educational process and places it in an organic relationship with teaching and learning (ibidem).

In my personal opinion the definition above is comprehensive and enlightening related to considerations about the *value* that we presented at the beginning of the study: methodological device of assessment (structural elements or variables), and the entire evaluation device are under the sign of concepts of motivation and engagement (motivating reporting and engaged choice) that characterizes the *concept of value*.

Value determines a person to choose depending on the criterion he sets for the purpose he has, using strategies and means, using the outcomes of his actions to achieve the goal. The channel is value-evaluation and integrative view that M. Manolescu presents upon evaluation as process and meta-process is applicable not only in education but also in other human approaches "intention to measure the effects of human intervention in the social sphere", (Mățăuan, 1995, p. 16).

Trying to "methodological" approach of some concepts related to the evaluation theory, the "linked" and "integrative" manner used, "interdisciplinary" presentation were made from the desire to offer a point of view that should be theorizing upon educational evaluative approach.

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