



Some Innovations in Testing and Assessing Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Education Training Programs According To the Competency Approach

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Summary: *Innovation in assessment of learning outcomes in early childhood education training programs according to competency approach is inevitable. It has great educational significance, aiming to contribute to promoting the formation and development of learners' personality according to training objectives. Diversify forms and methods of assessment to help teachers and learners achieve the set goals.*

Key word: *Evaluate; teaching methods, testing and evaluating; access to capacity; Preschool education; learning results*

I. Introduction

Quality of education is always a matter of social concern because of its importance to the country's development in general and education's development in particular. Innovation in testing and assessing learning outcomes in training programs is also one of the key contents to aim for quality education. In a higher education environment, lecturers, in addition to imparting knowledge and skills, need to carry out some activities for students, and based on those activities, encourage their students to discover, experience, interact, and then master the knowledge and skills. The document "Testing - Evaluation in teaching - learning at university" [1] has mentioned the role of testing - assessment, giving some theoretical and practical bases on assessment in higher education and the process of testing - assessment in teaching - learning at university. In this book, the author shows a combination of popular methods used in teaching. In general, the author has laid the foundation for the assessment of teaching-learning education in higher education but has not mentioned the assessment of learners' learning outcomes according to their competence. The pioneer in the field of assessing the learning outcomes in vocational education must be mentioned Benjamin Bloom. He believes that learning can change learners in 3 aspects: Awareness; Skills and Attitudes. These aspects are then divided into different levels starting from the simplest behavior to the most complex.

Currently, in educational institutions, forms of assessment have been widely and extensively used. However, each form of assessment has its advantages and disadvantages that need teachers to have a harmonious combination between them so that students can achieve the best results and develop competencies to meet the output standards of the program.

II. Research content

According to the current trend, the training process needs to shift towards developing the capacity of learners. Therefore, pedagogical schools in general and the ECE industry in particular need to have fundamental changes in both the curriculum and methods of training, testing, and evaluating... to keep up

with the inevitable development of that trend. The preschool teacher training program according to the competency approach of Vinh University has many major particular changes in the program framework since 2018 which clearly shows the stated training targets of the program:

Graduates of the university training programs in Early Childhood Education to become preschool educators have to have political and ethical qualities to meet professional requirements; have solid foundational and professional knowledge; can form ideas, design, organize and evaluate preschool education activities in the context of industrialization, modernization, and international integration. After graduating, students can continue their studies at a higher level.

To achieve the mentioned goal, the stage of assessment and evaluation of students' learning outcomes is the key step to affirm the level of students' achievement compared to the professional competency requirements set forth.

Usually, the assessment of students' learning outcomes is done indirectly through traditional test methods which are very familiar such as written tests, oral exams, and practice tests at the end of the term. Traditional assessment mainly assesses cognitive and hard skills, the minimum skills that learners need to be able to take on a job. When using the traditional method, the teacher's tasks include: making test questions, supervising learners to take the test, and grading students' work; The learners' task is to take the test. With the traditional test, the content is often limited, and difficult to fully assess the set targets.

Competency-based learning outcomes assessment is not a collection of exams. It is the basis for the certification of performance and is carried out in a sequence to collect evidence of a person's ability and knowledge in comparison with competency standards. Therefore, the assessment of learning outcomes according to the competency approach is a valuable diagnostic tool for learners and human resource users. Therefore, there is a difference between the assessment method according to the competency approach and the traditional assessment.

Currently, in many schools, there are two ways of learners' performances assessment:

- Norm-referenced assessment: This assessment method is to compare the ability of one student with another student. It is suitable for admission based on calculating the percentage score from high to low.
- Criterion-referenced assessment: This assessment method is very commonly used in professional training, especially in teaching practice. There are two basic factors here: implementation and comparison with criteria and standards set out for the work to be done.

Up to today, people have used a combination of these two assessment methods in the training process, but criterion-referenced assessment is more often used in the training of preschool teachers according to their ability.

2.1. Assessment of learning outcomes according to the competency approach

Assessment of learning outcomes according to the competency approach should focus on the ability to creatively apply knowledge in different application situations. Assessment of learning outcomes for modules/subjects as well as practical activities is the main measure to determine the level of the teaching targets' achievement, which plays an important role in improving learners' performance.

Competency-based assessment is not a set of exams just to recognize scores, but rather a process to gather evidence of learners' performance and knowledge relative to their professional capacity standards, thereby serving as a basis for certifying learners' competence. Competency-based assessment is required to be based on criteria, that is, to measure the performance or learning outcomes of learners in comparison with specific criteria of the profession (absolute assessment), which does not compare with the learning results of other students in the class (relative assessment). Assessment of learning outcomes according to the competency approach only recognizes learners when they can perform all skills of training programs, subjects, and lessons according to certain standards.[2]

2.2. Types of assessment of learning outcomes according to competency approach

In the framework of the preschool teacher training program according to the competency approach, the modules are designed with the following types of assessment tests:

2.2.1. Assessment of the process accounts for 30% of the course's academic performance

+ Assessment of the learning willingness (diligence, attitude to study) accounts for 10% of the course's academic performance

- Diligence: students must attend the full sessions of studying according to the regulations of each module

- Learning spirit and attitude: Students must go to school on time; be active in individual learning and group cooperation; positively involved in the lessons throughout the learning process.

+ Course records (exercises, group assignments, ...) account for 20% of the course's academic performance

- Exercises and reports through discussion: Individual assignments, work progress reports, summary reports. Students have to perform assignments and tasks independently or under the guidance of a teacher, including self-study content. The exercises are assigned periodically by the lecturer on the school's LMS and Elearning system. Students must complete the requirements under the assignment of each lecturer in each module on time.

- Group exercise report; discussion results report; self-assessment sheet: The teacher assigns exercises for students to work in groups, discuss and report results in face-to-face sessions. In this process, students will self-organize, self-assess each other and summarize the results then send them to the lecturer. After reporting the results of the discussion or group exercise, their group results will be evaluated by the lecturer. Students will base themselves on the evaluation sheets and the individual teamwork process to decide and divide points for each individual in their group.

- Regular testing during the teaching process can be informal to provide quick feedback for both learners and teachers during the teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers can promptly adjust and supplement knowledge to make learners achieve the set goals, along with it is the formation of performance capacity (knowledge, skills, attitudes) in learners.

This type of assessment is carried out close to each specific teaching content in each lesson or each learning unit through various organizational forms, methods, and teaching techniques for students such as Q&A, group discussions, exercises, and regular observations in the teaching process. Therefore, teachers can accurately assess the change or progress of learners' attitudes to have educational solutions timely and effectively.

The results of the regular assessment in the teaching process are recorded and saved by teachers mainly by making comments and notes in student monitoring books as a basis for directing and guiding regular learning.

This part also accounts for 30% of the course's academic performance, helping learners to pay attention, self-study, self-research, and improve individual capacity and group work capacity. Thus, regular assessment in the teaching process is the first important component of the assessment system in training in general and in performance-based training in particular.

2.2.2. Periodic assessment

The periodic examination is a very important component of evaluating systems in training based on performance. It is performed periodically according to separate regulations for each subject.

Periodic testing for the subject includes tests. A subject, depending on the time of studying, has a different number of periodic tests, but they are all applied in the form of objective multiple-choice tests on a computer. This part accounts for 20% of the course's academic performance in each subject

The periodic examination is specified in the subject program; the periodical test is held in the form of objective multiple-choice tests from 40 to 60 minutes or essays. Every module's exam conducted in the form of objective multiple-choice will be organized on the automatic grading machine. Every subject has at least one periodic test score. The periodic examination is conducted by the Quality Assurance Center in collaboration with the Information Technology Center to provide students with exams along with the school's general

regulations for each module, ensuring the objectivity, accuracy, fairness, and proper assessment of learners' capacity.

2.2.3. End-of-term assessment

A summarized assessment is conducted at the end of the theoretical or practical modules. It is based on the learning targets of the theoretical and the practical part and the training target of the whole course. And its entire set of goals must be verified, reflecting the true capacity of the learners.

According to the regulations on the organization of the end-of-course exam:

- At the end of each semester, the school organizes the main exam and a sub-exam to finish the subject; sub-exams are held for students who have not taken part in the final main exam
 - The form of the final exam can be an essay, Q&A, multiple choice, practices, project, or internship by topic's results defense, or the teacher might combine all the mentioned formats.
 - The main exam schedule must be announced at least 4 weeks prior, and the sub-exam schedule must be announced at least 1 week prior. Each subject's exam is held separately, not a combination of several subjects in the same exam session of the same student.
 - The time spent on exam preparation for each subject is proportional to the number of that subject's learning hours and ensures at least ½ day of exam preparation for 15 hours of theoretical study in class, and 30 hours of practical study. All subjects must be arranged with a teacher to guide the exam preparation, and the exam preparation outline must be provided to students when starting the exam preparation.
 - The list of students who are eligible and not eligible (reason must be stated clearly) must be publicly announced at least 5 days before the exam date. The examinees' names list and exam rooms must be publicized 1-2 days before the course exam.
 - For the written exam, each exam room must be arranged with at least 2 exam supervisors and not more than 50 students taking part in the exam. Examinees must be assigned by registration number. For other forms of examination, the principal shall decide on the arrangement of the examination room or the examination venue and other relevant contents.
 - Ensure all examinees are informed about their rights, duties, and obligations in the exam.
- Learners to be eligible to take the exam must ensure the following conditions:
- Attend at least 70% of the course time for the required subjects in the curriculum.
 - The overall average score is 5.0 or higher on a 10-point scale.
 - Number of times taking the final exam: After taking the final exam, if the overall score is still an F, students have to retake the course. If students are absent from the final exam with a valid reason, that exam will not be counted and the school will arrange another test for them. Or else, it is still counted and they will receive the lowest results.

III. Conclusion

Assessment of students' learning outcomes is one of the key issues that the Party and the State pay attention to. These are also solutions that bring benefits to schools in general and managers in particular, helping the teaching and learning activities improve and advance their quality.

Assessment of students' learning outcomes in the early childhood education training program according to the competency approach has great educational significance, aiming to contribute to the formation and development of learners' personalities. This is a stage of the training process, an important tool, and an effective solution to help managers improve training quality and achieve the desired training effect.

IV. REFERENCES

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