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THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Learning Contracts to Assess and Evaluate Diverse Classrooms at Teaching Institutions: A Study Made in Cuba and Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

Nowadays, teachers and researchers in the field of Pedagogic speak of the importance of a differentiated teaching and learning; for achieving this, the process should be centered on the students. One of the ways is to establish learning contracts with the students; that is, to get into an agreement with the students about what to teach, how to teach it, how to learn, etcetera. Though not so frequently, this is applied by some lecturers, mainly in higher education; but, are learning contracts applied in relation to the evaluation of the learners at teaching institutions? In this paper the authors share with the readers some of their reflections and findings about the establishment of learning contracts in assessment and evaluation, as another way the lecturer has at her/his disposal, for giving special attention to the diverse groups of the learners s/he is working with. The study was made taking advantage of the experience of the authors who work at teaching institutions, both in Cuba and Zimbabwe. The findings were gathered by means of interviews, the results of discussions at a discussion group and at seminar presentations, as well as, the opinions of the learners expressed through reflexive essays in portfolios. The results show that a number of lecturers do not know, understand, assimilate and take the risk of establishing learning contracts in the process of evaluation, as it should be, and that they are losing a great opportunity for giving special attention to the diversity of the learners in their classrooms.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Learning Contracts, Diversity, Student Centered Approaches, Differentiated Teaching and Learning, Formation of teachers*

1. Introduction

“If you wish to change the teaching style, begin changing the process of evaluation”. Camacho, 2008¹

“Evaluation by itself does not solve any problem. This depends on the participants in the process and the use they make of it. Evaluation cannot be reduced to tests, final exams and other similar expressions”. Castillo, 2002²

Various teaching experiences have proved the effectiveness of applying learning contracts or negotiation to instruction, since it permits to differentiate the teaching learning process, so that the students' individual characteristics are taken into consideration.

Learning contracts or negotiation are agreements between a teacher and a student or groups of students. They create conditions for differentiated instruction. They promote alternative activities that address the differing abilities, interests, or learning styles of students. They are mainly focused on the content (i.e. knowledge, skills and values) specific needs, interests, and wants of each learner in class. They provide a combination of teacher-selected tasks and student-selected tasks. However, when searching for information about this topic and its relation to the way assessment and evaluation are carried out in classrooms nowadays and when asking, informally, to colleagues from different schools, working experience and even scientific grades, these authors have felt that “something” is happening with the use of negotiation in the evaluation process.

In this paper the authors share with the readers some of their findings and reflections about the establishment of learning contracts on assessment and evaluation, as another way the teacher/ lecturer has at her/his disposal, for giving special attention to the

¹Translation by these authors

²Translation by these authors

diverse groups of students s/he may be working with at teaching institutions, in this particular case at the University of Holguín in Cuba and at Bindura University of Science Education in Zimbabwe.

2. Development

2.1. Diversity, learning contracts and evaluation

Diversity comes from the individual characteristics of each person and from the influence of the contexts in which s/he interacts. To know the numerous aspects that make a group class heterogeneous and the consequences these differences bring to the teaching learning process, should be the first step in the successful implementation of any teaching strategy.

To give special attention to the diversity of students in the classroom is a topic of paramount importance for teachers. Sometime ago, this was understood only, as an issue related to the level of knowledge of the learners: low level learners were supposed to benefit through this “special attention” in order to improve their learning rates.

Fortunately, teachers and lecturers are on the way of learning that to consider the diversity among the students and learners includes more than that, and they have to keep in mind each student’s/ learners’ personality is a unique one; though they may have a similar background, their personal experiences, needs, interests, wants, learning strategies and styles are different too, among other personal features.

A differentiated teaching learning process should be centered on the students and learners. One of the ways is to establish learning contracts with the students. Learning contracts are agreements between students and teachers that grant the student certain freedoms and choices about completing tasks. Carol Ann (2001) comments “... learning contracts between teachers and students come in several varieties. One allows students some freedom in their use of class time in exchange for doing responsible and effective work. Contracts can contain both ‘skills’ and ‘content’ components, and are helped in managing differentiated classrooms because the components of a contract can vary with a student’s need.”

Of course, the essence of what learning contracts are, match with what these authors would like teachers, lecturers and students do in the classroom. As indicated earlier in the quotation, “...learning contracts between teachers and students come in several varieties.”, and “...the components of a contract can vary with a student’s needs”. knowingly, teachers can get into an agreement with the students regarding content (at least, meaning topic to deal with), the activities, exercises or tasks, the teaching acts (whether they are going to work in groups or if they are going to respect the student’s preference for individual work), the teaching material or maybe the teaching media, among other elements of the process.

However, a question comes to these researchers’ minds: Do teachers or lecturers establish learning contracts with the students or learners related to evaluation; that is, related to what and when to evaluate, as well as what form of evaluation to apply?

Very frequently, teachers gather and talk about flexible curricula and the application of learners’ centred approaches and about the necessity of considering the learner’s needs, interests and wants for guiding the teaching learning process, as part of the treatment to the diversity of learners.

Naturally, some teachers and lecturers think that they are prepared for making changes in their lessons, courses or even curricula; in fact, they also think that they are “innovative teachers”. Every day, they “fight against old, traditional minds and approaches” and they apply, or at least, try to propose new teaching alternatives in which learning contracts or negotiation prevail.

But for these authors, some other questions have to be formulated and analyzed:

- Are teachers and lecturers innovative enough so as to have learning contracts with the students or learners and agree on what content to evaluate, what kind of test or type of evaluation to apply? And, if the answers are positive; then, how are they judged by students and colleagues?
- Do they really apply differentiated types of evaluation? And if so, on what basis do they make differences?
- Do they evaluate according to the students’/ learners’ needs, motives, preferences, interests and wants?
- Do they evaluate based on the students’ or learners’ future use of the knowledge assimilated and the skills developed?
- Which are the best forms to diagnose and get all the needed information?
- Is the process of evaluation developed according to the way teachers and lecturers guide the teaching learning process everyday in the classroom?
- Are learning strategies and learning styles taken into consideration while evaluating? Are multiple intelligences taken into account?
- What is the role of assessment? What is the relation among assessing, establishing learning contracts or negotiating and giving special attention to the diversity of students and learners?
- -Do teachers/ lecturers get into an agreement with the students/ learners about their marks?
- Do they involve their students in the process of judging and checking their evaluations?
- Are students’ and learners’ opinions valuable for the rest of the students and teachers/ lecturers?
- What is the importance of doing this?
- Is self-evaluation employed?
- Are the students stimulated to construct the correct view of their progress by means of self- assessment and evaluation?

The analysis of these questions generates a lot of opinions: some in favor, some against the application of learning contract in evaluation. But the truth is that these authors believe a great number of teachers are far from understanding, assimilating and taking the risk of establishing learning contracts in the process of evaluation, and that they are losing a great opportunity for giving special attention to the diversity of the students in their classrooms.

3. Evaluation

Evaluation is a teaching category and a component of the teaching learning process; it is related to the rest of the components in this process: objectives, content, methods, teaching media, and teaching acts.

Evaluation departs from the objectives, but it is not limited to the checking of the achievement of them because they cannot comprise all the knowledge, skills, values and potentialities of the students/ learners. Evaluation should depart from the objectives/outcomes of the teaching learning process, should give space for reflection, for the implementation of alternatives, for the use of imagination and for creativeness of teachers, lecturers and learners.

For both, students/ learners and teachers/ lecturers, evaluation has a different meaning, though with some points of contact, through which the relationship between objectives and evaluation is expressed.

In the evaluation process, there should be an integration of objectives and motives. In this way, the learners' most important objective of passing will not substitute the real most important objective of learning: developing and growing as personalities.

Evaluation has different functions; amongst is the pedagogic, the innovative and the control functions. The pedagogic function is the principal function. It produces three effects: the instructive effect which calls students/ learners' attention towards what is essential, towards the main knowledge, the forms to assimilate it, the intellectual, the teaching and the practical abilities. The educative effect is manifested on the fact that evaluation educates since the very moment the learner knows its curricular conception. This knowledge is mediated by the teacher/ lecturer and evaluation begins educating, whether positively or negatively, when the approach and the educational policy are determined. Evaluation should contribute to mutual help, group and cooperative work and to the analysis and solutions to problems common to a group. Finally, the resonance effect is the real or distorted reflection of the instructional and educational effects of evaluation on the students/ learners.

The innovative function of evaluation should be seen through the fact that the approaches and techniques for evaluating should not only be conceived as forms to corroborate the students'/ learners' mastery of knowledge, development of skills, but also, as a space for developing their critical thinking. Learners need to transfer the new knowledge and skills to new situations. Evaluation should be based on a flexible thinking, so that different possibilities of answering questions and solving problems can be accepted, hence the teacher's logics of answers will not be the only possibility; the students'/ learners' opinions (logics) can be considered too (so that they grow). For the authors of these paper, this function is of great relevance and should be kept in mind by all teachers and lecturers.

The control function of evaluation is the most widely recognised and studied in Pedagogic and Psychology, as well as at schools; it has become the guide within the teaching learning process since, in many cases, it has determined the work and intention of the teacher/ lecturer, and the activity of the student/ learner who considers this function his main objective.

According to Castro (1993), historically, there have been different tendencies that have supported the development of evaluation. Among these approaches that have withstood time, one can find the following:

Evaluation in its reductionist sense: It considers evaluation being equivalent to examinations, to measurement and marking, as an element that classifies labels, subdues, punishes and rewards the learner and provides evidences of his learning. It considers evaluation as a mere technical activity. It is also reductionist to limit evaluation to the learners' academic achievement, generally related to knowledge and, sometimes, skills too.

Evaluation as the centre of the teaching learning process: It simplifies the teaching learning process to evaluation: the objective is to pass the courses.

Evaluation as an intrinsic demand of the educative process: Evaluation is identified as being essential and consubstantial to the teaching learning process. It considers evaluation in its right place, playing its right role, without reductionism and absolutism. Every day, this tendency has more followers because of its belief in the integral and holistic character of evaluation and, above all, because of the person centred character it has; the learners and the teachers are protagonists in the process of evaluation.³

As Satheesh, 2009 considered, the old system of evaluation prioritizes evaluating achievement of learners by a terminal written examination, evaluating only cognitive development, evaluating memory of the learners. It gives more importance to summative evaluation. A marking system is used for evaluation. The affective and psychomotor domains are almost completely neglected. It is not continuous, not comprehensive.

The new system of evaluation gives stress to formative and summative evaluation at the same time. It stresses the need for making evaluation continuous and comprehensive. It evaluates all aspects of development through different methods.

Evaluation should fulfil the function of formative evaluation leading to immediate feedback, knowledge of results, diagnosis and remediation. Summative evaluation should fulfil the functions of gradation and placement.

According to Camacho, 2008, based on constructivism (centred on the person and his previous experiences), to evaluate is to talk and make reflections about the teaching and learning process. In this process, it is important to empower and give responsibility to the students, so that they can self-regulate and self-evaluate their learning and share with their teachers criteria for evaluation.

⁴Marshall, 2006 stated "...involving students in setting the criteria with the teacher pays dividends in increased ownership and motivation".

In the constructivist and socio-cultural evaluation, what is relevant is going to be found not only in the results of the teaching action, but also on the cognitive and socio-affective processes the learners are involved in. Furthermore, peer evaluation and group evaluation should be the result of the interaction among learners and between these and the teacher (Camacho, 2008)⁵

³Translation by these authors

⁴Translation by these authors

⁵Translation by these authors

It should be remembered that what is more relevant in this constructivist and socio-cultural approaches is that the learning (constructed, internalised by her/him) should allow the learner to be autonomous, creative and capable of making the right decisions to solve different types of situations, after having the help of the teacher or lecturer and her/his classmates (Camacho, 2008)⁶

Under the constructivist and socio-cultural paradigms, with the formative evaluation the teachers, lecturers and learners should look for the integration of knowledge, abilities and values to achieve effectiveness and help learners in their integral formation.

Formative evaluation is intended to promote in the students/ learners the regulation of their learning, of their own processes of learning. Learners are the responsible for their learning and the evaluation process; it is not only the teacher the one who evaluates and makes decisions, but also, the learners who apply self-evaluation and peer evaluation and, together with the rest of the group, evaluate the process of learning of the whole group class. Through this process, the teacher/ lecturer should determine the students'/ learners' needs, stimulate self-learning, suggest better ways to improve and, on this basis, make changes in the teaching practice. The students/ learners, as well as, the teacher/ lecturer develop personal, social and work-related competences.

Formative evaluation is the response to the view of education as a participative and constructive process. It is based on the best possible communication, empathy and feeling of trust among the participants.

Evaluation as a way to form competences allows the participants to be conscious of their cognitive construction processes (how they learn, which strategies they employ, who they learn with), as well as, to value the meaning and function of the actions developed and of the constructed learning, as a consequence, there appears the consolidation of personal, theoretical and methodological competences.

As it is known, among the procedures of the formative evaluation self-evaluation, peer evaluation and group evaluation are recognised. Self-evaluation is the evaluation that the student/ learner does of his own learning and practice, so that s/he is conscious of her/ his process of learning and work. According to Sanmartí, (1993) what is more important is that learners learn to self-evaluate themselves; this presupposes to decentralize the responsibility of evaluating since in the classroom everybody evaluates and regulates; evaluation is not only the responsibility of the teacher.⁷

Co-evaluation or peer evaluation is when the student's/ learner's learning and work is evaluated by the learner that is working with her/ him, so that s/he exerts critics, manages evaluation strategies and develops her/his capacities for advising. Group evaluation is based on the assessment the group does about the work and the learning of each individual of the group.

According to the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, 2006, the terms *formative evaluation* and *summative evaluation* are being redefined in education circles. Many teachers know formative evaluation as the informal, daily type of assessment they use with students while learning is occurring. Summative evaluation was the term used to "sum it all up", to indicate a final standing at the end of a unit or a course.

Current trends in assessment focus on judging student progress in three ways: assessment *for* learning, assessment *as* learning and assessment *of* learning. Assessment *for* learning is especially useful for teachers/ lecturers as they develop modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities. It is continuous and sustained throughout the learning process and indicates to students/ learners their progress and growth.

Assessment *as* learning focuses on fostering and supporting meta-cognitive development in students/ learners as they learn to monitor and reflect upon their own learning and to use the information gathered to support and direct new learning.

Assessment *of* learning is cumulative in nature. It is used to confirm what students/ learners already know and what they can do in relation to the program of studies outcomes.

What is now being divided into two approaches—assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning—was until very recently seen and promoted under a single focus formally known as formative evaluation or assessment *for* learning. Formative assessment (comprised of both assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning) can be defined as follows:... the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in the learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. (Assessment Reform Group 2001, cited in Gardner 2006, p. 2)

This is in contrast to assessment approaches that result in course or unit grades or marks, known formerly as summative evaluation and more recently as assessment *of* learning.

Assessment *of* learning refers to strategies designed to confirm what students know, demonstrate whether or not they have met curriculum outcomes or the goals of their individualized programs, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about students' future program or placements. (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education cited in Gardner 2006, p. 55)

Current research demonstrates that a focus on assessment *for* learning improves overall learning and can be a powerful motivator for students (Gardner 2006). For teachers/ lecturers, assessment *for* learning is invaluable in terms of obtaining diagnostic information that can be used for differentiated instruction.

In assessment *for* learning, teachers/ lecturers monitor the progress made by each student in relation to the program of studies outcomes and determine upcoming learning needs.

Assessment *as* learning focuses on the role students/ learners play in their learning. In this approach to assessment, students/ learners are viewed as the bridge between what they know and the unknown that is still to be learned. Their role is to assess critically both what and how they are learning. They learn to monitor their thinking and learning processes; to understand how they are acquiring and retaining new information or developing new skills and awareness; and how to make adjustments, adaptations and even changes when necessary.

⁶Translation by these authors

⁷Translation by these authors

Assessment *of* learning focuses on the cumulative results of learning. It involves providing quantified information on student/ learner knowledge or performance in direct relation to specific assessed outcomes. It takes place at specific times in the instructional sequence, such as at the end of a series of lessons, at the end of a unit or at the end of the school year. Its purpose is to determine the degree of success students/ learners have had in attaining the program outcomes.

Assessment *of* learning involves more than just quizzes and tests. It should allow students/ learners to move beyond recall to a demonstration of the complexities of their understanding and their abilities.

Furthermore, in assessment *of* learning students should be able to apply key concepts or demonstrate their new knowledge and skills in ways that are authentic. Herrington & Herrington, 2006 wrote: "An authentic learning environment provides an authentic context that reflects the way knowledge and skills will be used in real life". So, the goal of designing such a learning environment is to promote greater student/ learner engagement and to widen their learning experiences.

Assessment *of* learning can take the form of communicative tasks or other performance tasks, educational projects, quizzes, tests or final examinations. It includes a wide range of demonstrations of learning, such as portfolios, performances, displays, simulations, solution to problems, multimedia projects and more.

By using many different assessment practices and instruments, teachers/ lecturers provide students/ learners and themselves with a better picture of student skills and accomplishments than they would if they limited themselves to the repeated use of a narrow range of instruments.

Reliability comes from cross-referencing the results of a range of assessment instruments and finding that the results of the various pieces of evidence corroborate each other. The combination of practices related to assessment *for* learning, assessment *of* learning and assessment *as* learning allow the teacher/ lecturer to draw reliable conclusions about students'/ learners' learning.

When employing a range of assessment instruments and practices, the teacher/ lecturer is paying attention to the individual needs and differences of the students/ learners and provides them with varied opportunities to demonstrate their achievement, their progress, their growth.

When implementing all three assessment purposes, the teacher/ lecturer has to change her/ his teaching practice; a new practice that should manifest a change in the roles s/he has to play, as well as, the roles of the students/ learners who are going to be active in their learning.

They may seek ways to foster the development of a community of learners in their classrooms. They may also feel unsettled as they move their practice from one in which they were the presenters of knowledge to one in which the responsibility for learning is shared with the class (Black and William 2006, pp. 16–17 cited in Gardner 2006).

Professional development projects that have tracked teachers' needs as they implement an increased focus on assessment *for* and assessment *as* learning have found that teachers need "time, freedom and support from colleagues, in order to reflect critically upon and to develop their practice" (Black and William 2006, p. 19 cited in Gardner 2006).

4. But what is happening at Bindura University of Science Education and at the University of Holguin, in Cuba?

Having experience in teaching in two countries, Cuba and Zimbabwe, to corroborate these ideas, the authors decided to apply different instruments to collect lecturers' and learners' opinions on the issue object of analysis: learning contracts in evaluation at teaching institutions. Their experience is mainly in teaching at teaching institutions, forming the future teachers of secondary and high schools, as well as of higher education. At these universities, the learners have a period of practice, working as teachers, applying their knowledge and abilities in the teaching learning process at different schools and one of the components of this process is, precisely, evaluation. These future teachers assess their students, but at the same time they are assessed at universities.

To give answer to the questions previously formulated and to determine the problem that is going to be given answer by means of a project, information was gathered by means of the application of various instruments to lecturers and learners at the institutions object of study, as it was previously stated.

5. An Interview

An interview to 21 out of 23 of the lecturers from the Language Department at the University of Holguín (Fig.1) and to the 5 members of the Communication Skills unit in the Education Department at Bindura University of Science Education was applied. Its main objective was to determine if the lecturers knew what Negotiation Pedagogy is and if they apply it. The most important questions were the following:

- Do you know what Negotiation Pedagogy is?
- What is to negotiate or to establish learning contracts with the learners?
- Do/ would you do it?
- If so, what do/ would you negotiate?
- If you apply learning contracts in the teaching learning process, do/ would you do it with all the components? Can you explain how you do it?
- a) Do / would you include evaluation in the learning contracts? Why? Why not?
- Do/ would you negotiate content, forms of evaluation, types of exercises, questions, tasks or activities; time, date, marks?
- Are the opinions of the learners important for the evaluation process? Why?

The answers to these questions were recorded, after having the permission of the lecturers, for further analysis.

From the Cuban lecturers interviewed only 5 knew what Negotiation Pedagogy is, but from them only 3 had applied learning contracts with the students, mainly regarding the topics of texts for Reading Comprehension and Writing lessons. Evaluation was

out of question for them; a lecturer said "I listen to a student when talking about his partner's activity, but that is important for helping him with the exercise and correcting the mistakes, not for the mark I will give him".

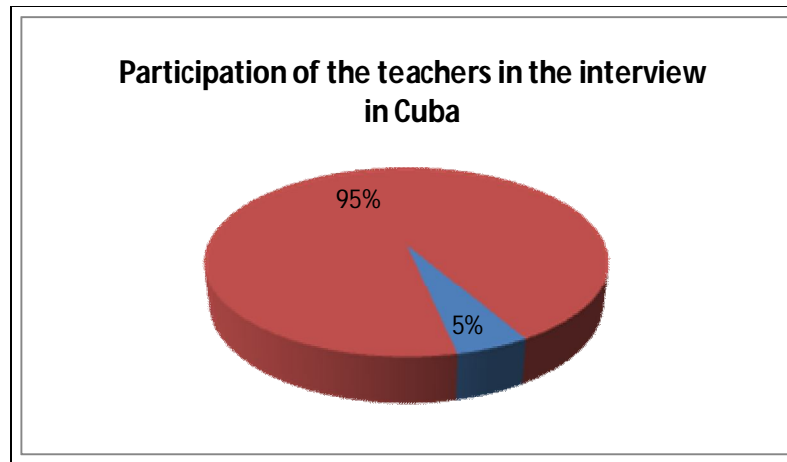


Figure 1: Participation of the teachers in the interview in Cuba

In Zimbabwe, from the 5 lecturers interviewed only one (2%) said he knew what Negotiation Pedagogy is, but he has never applied it. Four of them (9%) expressed that they would not implement contracts in relation to evaluation. Three lecturers (6%) commented on the fact that the learners' opinions are not important because they do not determine anything in the whole process; the marks of the assignments and the final exam are important.

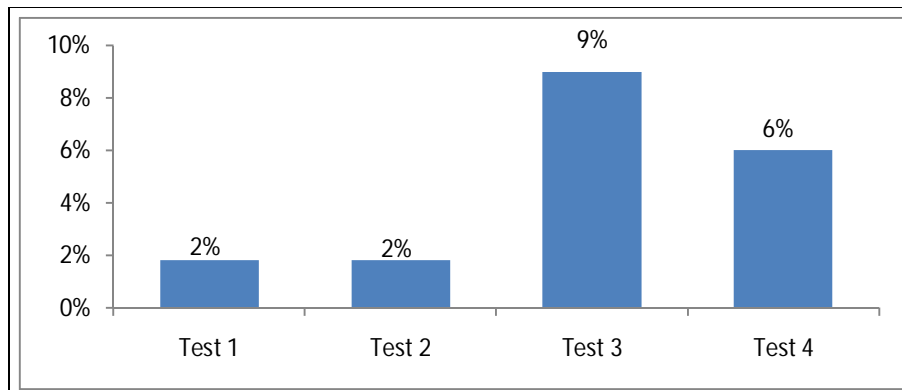


Figure 2: Representation of the answers given by the lecturers from the Communication Skills Unit at Bindura University in Zimbabwe

6. Group Discussion departing from a solution to problems task

To collect the opinions of the rest of the lecturers from the other units of the Department of Education at Bindura University of Science Education, as well as, of some other members of the Education Faculty academic staff, a discussion section was guided by two of these authors. This debate was based on the analysis of a task, that is, a solution to problems. This task was prepared based on the real experience of one of the authors; the situation and the questions to debate were the following:

A lecturer from a Cuban university, teaching Methodology for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language at the English Language Major, once decided to facilitate her lessons in a "different way", establishing learning contracts with her learners. For this reason, first of all, she deepened on the knowledge she had on the general features of the students to know which peculiarities of that age would favour negotiation. In a particular way, she asked most of the lecturers who have taught them during the previous three academic courses, for the characteristics of her learners' personalities that would permit a better management of the teaching learning process, as well as their needs and interests. She tried to be with them in different activities at school and out of it, so that favourable relationships were created among them.

As her learners had the possibility of working as lecturers in higher education after graduation, they had a teaching practice period, teaching English in the rest of the careers at the university while studying, but this is not enough to develop their teaching skills.

In fact, this lecturer experience consisted in negotiating with her students, so that she got into an agreement with them related to content, the methods to be used in the lessons, the teaching acts to choose, materials to elaborate, as well as, assessment and evaluation. And there were the learners the ones who developed most of the topics of the course outline, preparing and teaching the lessons with the suggestions given to each of them, but respecting their creativity and independence. There was a great amount

of responsibility on the learner-teacher's part and on the rest of the learners' behaviour and performance in the classroom, who have to support their classmates' activity, participating with discipline, but at the same time, being actively in the activities of the lesson and assessing and evaluating their classmates. The lecturer took into consideration the self-assessment and evaluation, the peer-assessment and the assessment and evaluation of the group and gave them her opinions and suggestions, in general and particularizing on each of the learners.

Of course, there were learners who did not accept to play the roles of teacher; nevertheless, they played an active role while participating in the activities of the lessons and in the assessment of the teaching task. The preference for keeping their roles as learners was respected by the lecturer.

But a learner, Richard, did not agree with this new model implemented by the lecturer. He told her that he would not accept the marks given by his classmates and he was several times asking his classmates not to teach the lessons, saying that it was the lecturer's responsibility. Some learners told him they like to do it, some others said that by doing it, they had another opportunity of teaching and receiving the opinions of their lecturer and of their classmates, some others said that that was another way of learning. Richard was not pleased with his classmates' responses and he went to see the head of the department to complain about it. The head of the department explained him that this was a new strategy under experiment trying to look for new ways of helping learners to learn better, to develop their teaching skills and foster values like responsibility.

In a different time in the timetable, considering their dissatisfaction, the lecturer decided to teach Richard and two other learners with the traditional way of lectures centred on her, following the principle that has guided her new teaching experience: respect for the learners' needs, interests and aspirations.

6.1. *Questions to Discuss*

- What do you think about the implementation of a new strategy like the one of the situation?
- What do you think about the way the experience was developed?
- How do you value the role of the lecturer in this experience?
- How do you value the role of the learners in this experience?
- Do you think the group learned with the lessons taught by the learners assuming the role of the teacher?
- What do you think about the way the learners were evaluated?
- Analyze the attitude of Richard.
- If you were the lecturer, how would you react to Richard's attitude?
- What do you think about the implementation of a new strategy like the one of the situation?
- What do you think about the way the experience was developed?
- How do you value the role of the lecturer in this experience?
- How do you value the role of the learners in this experience?
- Do you think the group learned with the lessons taught by the learners assuming the role of the teacher?
- What do you think about the way the learners were evaluated?
- Analyze the attitude of Richard.
- If you were one of the learners of that group, how would you react to the implementation of the strategy?

The lecturers valued the new teaching style as a challenging one. Most of them considered it represented more work for the lecturer because she had to devote extra time for orienting the learners and also when teaching lectures to the learner who did not accept to be taught by his classmates. They criticized negatively the way evaluation was usually carried out. Some were in favour of the attitude of the learner (Richard) and some considered he was not respectful to the lecturer, so if they would have been their lecturer, they would not have taught him independently of the lesson time.

7. **Questions discussion in a discussion group and in a seminar presentation**

In addition to the criteria collected with the previous tools, in Cuba, in a postgraduate course about Pedagogic within the topic of New Trends in Evaluation, the issue of learning contracts or negotiation in evaluation was introduced by means of questions, looking for the students' opinions. In Zimbabwe, during the development of a discussion group and in a seminar presentation in the course Management of Science Education of a Masters Degree in Curriculum Design programme, questions like the following were discussed:

- Is evaluation important? Why?
- Which are the functions of evaluation?
- What types of evaluation do you know?
- What do you assess and evaluate in your course? How do you know what you have to evaluate?
- How do you assess and evaluate in your course?
- Are you allowed to make changes on what the curriculum and syllabus establish regarding evaluation? What types of changes?
- Is self- assessment, peer-assessment and group assessment important? Why? Why not?
- Do you know what learning contracts are?
- Would you apply learning contracts in assessment and evaluation? How can we apply them?

The opinions of the lecturers were transcribed by two lecturers selected by the authors in both places, who played this role in a discreet way, in order not to affect their spontaneity while participating.

The main opinions were around the ideas of considering evaluation relevant to control the learners' process of learning, hence summative evaluation is decisive. Self-evaluation, peer evaluation and group evaluation are not so frequently used and not so necessary. When discussing about the application of learning contracts in evaluation, they shared the idea this is something ideal because of many reasons, among which the possibilities of making changes in curricula is very limited.

8. Reflexive essay within a portfolio and a written assignment

In Cuba, the final evaluation form, within the course Methodology for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in the English Language career, is the submission of a portfolio. To have a written evidence of the learners' opinions on evaluation, a task about this issue was assigned to the learners. The task asked them to write a reflexive essay where they could express their opinions on the importance of teaching, the way they judge evaluation, both as learners and as teachers during the pre-service work. In Zimbabwe, something similar was done, but this time it were the lecturers of the Communication Skills unit who asked their students to write an assignment on the topic, because the students had had their practice period already. Both experiences had the following questions as the motivating elements:

- Is evaluation important to you? Why?
- How is evaluation developed in the courses in your career? Illustrate.
- Do lecturers evaluate what you really need and aspire to master after graduating?
- During the courses you receive in your career, are you prepared for the types of evaluation you have? Are you evaluated in the same way you are taught?
- As a teaching practice teacher, how do you value evaluation? How do you see your students appreciate evaluation?

This was the best way found by the researchers to get the learners' opinions, because, otherwise, they would have felt embarrassed at talking in front of these investigators. Below there appear two examples of opinions expressed by students in Cuba (1) and in Zimbabwe (2):

"My studies at the university were all the time a mix of illusion, excitement and anxiety. But it was not until I began teaching during my lessons of Methodology for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, before the time of the teaching practice that I felt more confident in myself, excited and very happy in my life as a student. This made me realized how much I need to learn, the importance and leading role all teachers had through all my existence. Teaching made me see lessons from another angle. It is true, it was too demanding, but I accepted to do it. I became more involved with what I have to learn and how I would teach it if I have to. It was good that some lecturers would guide our studying outside the class, providing different materials, or even helping us in extra hours. A positive rapport was established, but "everything was not wine and roses". The most difficult thing for me was when I had to evaluate my classmates, who were my students in the classroom, but I had the support of my lecturer; she supported me with her experience, literature to study and some video tapes to watch. Then, I began involving my students in the evaluation I had to make. Every time they finish their participation in class I asked them to make an analysis of what they had done and even to provide a mark as if they would be the teacher, I also asked their partners and the whole group. With this, I learned to compare my ideas and their ideas on the evaluation, so this helped me a lot in conveying the right mark. Now that I have experienced this, I would like the rest of my lecturers do it in our lessons, but they do not do it [...]. That is why, I always try to make my students at school be relaxed and feel free of giving me their opinions about their evaluations."

"I like to teach, I enjoy seeing my students wanting to participate. It is pleasant to see my students gathered at my desk willing to observe the experiment, but among the things a teacher has to do, I do not like to evaluate; I do not like to check and mark the students' assignments, and, of course to fill up all the documents I have to. I would like my lecturers at university to teach me how I can make my students be more interested in evaluation, because I know that their main objective in this regard is to pass tests. For my final dissertation, I am thinking of making a research work to look for strategies to motivate students towards evaluation, not to see it as something that is compulsory at school [...]."

9. Summary of the General Findings

The results of each form of data gathering were thoroughly analysed and the findings are the following:

9.1. Lecturers

- Most of the lecturers do not know what Negotiation Pedagogy consists of, so they do not know what the learning contracts are;
- Quite a few number of the lecturers expressed that, though they know what to negotiate is, they consider it as a means to lose their authority and that learners cannot do it with responsibility;
- The majority of the lecturers think that negotiation is almost impossible to be applied in their classrooms and they cannot admit the establishment of learning contracts in evaluation;
- After knowing what negotiation means, very few of the lecturers said that they would negotiate, but marks would be given by them;
- Some of the lecturers asked themselves if they are not the ones who give the learners the marks, then how they are going to have the real rate of the learners' learning (the control function is the most important to them, the socio-affective side of evaluation is not considered);
- Some of the lecturers think that if the learners are at universities is because they have to learn and they cannot offer correct opinions of the work of their friends in the classroom and,
- Some lecturers questioned the freedom for making changes in the course outlines, in case they would like to make them.

9.2. Learners

- Learners wrote that few lecturers ask their peers to give their opinions about their classmates participations, what prevails is the opinion of the lecturer;
- A great quantity of the learners think that their lecturers have to change their minds in order to allow the application of negotiation in their lessons because it would be good for them;
- Once they are in their teaching practice, the learners are taught to mark tests following a marking guide (assessment and its formative value is not taken into consideration as it should be);
- At universities, the learners are evaluated mainly by means of tests and by oral and written assignments; their teaching is only seen, evaluated when lecturers visit them at their schools.

The scope of this research is limited to two countries and two teaching institutions. Anyway, as it can be appreciated from the opinions collected and summed up by these investigators that there exist problems with evaluation in the teaching practice of these teaching institutions that are affecting the integral formation of the future teachers and lecturers. So, there is an urgent need of changing the teaching practice and, with it, a change in the form learners are assessed and evaluated.

Thus, to have a new practice, these writers suggest that learning contracts or negotiation should be included in assessment *of, as and for* learning or summative evaluation. The learners of a teaching institution, future teachers at schools and lecturers at universities, should learn and develop skills to teach, assess and evaluate, because that will be their main concern after graduation and the time of their period of teaching practice is insufficient. If lecturers allow them to do this in the courses of their curriculum, they will be having a new teaching practice based on an authentic context giving answer to their future professional needs and respecting their diversity, fostering their own teaching styles. As a consequence, work-integrated education is fostered.

If learners develop performance assessment tasks in which they demonstrate the skills of teaching, assessing and evaluating, then lecturers, at these teaching institutions, would be given transcendental steps in introducing negotiation in their lessons for transforming the actual situation from fiction to a real fact. But, at the same time, this would serve for cross-referencing the results of the whole system of evaluation.

10. Conclusion

Traditional evaluation is centered on teacher's/ lecturer's responsibility and on the results of the student/ learner, who assumes a passive role: to give answer to the evaluation tool. Over the years, one can find teachers/ lecturers who think that evaluation is the instrument that allows them to "keep power and control over the students' progress". For them, it is a means for "frightening students and imposing the idea that if they do not have good marks and pass tests, they are not going to succeed at the end of the course".

In addition, evaluation is thought off as the instrument for showing, once more, that it is the teacher/ lecturer the one who knows more (or everything). On the other hand, evaluation is "something" that is established and marks should be registered and considered at the end of the course, as a result of the achievement of objectives or just to decide on who the best and worst students are. Teachers/ lecturers, whose ideas are similar to these, forget about the educative or affective value of evaluation. They forget that they should aim at guiding and monitoring the teaching learning process based on the students'/ learners' basic learning needs, one of the peculiarities that make the students/ learners diverse.

If students/ learners learn differently, they should be evaluated differently. Learning contracts in evaluation will help to contribute to the formation of each student and class, departing from their personal characteristics; this will also facilitate the fulfillment of their expectations in the course.

Forbes, 2010 wrote "... If we accept the idea that individuals have diverse cognitive profiles, then pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment will need to change so that students can learn and demonstrate their learning in different ways. Students deserve opportunities to work from their strengths, to enhance their areas of weakness, and to discover what they most enjoy".

These authors also agree with Forbes, 2010 when she stated that learning has nothing to do with what the teacher covers. Learning has to do with what the student is able to accomplish. Learning occurs only when the students can demonstrate accomplishment.

With evaluation new individual and group knowledge can be generated, as well as, professional abilities like assessing and evaluating their future students. And, how are future teachers being formed at teaching institutions going to learn to assess and evaluate if they are not given the opportunity of doing it even with themselves?

Learning cannot be transmitted from one person to another mechanically; it cannot be acquired by memory, it should be internalized. In order to get this, learning should be significant and functional. For learners at teaching institutions, it is significant and functional to learn to assess and evaluate, because evaluation is one of the categories of the teaching learning process they are going to manage at schools, so they are going to assess and evaluate their students.

Forbes, 2010 cited Howard Gardner says, "It is desirable to have assessment occur within the context of students working on problems, projects, or products that genuinely engage them and motivate them to do well" (Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice). And what genuinely engage and motivate learners is to feel they are taken into consideration, that they are the true protagonists of their teaching learning process and they can make decisions, assuming as the starting point the Negotiation Pedagogy.

As a result, these authors are calling for the actual implementation of a kind of evaluation, in diverse classes at the teaching institutions studied, that should be characterized by:

- Being part of the objectives of the curriculum;
- A challenge for the learners to better up and grow personally by means of metacognition, learning to know and guiding their own learning process;

- Shared responsibility among learners and lecturers through learning contracts or negotiation; and
- A process centered on the active and collaborative participation of the learners, who have changed their way of thinking and their attitude towards evaluation.

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