



Challenges of evaluating university students' academic performance

Moussa Elasâad BEN GASMIA*

Djelfa University (Algeria)

bghmmoussa@yahoo.fr

Hocine GHRIEB

Djelfa University (Algeria)

h.ghrieb@univ-djelfa.dz

Abstract

In this article, we try to shed light on the challenges facing the evaluation of academic performance among university students, as we see that the evaluation methods in our universities focus only on evaluating the student's knowledge and neglect his skills and interactions, which are important dimensions in the psychological characteristic of academic performance. We will propose a solution according to the latest theories that see Performance is not only a stock of knowledge, but rather skills and interactions that are measured with psychometric tools in order to know the student's actual academic level.

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* Corresponding author

1-Introduction:

Evaluating the academic performance of students is considered a fundamental goal for every university, because it is the basic criterion for the success or failure of the university. This topic has received great attention from researchers in various specializations in order to study it and find out effective and ineffective methods of measuring it for the purpose of revealing the true level of students, as we will present methods for evaluating performance. We explain its negatives and positives, and reveal the challenges facing the university professor in assessing the student's skills and interaction. We propose a solution, which is to suggest a note card that helps the professor evaluate the students' skills and interactions, in addition to their cognitive achievement.

2- Performance concept:

(The Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) defined performance as "the positive, active act of acquiring a skill, ability, or information and being able to perform it well according to objective standards." (Al-Fatlawi, Suhaila. 2003, p. 28)

Researchers define it as: "achieving goals or expected results that are largely associated with value creation and are generally associated with increased benefit or profit" (Virginie et al, 2012 p. 9)

It can be defined as "carrying out a specific activity in the form of an individual skill, interaction with another party, or reaching a level of knowledge."

3-The concept of academic performance:

(Stone) defined it as the skill to perform a specific work, or the ability and potential of a person to perform this work, and it requires that the person possess the necessary competencies to achieve an acceptable level of performance (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2011)

(Al-Tayeb, A. 1999) believes that it is the level of the student's benefits from the learning process within the academic environment, the changes that have occurred in his behavior, and the acquisition of skills to confront life's problems (Al-Tayeb, A. 1999, p. 24)

4- Definition of academic achievement:

It is defined as the degree that determines the level of success an individual achieves or reaches in the academic subject or educational field. (Muhammad, A. 2008, p. 178)

The Canadian Council on Education believes that the institution's academic achievement is reflected in three criteria: the learner's academic level in academic subjects, the disparity in students' level based on social and economic status, as well as school dropout rates. (Canadian Council on Learning, 2005)

Through the previous definitions, we conclude that the difference between academic performance and achievement is represented in the nature of the activity practiced by the student. Academic performance is reflected in the student's skill, cognitive abilities, and interaction with his colleagues, and is measured by psychological measurement tools such as psychological scales, an observation network, or standardized achievement tests. As for academic achievement, it is reflected The level of a student's knowledge balance in specific academic subjects during a semester or academic year, and it is measured by pedagogical assessment tools such as traditional or objective examinations.

5-Methods of measuring academic performance:

There are many methods for measuring academic performance, depending on the nature of the activities, as well as according to the goals set in the educational or training process. During the course of his studies, the student is subjected to a number of tests and examinations through which he determines the possibility of progressing to study and teaching for subsequent levels until he fulfills all the requirements for success and obtaining a graduation certificate in that specialization. Among the common methods used in pedagogical evaluation, we find:

5-1- Traditional exams:

Most teachers and trainers resort to the traditional exam in order to collect data about students' abilities to perform certain behaviors such as analysis, explanation, memorization, editing, etc., which indicate the extent to which pedagogical goals related to the program have been achieved.

Despite the criticism directed at them, traditional exams remain an effective tool for measurement if we take into account some conditions in preparing their questions. This is because the student's production in the traditional exam often includes behaviors that can be observed and relied upon as indicators in the process of evaluating learning that is not directly observable. This type of exam also allows for the assessment of intended skills and the assessment of other skills that show other aspects of his personality.

It should be noted that the traditional written exam is more accurate than the oral exam, as the latter causes fear in the student and this negatively affects his result, so the use of the oral exam is only to consolidate the results of the written exam.

The traditional exam is based on asking one open-ended question or a small number of questions that require the student to provide his answers in a somewhat lengthy manner in one go and from memory. In preparing the questions, it is required to specify the educational and intellectual goals to be measured for each question and that the questions be related to the course. (Bosna, Mahmoud. 2007, pp. 102-103)

• ***Difficulties facing traditional exams:***

- It is characterized by the generality of the questions and their inaccuracy in measuring specific objectives
- The resident professor is vulnerable to being influenced by the reputation of the student being examined
- The data we obtain through this type of examination is limited
- The questions do not include the entire prescribed study programme
- The student's fate may be determined by chance by answering questions that he carefully reviewed
- The person with a good expression suggests to the corrector that he answered well

5-2- Objective exams:

This type of examination is described as objective because its items include to a large extent the subject to be measured, as it includes various elements of the educational material that is the subject of measurement. This is why we find a large number of its items, and its items are precise and require precise and specific answers about which the experts specialized in the subject cannot disagree.

Constructing this type of exam requires a lot of effort and a long time. On the other hand, the marking process is considered simple and quick. We can understand the characteristics of these exams and their effectiveness by presenting the steps necessary to prepare them, which are:

- ***Determine the measurement field:***

Determining the field of measurement depends directly on the subject of measurement and the learnings (educational objectives) associated with it. The practical procedure agreed upon on its merit is the preparation of a two-way table of subject specificities, where the content of the educational material is specified in the first vertical axis and in the second horizontal axis the educational objectives underlined such as (knowledge, understanding ,application...)

Then the designer records the number or percentage of items in each box, which is the point of intersection of the content of the material with the objectives. This depends on the importance of what is required in the measurement to be carried out, as it requires the designer to have accurate knowledge of the content of the material and the intended skills while teaching this material.

☐ ***Choose appropriate items:***

The process of choosing a specific type of items in designing an objective exam depends on the nature of the intended learning, as each type of skill or learning has a type of item appropriate to it, and we mention the types of items as follows:

- Open-ended items with short answers: This type of open-ended items allows monitoring students' abilities in presenting the names of theorists, dates, facts...
- Double-choice items: The purpose of this type is to verify and reveal the student's ability to choose the correct answer from among two different answers, such as asking about the founder of a particular theory while proposing the answer between two founders.
- Multiple-choice items: It is considered the most common in terms of use due to the weak influence of the possibility of chance on the answers of the examinees. Its main advantage is that more than two answer suggestions are attached to each item and the examinee must determine the correct answer.
- Pairing items: These items are designed on the basis of presenting two series of items and what is required is to pair them together
- Arranging items: The student is presented with a number of items randomly and we ask him to arrange them in a logical order

☐ ***Preparing items:***

There are a number of conditions that must be respected when we prepare items in terms of form and content, as conditions were specified by researchers such as Payne (1986) and Thorndike (1969) as follows:

- Avoid ambiguous or misleading items
- Respecting the rules of grammar, morphology, and sentence structure in order to ensure sound and correct language
- Avoid items that suggest an answer to the respondent
- Ensuring the independence of each item over the others
- Provide main content in the item, not marginal content
- Distributing items appropriately among parts of the measurement field according to the importance of each part
- Adapting the complexity of the items to the level of the subjects
- Preparing the final form of the exam and the method of correction

The first page is devoted to instructions on the method of answering and the specified time, the correction key must be prepared, and the paragraphs must be analyzed and honesty and consistency must be studied. (Bosna, Mahmoud. 2007, pp. 105-109)

• ***Difficulties facing objective exams:***

Despite the strict procedures that this type of exam has, it faces difficulties, including:

- Its inability to measure all educational objectives
- The student may accidentally answer correctly and the answer does not reflect his level
- It requires a lot of time and effort to build
- Calls brain experts maintaining the material and this is not easy to achieve

5-3- Standardized achievement tests:

Standardized achievement tests aim to measure students' performance with regard to a set of educational objectives in order to determine the level they have actually reached. In this way, they coincide with objective exams in this regard, but they differ from the latter in many aspects, and we explain their characteristics as follows:

- ☐ The field of measurement includes all subjects and learning specified at the educational level concerned with measurement, and not just one subject or part of it, as is the case in an objective exam.

□ Achievement test items are subject to item analysis by applying them to a sample representative of the population of students concerned with the test in order to study the difficulty of the items and their discriminatory ability. The process of codification is carried out through item analysis to calculate validity and reliability.

It allows us to evaluate the quality of education for a certain level by showing the difference between specific learning and achieved learning, detecting problems that prevent the achievement of set goals, and planning improvements that can be included for appropriate treatment. Also, based on the general average of results and the average of each section, comparisons can be made. Many among students of various departments (Bosna, Mahmoud. 2007, p. 111)

• ***Difficulties facing standardized achievement exams:***

- Continuously re-adapting it to changes in the content of approved programmes
- It needs specialized experts to prepare it
- You need large samples to standardize and circulate to the community of individuals
- It requires a lot of effort and time on the part of its residents
- The difficulty of respecting individual differences and differences in circumstances among sample members if applied to large samples from different parties, especially if they differ in implementing the established programs.

5-4 Observation record:

The observation record is one of the important techniques used in educational evaluation, as it can be applied to collect information about the behavior of a student or a group of students. It is considered one of the most prominent estimation techniques. It is suitable for assessing the development of skills or the acquisition of some mental habits, because such learning is difficult to measure with traditional examinations. Or objectivity or standardized achievement tests. Direct observation provides us with important indicators that are useful in making appropriate corrections by the teacher.

In order to organize the collection of information using this tool, we must prepare a record that we can rely on during observation. This record allows the teacher to conduct the observation in a better way, because it directs to the parts of the behavior that must be observed and evaluated. When we want to prepare an observation record with regard to specific learning, we must first segment the behavior. The purpose is divided into its various

parts in order to determine performance criteria, and then we work to determine the evaluation scale. (Bosna, Mahmoud. 2007, p. 113)

Below we provide an example of an observation record regarding a university student's research presentation:

Total	Rating scale					Performance benchmarks
	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low	
	5	4	3	2	1	
3/5			X			Eloquence of language
4/5		X				Speech is audible
4/5		X				Spontaneity in presentation
4/5		X				Bring attention
5/5	X					answer the questions
3/5			X			Accept valid criticism
4/5		X				Convince the audience
3/5			X			Originality of research
3/5			X			Inference to reality
4/5		X				Include of basic axes
37/50	High level Overall level of performance:					

6- Conclusion:

Despite the multiplicity of psychological and pedagogical measurement tools, they are not effective in our university and educational institutions. This is due to the absence of standardized specialists in our institutions, as they have a very important role in helping teachers apply standardized achievement tests, observation networks, and design objective exams. Also, the absence or scarcity of Local studies that recommend the necessity of building, activating and adapting pedagogical evaluation tools make teachers and principals adhere to traditional evaluation tools such as traditional examinations and homework. Our study came as an attempt to develop the university evaluation system based on the latest theories that see that performance is not only a stock of knowledge, but rather activities and interactions measured with tools. Psychological measurement in order to know the actual academic level of the student.

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