Traditional Evaluation vs. Alternative Evaluation at FAREM-Carazo

MSc. Xiomara Valverde

Department of Educational Sciences and Humanities
UNAN-MANAGUA, FAREM-CARAZO

xvalverde@unan.edu.ni

"The conventional methods we use to evaluate our students are not good enough to achieve what we want, so we need to radically think our strategies to cope with the changing conditions of higher education internationally" (Brown & Glasner, 2007, p.24).

In the following sections, the topics related to educational evaluation, traditional and alternative assessment, innovative, democratic and cultural perspective will be addressed.

The **educational evaluation** has been applied in a **traditional** way mostly, although there is also the **alternative** assessment approach that, as its name itself implies, has revolutionized the traditionalist approach to it. This has become **innovative**, **to this is added its democratic character to be able to change its cultural** perspective.

In the first instance, **the educational evaluation** has been defined by different authors using different elements that come to enrich that concept each day making it more complete and inclusive. Therefore, this has been applied in the school environment in a **traditional** way, this means that it is done through examinations and written tests in order to obtain a number that meet both parents and teachers´ expectations when allocating an amount to measure knowledge of their children and students.

On the other hand, the educational evaluation also offers new **alternatives** to evaluate the teaching-learning process, for example, the portfolio, projects, and games, among others. In the same way, the educational evaluation fulfills the role of **innovator**. The teaching-learning strategies have changed, so that the evaluation process of learning must also be transformed to be in tune with the processes mentioned above.

Likewise, evaluation must also be **democratic** so that it can be innovative, that is, the participation of all those involved in this process is very important. In the evaluation process of the Department of Educational Sciences and Humanities at FAREM-Carazo, the Dean of the Department, the coordinators of majors, the groups of subjects that are integrated by all teachers who teach a common subject, even the students, must collaborate in order to contribute democratically to this process of educational change and innovation.

On the other hand, Carbajosa (2008, page 8) affirms that, it is of great concern to discover ways to stimulate the evaluators to sharpen the vision of their present reality and to understand the realities of the others, understanding that the evaluation process is a shared task. In order to be able to reflect on the evaluation practices that have been implemented in the department and that the product of the same has results for a change and opt for innovation, the evaluation must be done as a whole, since it is a task of all, not only of teachers and coordinators.

Also, in order for the evaluation to comply with the innovative characteristic, it must be under the cultural perspective, the institution must provide the conditions so that all personnel involved in the process of learning assessment change their traditional views to more innovative ones.

From the analysis of the following sections there will be a reflection on the traditional evaluation vs. alternative at FAREM-Carazo.

The educational evaluation has been defined by different authors, among whom Mora (2004) is mentioned, who states that evaluation is useful if it is headed towards progress where weak and strong points are identified with the idea of improvement. It also expresses the need to take into account feasibility and equity.

There are many other definitions among which there are:

Sanmartí (2007), who states that evaluation not only determines what is taught, how it is taught, what is learned and how the student learns but also measures results. D'agostino (2007, p.12) also affirms that educational evaluation is that process oriented towards the determination, search and obtaining of evidences about the degree and level of quality of the student's learning, to judge whether it is appropriate or not and take the appropriate measures. Tenbrink (2006, p.18) mentions that educational evaluation, therefore, could be defined as a process of formulating the judgments that must be made for education to take place, and Salinas argues that from a general perspective, to evaluate means to estimate, appreciate, calculate the value of something.

As can be seen from the definitions, the different experts coincide in many aspects when they refer to educational evaluation.

On the other hand, educational evaluation has been applied in the school environment in a traditional way, according to Mateo and Martínez (2008), the traditional approaches to educational evaluation that have been applied are based on the collection of test product data and tests made by the teacher or the application of standardized tests.

In the Educational Model of UNAN-Managua (2011, p. 33) only the following statement is found:

> Not only the students, but all the elements involved in the process are evaluated: curricula, syllabi, teaching-learning strategies, materials used, physical resources, the learning environment and the performance of the teachers.

While it is true that in classrooms at UNAN-Managua, FAREM-Carazo, in majors that belong to Sciences of Education, teachers apply a variety of teaching strategies, which is affirmed by the reports of direct supervisions prepared by the unit of methodology at this Faculty. It cannot be said that teachers at the time of evaluating the knowledge apply the alternative evaluation. On the contrary, a traditional and basically summative form of evaluation is applied, as Bordas and Cabrera (2001) affirm on the very innovative teaching strategies that are applied by teachers but are evaluated in a traditional way.

Consequently, the contradiction is observed since teaching-assessment practices are not complemented, specifically, in the English Language grammar classes, teachers apply a very active and constructivist methodology because students use grammar in role plays, make informational murals, write diaries, among others.

However, at the time of evaluating, 40% of the written exam, teachers prepare extensive multiple choice tests (four to five pages), this explains the contradiction of applying innovative strategies at the time of teaching the class but evaluate learning traditionally.

The following is a study carried out by Aburto (2014) in which he asserts that there is confusion among the teachers at UNAN-Managua, FAREM-Carazo, between qualification and evaluation. They do not know how to distinguish between what to evaluate, whether content or learning, neither know how to distinguish which are the significant learnings, which students will need to put into practice in real life and work.

According to the study by Aburto (2014), the teachers of the disciplines of Mathematics, General Physics, French II, History of Nicaragua, among others, of the FAREM-Carazo, the results indicate that:

> 70%, that is, 14 teachers designed evaluation instruments, loaded with reproductive responses at the level of knowing and knowledge. Among the items used mostly are the questions of

reproduction of contents in which they excel: define, complete, enumerate, multiple selection and false and true.

In practice it is clear that the different actors involved in the study do not dominate the processes of teaching-learning and the process of educational evaluation.

However, although the alternative assessment approach exists, it is not consistently applied in our university environment. *"Alternative evaluation: refers to all techniques and methods of evaluation that attempt to overcome the traditional methodology of evaluation, based on the simple conduct of tests and exams, with the sole and principal purpose of qualifying"* (Ávila, Calatayud, De Miguel, Canton, Catillo, and Zaitegui, 2010, p.17).

According to Mateo and Martínez (2008), the educational evaluation also presents new **alternatives** to evaluate the teaching-learning process. This approach is based on direct observation of students' work and their skills. Alternative evaluation is also known as *authentic and of execution*. That is, for the alternative assessment to be authentic, students have to perform activities that belong to real life. It is important to point out that this type of tests cannot be designed by the teacher; instead, in the evaluation by execution, the students must elaborate a product, construct, and give solutions to a problematic raised.

In relation to the above mentioned by Mateo and Martínez (2008) on the alternative evaluation and analyzing the reality of the Department of Sciences of Education and Humanities at FAREM-Carazo, it can be affirmed that, the teachers of this department only apply the traditional way to evaluate, this is easily verifiable when reviewing files of the direction of this department in which the teachers present the proposals of exams that have the characteristics in a hundred percent traditional by the elaborated items.

Although the Educational Model, Normative and Methodology for Curriculum Planning 2011 (pp. 32-33) states that:

"The evaluation is conceived as part of the teaching-learning process, and therefore, its primary objective is not the summative evaluation of the knowledge acquired by students. The evaluation is understood as the gathering of information in an orderly and systematic way that permits the decision making that allows to redirect, redefine or reorient the development of the educational process. Self-reflection and reflection on the causes of the deficiencies found facilitate the decision-making process that allows the process to be redirected, and therefore, to develop a formative evaluation. This allows the students to know how they have advanced and where in the process they are, to know their difficulties and what they can do to improve. This implies the creation of spaces, environments and instruments that favor hetero-evaluation, self-evaluation and co-evaluation.

To the above mentioned by the Educational Model of UNAN-Managua, it will be necessary to add the different workshops that have been given to explain the thematic of evaluation of

the learning by the corresponding units directed to the directors, coordinators of majors and the teachers in general. However, leaders have not taken any action to change the learning assessment approach by clearly obviating the indications of UNAN-Managua Educational Model and the existence of alternative assessment and applying the traditional assessment, which culturally has been applied for decades.

On the other hand, evaluation, according to Mateo and Martínez (2008), has become innovative, because it has undergone changes in the last ten years, which has been transformed into innovation, most significantly in the field of education.

Likewise, González and Ayarza (1996, cited by Mora, 2004) affirm that the educational evaluation qualifies as an instrument to sensitize academic work and facilitate innovation. Thus, Santamaría Vizcaíno (2005) expresses that if the teacher uses novel and creative techniques, he will be enriching the magic of learning and also the evaluation, just as it will benefit from this attitude of change, resulting in the opportunity for the student to learn and show what they know. It also points out that multiple intelligences, the use of the portfolio, projects, leisure activities, among others belong to the qualitative evaluation. It also states that *qualitative evaluation employs observation, but uses a broader range of educational variables (p.60)*. It also states that *quantitative evaluation relies on measurement, almost as a unique educational variable (p.60)*. With these statements, the alternative evaluation can be described as qualitative.

According to Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (1995, cited by Mora, 2004), the Illuminative Assessment covers qualitative assessment and according to Parlet and Hamilton (1997, quoted by Mora, 2004) the main objective of this model is the description and interpretation rather than valuation and prediction.

On the other hand, Falchikov and Thompson (2008) affirm, in a recent study by Higher Education Academy (HEA) in England, that among the six types of innovations applied in the evaluation of knowledge, they only presented non-written evaluations, oral presentations, non-conventional writings, portfolios, group assessments and collaborative work, student participation in the evaluation process and the use of technology.

While it is true that everything related to innovation in evaluation is very interesting and important, its implementation faces many challenges such as: resistance to change, lack of interest in engaging in participation and fear of new challenges. The evaluation process takes time and the constant reflection of the practice should be promoted in order to achieve a change of attitude on the part of the teachers. If this is achieved, the practice of evaluation and the teaching-learning process will improve (Mora, 2004).

In this way, one of the proposals to be implemented as soon as possible in the Department of Sciences of Education and Humanities at FAREM-Carazo is the inclusion of the Alternative Assessment so that the process of Evaluation of learning is more democratic and innovative. It is not an easy task, however, a change can be achieved if teachers reflect on their evaluation practices.

Finally, the Cultural perspective is addressed, which has much to do with analyzing how innovations are interpreted and integrated in the social and cultural context of an institution. From this perspective, innovation in the evaluation of learning is supposed to be applied in coordination with different strategies (Mateo and Martínez, 2008).

This cultural perspective has to be adopted little by little by the teachers at FAREM-Carazo, especially those who work in the Department of Sciences of Education and Humanities. The evaluation culture applied so far is that of traditional assessment based on measurement. It is a challenge for the coming times and for the authorities in charge of the methodological and technical part of this faculty.

The culture of innovation in which students are involved in their own assessment of learning causes a bit of negative reaction on teachers who are reluctant to leave their comfort zone, however, if applied in stages, this will be a reality to improve the evaluation process of learning. *"Introducing innovations in evaluation processes merits to follow certain steps in order to ensure goals and not drift, because when it attempts to fit any change in society, it reacts offering resistance despite the fact that what is pursued is to improve or repair problematic or time-worn situations"* (Arias Peñaloza and Arias Lara, 2011, p.5).

In conclusion, educational evaluation is democratic, alternative, traditional and innovative and this is influenced by the culture that is governed by instruction. It is therefore a challenge for the people involved in the teaching-learning process to bring about changes in order to improve the evaluation process of learning through innovations and new alternatives in this field of education.

REFERENCES

Aburto, P. (2014). *Análisis de la evaluación educativa y su relación con la planificación docente y el rendimiento académico estudiantil durante el primer semestre del año 2008*. En Revista Torreón Universitario. Número 7. Pág. 12 a 22. Retrieved from: http://revistasnicaragua.net.ni/index.php/torreon/search/search

Arias Peñaloza, Milvia Lisette y Arias Lara, Sergio Alejandro. (2011). *Evaluar los aprendizajes: un enfoque innovador*. En Educere: Revista Venezolana de educación. Volumen 15. Número 51. Pág. 357 a 368. Recuperado de: http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/356/35621559006.pdf

Ávila, M., Calatayud, de Miguel, C. Canton, I., Catillo, S. & Zaitegui, N. (2010). *La evaluación como proceso sistemático para la mejora educativa.* Retreived from: https://books.google.com.ni/books?id=OCwbAg AAQBAJ&pg=PA17&dq=evaluacion+alte rnativa+concepto&hl=es-419&sa=X&ved =0ahUKEwj1kcjOyMDSAhVS52MKHTIF CrIQ6AEIMDAE#v=onepage&q=evaluac-ion%20alternativa%20concepto&f=false

Brown, S. & Glasner, A. (2007). *Evaluar en la universidad: problemas y nuevos enfoques.*

Bordas, M. & Cabrera, F. (2012). *Estrategias de evaluación de los aprendizajes centrados en el proceso.* En revista española de pedagogía. Número 218. Pág. 25 a 48. Retreived from: https://dpegp.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/lectura-1-eva-apren.pdf

Carbajosa, D. (2008). *Debate desde paradigmas en la evaluación educativa.* Retreived from: http://docenpostav.unan.edu.ni/pluginfile.php/3686/mod_resource/content/0/DEBATE%20DESDE%20LOS%20PARADIGMAS%20EN%20LA%20EVALUACION%20EDUCATIVA%20%20DIANA%20CARBAJOSA.pdf

D´agostino, Giusppa. (2007). *Aspectos teóricos de la evaluación educacional.* Retreived from: https://books.google.com.ni/books?id=8ueTibkvwtwC&pg=PA17&dq=defini ci%C3%B3n+de+evaluaci%C3%B3n+educ ativa&hl=es-419&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjA jamY1cTSAhUqw1QKHaNaCp8Q6AEIHj AB#v=onepage&q&f=false

Falchikov, N. & Thompson, K. (2008). *Assessment: What Drives Innovation?* Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 5(1). Disponible en: http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol5/iss1/5

UNAN-MANAGUA. (2011). *Modelo educativo, normativa y metodología para la planificación curricular 2011.* Managua.

Mateo, J. & Martínez, Francesc. (2008). *La evaluación alternativa de los aprendizajes.* Retreived from: http://www.ub.edu/ice/sites/default/files/docs/qdu/3cuaderno.pdf

Mora Vargas, A I. (2004). *La evaluación educativa: Concepto, períodos y modelos.* Revista Electrónica "Actualidades Investigativas en Educación". Retreived from: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=44740211

Salinas, Bernardino. (s.f.). *Evaluación de los estudiantes en la educación superior.* Recuperado de:http://www.postgradoune.edu.pe/documentos/evaluacion/La%20evaluacion%20estudiantes%20en%20la%20ESuperior%20UV.pdf

Sanmartí, Neus. (2007). *10 ideas claves. Evaluar para aprender.* Retreived from: https://books.google.com.ni/books?id=BuAkkh RUtYgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=evalu aci%C3%B3n+educativa+neus+sanmarti &hl=es-419&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi8vM n8icPSAhUOxGMKHf84Ar8Q6AEIGjAA-#v=onepage&q=evaluaci%C3%B3n%20educativa%20neus%20sanmarti&f=false

Santamaría Vizcaíno, Martin. (2005) *¿Cómo evaluar aprendizajes en el aula?* San José, C.R. EUNED.

Tenbrink, Terry. (2006). *Evaluación: Guía práctica para profesores*. Retreived from: https://books.google.com.ni/books?id=CJyeZusF6YIC&pg=PA18&dq=definici%C3%B3n+de+evaluaci%C3%B3n+educativa&hl=es-419&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiihs6-3cTSAhUHxFQKHQykBc4Q6AEIQjAI#v=onepage&q=definici%C3%B3n%20de%20evaluaci%C3%B3n%20educativa&f=false