







Could Student's Evaluation be a Pleasant and Effective Process?

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Abstract

The evaluation of student's performance is one of the most important issues of educational reality. It strongly attracts the interest of all involved in the process of education : teachers, students, parents and the state as well. This study, is trying to find out, if using the project method, the teacher can assess effectively students, in a series of evaluation areas, concerning the cognitive level and their skills as well. The results of the study are encouraging for the qualitative evaluation of student performance, and also highlight the importance of the implementation of alternative learning methods and evaluation.

Keywords: Evaluation, Project method, Skills, Student performance.

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Citation | Kapachtsi Venetia; Pantelidi Ioanna; Stamidou Markia (2016). Could Student's Evaluation Be a Pleasant and Effective Process? Journal of Education and e-Learning Research, 3(2): 51-56.

DOI: 10.20448/journal.509/2016.3.2/509.2.51.56 

ISSN | 2410-9991



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Asian Online Journal Publishing Group

1. Introduction

The evaluation of student's performance is undoubtedly one of the most important daily issues of educational reality. It strongly attracts the interest of all involved in the process of education : teachers, students, parents and the state as well. Teachers are called to achieve the desired educational goals by evaluating with success the teaching process (Taratory – Tsakaltidou, 2009). Students' performance is an important factor which affects their self-image and as a consequence, their relationship both with themselves and with the social environment too (Shaffer and Kipp, 2004). Through the assessment, students are rewarded for their efforts, mobilized for their improvement, while acquiring self-knowledge and self-concept (Dimitropoulos, 1998; Shaffer and Kipp, 2004; Kakana, 2006; Kapachtsi, 2008).

Modern social demands, require the establishment of an effective and meritocratic evaluation system, which will not be limited to a simple ascertainment of students' cognitive level, but will consolidate all their skills by discovering other aspects of their personality (Kapachtsi, 2011). A prerequisite for achieving this goal is the implementation of alternative teaching methods such as the project method. This method is characterized by two core values: co-operation and spontaneity (Frey, 1986).

As part of the project method, student assessment areas concern, on the one hand the cognitive level, on the other hand a set of skills and characteristic features of his/her personality. The evaluation criteria, taken into account while applying the method, are: the successful fulfillment of objectives the active participation, problem solving and initiative taking, the development of social skills (dialogue , communication, collegiality, conflict management etc.) personal creative expression and integration of each student in all,the transformative learning,the evaluation of the results of the project by the students themselves (Dimitropoulos, 1998; Chrysafidis, 2002; Taratory – Tsakaltidou, 2009; Kapsalis and Chaniotakis, 2011).

Generally speaking, in the evaluation of students through the project method, what really interests us, is the emergence of all student's abilities and his progress in knowledge level through an alternative and interactive way of learning, offering equal opportunities to all students.

2. The Research

2.1. The Purpose of the Research – Methodology

The purpose of this research, is to find out, if using the project method, the teacher can assess effectively students, in a series of evaluation areas, concerning the cognitive level and their skills as well.

Data collection for students' evaluation was attained through observation. The implementation of the method was carried out by two teachers on five hours of instruction in a class of twenty pupils, in the third class of a Junior High school in Eastern Thessaloniki. The method was applied to the project module "Socialization and social control" of the school textbook in the subject of Social and Political Education.

2.2. Description of the Implementation of the Project Method

During the first class period became the first acquaintance with the students. There was a discussion in relation to the means of socialization and an introduction of students to the concept of the project method. The students were divided into 4 groups of 5 people and decided the work items concerning socialization. The program implemented was based on a learner-centered axis to support educational priorities with the following objectives:

- The organization of students knowledge regarding social media in adolescence,
- The acquaintance with the modern means of social network,
- The comparison between modern and past social network,
- The connection of social media with adolescents' daily life,
- The understanding of Internet threats and risks,
- The information of the wider school environment for safe web browsing
- The creation of skills.

In the second class period the project started. After about 35 minutes, the first feedback took place, where teachers discussed with students the results of their investigation and any problems encountered during the process. After the break, teachers were informed about the progress of work and students began composing the work.

In the third and final class period, the writing of the work was completed. The available time for the completion of the work was 20 minutes. The last class period of the implementation of the project was devoted to the presentation. Specifically, the steps, followed to the project method, are given below:

Stage 1: Formation Groups

The separation of the groups was based on the students' skills. The five profile skills given to the students, is that of the leader, the computer professional, the writer, the artist and the presenter.

Each student chose the category that represented him/her more and 4 groups of 5 people were created. Each group was formed by one student from each category, in order to be students of different personality profiles in the groups.

Stage 2: Selection of task topic

Students undertook to propose themselves topics of their choice: The five topics which were finally chosen were: a) The social media used by teenagers nowadays. The comparison with older generations, b) The arguments in favor of the use of modern social media (benefits). c) The arguments against the use of modern social media (potential risks). d) A construction of a poster with the theme: "Safer Internet".

Stage 3: Role allocation – Planning

Within the groups became the role allocation by the students themselves. Each group selected an internal coordinator, who intended to report the progress of the work. Each group took over determining the work content and the design of their project.

Apart from the choice of the subject and the coordinator, the students set the objectives, took the individual roles within the groups and organized all the required actions.

Stage 4: Implementation of action groups plan

After the completion of the design, the students used the computer lab to perform their work. The coordinator of each group used to inform teachers about the progress of the project. Generally speaking, the teachers were pleased with the implementation of the project and the cooperation within the groups. However, some complaints were expressed about the limited participation of some students

process. Some breaks for feedback were given to the groups during the conduct of the project.

Stage 5: Completion of the program

At this stage, the teams completed their work and determined the presentation. Each team had at its disposal 10 minutes for the presentation of the assignment. At the end, students evaluated both the project as a whole, and the teachers- coordinators of the program, in the form of discussion in the classroom. Most groups have chosen to present their work using the method of lecture. One of the groups had the idea to make the presentation of work by using internet. One group presented a poster.

3. Evaluation of the Project- Results

The evaluation of the project took place in three stages in four teaching hours. Each evaluator rated students with observation during the whole process, under the evaluation sheet. The areas which were evaluated descriptively in five-point scale 1-5 (1. None, 2. Poor, 3. Fair, 4. Good, 5. Very good performance) were the evaluation of : a) the cognitive level, b) the critical capacity of students, c) their willingness to work , d) their initiative, e) the originality of the work, f) cooperation, g) quality of work and h) students’ behavior. Specifically, the evaluation was conducted in three steps:

First evaluation step

During the first implementation phase of the evaluation, the fields which were assessed through the observation were the following : cooperation, critical capacity, initiative taking , willingness to work and behavior.

At the points of the table where there is a dash (-), the absence of the student during that class period is denoted. In places where there is a gap, what is denoted, is the evaluator’s weakness in rating student due to limited participation or lack of adequate data. Collaboration (Table 1) is a skill that can be assessed from the beginning of the implementation of the project. It is noteworthy that in all groups there were students who worked satisfactorily. However, it was observed that even students who obtained the highest mark in this field, did not cooperate with all members of their group to the same extent.

Table-1. Co operation

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	4	4	5	1	4	4	4	1	
MEMBER2 nd	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	
MEMBER3 rd	4	1	2	5	4	1	3	5	
MEMBER4 th	4	-	5	5	4	-	4	5	
MEMBER 5 th	-	3	3	5	-	3	2	5	

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Critical capacity (Table 2) was another field which was assessed. However, we believe that it is possible for students to be evaluated in this area, provided they participated in the debate concerned. Moreover, this field can be assessed during the process of the project as well. What we can observe in the Table 2 is that in this area, the students who were evaluated, collected almost the same scores by the two evaluators.

Table-2. Critical Capacity

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	5	3		-	5	4	4	-	
MEMBER2 nd	4	4			4	5	2		
MEMBER3 rd	4	2			4	2		4	
MEMBER4 th	4	-		5	5	-	4	5	
MEMBER 5 th	-			5	-			5	

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Taking initiative is also an evaluation area which can be easily scored by the project method (Table 3). Specifically, this field was assessed by the first class period of the implementation of the project, while it was observed that the students who chose the leader profile mainly attracted the highest mark in this field. What we can observe in this table, is that in this area, the two evaluators converged largely on the results of the evaluation.

Table-3. Initiative

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	4	4	5	1		3	5	4	1
MEMBER2 nd	3	4	3	4		2	5	3	3
MEMBER3 rd	2	1	2	4		2	1	1	3
MEMBER4 th	4	-	5	5		3	-	5	5
MEMBER 5 th	-	3	2	5		-	1	1	5

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Willingness is another field which was easily assessed through the project method (Table 4). It is noteworthy that in this area the students gathered almost the same scores from the two evaluators.

Table-4. Willingness

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	4	3	5	2		5	3	5	2
MEMBER2 nd	4	3	4	4		3	4	4	4
MEMBER3 rd	4	3	3	5		3	1	3	4
MEMBER4 th	3	-	5	5		4	-	5	5
MEMBER5 th	-	2	3	5		-	2		

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Behaviour (Table 5) was an area that could be assessed from the beginning of the implementation of the project, as it characterized students' personality. They were evaluated both for their behaviour in classroom and in relation to their classmates. The evaluation results do not show any significant differences (Table 5).

Table-5. Behavior

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	3	4	4	2		3	3	3	2
MEMBER2 nd	3	4	4	5		3	5	3	4
MEMBER3 rd	3	4	5	5		3	5	5	5
MEMBER4 th	5	-	4	5		5	-	3	5
MEMBER 5 th	-	4	4	5		-	4	4	5

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Second evaluation step

In the second implementation phase, the completion of the evaluation process was attempted. During the last teaching period, the students were evaluated on the understanding of the concepts of "Socialization and social media" (Table 6) by the mapping method (Dimitropoulos, 1998; Fortouni and Fragkaki, 2003). The map of the concepts was portrayed in the whiteboard (Figure 1, Mapping the concept of socialization), while students' evaluation held in the form of discussion, forming a semicircle in the centre of the room.

Understanding of concepts was an area that could not be easily evaluated by verbal discussion - examination. Some students were familiar with the concepts under consideration, but they were not in the mood for participation. However, we believe that this field requires longer time and a written test done individually. Generally speaking, as we can observe in the Table 6 students had almost the same scores by the two evaluators.

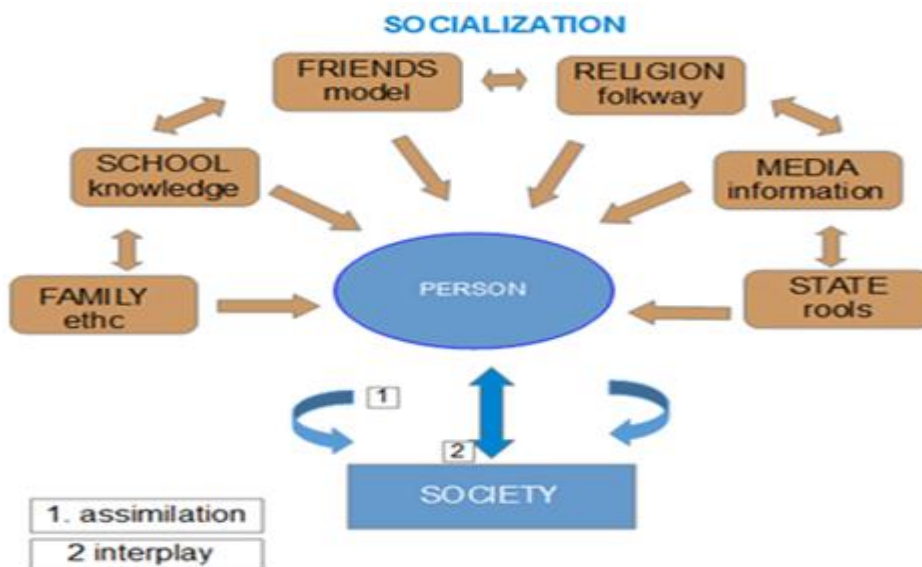


Figure-1. The Significance of socialization

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Third Evaluation step

During the third phase of the implementation, students were evaluated in the areas of originality (Table 7) and the quality of work (Table 8). They were also assessed for the presentation of work by students, and at the end of the presentations the students evaluated, in the form of discussion, the overall project.

Table-7. Originality

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	3	3	3	4		3	3	4	4
MEMBER2 nd	3	3	3	4		3	3	4	4
MEMBER3 rd	3	3	3	4		3	3	4	4
MEMBER4 th	3	-	3	4		3	-	4	4
MEMBER 5 th	-	3	3	4		-	3	4	4

Source: Chrysafidis (2002)

Originality is a skill which was evaluated as a whole and not per person. In general, there were few differences between the results of the two evaluators.

Table-8. Quality of work

	Evaluator 1					Evaluator 2			
	Groups					Groups			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
MEMBER 1 st	4	4	5	5		4	3	5	5
MEMBER2 nd	4	4	5	5		4	3	5	5
MEMBER3 rd	4	4	5	5		4	3	5	5
MEMBER4 th	4	4	5	5		4	3	5	5
MEMBER 5 th	-	4	5	5		-	3	5	5

Source: Fortouni and Fragkaki (2003)

In the Table 8 the quality of the work was assessed as a whole. In general, the evaluators were satisfied with the students' work as it is shown by the results.

4. Conclusions

Project method could highlight student's all skills. The main advantage, as a qualitative type of assessment, is that records fully and openly all the aspects of students' learning effort.

Additionally, this assessment does not obtain comparative character (Compared score among students), but on the contrary it is based on criteria derived from learning goals.

The implementation of the project constitutes a twofold effort implementation of an alternative teaching method that requires both a well-designed framework for action by the teacher and the active participation of the students too.

According to our survey, regarding the evaluation of the entire program by the teachers, the effectiveness of the project is due to the accomplishment of the educational objectives. Specifically, the educational objectives which were achieved are the following: through concepts mapping method, students were found informed about socialization, the existence of new social media, the connection of the social media in their daily lives. In addition to these, cultivation of teamwork skills was achieved, as a cooperative climate among students was established. At this point, it should be noted that the implementation of Project method not only had positive effects in terms of acquiring knowledge and teaching skills of students, but also it was a springboard for the updating of the entire school community for the world day of safe navigation on the Internet, by the poster constructed from the 4th working group.

Of course, we should take into consideration the restrictive factors, characterizing a case study (minimum time acquaintance of students, limited time for the project implementation).

From students' point of view, the evaluation process which took place in the form of debate during the last class period, showed that students felt very satisfied with the conduct of the project, which was described as an interesting way of learning. They also said that they did not realize that they were examined.

In general, the implementation of the project converted the carrying-out of the assessment in an interesting and enjoyable process for both, students and teachers. The teachers transformed the role of evaluator into the role of an observer, who had at his disposal a wealth of information and time to evaluate the students objectively, as much as possible. On the other hand, students, knowing that they were free of the stress of testing, had the opportunity to unfold their personality and all their skills.

Finally, a proposal for a future research concerns the implementation of the project for the evaluation of students' cognitive level with additional individual and written examination.

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