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Curricular approach of education. Effects on evaluation design

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Abstract

This study aims at emphasizing the pedagogical effects of curriculum paradigm, as the postmodern education theoretical and praxiological model on design and implementation of evaluation in the didactic process. Evaluation, as a main element of instruction process, besides teaching and learning, must be conceived and realized as an effect of curricular approach of education and instruction. This way of thinking leads to a certain path in evaluation projecting and realization, aspect which will be highlighted in the present study. Thus, the processual perspective on evaluation asks for reflection on the role of evaluation in the projecting and implementation of both objectives of instruction, contents, didactic methodology, projection of evaluation instruments (as products of evaluation) and the context of instruction realization.

Key words: curricular approach of education, evaluation, instruction, curriculum paradigm

1. Introduction

Curriculum paradigm become the fundamental model of post-modernity once with Ralph W. Tyler's book [1]. The curricular approach of education represents a fundamental direction of education development / evolution determined by the epistemological and methodological requirements of curriculum paradigm. This paradigm offers a new way of approaching the general theory of education and, in the present case, of evaluation. Thus, the educational system, as a sub-system of education, will be determined at the level of all its components from a structural, functional and operational perspective.

The curricular approach of education can explain most of the current changes at the level of educational system and process. It promotes a global and open vision on education and instruction.

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In post-modern epoch the evolution of education has two dominant directions:
- The tendency of opening the educational system to the community,
- The integration, at the level of curriculum projection, of non-formal and informal social context.

The open vision of education refers to the context of its organizing and realization as a psycho-pedagogical activity of the individual's permanent (self)-development – (self)-education.

The global vision of education is built on three epistemological ways supported by post-modern pedagogy at the level of general theory of education:
- Articulation between: a) the psychological requirements of education, expressed in terms of competences or skills which have to be developed; b) the requirements of society, expressed through general contents of education which have to be assimilated, internalized and capitalized through the education process;
- Correlation between: a) the objective dimension of education, expressed through its basic function and structure; b) the subjective dimension of education, assumed through system finalities (ideals, strategic goals) and process finalities (general, specific and concrete objectives);
- Integration of all general contents and forms of education in the functioning structure of each project of a curricular type (system reform, syllabus, programs, textbooks, didactic projects etc), conceived from the perspective of permanent education, self-education and entrepreneurial paradigm of education [2, p. 317].

Education cannot be any longer conceived / realized exclusively in the social and pedagogical context offered by the class of students in a traditional perspective. It has to integrate the non-formal context (as a capitalization of its development resources) and the informal one (as social, cultural, personal and technological determinations of post-modern society) in an unitary complex whole with maximum formative effects. These changes lead to the creating of extended educational media which presuppose the uniformity of educational influences for achieving the educational ideal.

It can be done through two directions of action:
- Becoming aware of the importance the outside school environment has in personality forming and development,
- The educative intervention at the level of all forms of social organization of education (formal, non-formal and informal).

From this perspective, the curricular projection of education and instruction implies:
- Establishing the fundamental pedagogical concepts in the context of descentered and intensive mobility of information and its communication networks, specific of a post-industrial, informational, knowledge-based society [2, p. 114],
- Admitting the diversity of pedagogical opinions and interests, stylistically multiplied at a universal scale, which requires "the designing of a common framework of consent" in relation to "the radiant self-content of local pragmatism", reflected at the level of curriculum at school's disposal [3, p. 342, 343],
- Affirming the post-modern education's major directions of evolution, founded at the level of education and instruction curricular projection, developed in the context of permanent education, self-education, full capitalization of educability [2] and of the entrepreneurial paradigm of education [4].

The curricular approach of education has major effects at the level of the educational system through a reconstructing of the concept of educational system in accordance with the new social reality of post-modern education, developed in an informational, knowledge-based society. Therefore, the educational system includes, among the assembly of schools at all levels and types socially acknowledged, other organizations specialized in non-formal education and communities which consensually fulfill pedagogical roles and functions (family, local community, NGOs, social actors etc.) [2, p. 318-319].

In curriculum theory and practice, there are underlined two categories of curricular projection principles:
- Functional principles: 1) the principle of society necessities analysis; 2) the principle of students' necessities analysis; 3) the principles of instruction contents analysis;
- Axiomatic principles: 1) the principle of defining educational, behavioral (psychological) and content objectives; 2) the principle of selecting the learning experiences depending on the objectives pursues; 3) the

principle of methodological organization of learning experiences in various pedagogical and social contexts; 4) the principle of permanent evaluation of the fulfillment degree of the educational objectives established at the beginning of the activity.

These principles are to stay at the basis of the fundamental activities of the instruction process. In the present study, we will especially consider their impact at the level of evaluation.

2. The formative projection of evaluation

The curricular approach of education lies at the basis of projection of all actions concerning the instruction process. From the perspective of our study centered on evaluation, the conceptual and methodological framework offered by the curriculum paradigm as a model of post-modern pedagogy of projecting and realization of education and instruction leads to the highlighting of the defining characteristics of projection and evaluation implementation as a basic action of the instruction process.

From this perspective, evaluation represents simultaneously:

- a) a structural element of the educational system,
- b) a major action of the didactic process conceived as a system of teaching – learning – evaluation actions,
- c) a structural-functional principle integrating the actions of the didactic process in an open, global context, subject to permanent changes.

The defining characteristics of the evaluation activity represent the methodological landmarks necessary for projecting the evaluative actions within the education/instruction system and process.
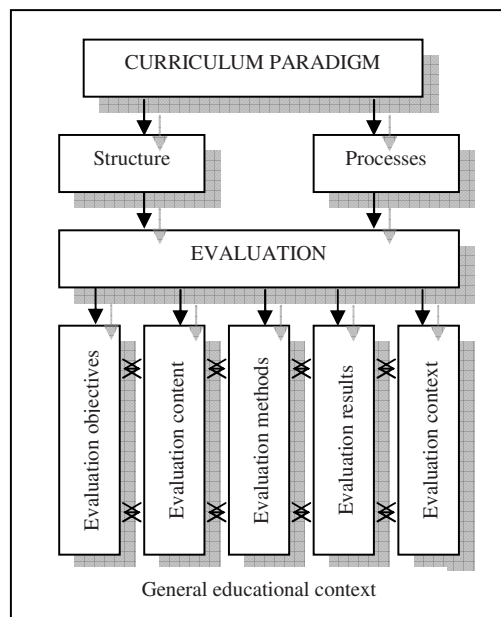

Fig. 1. The structure of evaluation in the curricular approach of education

The curricular projection of evaluation activity represents an integrative demarche of implementing evaluation as a basic action of the didactic process. It regards the pertaining of evaluation to: the concrete objectives of the didactic process, the basic contents of instruction, the strategies of instruction and the context of instruction implementation, the actors involved in instruction, the necessary performances of students as concrete elements of their future competences.

The formative value of curriculum structural elements is to be reflected at the level of the evaluation activity it determines and establishes the level of relevance.

Evaluation instruments have to be projected as sub-elements of the evaluation activity. They correspond to all components the evaluation activity reports to.

The structure of the evaluation instruments should present:
- the objectives of evaluation (they are represented by the objectives of instruction),
- the contents to be evaluated,
- the type, level and the descriptors of the pursued performances,
- The moment of evaluation (evaluation strategy),
- The context in which evaluation is realized.

The operationalization of the evaluation activity can start from a series of interrogative landmarks and subsequent answers [5, p. 63-66]:
- What do we evaluate (knowledge, skills, attitudes; whether they know, whether they know how to do it, how to do it, how is it to be applied in real life; objectives, syllabus, methods, results),
- Why do we evaluate (improving students' performances, evaluation instruments, methods, means; selections, adjustment, contents improvement),
- To whom evaluation use (to students, the evaluator, parents, employers),
- Whom we evaluate (students individually, students in relation to the group, the group),
- When do we evaluate (at the beginning, permanently, at the end)
- How do we evaluate (what methods, techniques and procedures, with what instruments)
- Which is the context in which we evaluate (actors, resources, space, diverse constraints)

The landmarks taken into account in the operationalization of evaluation at the level of the didactic process as well as the given answers become the axiological and methodological principles of evaluation. Relating to them, teachers will be able to efficiently project evaluation at the level of the didactic activity.

3. Evaluation as a process of teaching and learning

The curricular perspective on the evaluation activity underlines the necessity of establishing the role played by evaluation in projecting and implementing both the objectives of instruction, contents, didactic methodology, evaluation instruments projecting (as products of evaluation) and the context of instruction implementation (that is the organization and unfolding of the instruction process).

Evaluation determines the projecting and implementing of all structural / process elements of school curriculum.

The objectives of instruction become objectives of evaluation determining the type of evaluation strategy to be implemented. It determines the way of projecting and transmitting the contents of instruction which come in the form of items / structure of tests / situations of instruction.

The methodology of instruction must be correlated with the evaluation activity in order to realize the complete harmonization between the objectives, contents, instruction strategies and the objectives, contents and evaluation strategies.

On the other hand, the projection and implementation of the evaluation process is realized depending on the context of instruction realization. It determines the objectives, contents, strategies and the structure of the tests / evaluation situations, facilitating formative effects related to the instruction action.

Evaluation puts into relation the entry elements of the educational system to the process of instruction carried out in order to obtain certain effects related to a set of criteria and standards. From this perspective, the expression of correlating the results of the instruction activity to the objectives set is represented by the school results.

School results represent a very complex reality of the educational system and process and they are the short, medium and long term effects of the instruction activity.

The typology of school results can be understood in the context of curriculum paradigm as a general theory of projecting education and instruction in post-modernity. Therefore, the diversity and the hierarchical levels of pedagogical objectives determine the structure of school results pursued at the level of the instruction process.

According to Radu I. T. [6, p. 155], there can be determined four categories of school results. They can manifest at various levels of realizations, from a theoretical and practical perspective, classified at various levels of complexity and diversity:

- Gathered knowledge (data, facts, concepts, definitions, theories etc.),
- The ability of applying knowledge in fulfilling didactic tasks (skills, abilities, work methods and techniques etc.),
- Intellectual abilities (reasoning elaboration, argumentation, interpretation, independent thinking, creativity),
- Personality traits, attitudes and behavior.

In S. Cristea's vision [7, p. 143], the evaluation activity corresponds to the psycho-social dimension of pedagogical objectives and refers to three types of contents:

- Various competences acquired in the didactic process proposed at the level of general objectives, in accordance with the ideal and goals of education,
- Various skills (specific skills and attitudes) acquired in the didactic process, in accordance with the intermediary objectives, projected at the level of school disciplines,
- Various performances (knowledge, skills, and strategies) acquired in the didactic process, in accordance with the intermediary objectives operationalized by teachers during their current didactic activity.

This triad of pedagogical objectives delimits the content of the evaluation activity which, from a curricular perspective, has to be integrated in the functioning structure of pedagogical objectives projected at all levels of generality and to be carryout out on a long, medium and short term.

Each category of school results requires the pursue of a certain type of pedagogical objectives, the selection of proper instruction contents, the organizing and providing of some instruction experiences which make use of specific instruction contexts and methodologies, as well as proper evaluation strategies.

Conclusions

Evaluation cannot be conceived outside the theoretical and methodological framework offered by the curricular approach of education. It imposes a certain explanatory model of al defining issues which have to lie at the basis of evaluation projection and implementation within the didactic process. The structure of the evaluation actions and of the instruments used in evaluation will reflect the component elements of school curriculum and, by extension, the whole education activity.

On the other hand, evaluation will have a fundamental role in projecting and implementation of instruction objectives, contents, didactic methodology, the projection of evaluation methods (as products of evaluation) and the context of instruction implementation (in terms of organizing and carrying out of the instruction process).

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