CRITERIA FOR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IN ARTS: THE QUEST FOR THE BALANCE BETWEEN OBJECTIVENESS AND SUBJECTIVENESS

Eduardo Conde Garcia and Priscila Gambary Freire

Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil

Evaluation has been theme of several articles, books, and debates all over the world, given its importance and complexity in education. An etymological research reveals the meaning of “evaluation” and its implications in the diverse philosophic-educational currents. These interpretations end up directing the way with which evaluation has been practiced. From these, the formative and the summative currents have originated. Their application in the performing arts has been done in a very subjective way, given their nature.

Techniques of making objective this subjectiveness are investigated in this research as a resource to find a balance, where neither the evaluator’s subjectiveness overlaps the logic of objectiveness, nor the excessive objectification ends up in tagging the intrinsic subjectiveness of performance. Different evaluation types are studied, seeking a hybrid performance evaluation model. The method used is the analytic-synthetic, applied to a bibliographic research.

Keywords: Evaluation, Education, Arts, Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation has been theme of innumerous articles, books, and debates all over the world, given its importance and complexity in education. Some of those involved in the art of teaching believe it to be essential for education. Others defend it to be dangerous due to the punitive and restraining aspects involved, leading to a summative practice. For the defenders of this proposition, whose pedagogical practices are usually based on a constructivist teaching model, the restraining character of summative evaluation justifies the absence of substantial criteria and direction in their pedagogical approach for the measurement of learning.

An etymologic analysis reveals the origins of evaluation in the indo-european root *wal*, meaning “to express one’s strength”, “to be powerful.” It gave origin to most of its latin derivates, such as valere (“to be strong, powerful” or “to have value”), valeo (“value”), vallare (“to give strength to”), validitas (“strength”), convalescere (“to regain one’s strength”), and so many others. By extension, “to evaluate” must come from *evalere*, a latin word formed from the contraction of *e*, or *ex* (indicating an outward movement, a change of state, a separation), + valere. Thus, it may be concluded that “to evaluate” must have the meaning of determining the value, the power, calculated from certain data that are extracted from the object to be analyzed. A more recent form is found in the French word *évaluer*, derived from *ésvaluer*, which was used until the 17th century. Before it, and until the year 1366, an even older form had been in use:
*Evaluare*. Its meaning has remained untouched along the centuries, as “to determine the price or the value of something.”

In the beginnings, it was done orally, as a way of measuring the degree of maturity of a person to achieve a certain level. In the Middle Ages, the rational method – applied to facts and realities that were not susceptible of experimental evidence – and the argument of authority – consisting in admitting a truth or doctrine, based only in the intellectual or moral value of the person who proposes or professes it, predominated. In the 20th Century, with neoliberalism, State controlled education led to the creation of measuring instruments. From this point on, evaluation abandoned, according to the modern constructivist theory, the formative meaning and adopted a summative posture, disqualified by some education specialists, who question its efficacy in the measurement of learning. *Evaluare* must be understood, thus, in terms of absolute knowledge measurement or in the recognition of relative cognitive aspects?

The possibility of summative evaluation to disencourage someone was interpreted by constructivists as being harmful to formation and the consequent reinterpretation of *evalere* started to focus the educator and not the learner anymore. In this view, the constructivist perspective criticizes the summative position, but it does not offer specific means of knowledge measurement. Thus, the original meaning of the word loses its importance. The less objectively mensurable resources, the more difficult it is to determine value. Associated to such complexities, evaluation becomes an even more delicate matter when dealing with the field of arts, due to its subjective nature. Making objective what has as intrinsic quality subjectiveness is not an easy task. The difficulty involved in the implied subjectiveness of the object of measurement requires from the evaluator a complex attitude in this gauging. However, it is possible to find a balance between subjectiveness and objectiveness in the academic field of arts. The adoption of objective criteria, for instance, tends to decrease the subjectiveness of the evaluator. Also, the variety of measurement resources makes the gauging of quality result more realistic. Thus, based on this hybrid conception of evaluation, that searches the balance between subjectiveness and objectiveness, light will be shed on performance evaluation criteria in arts.

Parallel to the study of different existing types of evaluation, a learning gauging model in the field of performing arts will be suggested, which may help to achieve a more optimized comprehension and action of this important pedagogical instrument. The method used is the analytic-synthetic, applied to a bibliographic research.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

A sample taken from the existing bibliography on evaluation reveals the educators’ worries with its formative aspect. The summative characteristics, currently associated to 20th century practices, seem to be condemned to the intention of “tagging” the student. According to Souza and Boruchovitch, “evaluation can be processed under the shield of two distinct logics: summation or formation. The prevalence of the first seems to condemn students to suffered and suffering performances.” Following this rationale, those authors criticize summative evaluation because of the possible scars that it may leave in students: “summative evaluation puts together some ideas: judgement of value, final sentence – printing indelible marks to those who

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experience it.” This view on evaluation has a critical meaning over the concept, said to be used today, of “attributing value.” This research did not have as objective to make explicit a formula for formative evaluation, but to map and to analyze the implications of evaluation concepts experienced during an undergraduate Pedagogy course in relation to learning motivation. On the other hand, in the constructivist point of view, the freedom ideal, going towards a critical opinion from the student, led philosophers, like Paulo Freire, to criticize summative evaluation:

Intransigent and radical defense of democracy, dialog, as well as the notion of human unreadiness in the relation between educator and student, present in the work of Paulo Freire, became essential tools for the rethinking of learning evaluation as an auxiliary instrument of the educator who seeks to make education a freeing practice for his students and for society. Such democratic ideal demands a new posture from the educator. At the same time that he refuses to “determine the value” of the object to be analyzed, he seeks, within the emancipatory ideology, to dialogue and to share experiences with the student: “Freire’s conception is one in which acquiring knowledge is necessarily a shared action, never by oneself. Besides being historical, gnoseological, and logical, it is also dialogical.” From this logic, the philosopher ends up in a dead end: at the same time that he understands the human being as being constantly polished, his state of unreadiness does not allow him “to calculate the value,” ex-valere, but “to attribute value” to the subject. As valere is an existing quality in everyone, in different degrees, the attribution of value turns to himself, where the educator takes the student as a subsidiary ground for his own evaluation:

Formative evaluation has the function of helping the teacher in the daily rolling along of his duties, making possible for him a process of identification and sensitization from the use of the homogeneity/heterogeneity pair. Through a closer contact with his student, the teacher proceeds to a diagnostic and methodologically invests in content acquisition for the discipline.

This understanding of evalere gains strength in the constructivist theory of the second half of the 20th century and tries to invade the evaluation concept also in the arts. Grade attribution is seen as a summative attitude, not as a measurement of knowledge that has student development as its base:

The conception of summative evaluation is characterized (...) with a hampering character, where evaluation is perceived by its actors as a quantitative practice, a way of measuring “how much” knowledge

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2 “A avaliação classificatória agrega algumas ideias: julgamento de valor, veredito final, emissão de sentença derradeira – imprimindo marcas indeléveis àqueles que a vivenciam”. Ibid., 209.


4 “A concepção freiriana entende que o ato de conhecer é necessariamente um ato compartilhado, nunca solitário. Além de ser histórico, gnosiológico e lógico, é também dialógico.” Ibid., 54.

5 “A avaliação formativa tem a função de subsidiar o professor no desenrolar cotidiano de suas tarefas, possibilitando-lhe um processo de identificação e sensibilização a partir da utilização do par homogeneidade/heterogeneidade. Através de um contato de intimidade com seu aluno, o professor procede a um diagnóstico e investe metodologicamente na aquisição dos conteúdos da disciplina.” Ibid., 59.
the student acquired, without the worry with the construction of a knowledge that makes the student’s intellectual growth possible.6

The criticism of the so-called summative evaluation seems to result in nothing, where learning measurement becomes impossible. The objectiveness of mensuration ends up being dissipated into a vague subjectiveness. The criticism should not be made to the attempts of “measuring the value,” but to the uncompromised way with which such measurement has been practiced, treating the complex evaluative process with the simplicity of the evaluator’s subjectiveness:

Evaluator procedures are related to cultural and social values, as are education, school, and society conceptions. The complexity of art evaluation is even greater because it also involves matters related to art subjectiveness in the evaluative process.7

Would it not be possible to admit an evaluative model in which the worry with the construction of knowledge is concomitant with its measurement? How would a performance evaluation model be acceptable where objectiveness and subjectiveness could act simultaneously without, however, losing the focus on formation?

DISCUSSION

In order to arrive in a hybrid performance evaluation model, where objectiveness and subjectiveness are equally important, without losing focus on formation, it is necessary to study the different existing evaluation types.

Formative evaluation has as its focus the subject’s formation, without worrying with the measurement of processed and/or retained information during the learning process. It seeks a constructive feedback, based on dialogue, that allows the educator to reevaluate his work plan.

Summative evaluation aims, not to punish, as the constructivist theory believes, but to give educator and student a “measurement” of what has been learned. When it is well done, it should also serve as a feedback about the results of knowledge transmission. Thus, this type of evaluation should not be seen as exclusively summative, but it contains aspects of formative evaluation.

Two evaluation types have not been discussed so far: process and impact evaluation. The first aims to make a comparative analysis on what was planned and what was actually done; the second, on the other hand, has the objective of judging the efficiency of what was proposed and the expected changes – in other words, it analyses up to what extent the teaching program has reached its objectives.

Performance evaluation in arts should take into consideration the above mentioned aspects. However, the inherent subjectiveness to this knowledge domain reveals a complexity, where the mensuration of the acquired knowledge becomes considerably difficult:

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7 “Os procedimentos avaliativos estão relacionados a valores culturais e sociais, assim como as concepções de educação, escola e sociedade. A complexidade da avaliação em artes se faz maior, pois envolve, ainda, questões relacionadas à subjetividade da arte no processo avaliativo.” Ibid., 102.
Regarding the Theater-Interpretation course, the wide use of behavioral and subjective evaluation criteria is noticed (...). Despite professors attribute an emancipatory meaning to evaluation (...), their use point to a diagnostic evaluation concept (...) of art teaching.8

Thus, it becomes necessary to seek objective elements that make it possible for the educator not only to comprehend more precisely the achieved objectives, but also to guide him towards possible changes in the teaching process. When evaluation is faced in all its complexity, the responsibility of the measurement result goes from the educator to the student. For this to happen, the variety of activities in learning evaluation is essential:

´Teaching´ something means to vary a lot (...). Learning evaluation means gathering a great variety of activities that may put the content to be learned in different particular contexts.9

Thus, the evaluator must take into consideration varied aspects, and never based on a unilateral opinion, superficially analysing the student’s development along the teaching period. Having this understood, Celso Antunes offers a series of essential procedures in the elaboration of a school efficiency evaluation project:

a. Every valid evidence about the student’s progress towards his/her desired proximal development must be grounded in exams, individual papers, group projects, tests, diagnostics on his/her intelligences, other about his/her competences, observations, interviews, questionnaires, that will be part of each student’s portfolio;
b. Registration of the students discussions, comments, spontaneous or directed essays, interventions in class, in the school’s playground, in excursions;
c. Analysis of the parents’ opinion, eventually of the action and intervention of other professionals, of school employees (...), sociograms, analysis of their production and self-evaluation.10

Within the universe of the performing arts, the following diversification of activities could be suggested:

a. Punctual tests, with details concerning the aspects to be evaluated and their specific weights; in order to decrease the weight of the teacher and for the decision to become the least personal, the more people in the jury, the better it is;
b. Registration of the student’s weekly progress, with details concerning his/her development, that may be done either through letter grades, or through grades ranging from 1 to 5; at the end of each lesson, the student himself/herself can make his/her own self-evaluation, if it is agreed between teacher and student;

8 “Quanto ao curso de Teatro-Interpretação, nota-se amplo uso de critérios avaliativos comportamentais e subjetivos (...). Embora os docentes atribuam à avaliação um sentido emancipatório..., seus usos apontam para uma concepção de avaliação diagnóstica (...) de ensino de arte.” Ibid.
9 “´Ensinar´ algo significa variar muito ... ´Avaliar´ a aprendizagem significa valer-se de uma grande diversidade de atividades que possam colocar o conteúdo que se quer ver aprendido em diferentes contextos particulares.” Celso Antunes, A Avaliação da Aprendizagem Escolar. Series “Fascículo na Sala de Aula,” Vol. 11, 4ª ed., Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes, 2002, 32.
10 “a) Toda a evidência válida sobre os progressos do aluno em direção ao seu desenvolvimento proximal desejado precisa fundamentar-se em provas, trabalhos individuais, trabalhos em grupo, testes, diagnósticos sobre suas inteligências, outros sobre suas competências, observações, entrevistas, questionários e que passarão a integrar o portfólio de cada aluno;
b) Registro das discussões dos alunos, conversas, comentários, redações espontâneas ou dirigidas, intervenções em aula, no pátio da escola, em excursões;
c) Análise da opinião dos pais, eventualmente da ação e intervenção de outros profissionais, de funcionários da escola (...), sociogramas, análises de suas produções e de suas auto-avaliações.” Ibid., 39.
c. Clear rules about attendance, being possible for it either to interfere or not with the final progress grade;


d. Bonuses that allow the student to make up his/her grade during the class period.

Another way of decreasing the teacher’s charge in performance tests is to either videotape or record it so that a jury made up of other examinees judge him/her. Whenever possible, this may be done without seeing the candidate, in a process called “blind review.”

Given that subjective evaluation is endemic to so many significant situations, it is important to understand what elements add or detract from its efficacy. A key question in this regard is whether or not the reviewer should be permitted to use supplemental information such as the applicant’s identity and prior record … should the reviewer be informed or blind?11

All these evaluative resources must be part of a detailed syllabus, to be followed both by educator and student. Evaluation criteria must be meticulously planned by the teacher, so that it may reflect each student’s profile. Students with a high standing in exams may have their final grade lowered because of attendance problems without justification and/or low weekly progress. Diligence, commitment, and discipline are important requisites in professional life, considering the competitive world we live in. Evaluation becomes also an important mediating instrument in this process.

Despite this, evaluation must never be conceived by the teacher as a tool to disencourage the student, but to motivate him/her to have the greatest development possible. Lack of well set rules and clear learning gauging criteria gives way for the student to determine the course development, not to say that the educator lacks resources to charge a productive posture from his disciples. A possible class fail should not occur because of the teacher’s will, but as a result of the student’s decision of not making worth the compromise set since the beginning of the academic period. Among the evaluative resources, progress, weekly production, fulfillment of specific objectives must be substantially taken into consideration. In this context, it is important to say that many teachers use student’s self-evaluation or progress as the predominant item in assessment. Actually, self-evaluation, feedbacks and progress reports must be constantly done, not only for assessment reasons. On the other hand, punctual evaluation must not be underestimated, once the student is being prepared to face the labor market, where this resource is applied to different situations, such as when applying for a university position, for a place in an orchestra, for a play, etc. In this case, the evaluator is not interested in the candidate’s progress capacity, but in his/her ability to demonstrate proficiency on the spot, given a standard of excellence. This posture is not acquired in a flash, but through hard training.

A lot is discussed about the problematic of evaluation in the academic field, but little is concluded, in a direct and practical way, about an ideal model that contemplates a balance between objectiveness and subjectiveness. Based on the before mentioned ideas, the following evaluation plan is suggested for an annual discipline:

**Evaluation System**

- Attendance: clear rules regarding absence limits and its consequences. E.g.: for a better grasping of this class, the minimum attendance requirement is 75%. Being 34

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lessons during the school year, 8 absences will be tolerated. Progress grade (see below) will be decreased in 0.4 points (0-10 scale) per absence from the 3rd absence. For those students who are present during all classes, a bonus of 1 (0-10 scale) point will be added to the progress grade.

- This course evaluation will be based on a grade point average of the following items:
  - **Progress** – a weekly self-assessment will be done, where the student will give himself/herself a grade from 1 to 5, based on his/her weekly dedication and progress. At the end of the year, these grades will be added and an average taken, which will be the progress grade.

  - **Tests**
    - Test #1 – (date) – content to be performed. Recording (videotaping) for a blind review (whenever applicable)
    - Test #2 – (date) – content to be performed before a jury
    - Test #3 – (date) – content to be performed. Recording (videotaping) for a blind review (whenever applicable)
    - Test #4 – (date) – content studied during the whole year. Performance before a jury
  
  - Each test will be evaluated, taking into consideration criteria x, y, and z. A grade from 1 to 5 will be given to each item.

  - The definition of the weight of each test and of the progress grade is this:
    - Progress grade – 25%
    - Test n. 1 – 15%
    - Test n. 2 – 20%
    - Test n. 3 – 15%
    - Test n. 4 – 25%

  - Evaluation sample:

    | Content “A” | Content “B” |
    |-------------|-------------|
    | Criterion x | _4_ (5)     | Criterion x | _5_ (5)     |
    | Criterion y | _4_ (5)     | Criterion y | _4_ (5)     |
    | Criterion z | _3_ (5)     | Criterion z | _4_ (5)     |

    Subtotal: 11/15 = 73%                                           Subtotal: 13/15 = 87%

    Average = (8,7 + 7,3) / 2 = 8,0

  - Final grade calculation:
    
    Number of points obtained in Test n.1 = 8,0 x 15% = 1,2
    Number of points obtained in Test n.2 = 9,5 x 20% = 1,9
    Number of points obtained in Test n.3 = 8,0 x 15% = 1,2
    Number of points obtained in Test n.4 = 9,0 x 25% = 2,3

    Test grade = 6,6
    Number of absences: 4 = - 0,8
    Points obtained in progress = 8,0 x 25% - 0,8 = 1,2

    TOTAL = 7,8
FINAL REMARKS

Taking all that has been discussed into consideration, it is understood that art performance, for lacking concrete data, is apparently difficult to be measured. Its values have been judged in a very subjective way, which leads many times to imprecise results, which are far from the ideal. This uncompromised summative posture may be disencouraging and must be reevaluated. The objectivation of subjectiveness into aspects of possible mensuration makes the evaluation results to better reflect the reality. As techniques of this objectivation, punctual tests, progress registration through self-assessment, adoption of clear attendance rules (being this possible to reflect in the progress grade), as well as bonuses that allow the student to make up his/her grade during the course period were suggested.

Generally speaking, it may be said that the original meaning of evaluation is not necessarily linked to observable cognitive aspects. It may be associated to values that are taken from observable data of the analysed object. Thus, the two meanings of the word may be accepted. Constructivism does not admit the summative posture, understanding that it goes against the idea of motivation and formation. On the other hand, those who defend summative evaluation sometimes do not comprehend that the result must be fruit of a variety of activities that, in fact, reveal to what extent a given content has been learned. Such measurement must not be understood as being disencouraging: motivation must be stimulated by the educator, through his work plan and the way with which he directs his class. These concrete data are important tools for the teacher to make a comparative analysis between what was planned and what was actually done, besides measuring up to what extent the teaching program reached its objectives. This way, measurement serves formation. Evalere starts, then, to take a hybrid meaning: specific value is measured without, however, losing the formative interest.

REFERENCES


