

A realização do novo método de avaliação carece da compreensão dos pais

Dr. Leong : Como é que têm reagido os pais ao chamado novo método de avaliação?

Sr. Vong : Para a avaliação da aprendizagem, a nossa escola pôs em acção, desde há quinze anos, um plano de avaliação de qualidades múltiplas, começando a reforma pelo ensino infantil. É nossa intenção prosseguir até aos anos mais avançados. No entanto, estamos preocupados com o grau de confiança que os pais terão no nosso método de avaliação. Isto porque, não há uma nota específica para lhes apresentar e eles poderão questionar quanto ao valor exacto e à justeza da avaliação. Se o aluno reprovar ou tiver de abandonar a escola, os pais terão muito que reclamar ácerca deste tipo de avaliação.

Sra. Chan : Desde há dois anos que utilizamos, no ensino infantil, o método de avaliação por múltiplas qualidades. Utilizamos o Sistema de Espectro de Qualidades, como ferramenta para avaliar os alunos. Como não há notas consideráveis a mostrar, no princípio os pais duvidaram um bocado do sistema. Entretanto, a escola encontrou vários meios para explicar aos pais as características particulares do sistema. Forneceu informação sobre o método de avaliação, permitindo aos pais compreenderem melhor como funciona e perceberem que essa é a melhor forma de conhecer o desenvolvimento do aluno, levando-os também a concordar que este tipo de pedagogia é a mais conveniente para os filhos. Agora, os pais já compreenderam e são capazes de aceitar este tipo de avaliação.

Sra. Pun : Teremos de obter a concordância dos pais para a realização deste tipo de avaliação, caso contrário eles opor-se-ão. Quanto à avaliação do comportamento dos alunos, construímos um gráfico de avaliação com vinte e cinco perguntas, com vários níveis cada, para ser feito o registo semanal das suas acções. Com este gráfico, os alunos podem reflectir sobre as suas atitudes, tanto as positivas como as que necessitam de melhorar, dando azo a que sejam eles os próprios a querer melhorar.

Os alunos sabem que essas informações serão contadas nas notas respeitantes à conduta individual. A avaliação será registada pelos próprios alunos e o conselho de turma fará a estimativa final.

Ao longo das duas horas de conversa, os quatro professores falaram sobre o muito que têm a dizer ácerca das dificuldades em realizar a Reforma da Avaliação. O recurso à pedagogia é, sem dúvida, uma prática corrente e, os professores preocupados em alterar o sistema de avaliação, debatem-se, constantemente, com enormes problemas técnicos. Mesmo assim, a reforma da avaliação é uma estratégia importante para aumentar a eficácia da pedagógica e a qualidade da aprendizagem. Os reformadores do ensino deverão providenciar para que os professores obtenham informação adequada e queiram fazer a avaliação dos seus alunos através de diversas formas, para que se consiga que toda a sociedade se preocupe com o verdadeiro sentido da avaliação, suas funções e seus efeitos. Só assim é que a Reforma da Avaliação poderá passar da forma nominal de avaliação múltipla, para a verdadeira essência da educação.

Em "Revista do Professor"
Nº 7, Janeiro, 2004

02 Teachers' View on Learning Quality Assessment

At the end of 2003, the SAR Government started the procedure of revising the Educational System of Macau. For Article No.12 of the "Educational System Review Proposal" put forth for public consultation, the suggestion of "The evaluation of a student's academic performance should be done through Multi-Assessment with the aim of enhancing the student's accomplishment in learning" was stated. This type of Reformed Quality Assessment proposed to the teachers does not mean that they neglected the students' attitude and practical learning performance. The main reason is that the learning procedure and the actual application of the imparted knowledge cannot be detected through the traditional written examinations. Due to the limitation of the typical written tests, the higher order of the domain in the cognition, skill and sentiment of the academic achievement cannot be precisely evaluated.

Learning Quality Assessment counts not only the attainment of the objectives of teaching and learning, but also the knowledge acquirement process. The purpose and function of the evaluation is to instigate the students to learn, to allow the students' learning accomplishment be acknowledged, to diagnose the students' weakness in learning, to rectify the fault and to offer an appropriate responding message to the matter. The Quality Assessment also presents to the teachers a reliable basis for pedagogic improvement. In reality, what type of academic assessment are most schools executing? What are the problems found in the Reformed Quality Assessment?

To understand the present Macau teachers' opinion about Learning Quality Assessment and the difficulties they met during the procedure, the editor of the

current issue of "Teachers' Magazine" invited four junior secondary teachers from four different schools to participate in a conversazione of the said theme. The participants were Ms Pun In Va from Escola Secundária Pui Va (Pui Va Secondary School), Ms Chan Yin Peng from Anglican Choi Kou Middle School, Mr. Vong Kam Fun from Escola São Paulo (St Paul's School) and Ms Chao Kai Fan from Escola Hou Kong (Hou Kong Secondary School). At the same time, the editorial panel had also invited Dr. Leong Seng On from the Faculty of Education, University of Macau to join the discussion, each aired his/her own views and many of the points are worthy of our front line teachers' deep contemplation.

Opinions about Multi-Assessment

Editor : At present, people from the educational circles are reviewing the educational system. Among the proposals, there is the project of the adoption of Multi-Assessment for the academic results of the students. In fact, what does Multi-Assessment mean? We would like to hear about Dr. Leong's opinion on Multi-Assessment.

Leong : Theoretically Multi-Assessment may mean different ways of evaluating a student's performance in the subjects of Chinese, English, Mathematics, etc, but also his/her other subjects like music, physical or moral education etc. Conceptually, it is necessary to give multidisciplinary quality assessment, not giving undue emphasis to certain items. The situation is specially practical for the primary and junior secondary sections, holding a greater space for appraising than that of the senior secondary and are also exempted from public examinations.

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Another practice is that Multi-Assessment utilizes different modes of tests to grade the practical performance and evaluate the research projects of the students, making use of different methods to appraise the capabilities of a student. Therefore, Multi-Assessment enables us to understand a student's abilities through various measures. No matter what type of assessment, the target will arrive at the pedagogic aim. There must be a pedagogic focus before a teaching process can be carried out, and this will finally followed by Learning Quality Assessment. Once the course of the pedagogic target is deviated from the aim, the assessment will fail to arrive at its significance while losing the meaning of evaluation. All pedagogic theories stress on a pedagogic target, and the setting of a procedure. Then at the end, comes the teaching and learning assessment. This is a relation of three in one. Meaning to achieve a certain goal, there must be a process and then an assessment to reflect the result of the pedagogic target. Should the goal be not clear enough, the outcome of the appraisal would not be clear also and the result would not be ideal too.

Opinions about the different modes of Quality Assessment

Editor : Please tell us what kind of Quality Assessment is practised in your school.

Vong : We usually grade our students through their written examinations. As for ordinary school days, we may add in other types of assessment like group projects, presentations, etc. At present, we are heading towards the development of multi-directional evaluation and are considering to count also the students' other performance besides the examinations.

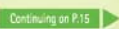
Chao : Our school values much the cultivation of the students' moral quality and puts heavy weight on assessing the students' ability and the grades obtained in the procedure of learning. Of course, there are different situations of evaluation for different subjects, with various modes of grading and requirements. For the subject of the Chinese Language besides having tests and examinations, we usually arrange a five-minute activity of "Pre-lesson Presentation" to allow the students to express their viewpoint about the new self-read lesson. The aim is to nurture their ability of expressiveness and points are awarded according their manifestation. Counting the result of reproducing what is learned is advantageous too. For example, an ordinary test lets the teacher discover his/her quality and quantity of teaching. From the scores on the report gained by the students, the insufficiency of their effort is seen and the students are also conscious of the defects to be corrected. This method makes everything concise and precise. I believe that, scores awarding method, to a certain level, plays the part of encouragement and instigation. Until the present day, many schools still keep utilizing marks and scores to decide the result of the students' learning ability. In fact, the nature of this kind of tests is quite one-sided as it is only graded by the teacher alone and it is a bit too subjective. If the work is to be done by a team and then is reported to the whole class, allowing the classmates to give comments and criticisms, the opinions would be more objective. However, our school holds another method of assessment. For the subject of Geography, the Panel Coordinator will lead the whole team of Geography teachers to act as the assessment group. They give assignments with the themes of earthquake, environment protection, afforesting etc. and ask the students to form into groups to collect information and write reports. Then each group will be graded by all the other groups of the same class to obtain a more objective result. We have also music appreciation and activities of comment on music pieces for the subject of music. For Biology, the students form themselves into gardening teams to experience planting. The teachers of that Panel will lead the class advisers to make group assessment at the time of harvest. This enables the evaluation to be more multidimensionally and more flexibly expressed, bearing a satisfactory result.

Pun : We are also practising assessment through examinations in our school and it is estimated that most of them would further their studies in

universities. Therefore we have to consider the point of linkage with the future education. For the present so-called Multi-Assessment, we are evaluating the students' moral behaviour besides the school examinations. Since we have started to adopt the policy of having three terms in a scholastic year, for the academic assessment process, there are examinations for all the subjects for the first and third term. In the second term, examinations are only for the Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics while the other subjects are only evaluated by a general test. The aim is to let the students treasure the procedure of learning and not just lay all the attention to examinations. As quite many students are too concerned about the scores they obtain for the examinations, lowering their frequency will most probably result in a better outcome and at the same time, we also take pains to nurture the personality and moral character of our students. As for the appraisal of their conduct, we have a target of "Ten Excellences" which includes being considerate, regulations observing, being polite, being self-confident, willing to serve, learning attitude, human relationship, sense of participation, creativity and extracurricular activities. The grading of these ten virtues will be processed by various units. The first assessment is the student's self-evaluation. Then come the officers of the class, followed by the different subject teachers and the class adviser. The final procedure is the opinions of the same class level panel and the school administrative officers. This is to make the outcome more reasonable and more precise.

Chan : We believe the aim of quality assessment is to enhance the students' learning development. It not only has to manifest the effect of instigation but also the diagnostic function. In general, we also utilize written examinations to evaluate our students. Nevertheless, we keep promoting and investigation the practice of Multi-Assessment. Since there has been the implementation of Quality Management Policy of International Organization for Standardization in our secondary section since 2000, the basis of our teaching operation is deemed to include the quality assessment. For example, in the three terms of our school, the scores of the students' performance are in the ratio 3:3:4, which means the first and second term each takes 30% and the third term holds 40% of the whole scholastic year evaluation. Furthermore, the out-come of the first term assessment is made up of the students' daily manifestation and their examination scores (50% each). The daily performance will be appraised by the respective teachers who will mark their performance according to the set requirements and the weight of the specific subjects. For the Science Course, the ratio of the outcome for each term is 7:2:1. This means the tests and examination together take 70% ; experiment operation and examination, theme reports, home assignments, project production, etc. occupy 20%; learning disposition, including the learning attitude, the positive contemplation and voices, timely submission of homework etc. form 10% of the termly appraisal. From the above mentioned structure of assessment, it is shown that written examinations and tests hold the main weight of evaluation, while other stated items such as experiment operation, theme reports, etc. also carry some importance. This pattern of assessment not only considers the intellectuality of the students but also their other capabilities. At the same time, through the International Organization for Standardization for high quality assessment, it is guaranteed that the results are well and radically investigated, manifesting fully the students' performance. Both the intellectual and non-intellectual capabilities of the students' are therefore, successfully elevated. Most of the students in the Science Course hold a passing grade or above the school standard requirement.

Leong : Theoretically, all assessments do involve two main directions. One is fairness and the other, encouragement, which is needed by the learner. It seems they are two different focuses and it depends on the target of education. If the aim is to set an unbiased standard for promotion and detention, then it is different from instigation or encouragement. Therefore these two aims are very much not the same. To achieve the two mentioned targets in the same educational situation, it requires a more specific strategy. At present, it is not too profitable to execute the two together.

Chao : When we make assessments, our target lies mainly on encouragement so as to incite the students to learn actively and joyfully. 

Leong: If some of the assessments bear the nature of incitation, it seems that we do not have to give a precise evaluation and it is not necessary to distinguish clearly the closeness of two grades. Therefore, many educators suggest that if the assessment is meant to be instigating or offering encouragement, the grades need not be marked from 0 to 100. Just a symbol will be enough.

Chao : If we evaluate all the junior secondary subjects, including Chinese, English and Mathematics with this policy, basically, all the students would pass class. However, for the assessment of the senior secondary section, the evaluations have to be in scores of marks. Then what shall we do? How should we bridge these two modes of appraisals?

How to assess the non-academic subjects?

Editor : In accordance with what Dr. Leong has said that it all depends on the aim of the assessment, and different targets hold different patterns of appraisal, here we would like to learn about the various models of evaluation of your schools.

Chao : For the subject of music, we offer the weak students supplementary examinations until they grasp the knowledge. I believe that the main purpose of Music Education is to cultivate the students' musical potential, appreciation of the art of beauty and basic knowledge of music. Besides having the singing examination, we hold assessments of "Music Comments". This is giving a point of view after listening to a piece of music. There are tests on music theories also. Should the students fail to obtain a passing mark, we sure offer them other chances, with guidance, until they acquire the required information and skills.

Pun : As for Computer Science, since the application of Information Technology has become a present day practice, students have to master a certain capacity of this knowledge. Should a student not be possessing the basic skills he/she would not be graded as passed. It is because if a student fails to meet the fundamental requirement in the Junior Secondary, he/she will find it even more difficult to cope with the Senior Secondary standard and will surely obtain a negative result.

Leong : Have we ever considered that due to economic reasons that a student cannot afford to own a computer? Then in the lack of practice, he/she may fail in that subject.

Pun : There will be enough time for practice as the Computer Room is open even after school. We had observed a student, who though had tried very hard and passed the written examination but could never operate the practical computer process. As a result a pass grade could never be obtained.

Leong : This situation may involve two points. Firstly, we have to see if certain individual students hold computery mechanism impediment. When a student is able to pass all other learning assessments and fails in a certain item of a certain subject or fails to reach the needed requirement, should we treat it with flexibility? As for pedagogic skills, he/she may need individual assistance. Secondly, see if the student does have sufficient computery operation drill both in school or at home. This may require some administrative support. For example, though the Computer Room is open for practice, due to economic reasons, the students in the northern region of Macau may not be able to install a computer at home and with the scheduled time of practice at school, these students may have less chance of computer operation exercise than those who have their own computers. This does affect their learning of the subject. Here what I would like to stress is that, for any type of assessment, we need to have a very clear pedagogic target. We have to stimulate the students to learn and assessment is meant to evaluate the students' learning results. On other hand, assessment is also set to guarantee the pedagogic quality and requires the students to reach a certain standard. However, every assessment has to meet the demand of each of the targets.

Difficulties in the procedure of Assessment

Editor : Are there difficulties in the procedure of assessing?

Vong : In the attempt of Multi-Assessment, there are really difficulties. Though the teachers all know that this new assessment model is beneficial, it is hard to give an over all management as the number of the students that a teacher has to face is quite big. Furthermore, the operation of this Multi-Assessment is more time consuming than grading the traditional written examination. This hinders the required progress of the set syllabus. Besides grading the routine tests and examinations, to process an additional assessment, extra time is needed to arrange the students into groups for research, to help them to work on the special themes and plan for the presentation and then to appraise their outcome. All these sure occupy much time, affecting the pedagogic flow.

Chao : No matter which pattern of assessment is adopted, the final decision is either class promotion or retention. This leads us to the trend of evaluating the performance by examinations. That means, though different modes of assessment may be added in the daily appraisal, tests and general tests are still the main items for grading. The reason is that it is very hard to have an objective view to assess activities like planting, theme research assignment, report presentation etc. Therefore, the above mentioned assessments are, in fact, introducing some extracurricular activities into the classrooms. We are now discussing about the Junior Secondary Education, but soon the students will be going to the Senior Secondary classes and then have to sit for university entrance public examinations. To equip the students with the ability to deal with examinations, no one would like to make great rearrangements in this fundamental stage of the Junior Secondary section. I find the most difficult process is the exploration and trying out. Once the process is done and under the instruction of the school authority, the reformation can be properly executed. Should it be still in the experimenting period and the teachers have to try to apply the new model of assessment while keeping also the old, the work load would be too heavy.

Chan : In the execution of Multi-Assessment, the method of evaluation, the content, the requirement, the effect, the allotted time, the resources distribution, etc. have to be thoroughly prepared and elaborately designed, otherwise it would stray into formalities, losing the meaning of assessment and increasing the difficulties of the appraisal. In the example of evaluating an experiment operation

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belonging to the Science Course, how should we assess the students' experimental operation? How to set the relevant questions, requirements, limitations, manipulating time, group division, equipment preparation, laboratory arrangement, the teacher's arrangement etc? A set of possible evaluation pattern was shaped out by the a few teachers after two years of participation, trial, practice and cooperation. At present, the assessment for experimental operation is still in the stage of evaluating the basic operation techniques and in the phase of fundamental indices attainment. To exercise a higher level of experimental operation assessment, like revising and designing an experiment, there will be a long way to go.

Pun : Class promotion and retention, the students' future High School Examination and other international public examinations give much pressure to the teachers. This is contradicting to the Multi-Assessment executed in schools. Examination is the most basic and very prompt means to assess the students' basic knowledge acquirement. There was a case in our school which was about a student of the graduating class of Junior Three. He passed all the subjects but Computer Science. Since there is a regulation in our school stating that all graduates have to pass in all the subjects, it gave us really a hard time. Of course, besides taking into account the academic results, we check also that student's learning developments throughout the whole scholastic year. It is found that not much improvement is shown in his overall performance though the relevant teacher has been offering guidance and has been trying hard to give him help. In this situation should we assess him promotion or retention? This sure gives the teachers a hard time.

Is it possible to have Probationary Promotion?

Leong : Have you ever considered which of the failing subjects can be granted a probationary promotion? That means, allow the student to promote to the higher class on condition that he/she should make up the subject with a negative result at the previous level.

Pun : This is rather difficult for the school administrative operation.

Leong : Theoretically, it is beneficial for the students. It can be carried out like the university credits, permitting the students to take the same subject for the second time.

Chao : This practice really carries great difficulties. To be sure there will be terrible confusion in the operation as there are many classes with many students in a school.

Leong : Certainly, it needs other supportive co-ordinations.

Pun : No matter how it goes, the basic abilities of a student should be well built in the fundamental classes. For example, some students were already very weak in English when they were in the primaries, if they are just allowed to pass on to the secondary section, their problem will be even worse. There were students who had failed in the subject of English language for two consecutive years. Even though the teachers kept encouraging the students who kept trying very hard, still the result turned out to be unsuccessful. Some students did take a transfer and went to another school because they kept getting unsatisfying grades in English for two following years. However, they still dropped into the miserable condition of class retention due to their weak foundation. The teachers fall into a contradictory situation too, when they do the evaluation. Generally, for the future development of the students, we should not put the focus on the recapitulative outcome of the assessment but check the improvement of the students' learning process while observing their results of the third term. Should it be a passing score and the general average obtained is not too much away from the requirement, a supplementary examination will be given as a second chance. We have been using this method to help the improving students to pass class. Nevertheless, there are students who do not treasure this opportunity and become final losers.

Chao : For some students, though they were given a chance, due to the very low scores of theirs and with too scarce improvement they have to be retained. For those who are very close to a passing grade, the decision of a supplementary examination, promotion or detention will be made, through a careful consideration of the school administrative staff.

The Execution of the New Assessment needs the Parents' Comprehension

Leong : How do the parents react to this so called New Assessment?

Vong : For the learning Assessment, our school had already set up a Multi-Quality Assessment Plan fifteen years ago and has started the reformation from the kindergarten section. We mean to proceed on orderly to the higher classes. However, we worry about the parents' confidence in our assessment model. It is because there is not any concrete score to be presented to them and they may wonder about the preciseness and fairness of the evaluation. Should this assessment cause a student to retain class or leave school, the parents will have much to complain.

Chan : We have been executing Multi Quality Assessment to evaluate the kindergarten students of our school for two years. We utilize Quality Spectrum System as the tool to appraise the students. Since there are not any substantial scores shown, the parents did doubt about it at the beginning. In the meantime, through different channels, the school explains to them the distinctive feature of the System and issues assessment guidance to allow the parents to understand the method of the execution, to see that this assessment being the best way to know about the growth of the student so that they do agree that the development of this appropriate pedagogy is most profitable for their child. Now, the parents have already understood and are able to cope well with this type of assessment.

Pun : If we fail to obtain the parents' recognition of this assessment, they will object to it. As for the evaluation of the students' behaviour, we have designed an assessment chart with twenty-five questions, stating various scales to mark weekly their doings. With this chart, the students may reflect upon their performance, both the positive ones and those that need to be improved so as to give space for the students to make self-developments. We let the students know that the result of the twenty-five questions will be included as the scores for their conduct marks. The Assessment will be recorded by the students themselves and the class adviser will do the reckoning.

During the two hours' talk, the four teachers have much to tell about their personal views on the difficulty in executing the Reformed Assessment. There is no doubt that guiding pedagogy is a practical phenomenon and teachers facing the reforming assessment, to be sure, will meet with heavy technical problems. Nevertheless, the Reformed Assessment is an important strategy to elevate pedagogic effects and quality learning. Educational Reformers should promote the teachers' knowledge and disposition of Assessment through various means so as to motivate the whole society to be concerned about the real meaning of assessment, its function and its effects. Only in this way that the Reformed Assessment can then be transformed from a nominal multi-assessment to manifest the radical essence of education.

Excerpted from <Teachers' Magazine>
7th Issue, January, 2004.

