Evaluation practices of Post Graduate Diploma in Education Secondary School Student Teachers in Mhondoro Ngezi of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the importance of evaluation in the teaching and learning process. Evaluation is one way in which teaching and learning is measured for its worthiness and decisions made on how it should progress. Therefore evaluation is important in the classroom to establish if the teacher is on the right track and to ensure that the children are learning. The main research question of this study was 'How important is evaluation in the teaching and learning process?' The study used a qualitative approach to generate the data. The study was carried out in the Mhondoro - Ngezi district of Mashonaland West region. The population was all the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) Post graduate diploma secondary school students teachers who were in their final semester. A sample of 25 teachers were seen. The respondents were conveniently selected in the schools as the researcher focused on those students teachers who were allocated to him on a particular day. These student teachers taught various subjects ranging from languages to mathematics. Lesson observations, interviews and document analysis were used to generate the data. The findings showed that the teachers used both formative and summative evaluation in the teaching and learning process. Evaluations were mainly routine as they did not relate to the teaching and learning process most of the times. There was little evidence of evaluations on the

rest of the records kept. The major recommendation is that student teachers on staff development should be capacitated in proper evaluation methods of the records they keep to improve the teaching and learning process in their classrooms.

Key words: evaluation, teaching, learning, records, decisions, student teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of schools is to help learners acquire literacy, numeracy, social, life skills and many other behaviors through teaching and learning. The responsibility for schools to prepare the future members of the society is a very important one which must be meaningful and relevant. Educators need to determine if schools are managing to provide teaching adequately and if learners are learning relevant material and are acquiring it in preparation for independent living. Teaching and learning is a psychological process which must be gauged in a scientific way. This study assesses the importance of evaluation to teaching and learning. It will begin by describing key terms like 'evaluation and 'teaching and learning'. It will then assess the importance of evaluation to teaching and learning providing the educational implications.

Evaluation is one way in which teaching and learning is measured for its worthiness. Genesee and Upshur, (1996) and Jabbarifar, (2009) explain evaluation as the collection of, analysis and interpretation of information about any aspect of a program of education or training as part of a recognised process of judging its effectiveness, its efficiency or any other outcomes it may have. This points out that there is judgment involved, which means that the evaluator makes an effort to determine the merit of the program. By programing this will include lessons, subjects or

programs on offer. Effectiveness and efficiency are two key words to evaluation. Effectiveness means the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result. This is commonly referred to as doing the right thing. By efficiency one means the ability to do things well and without wasting resources. This is what is termed doing the thing right. When one looks at teaching and learning they can see that the use of evaluation brings in the need to judge that process for its effectiveness and efficiency. In the classroom setup the teacher prepares their lessons and delivers them. They must evaluate to find out how effectively and efficiently they will have done. Without some form of evaluation the teacher will not be able to determine their progress in meeting the set standards.

Teaching is the act of imparting knowledge or skills through instructions. Yunus, (2016) states that other psychologists state it in a broad way as an intimate contact between a more mature personality and a less mature one. Greens (1964) declares that it is the task of a teacher which is performed for the development of a child. The next meaning is all-embracing as it specifies the actual behaviors of the teacher. Wells, (1982) describes teaching as a cluster of activities that are noted about teachers such as explaining, deducing, questioning, motivating, taking attendance, keeping records of students' work progress and background information. These are aspect that are in teaching and learning. Therefore teaching can be defined as undertaking certain ethical tasks or activities with the intention of inducing or causing learning in the children.

Learning can be demarcated as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience or being taught. Psychologists according to Snowman (1997) express learning as a process that

depends on experience and leads to long term changes in behavior potential. These skills, knowledge, habits, attitude, interest and other personality characteristics are the behaviors that are a result of learning which are seen in the child. According to Yunus (2016) teaching and learning are related because teaching is what teachers do and learning is what pupils do. Thus the ability of the teacher to teach should be evaluated or judged on the basis of pupils learning. Yunus (2016) and Wells (1982) argue that a teacher should be held accountable for pupils' learning despite poor parenting, negative attitude and poor social environments.

The above delineations clearly show that teaching and learning are valuable activities which are worthy of judgment to see if there are of value to society. Stantrock (2004) affirms that teaching and learning are psychological aspects which warrant attention as they are the fundamentals of any child's development. Thus teaching and learning can be are effective ways of bringing the pupil into a successful interaction with the material to be taught, the learning situation and the teacher who provides the learning opportunities (Huitt, 2003). Therefore evaluation is important in the classroom to establish if the teacher is on the right track and to ensure that the children are learning. The main research question of this study was 'How important is evaluation in the teaching and learning process?'

The study generated the following research questions:

1. What type of evaluation do secondary school student teachers carry out during the teaching and learning process?

2. How do they implement these evaluation practices and what are the implications in the teaching and learning process?

3. How do they solve the challenges they encounter during the evaluation?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Evaluation focuses on the teacher, the programs on offer and the learner, there is need therefore to find out if the teacher is performing their work in order to identify strengths and weakness for improvement (Danielson and McGreal, 2000). The same can be said of the programs and also the learner. In order to achieve this a number of evaluations are carried out. The purpose of evaluation is usually for accountability to authority who in this case is the head resulting in an improvement of teaching and learning. The other purpose of evaluation is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching like all other professional practices has to be continuously and systematically examined, reflected upon and improved (Nyanungo, 2002). Evaluation of teaching and learning does all that resulting in pupil's positive outcomes.

2.1. Types of evaluation

In order to accomplish the above two different approaches to evaluation are used namely formative and summative. We begin with the former as Garrison and Ehringhaus, (2010) say that formative evaluation which includes diagnostic testing is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted by teachers during the learning process in order to modify their teaching. According to Salkind, (2008) formative evaluation focuses on teacher's performances, pupil's performances and programs development. Teacher performance usually centres on classroom observations by managers, other teachers or external evaluators; teacher self-

evaluation and teacher portfolios. Teachers are evaluated formatively to provide feedback and identify needs so that their knowledge and experience can grow. Plan books, scheme books, record books of remedial and extension work are looked at periodically. This may be weekly or fortnight. The aim is to establish if teachers are keeping to agreed standards. Research has shown that standards need to confirm to the school vision and mission expectations and values (Peterson, Strawhun and Hoff, 2015). In Zimbabwe all schools have a vision and a mission statement. This constitutes the school policy. Such a policy must relate to the national policy. This is currently in line with the state requirements. The national pass rate shows that schools are abiding within their mandates.

2.2. Formative evaluation and use during the teaching and learning process

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012) study shows that teachers also carry out formative evaluations in their classrooms. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2010) point out that this is part of the instruction process. Teachers use it to get information needed to adjust the teaching and learning while the lesson is in progress. As the teacher moves around teaching they note the problems pupils might be having. A teacher may observe that a particular aspect is not being understood by some pupils. Quick adjustments may be made in the form of changing the teacher's language, the pace, or by introducing extra media for clarification or even doing on the spot remediation for specific pupils identified in the formative evaluation. On the spot remediation is carried out immediately the teacher notices that the pupil has made an error to ensure that the pupil keeps on proceeding with the lesson without experiencing more complex problems due to missing the concept being addressed. Primary and secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe use this approach to a great extent. The teacher grades the child's work at the end of the lesson and the lesson is evaluated to determine if the objectives were achieved.

Garrison and Ehringhaus (2010) also say that for formative evaluation to be meaningful pupils need to be involved. Pupils need to be involved as their own assessors by asking them to account for how well they are doing. The teacher may also use pupils to peer evaluate each other by checking the quality of their work against previously established criteria. Thus formative evaluation may include a number of activities like pupils self and peer evaluation. Pupils are asked to keep records of their own work. The teacher sets the evaluation criteria and also sets goals with the pupils. The action of making observations by walking around the classroom checking pupils' work is an important source for formative evaluation. All these activities are important as they are a rich source of material which will aid teaching and learning.

Mberi, Kent and Matanda (2002) point out that the teacher's questioning techniques are a source of vital information during formative evaluation. Teachers' questions and pupils' responses give the teacher the opportunity to gauge the degree and the depth of pupils learning; which is important information for formative evaluation. It is clear that formative evaluation has several advantages as can be seen from the above assessment. It enables the teachers to choose the most suitable techniques and media on the spot. The teacher does not have to wait for weeks to make his or her adjustments. As the teacher is evaluating midstream of the lesson or at the end of the lesson they are able to make strategic plans for the next level. This also gives the teacher the evidence to judge if the lesson might need adjustment, changing or abandoning altogether.

Two fundamentals which improve children's learning occurs namely feedback and motivation (Coe, Aloisi, Higgins and Major, 2014). They give the teacher the opportunity to give pupils immediate feedback. According to Skinner immediate feedback results in the pupil wanting to repeat the action (Slavin, 1997). Lack of feedback may result in the extension of a negative behavior. Motivation ensues after favorable feedback, thus formative evaluation promotes motivation both intrinsic and external resulting in improvement in the pupils learning.

Two disadvantages worth noting are that formative assessment is time consuming and favors small classes like those found in private schools. With the thirty minute periods at primary schools and the forty minutes periods at secondary schools in Zimbabwe teachers may find it hard to carry out formative evaluations effectively. In most cases it degenerates into the teacher just going through the motions around the class. The above scenario is made worse by the large classes in Zimbabwe. In some secondary schools classes average more than fifty students. Some studies have shown that class size effects reduce teacher effectiveness (Schanzenbach, 2014).

2.3. Summative evaluation and use during the teaching and learning process

The second approach called summative evaluation is used to determine at a particular point what pupils' levels of performance are. It is given at the end of a programme as an accountability measure that is used as a grading measure to rank the pupils; examples in Zimbabwe are end of unit or chapter tests, end of term tests, end of year tests, grade seven tests, ordinary level and advanced level examinations. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2010) say that it is used as a means to gauge pupil's learning relative to agreed school and national standards. Summative assessment is spread out and occurs after instruction at certain intervals for example a few weeks; months or

even a year. Teachers in Zimbabwe favour summative assessment as they use it to check on certain aspects of the learning process. It does not effectively gauge the teaching aspect although pupil's performance on it is also used to assess teachers, schools and even countries' outcomes. Thus one of its disadvantages is that it happens far up the learning path to provide information at the classroom level to allow the teacher to make instructional adjustments and interventions during the actual lesson.

Another use of summative evaluation say Gomby and Larson (1992) is to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. Zimbabwe uses summative evaluation to place children in specific programs. It might be in ability groups or even in streamed classes. The school Psychological Service and Special Needs Education Department (SPS&SNE) uses summative evaluation in the form of standardized tests to place pupils in special classes, remedial groups, units or resource centres depending on the level of their performances as compared to their grade equivalent peers. Special evaluation instruments called norm referenced tests are used to rank learners for placement in special programs. The results can also be used to accelerate learners who are performing above their form level into the next form.

The advantage of summative evaluation, claims Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot and Nuttall (2002), is that it provides pupils the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt. Parents, guardians and other stake holders usually want to know how pupils are performing. This accountability issue is very prominent in Zimbabwe as parents ask schools to be accountable by improving their pass rates.

The main disadvantage of summative assessment is that it is limited in scope. In Zimbabwe a significant number of teachers have little knowledge on evaluation. There is a knowledge gap which needs closing.

2.4. Suggestions for improving evaluation practices in the teaching and learning process

The assessment made has shown the evaluation is being carried out in the teaching and learning process in Zimbabwe. However teachers are not fully conversant with what it really entails as they fail to use it adequately in teaching and learning. Similar findings were made in the literature (Harlen et al 2002). The following implications for teaching and learning are important. Teachers' education should combine some of the features of formative and summative evaluation to address the full range of teaching and learning activities. This can be achieved by keeping test materials or banks which cover the whole range of the curriculum (Harlen et al 2002). Pupils must be partners in evaluating their learning so that they are motivated in class.

Some of the major criticisms of our education system is that it does not produce learners who fit into industry and other careers (UNESCO 2001). In order to prepare students properly teachers must use a combination of the formative and summative evaluation to guide pupils' decisions about selecting appropriate learning targets, future courses and career options.

In conclusion the assessment has shown that evaluation has important aspects which help in the improvement of teaching and learning. Both formative and summative evaluation where looked

at and their components and their effects on the teachers performance and the pupils learning behaviors highlighted. Evaluation is a crucial part of teaching and learning which acts as the teacher's tool for fine tuning of the lesson in progress and also as a way of establishing how much the pupils have learnt. Zimbabwean teachers need to be capacitated in evaluation strategies to ensure that their teaching and learning is meaningful. It is important to find out how important evaluation is in their current teaching and learning processes to achieve the above. This was the focus of the study to establish this baseline as a way forward in developing teachers in the post graduate diploma in education (PGDE) programme.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach to generate the data. This enabled the collection of what Stake (2010) labels as 'thick descriptions' on evaluation as it was being carried out by the secondary school teachers. The study was carried out in the Mhondoro - Ngezi district of Mashonaland West region. The population was all the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) PGDE students who were in their final semester. The researcher was one of the lecturers who were following up the students on teaching practice. A total of 25 respondents were seen. These student teachers taught various subjects ranging from languages to mathematics. The focus of the study was on the evaluation approaches they used regardless of the subjects they were teaching. The respondents were conveniently selected in the schools as the researcher focused on those students who were allocated to him on a particular day. Lesson observation, interviews and document analysis were used to generate the data. The interviews were guided by the main research question and this resulted in the generation of further questions as the study unfolded.

The researcher was in the field for two weeks and collected data until they was data saturation (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

Data analysis involved sorting, coding, pattern formation and thematic generation in line with the generated questions. All ethical considerations were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of both the respondents and their schools. The results in the next section show the themes that were produced from the generated data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. What type of evaluation do secondary school student teachers carry out during the teaching and learning process?

The data shows that the teachers use both formative and summative evaluation in the teaching and learning process. This was observed during the teaching and learning process. The teachers used 'kid watching' whereby they checked if students were on task or not. Table I shows the formative evaluation items used by the teachers. It displays the specific item which was observed and the types of activities which were evaluated. This concurs with Garrison and Ehringhaus (2010) and Salkind's (2008) comments on the teacher's performances. My focus was on the decisions the teacher made during that item focusing on the children's activity. Teachers evaluated the students' activity made an evaluation and then decided on the next step. Evaluations and decisions were made on students' responses. Teachers adjusted their teaching and rewards in line with these responses. This means that good teachers are continuously

evaluating their students' actions and their own. At the end of the day the significant outcomes are captured in the lesson evaluations.

Table 1: Formative Evaluation in the Teaching and Learning Process

Item observed	Frequency	Activity
Register	Daily	Pupils attendance
Classroom teaching (oral)	Daily, during the teaching process	Teaching and learning
Charts, Cards	During the learning process	Group work
Pupils responses	During the learning process	Responses, activities, interactions, smiles, nodding, clapping in unison
Group work	During the lesson	Teacher questions, pupils discussions
Pupil responses- Exercise books	During the lesson, Daily	Number of exercises – as stipulated by government policy
Teacher comments	During and after the lesson	Student responses, activities, interactions
Lesson plans – evaluations	Daily	Reflective comments
Schemes of work - evaluations	Termly	Written comments
Teacher made tests	Weekly	Questions on board, pupils'

		answer sheets, scores
Tests record books	Weekly, monthly, termly, yearly	Pupils' test scores
Remedial record book	Before, during and after the teaching process	Educational plans (group or individual) written comments
Extension record book	Before, during and after the teaching process	Educational plans (group or individual) written comments
Social record book	Termly, when necessary	Comments on individual students, disabilities, non-readers
Extra mural record book	Termly, when necessary	Comments on individual students

During the lesson teachers used the questioning technique to solicit responses from the children. It was observed that the questions they used were not planned for in the lesson plan. Most of them where 'what' type of questions. Some teachers also tended to focus on only specific children.

End of lesson evaluations were carried out at the end of the day. The schemes of work evaluation was done at the end of the week. Decision making only applied to lesson plans and schemes of work evaluations. Evaluations were mainly routine as they did not relate to the teaching and

learning process most of the times. There was little evidence of evaluations on the rest of the records kept.

Summative evaluation was not evident in oral lessons but was done at the end of set units for example as shown in Table 2 weekly termly or yearly.

Table 2: Summative Evaluation

Item	Frequency	Implications
Tests	Weekly, Termly, Yearly	Decisions on ranking and grouping students

Teachers planned everything including the test administration. The results of the tests were not used to improve the lesson delivery but to rank students. Thus progress records showed the children's pass and failure rates only. The teachers were indecisive on what to do with those children who were persistently failing.

4.2. How do they implement these evaluation practices and what are the implications in the teaching and learning process?

Teachers were overwhelmed by the amount of record keeping. They tended to have a set format for the evaluations. Most were not done at the end of the lessons because they was no time provision on the timetable. Most of the evaluations were done at the end of the day when they would have forgotten some of the key aspects of the lesson. The amount of evaluations they carry is indicative of the importance of evaluation in the teaching and learning process. These results confirm Harlen et al's (2002) who observed that teachers were not conversant with both formative and summative assessment. Most teachers observed

follow *ad hoc* means of formative evaluation. The need for accountability makes it mandatory that a teacher carries out an evaluation for each item depicted in Table 1. Evaluation ends up becoming a routine rather than a necessity.

Box 1 shows the evaluation observations and implications which occurred during and after the lesson. It is mandatory that each teacher has specified records on pupils although the way they evaluate is not uniform. Each teacher's objective for keeping records differs as shown in Box 1.

Box 1: Evaluation observations and Implications

- Most teachers have records
- Most teachers do not use them to make decisions
- Evaluations are done in schemes of work and plans
- Most teachers use evaluations to record what they have done
- Few mention what the children would have done
- Strengths are identified
- Weaknesses are identified
- Decisions result in remedial or extension work
- However most teachers do not know what to do with the identified students

Records are important to teaching as they pinpoint students' circumstances which may need decisions to be made in time to enable the student to continue with their schooling. Other issues which needed decisions were discovered in the records and during interviews with the teachers. In one school fewer girls were in attendance because they were getting married early. It was noted that teachers were in a dilemma on what to do.

Another school had a poor attendance because children where failing to come to school due to hunger. Most schools in the districts were far apart resulting in significant children coming from faraway places. Decisions were made to provide children meals at the schools. Parents took part in providing the food and cooking for the children.

4.3. How do they solve the challenges they encounter during the evaluation?

The results in table 3 show four significant challenges the teachers in the PGDE programme face. The first and second are significant as they empower the teacher to make evaluations and decisions. It is important that teacher capacitation curriculum should include aspects on evaluation and decision making. This enables the teachers to address the challenges which were observed in the teaching and learning process. Mentoring of PGDE student teachers from capable practicing teachers should be strengthened so that they copy appropriate evaluation formats.

Table 3: Challenges and Solutions

Evaluation challenges	Solution
Ignorant of the evaluation processes	Capacitate teachers on evaluation strategies; Involve pupils in formative assessment
Having too many records	Develop a clear policy on the records i.e. have both formative and summative evaluation in the final grading of students; Use electronic devices
Indecisiveness	Strengthen mentoring in the schools
Other issues raised by the evaluation	Refer to some other departments for help e.g.

	SPS and SNE; Social Services; Community etc.

4.4.'How important is evaluation in the teaching and learning process?'

In response to the main research question, the presented results show that evaluation is important in the teaching and learning process in the observed schools. Evaluation is the continuous thread that keeps the lessons glued together and enables the PGDE student teacher to accomplish the subject aims. Evaluations which feed into the lesson results in a coherent programme with improvements on the students. This causes students' good results and subsequently significant outcomes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were made; that PGDE student teachers used both the formative and summative evaluation in the teaching and learning process. This meant that the teachers were continuously evaluating their students' actions and as well as their own. However, most teachers followed *ad hoc* means of formative evaluation. Teachers kept too many records which made it difficult for them to evaluate their lessons properly. Most teachers tended to have repetitive ways of evaluating which did not reflect the day's lesson adequately. Teachers were in a dilemma on what to do when confronted with students' circumstances which needed decisions to enable the student to continue with their schooling. There was little evidence of mentoring from able practicing teachers for some of the student teachers.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers on PGDE staff development should be capacitated in proper evaluation methods of the records they keep to improve the teaching and learning process in their classrooms. It is important that student teacher development should include aspects on evaluation and decision making. Mentoring from competent practicing teachers should be strengthened so that these teachers learn appropriate evaluation tactics to be used during the teaching and learning process.

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