# EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: CAN THEY GO HAND IN HAND?

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Evaluarea în învăţământ constituie o preocupare permanentă a pedagogilor teoreticieni şi practicieni, devenind obiectul numeroaselor dezbateri şi cercetări. În acest articol autorul a întreprins o încercare de a determina similitudinile şi deosebirile dintre evaluare şi apreciere. Analizând definiţiile cuvintelor-cheie ce se referă la tema studiului, ajunge la concluzia ca ele sunt sinonime, ceea ce îl face să presupună că ambele au aceleaşi principii şi funcţii în procesul de instruire. Sunt specificate funcţiile aprecierii şi ale evaluării randamentului şcolar, cu scopul de a stabili raportul dintre noţiunile *evaluare* şi *apreciere*, autorul încercând să evidenţieze punctele de tangenţă şi discrepanţele dintre acestea. S-a constatat că evaluarea şi aprecierea sunt în strânsă legătură şi se prezintă ca elemente componente ale unui proces unitar. Se menţionează că, totuşi, acestea sunt diferite după natura lor şi după rolul pe care îl îndeplinesc.

Assessments and evaluations are everyday terms in education as well as in other areas of life. **"Assessment"** is the process that a teacher/examiner conducts to measure how much a student/candidate has learned.

*E.g: 1) The students will be assessed at the end of the year.*
  *2) Assessment is done weekly.*

**"Evaluation"** is the process used to measure how effective a particular approach or method is to achieve specified ends.

*E.g: 1) The students are using computer-based learning this term and the teachers will evaluate its effectiveness at the end of the year.*
  *2) We must evaluate the new methods of assessment to ensure that they are valid, reliable, relevant and fair* [1].

Probably the most frequently given definition of evaluation is: *a systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object.* This definition is hardly perfect. There are many types of evaluations that do not necessarily result in an assessment of worth or merit - descriptive studies, implementation analyses, and formative evaluations, to name a few. Better perhaps is a definition that emphasizes the information - processing and feedback functions of evaluation. For instance, one might say: *Evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object.* Both definitions agree that evaluation is a systematic endeavor and both use the deliberately ambiguous term "object" which could refer to a program, policy, technology, person, need, activity, and so on. The latter definition emphasizes acquiring and assessing information rather than assessing worth or merit because all evaluation work involves collecting and sifting through data, making judgments about the validity of the information and of inferences we derive from it, whether or not an assessment of worth or merit results.

There is often confusion in people's minds as to the differences between assessment and evaluation. There are some overlaps, but there also are fundamental and important variations. Assessments and evaluations tend to happen at different stages and have a different purpose. Teachers use two distinct processes to help students build lifelong learning skills: assessment and evaluation. Assessment provides feedback on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work products for the purpose of elevating future performances and learning outcomes.

Evaluation determines the level of quality of a performance or outcome and enables decision-making based on the level of quality demonstrated. These two processes are complementary and necessary in education. This module draws important distinctions between assessment and evaluation, underscoring the need for both processes to occur at separate places and times, and ideally through different roles. Although assessment and evaluation are used for different reasons, they do have some similar steps. Both involve specifying criteria to observe in a performance or outcome. Both require the collection of data and other evidence by observing the performance or by looking at the outcome or product. Both require a performer and a person who collects information about the performance. Both processes also conclude with a report of the findings which include all the similarities and at least as many differences.

The relationship between the people involved is different in the assessment and evaluation processes. In both cases a person (either evaluator or assessor) observes or collects evidence about a performance or outcome; another person performs or develops an outcome. In both cases a person (either the assessee or

client) requests the process (either evaluation or assessment). In assessment, the focus of control rests with the performer; in evaluation, it rests with the observer. In assessment, there is no mention of the actual quality of the performance; only how to make the next performance stronger. There is no language indicating the level of quality, such as *"good," "terrible," "terrific," or "horrible"*. Conversely, in the evaluative report, only information regarding the actual quality of the performance is given. This might be in the form of a grade or a score or an evaluative comment, such *as "good work".* The purpose of the evaluative report is to report the level of quality and possibly any consequences based on the determined level of quality [2].

After establishing the similar steps of assessment and evaluation, we will try to analyze the differences between these two processes. They aid each other and complement each other in reaching feasible end of a study or a research. Both words do seem to resemble one another because of which they are often confused with each other as a result. However, assessment is the inaugural step of a scientific study whereas evaluation is the final step that concludes a specific study. Assessment is the process where every data, every observation regarding the study is collected whereas evaluation is the stage where one confirms whether or not the solution to a certain issue or the goal of a certain study has been reached. Assessment helps a case arrive at an evaluation in all sorts of ways. Both these processes are essential for the improvement of a subject or a person. In the case of teachers, marking an exam paper and giving marks to the students would serve as the evaluation which would in turn allow them to come to a conclusion regarding the level of learning of the student [3].

Assessment tends to be an interactive process, involving the student as well as the teacher. The student should be able to see how she is progressing. The assessment often revolves around goals or objectives. The student can go away from the assessment knowing how she has progressed up to that point and where she needs to go from there. On the contrary, the evaluation tends to be carried out at the end of a particular stage or period of time.

According to Angelo T. **assessment** focuses on learning, teaching and outcomes. It provides information for improving learning and teaching. Assessment is an interactive process between students and faculty that informs faculty how well their students are learning what they are teaching. The information is used by faculty to make changes in the learning environment, and is shared with students to assist them in improving their learning and study habits. This information is learner-centered, course based, frequently anonymous, and not graded. While **assessment** focuses on learning, teaching and outcomes; **evaluation** focuses on grades and may reflect classroom components other than course content and mastery level. These could include discussion, cooperation, attendance, and verbal ability [4].

The table below summarizes key differences between assessment and evaluation:

*Dimension of Difference: Assessment and Evaluation*

| DIMENSION OF DIFERENCE | ASSESSMENT | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|
| **Content:** timing, primary purpose | *Formative:* ongoing, to improve learning | *Summative:* final, to gauge quality |
| **Orientation:** focus of measurement | *Process-oriented:* how learning is going | *Product-oriented:* what's been learned |
| **Findings:** uses thereof | *Diagnostic:* identify areas for improvement | *Judgmental:* arrive at an overall grade/score |

A quality assessment process has four steps:
*(1) develop guidelines for the assessor to follow when assessing a performance;*
*(2) design methods used for the assessment;*
*(3) collect information about the performance or work product;*
*(4) report findings to the assessee.*
Executing each of these steps insures that the assessor and the assessee agree upon the purpose of the assessment, what is to be assessed, and how the assessment is to be reported.

**1) The first step** in setting up an assessment is to define the purpose for the performance and the purpose for the assessment. With this information, the person being assessed (assessee) can better determine what is important to assess, and the person doing the assessment (assessor) is equipped to give correct and appropriate feedback.

**2) In designing a method for assessment**, both parties should collaborate to generate a list of possible criteria that could be used by the assessor to give feedback to the assessee. From this list, both should agree and select the most important criteria that best meet the guidelines from the first step of the methodology. In most cases, this list should contain no more than four criteria.

**3)** During **the 3ʳᵈ step,** the assessor must **collect information** consistent with the chosen criteria and factors. It is important for the assessor to note: *(1) the strong points of the assessee's performance* (things done well) and why they were considered strong, *(2) the areas in which the assessee's performance can improve, along with how the improvement could be made,* and *(3) any insights that might help the assessee.* By using this structure for data collection, the likelihood that positive changes in behavior of the assessee, as a result of the assessment, will increase.

**4) The final step** of the methodology is for the assessor to report findings to the assessee in as positive a manner as possible [5].

We have found it valuable to structure these in a report that consists of three parts (*Strengths*, *areas for Improvement, and Insights*):

➤ *Strengths* identify the ways in which a performance was of high quality and commendable. Each strength should address what was valuable in the performance, why this is important, and how to reproduce this aspect of the performance.

➤ *Areas for Improvement* identify the changes that can be made in the future (between now and the next assessment) that are likely to improve performance. Improvements should recognize the issues that caused any problems and mention how changes could be implemented to resolve these difficulties.

➤ *Insights* identify new and significant discoveries/understandings that were gained concerning the performance area. Insights include why a discovery/new understanding is important or significant and how it can be applied to other situations [6].

Angelo T. and Cross K. present many classroom assessment techniques. Not all are useful for all classes and no instructor should attempt to use all of them in one course. All, however, are focused on helping the student learn. Bellow we give an example of an assessment technique: [7].

*E.g.*

<u>*Seminar Assessment:*</u>

| Strengths | <ul><li>Key points at the beginning of the report. This was helpful because it gave a good foundation for the rest of the report.</li><li>All spoke clearly, so the audience was able to hear and be more involved.</li><li>Good presentation setup. This made the presentation flow and made everything easier to understand.</li></ul> |
|---|---|
| Improvements | <ul><li>You may want to expand more than what is on the screen. Sometimes only the bullet points were read and not expanded upon. This would help others have a better understanding of the subject.</li><li>Could have explained words better to allow audience to have a better understanding of the material.</li><li>Some team members didn't have good eye contact. This made the audience feel less included.</li></ul> |
| Insights | <ul><li>I didn't know polymers were used in the medical industry.</li><li>Group members shouldn't wander around while others are speaking.</li></ul> |

As is evident from the above table, students are starting to elevate their level of assessment by giving reasons why the particular item is a strength or area for improvement. The insights indicate that students are internalizing both information delivered and things about the process of giving a presentation. However, the level of critical thinking displayed in the insights is usually less than the strengths and improvements. From the instructor's vantage point, groups that tended to deliver strong assessments were also strong performers. Groups that delivered weak assessments tended to give weak performances. The result of the analyzed technique indicates that the students felt that the assessment process helped them become better presenters of information. The outcomes of an assessment are often measured in a structured way, perhaps against a mark scheme or a checklist. It is like a measurement, is goal-orientated and sets new aims. An evaluation involves a value judgment, looking at several assessments and aspects of a student's career. It should summarize strengths and weaknesses, giving a rounded picture of the individual.

Evaluation and assessment are often thought of as having the same meaning because they can sometimes be carried out by one event. However, each serves different purposes because assessment and evaluation are each concerned with different aspects of teaching and learning. We assess our students to establish *"what"* and *"how much"* they have learnt but we evaluate our students and they evaluate themselves to find out *"how"* the learning process is developing.

Assessment and evaluation not only differ in their purposes but also in their use of collected information. While it is possible to use the same tools for the two approaches, the use of the data collected differs. For example, an instructor can use the results of a midterm exam for both assessment and evaluation purposes. The results can be used to review with the students course material related to common mistakes on the exam (*E.g: to improve student learning as in assessment*) or to decide what letter grade to give each student (*E.g: to judge student achievement in the course as in evaluation*) [8].

It's been said that in life, timing is everything. As in life, assessments performed at crucial times in the learning process, can spell the difference between gathering data to evaluate students and using assessments to enhance learning. Based on timing and purpose, four *functions of assessment* in education are established:

- **Formative assessment:** provides diagnostic feedback to students and instructors at short-term intervals; *E. g: during a class or on a weekly basis.*
- **Summative assessment:** provides a description of students' level of attainment upon completion of an activity, module, or course;
- **Evaluative assessment:** provides instructors with curricular feedback; *E. g: the value of a field trip or oral presentation technique.*
- **Educative assessment** integrated within learning activities themselves, educative assessment builds student (and faculty) insight and understandings about their own learning and teaching.

At its most useful, educative assessment (sometimes termed active assessment), is an episode in the learning process; part of reflection and autobiographical understanding of student progress.

After analyzing the four functions of assessment we would like to treat the functions of evaluation in the educational process.

*The functions of evaluation in education are*: to provide a systematic assessment of the development of these qualities as an outcome of educational endeavour; to serve as the basis for the improvement of the way activities are carried out; to discover whether certain activities have led to desired effects or outcomes. Without the benefit of evaluation, one is unable to determine how well the programme has achieved its goal. Other *functions of evaluation* are:

1) **Evaluation enhances the quality of the teacher:**
   ✓ Through education teachers are able to find out how far they have been successful in achieving the objectives of education;
   ✓ Teachers are able to assess the degree to which they have succeeded in their teaching;
   ✓ Evaluation helps the teachers to adopt appropriate instructional strategies.
2) **Evaluation helps in clarifying the objectives:**
   ✓ Teacher gets a deeper insight into the various aspects of the topic to be thought.
3) **Evaluation motivates learners:**
   ✓ Since the teacher continuously evaluation the learner's learning, the student tries to learn the topic well.
4) **Guidance can be given on the basis of evaluation:**
   ✓ Evaluation makes the individual difference clear;
   ✓ Through evaluation, specific difficulties of the learner can be identified, so evaluation helps to give guidance.
5) **Evaluation can help in bringing changes in the curriculum:**
   ✓ The educational investigation is presenting principles and strategies;
   ✓ Educational evaluation provides the direction for bringing about such changes [9].

According to Sanders James and Fitzpatrick Jody, the formative and summative function can be attributed to the evaluation process too [10].

*"When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative."*

(Bob Stake)

➢ **Formative evaluation** accompanies the development process, it serves the purpose of quality assurance. Its primary goal is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation. It provides data which is used to optimise the design of an educational course;

➢ **Summative evaluation** ensures the (subsequent) control of quality, effects and utility of an educational course. The question of interest is whether an educational course or individual components of the course can meet certain expectations in practice [11].

*Formative* and *summative evaluations* can complement each other. At the beginning and during a project, formative evaluation usually plays a greater role; towards the end, summative function often receives greater emphasis. Discussion in this module is intended to strengthen outcomes from assessment and evaluation in teaching/learning situations. Assessment is a process used to improve a performance or outcome. Evaluation is a process used to determine the quality of a performance or outcome and to make decisions based on the quality. Both processes can be *formative* (undertaken while an educational process is ongoing) or *summative* (taken at the conclusion of an educational process). Before starting either assessment or evaluation it is essential for instructors to clarify the purpose of the process. It is then critical to communicate this purpose to everyone involved and to establish whether this will be conducted as assessment or evaluation. Finally, one should be cautious whenever an assessor will ultimately be an evaluator or when assessment is initiated without buy-in of the assessee.

*Assessment without evaluation*

The most straightforward example of assessment without evaluation is the end of year examinations where the grade indicates the "attainment" or "achievement" level of each student, which can be measured against the other students. The result is simply that students know whether they have passed or failed and teachers know who are the "good", "average" and "weak" students.

*Assessment with evaluation*

However, in addition to end of year tests, during the course of a school year students may take smaller tests. Generally, the scores from these smaller tests (such as 6/10 or 62%) will give the teacher the rank order for the students in the class but will probably not tell the students where and why they are going wrong nor will it give them strategies to help them improve. Neither will the scores inform the teacher about how and why the students behaved in a certain way.

In the end we would like to admit that assessment and evaluation are the terminal ends of all scientific inquiries. They need each other, and they support one another, being essential for the improvement of the subject or the person. This article clearly proves that quality assessment is worthy of our attention because it is an important part of the way in which higher education is being shaped and changed. It is interesting, and in our interests, to engage with these processes.

To sum up, we should mention that we assess learning, and we evaluate results in terms of some set of criteria. These two terms are certainly correlated, they can go hand in hand, but it is useful to think of them as separate but connected ideas and processes.

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