

Descriptive evaluation of the primary schools: an Overview

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Abstract

Evaluating the educational activities and the students' progress is one of the major purposes of all educational systems. In the same line, this article describes the descriptive evaluation and judgments about the value of the utility goals, designs, implementations, and the results to conduct appropriate decision making to serve the needs of not only the learners but also the society. Descriptive methods in evaluation are concerned with changes in attitudes and behaviors of the students in order to create high amount of interest and motivation in the students. To this end, teachers are required to be familiar with the description and evaluation of teaching techniques. Accordingly, they can identify the entry behavior of the learners based on the diagnostic evaluation. Research strategies and objectives expressed in this paper describe the evaluation and application of the direct consequences of the strengths and shortcomings and limitations of descriptive evaluation.

Keywords: evaluation, evaluation training, evaluation description

1. Introduction

Evaluating the students' progress is one of central and essential requirements of any educational system. This is usually conducted by the teachers before, during, or after covering some of the intended educational materials. Hence, teachers need to know how to conduct effective evaluation of their students' progress. Moreover, teachers need to realize the fact that evaluation, similar to education, is an ongoing process which should be carried on all the time. In fact, evaluation is an inseparable part of education which facilitates education. In other words, the results obtained from evaluation in any form and scale can boost education.

Although many scholars in educational sciences attach the same importance to evaluation, they have defined the term "evaluation" differently. Among the researchers, Woif (1984) defined evaluation as a process of comparing the objectives and the functions of the programs. Reber (1984) also defined evaluation as a process of gathering necessary information for making decisions about an educational program. In the same line, Nasr (2002) considered evaluation as making various decisions, selecting the type of information, gathering the information, and analyzing the information for making proper decision.

In view of the above, descriptive evaluation has recently been the focus of some researchers. In a research conducted by Zareie (2009) regarding the effect of descriptive evaluation on students' active participation in learning, it was found that there is a significant difference between learning through traditional and descriptive methods. However, there is no difference between males and females using descriptive or traditional methods. In other words, both males and females have the same assumption about utilizing descriptive evaluation. Zareie (2009) further added that the quality of education in descriptive methods more emphasized than in the traditional methods. In fact, the students' participation in descriptive methods is more than their participation in traditional methods. In the same line, Maher (2006) carried out a research focusing on the effect of utilizing descriptive evaluation in traditional methods classes on the environment of the class and the creativity of the students in primary schools. Accordingly, the results were indicative of the fact that there is a significant difference between many variables.

In another research, Rezaie and Seyf (2006) highlighted the point that students who are evaluated

descriptively can make more progress than those who are evaluated by traditional methods. In line with Rezaie and Seyf (2006), Khoshkholq and Pashasharifi(2006) also underlined the point that in some cases descriptive evaluation has been successful while in some other cases it has not been. Accordingly, in the first three years of trying the descriptive evaluation method, some of the objectives such as the improvement of the learning environment have been improved. This is while some other objectives were not fulfilled. Khoshkholq and Pashasharifi (2006) outlined some of the objectives which were not achieved as: 1) improving the students' viewpoints about learning, 2) increasing the students' learning through enhancing the memory, 3) increasing learning opportunities through involving the parents in the teaching process, and 4) using various available tools to enhance descriptive evaluation.

Considering the fact that descriptive evaluation is a determinant factor which boosts successful teaching/learning, the following section focuses on outlining some of the most effective ways of utilizing descriptive evaluation particularly in elementary schools.

2. Descriptive evaluation methods

Evaluation is considered as one of the most important factors in any educational systems. In fact, the output of an evaluation reveals the success or the failure of a particular educational program or a course. To this end, various evaluation methods are utilized by the teachers and the educational systems to find out the quality and more specifically the quantity of learning. Among the various evaluation methods, descriptive evaluation is more concerned with the quality of teaching/learning than the quantity.

Descriptive methods in evaluation refer to teachers' evaluation of students' progress using different methods to report the results to the students and their parents descriptively. Referring to various countries evaluation methods, it is revealed that using descriptive evaluation has a long history. Descriptive evaluation methods are currently used in Japan by utilizing five variables and in Germany by utilizing six variables. Accordingly, in most of the countries, students' report sheets include more than just scores. In fact, other activities of the students such as the students' viewpoints toward learning are descriptively evaluated. Evaluating the students' progress merely by assigning him/her scores can not only cause negative competition between them but also affects their progress. This can also waste much of the potential human and economical resources. In his regards, Rastegar (2008) put forth that fussing to much over scores of the students will make the students disappointed and de-motivated about education.

3. The main objectives of descriptive evaluation

Following are a list of the most important of the descriptive evaluation objectives:

1. Improving the quality of teaching process
2. Improving the quality of learning process
3. Putting emphasis on the objectives of education rather than the objectives of the books
4. Increasing the hygiene psychological environment of teaching and learning by decreasing the pressure of the current evaluation system

4. Descriptive evaluation tools

Conducting evaluation in any type, whether traditional or descriptive, requires utilizing some sort of tools. In the same line, there are varieties of tools which can be employed by the teachers for carrying out descriptive evaluation. Following are the most effective ones:

1. Listing teachers' observations of the students' progress during teaching
2. Listing students' activities during teaching such as participating in group work
3. Conducting project based activities which can be done by the students in-or-out of the classrooms
4. Conducting functional tests in which the students show their progress in the related subject matter

5. Meeting the standards for descriptive evaluation

After reviewing the most essential descriptive evaluation methods, objectives, and tools, one should meet the standards of descriptive evaluation. In fact, carrying out descriptive evaluation is unlike traditional evaluation. The most important standards which one should keep while utilizing descriptive evaluation can be summarized as: 1) moral standards, 2) benefit making standards, 3) functional or practical standards, and

4) accuracy standards.

1. Moral standards: this type of descriptive evaluation is based on moral standards. In fact, according to this standard, the privacy and respect of the teachers, the students, and the parents should be considered.
2. Interest making evaluation: considering this standard will cause high level of learning to be achieved.
3. Practical standards: applying these types of standards guarantees the possibility of carrying out descriptive evaluation successfully.
4. Accuracy standards: these types of standards will result in accurate descriptive evaluation to be carried out. In other words, these types of standards ensure the accuracy and validity of the evaluation.

6. The benefits and drawbacks of descriptive evaluation

Similar to any type of evaluation method, descriptive evaluation has its own benefits and drawbacks. Hence, those teachers who are interested in employing descriptive evaluation rather than traditional evaluation in their classes should have a transparent picture of the advantages and disadvantages of descriptive evaluation. This would help them to obtain the optimal objectives of teaching and learning processes.

Following are some of the benefits associated with the use of descriptive evaluation:

1. Reducing the pressure and stress caused by various examinations
2. Eliminating the sense of shyness among the students because of obtaining low scores
3. Increasing teachers' understanding of other evaluation methods
4. Reducing student's stress to the most extent
5. Changing the students' viewpoints toward obtaining knowledge
6. Providing the necessary basis for necessary changes to be undertaken in the educational systems

Based on the above-mentioned benefits of descriptive evaluation systems, it can be concluded that the best descriptive evaluation system should have the following criteria:

1. Draw the objective to the students' optimal learning
2. Consider the variety of evaluation and evaluation tools
3. Consider the psychological hygiene of learning (Kiyashmeshki, 2008)

In view of the above, most of the researchers and the teachers who agree with the utilization of descriptive evaluation methods rather than traditional methods of evaluation highlight the points that:

1. When descriptive evaluation is used the students have the chance to discover the content of the subject matter by themselves. A teacher who employs descriptive evaluation knows that his/her role is a guide in the classroom and the students are in charge of their own learning. When the students realize that they have discovered something new, their motivation increases.
2. Descriptive evaluation highlights the four essential frameworks underpinning learning set by UNESCO which are: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live, and learning to live together.
3. Descriptive evaluation underscores cooperative learning and boosts creativity.

In addition to the above-mentioned benefits of the descriptive evaluation methods, some of the possible drawbacks may be: 1) they may be time consuming, 2) they may increase the amount work that teachers' should do at home or school, and 3) huge number of the students in the classrooms (Seqatoleslami, 2007).

7. Conclusion

In all educational systems, evaluation is considered as one of the essential objectives which is achieved through various ways. In fact, the results which are obtained from any type of evaluation reveals the success or the failure of an educational system or more particularly an educational program. As a matter of fact, the type of information which is gathered from any type of evaluation is utilized to make fundamental decisions in big scales. Accordingly, a reliable evaluation system should be employed to arrive at reliable results.

In view of the above, the present paper was initially set to shed more light on descriptive evaluation method compared to traditional evaluation method. It should be highlighted that the purpose of the present paper was not to reject the traditional evaluation method. In fact, the major focus of this paper was to highlight descriptive evaluation method which is currently used in many successful educational systems.

Unlike traditional evaluation systems which focus on the quantity of teaching/learning, descriptive evaluation aims at discovering the quality of teaching/learning. In other words, how much material related to a subject matter is covered is not the focus of descriptive evaluation. In contrast, descriptive evaluation is set to discover the amount of the material which has been internalized by the learners.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that, the main objectives of descriptive evaluation are: 1) improving the quality of teaching/learning, 2) highlighting the objectives of the educational system instead of merely focusing on the objectives of the books, 3) increasing the psychological hygiene of the teaching/learning environment, and 4) decreasing the current stress which is the result of the current evaluation system.

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