

FACULTY AND GRADUATES ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS IN THE INITIAL TRAINING OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

PROFESORADO Y EGRESADOS ANTE LOS SISTEMAS DE EVALUACIÓN DEL ALUMNADO EN LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DEL MAESTRO DE EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL

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ABSTRACT

In view of the need to improve course descriptions, the most recent graduate classes of initial training of Preschool Teachers at Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona have been studied in order to gain insight on the status of the student assessment systems. The methodology used was qualitative using focus groups of teachers and graduates of the last four classes (2007-2011). The results show similar perceptions regarding coherence among the different course program items and the transparency of the assessment methods applied. Some different perceptions have been noticed in respect to the instruments used, the feedback provided and the cognitive abilities more frequently assessed. The study concludes that it is essential that all teaching guides show coherence in the various items; that the students have an early knowledge of the assessments, in a clear and transparent manner; that self and co-evaluation systems are included; and that the faculty guide the connection between theory and practice in a critical and reflexive way.

Keywords: faculty, graduates, assessment, preschool teacher training

RESUMEN

Ante la necesidad de mejorar las guías de las asignaturas, se ha investigado para conocer el estado de los sistemas de evaluación del alumnado en las últimas promociones de la formación inicial del Maestro de Educación Infantil en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. La metodología utilizada ha sido cualitativa, a través de grupos de discusión de docentes y graduados de las cuatro últimas promociones (2007-2011). Los resultados muestran percepciones similares respecto a la coherencia entre los diferentes apartados de los programas de las asignaturas y la transparencia sobre el tipo de evaluación a realizar; y apuntan percepciones diferentes respecto a los instrumentos utilizados, el feedback transmitido y las capacidades cognitivas más evaluadas. Se concluye que es esencial que en las guías docentes haya coherencia entre los diferentes apartados; el estudiante conozca la evaluación con prontitud, claridad y transparencia; se contemplen sistemas de auto y coevaluación; y el profesorado guíe la conexión entre teoría y práctica de forma crítica y reflexiva.

Palabras clave: profesorado, graduados, evaluación, formación de docentes de preescolar.

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In the Spanish university, during the process of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) several guidelines or fundamentals of various official documents such as the Bologna Declaration of June 19, 1999; the Prague Declaration of May 19, 2001; the Berlin Communiqué of September 19, 2003; the Framework Document “Integrating Spanish University System in the European Higher Education Area” (MEC, 2003); Royal Decree 1125/2003 and proposals for the renewal of the educational methodologies University (MEC, 2006), have been incorporated with the aim of promoting mobility and employability of citizens through education and cooperation. As a result, it has promoted the reorganization of the curriculum of higher education by adapting to new training focused on student work and skills development, asking universities to make lifelong learning a reality.

These changes relate to a new way of conceiving the teaching-learning. Modifying the traditional role of the teacher as mere transmitter of knowledge is required. The student becomes the protagonist. The teacher is assigned the role of interactive and sequential guide (Bembenutty, 2009) so their students acquire the fundamental skills through active methodologies and processes of conscious and reflective learning (Angulo, 2008; Cano, 2012).

The way that the student assessment systems are understood is one of the key aspects of change. These should not only be used to certify the end the success or failure of learning and should become a strategy to improve and favor them throughout the process (Romero, Fraile, Lopez & Castejón, 2014). That is, that the assessment becomes part of the training process with ongoing feedback that informs the student on their standing in the learning and skills acquisition process (Cano, 2012; Escudero, 2010; Ferguson, 2011; Sadler, 2010).

This assessment calls for a rethinking that influences the other components of the learning process (López, Martínez & Julián, 2007). Biggs (2005) uses the concept of “aligned teaching” to refer to the importance that all curricular elements be consistent among them and reinforce each other mutually (learning objectives, activities, methodologies, assessment and grading).

On this issue, the international literature shows that formative assessment is closely related to the active methodologies and the deep and reflexive student-centered learning processes (Biggs, 2005; Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Knight, 2005; Lopez, 2009). In turn, other authors support the importance of getting a formative assessment (Bonsón & Benito, 2005; López, 2009; Martínez, Martín & Capllonch, 2009; Zabalza, 2002), since too many of the assessment practices are limited to a final and summative assessment with a rating as their sole purpose (Palacios, López Pastor & Barba, 2013).

Álvarez Grau, and Tortosa (2010) note in their study that the development of formative assessment systems at the university improves student involvement. For Montero, Villalobos, and Valverde (2007), there is a better academic achievement when students are involved in the evaluation. That is because the selection of alternative ways of assessment (continuous, final or mixed and self-assessment, peer assessment or dialogue assessment) (Castejón, López Pastor, Julián & Zaragoza, 2011; Fraile, López Pastor, Castejón & Romero, 2013; López Pastor, 2009; Santos Martínez & López, 2009; Vallés, Ureña & Ruiz, 2011) provides a link between formative assessment and responsibility, involvement, participation and control over their own learning in students (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Falchikov, 2005; Rodríguez & Herrera, 2009).

Buscà, Cladellas, Calvo, Martín, and Capllonch (2011), in a study that analyzes the presence that formative and participatory assessment has had on Spanish journals, indicate that between 1999 and 2009, of the 165 articles related to alternative assessment systems, only 32 are contextualized in college. In relative terms, this represents 19.4%. Therefore, it could be said that the number of publications in the context of university teaching has been quite low compared to other stages of education.

Several authors agree that considering student assessment systems as the key link to the epistemological and methodological change involved the EHEA are a reality (Buscà, Pintor, Martínez & Peire, 2010; Zabalza, 2001).

But do we really know what kind of evaluation is being applied? And, do teachers and students perceive it the same way? Gutierrez, Perez, Perez, and Palacios (2011) suggest that the views of students and teachers regarding the teaching activity are already being studied since the 1970s (Escudero, 1999; Feldman, 1988; Roberts, 1981).

Also, some studies focusing on the views of faculty or students about assessment processes developed in higher education (López Pastor, Pintor, Muros & Webb, 2013; Santos et al., 2009; Valles et al., 2011), indicate the existence of divergent perceptions between the two groups regarding assessment and grades (Adams, 2005; Castejón & Santos, 2011; Flores & Del Arco, 2011; Gutiérrez et al., 2011; Jaskyte, Taylor & Smanga, 2009; Martínez, Castejón & Santos, 2012).

Given the scientific gap with respect to the opinions of students and teachers in the initial training of Preschool/Early Childhood Education teachers on the student assessment systems, this study poses the following objectives:

- To perform a diagnostic evaluation of the assessment systems, conducted in the subjects of the Bachelor of Preschool/Early Childhood Education at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).
- To compare the perception of students and teachers regarding the assessment systems used and the course programs of the different subjects taught.
- To take note of key aspects related to student assessment systems in order to incorporate them in the course guides for the new Preschool/Early Childhood Education Teacher Training Degrees.

METHODOLOGY

Design

We opted for the interpretive paradigm, which is also known as the qualitative, naturalist, humanist or ethnographic paradigm (Albert, 2007), as it seeks to focus on the interpretation and understanding of phenomena from the meanings and intentions of people involved in the educational context (Latorre, Del Rincón & Arnal, 2003); in the case of this research, of the faculty and graduate students. As for the design itself, this work is classified within phenomenology (ibid.)

Context

The degree of Master of Preschool or Early Childhood Education in Spain trains educators that will teach children from 0-6 years. At UAB, Early Childhood studies began during the academic year 1973-1974 in what used to be the *Escola de Mestres de Sant Cugat del Vallès*. The first change was contemplated with the University Reform Act (LRU, per its acronym in Spanish), in 1983 (BOE, 1983). Within the most recent and current curriculum, the program started in 2009-2010, where the Certificate

(180 credits, three years) became a Grade (240 credits, four years) in order to adapt to the European Bologna Process.

The degree given both by the Certificate and the Graduate Degree in Early Childhood from the UAB, is the most valued in the field of education, both at a national level (number 1 in the ranking of *El Mundo* [2014] for the past six years) and worldwide (position 103 in the *QS World University Rankings by Faculty 2014/Social Sciences and Management*).

From here, in order to improve assessment processes at the university level, there is now a growing interest in the analysis of college teaching (Lorente and Kirk, 2013) and the beliefs and perceptions of its protagonists (faculty-students-alumni) (Basow & Montgomery, 2005; Mukherji & Rustagi, 2008). For this reason, and being active members of the “National Network of Formative and Shared Assessment in Higher Education” (refer to López Pastor, Castejón, Sicilia, Navarro & Webb, 2011), it is considered that this study is particularly relevant taking in consideration that in the context of university teaching there are too few publications on this subject, especially compared with other educational stages (Buscà et al., 2011), and are even fewer those showing the valuations of students, alumni and faculty in the initial training of Early Childhood Education Teachers.

Participants

The sample for this study was made through intentional or convenience sampling (Tójar, 2006) of the faculty and alumni of the last four classes (2007-2011) of the Early Childhood Education degree at UAB. The representativeness of the study suggests that the results can be applied to this sample and

to others that are similar in time and place (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010).

A total of six college professors and nine graduate students (Table 1 and 2) participated. For the selection of these components, the following heterogeneity factors were taken into consideration:

- For teachers: sex and age, department or area of expertise, years of teaching experience and contractual status.
- For graduate students: sex and age, year of graduation and average grade.

Data collection technique

Four categories of study analysis were determined: characteristics of the assessment systems, coherence between assessment and the items of the course programs, congruence between assessment and cognitive abilities, and antagonistic and prospective analysis (see Table 3).

The nature of this research has led to consider the discussion group (Krueger, 1991) as the appropriate methodological tool to meet the purposes of the same. In this sense, we have opted for the creation of two discussion groups: one for the teachers and one for the graduate students.

In order to carry them out, both discussion groups had a skilled moderator and a technical assistant (TA). The moderator guided conversations based on a script of questions and sub-questions (Table 3), made from certain categories of analysis. The TA was commissioned to write the order of the participants and their most significant statements. Additionally, the conversations of both meetings were recorded using an audio recorder so that the verbatim transcription of all ideas and opinions could be done later.

Table 1
Profile of the participating faculty

| Code | Sex | Year of Birth | Area of Knowledge | Years of teaching experience | Contractual status |
|------|-----|---------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------|
| P1 | F | 1960 | Didactics and Educational Organization | 9 | Associate |
| P2 | F | 1978 | Didactics of Music | 8 | Lecturer |
| P3 | F | 1947 | Didactics of Language and Literature | 26 | Retired |
| P4 | F | 1945 | Didactics of Language and Literature | 35 | Emeritus |
| P5 | F | 1975 | Psychomotor Development | 8 | Associate |
| P6 | F | 1960 | Didactics of Mathematics | 20 | Adjunct |

The development of the discussion group script of questions and sub-questions generated the final categories and variables (Table 3) through which the study results have been organized.

Procedure

Discussion groups were conducted at the School of Education at UAB. The duration of the discussion group of graduates was 1 hour and 51 minutes, while that for the teacher's group was 1 hour and 32 minutes.

After the consent of the participants, the results were recorded as field notes and audio recording. After transcribing these records for

qualitative and descriptive analysis of the data, the phases of content analysis proposed by Bardin (1986): the "pre-analysis and preparation of the material," "exploitation of the material" and "treatment of results and interpretations" were applied. For this task, we used the computer software "Nudist NVivo" (eighth edition).

The quotes from the participants of the discussion groups, which are outlined in the following results section, are coded with the letter A in the case of students, while the faculty's quotes are coded with the letter P. To ensure the anonymity of the people tested, both letters will be accompanied by an identification number assigned to each collaborator (see Table 1 and 2).

Table 2
Profile of the participating alumni

| Code | Sex | Year of birth | Class of | Average grade |
|------|-----|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| A1 | F | 1989 | 2007-2010 | 7.6 |
| A2 | F | 1981 | 2007-2010 | 8 |
| A3 | F | 1990 | 2008-2011 | 7 |
| A4 | F | 1989 | 2007-2010 | 8 |
| A5 | F | 1987 | 2008-2011 | 8 |
| A6 | F | 1976 | 2007-2010 | 8.57 |
| A7 | M | 1973 | 2008-2011 | 8.4 |
| A8 | F | 1988 | 2007-2010 | 8.2 |
| A9 | F | 1978 | 2007-2010 | 7.8 |

Note: Grades ranging from 0 to 10.

RESULTS

Below are the most significant results in relation to the categories and variables of the study.

a. Characteristics of assessment systems

a.1 Assessment tools

In the opinion of students, the assessment instruments most used by teachers were, in order of highest to lowest frequency of use: exam, group work, learning portfolios or portfolio and diaries:

Exams and group works (A-1, 2, 4, 6, 8).

I remember the learning portfolio (A-3).

Yes, Yes (A-4).

Diaries (A-7).

In this sense, the teacher recognizes that the test is the assessment tool more (P-2, 4, 5, 6) is used, after group work (P-4, 5, 6), reflective diaries and readings (P-1, 3, 4). In addition,

they added other instruments such as writing experience, group discussions, individual work, portfolios, daily classroom, etc.

The exam [...] is an instrument that adjusts individually [...] and helps to fine tune (P-6).

I usually do group discussions (P-3).

I use the class diaries, first more descriptive and later, during the final years, more reflexive (P-4).

Teachers express a slight change from more to fewer exams and from fewer to more portfolios. But, not all of them have had good experiences about these portfolios that are now a fad as assessment tools:

There has been a boom in portfolios (P-4).

I'm a bit mad with the portfolios because someone from this house makes portfolios and does not return anything and then everything is delivered at the end. I did portfolios one year

Table 3
Relationship of the discussion groups' script of questions and sub-questions and the definitive categories and variables of the study

| Script of questions and sub-questions | Categories and variables |
|---|--|
| <p>Assessment systems used and opinion about them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assessment procedures, instruments or activities were developed? • What type of assessment do you think are used mostly at the university? • The students are informed of their learning? How? How often? • How are they graded? | <p>Characteristics of assessment systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruments • Information and transparency • Feedback • Grading |
| <p>Coherence of the assessment systems used with the contents, methodology and objectives sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there coherence between the different sections of the subject programs and the assessment performed? • Is the assessment written in the program equivalent to the one performed? | <p>Coherence, assessment and sections of the subject programs</p> |
| <p>Congruence between the assessment systems and the cognitive abilities (remembering, applying, understanding, analyzing, synthetizing, valuing, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What cognitive abilities are prioritized with the assessment system developed? • What degree of importance do you consider that each of the cognitive abilities have with the training of teachers? | <p>Congruence between the assessment systems and the cognitive abilities</p> |
| <p>Positive and negative aspects of the assessment systems developed and alternatives for the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that the assessment works at the university? • What strong and weak points would you highlight? • Do you know alternative assessment systems to the ones developed? • What do you think needs to improved? | <p>Antagonistic and prospective analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong points • Weak points • Improvement proposals |

and then grading everything is awful [...] But it is working for some people when they are returned frequently (P-6).

a.2 Information and transparency about the type of assessment

Regarding information about assessment, the students consider that:

It is important to have the schedule in writing and how you will be evaluated, but some flexibility has to be included (A-3, 7).

They also refer that in the different subjects, it hasn't always been informed the assessment to be administered:

There are teachers that on the first day they would give you the copy of the syllabus with all the details (A-3).

When you know it you are relaxed, but sometimes the end of course was right there and you still didn't know what you needed to do for the assessment (A-1).

I remember class representatives that during the Student Council meetings or with the graduate Coordinator, they would comment if something was not being met and the coordinator would make some changes (A-3).

Faculty mentions differences between earlier and more recent semesters:

The assessments were not included in the syllabi back in the day. It is a recent thing for the assessments to appear. At the UAB since the pilot plan from 2005. When I was studying at the University of Barcelona, there was only one exam, that's it (P-6).

When I was studying here (UAB), during the time of... in 1995... there were exams here but also presentations, and everything counted for the grade, with a different weight, but counted (P-5).

Whether the assessment appears on not in the subject syllabus, the faculty is greatly of the opinion that they have always been the ones to decide. Regarding the percentage of the different assessment activities, they recently comment that:

Percentages are sometimes negotiated, but the decision is always ours (P-1 and P-3 and P-6 agree).

Teachers and students agree that already made some experiences where the / the student / to participate in the election or negotiating some criteria for the course, showing possibilities of a flexible evaluation system, which allows the involvement of student in the process.

Regarding the percentages, at the beginning of the semester, they were explained to them: this... But, throughout the semester, depending on how things were going... we re-negotiated. If at the beginning of the semester they had to do 10 quizzes, maybe they ended up making seven. Or 40% of the work ... And we negotiated. If everyone agreed, that was changed (P-6).

The first day of class, we were presented with different items so as to assess the course: attendance, content blocks, review, etc. And we were asked how much each should be worth and we sent our percentage of each thing based on 100 points to the teacher and she obtained an average. [...] we did it together in a very participatory manner (A-3).

a.3 Feedback of the learning received by each student

One of the most frustrating aspects for the students of the study is that they consider that little feedback has been received from the faculty regarding their learning. Normally, it is only a numeric value.

In some subjects, no feedback was given. It was just a grade in the intranet (A-2).

With the preparation of the portfolio, a detailed *feedback* wasn't offered either. In the words of a student:

It was a crazy amount of work, [...] I think that the least that a student deserves is feedback, right? With comments, pages read, this here and there [...] Not even looking at the work, just a grade, and that is the grade of the portfolio... I felt personally hurt (A-7).

A few of the graduate student talk about a positive experience regarding the preparation of the portfolio:

The portfolio went ok for me [...] also, you would give it to the teacher on paper and she would say, wow, this is nice here, or here you are weak. I mean that we had some input and it was interesting. Also, you could always add some extra stuff that it was interesting to you (A-4).

However, the opinion of the faculty is very different. They say that the students always have some kind of *feedback*, since:

Returning a graded assignment is crucial (P-3).

The assignments: When they handed me written assignments, I returned them with many comments (P-6).

a.4 Grading

For the students, grading has a different value:

You go everywhere with your grade. You can later take substitute tests... (A-6).

But we are talking about a study program with a very low percentage of dropouts. The grades never worried me. I had studied another specialization before where you have 150 students at the beginning, then 70 on the second year [...] and only 40 graduate. Here I was very relaxed (A-9).

It never happened to me, but imagine you start a course and you are told that you already have a 5 or a 7. And they tell us: you just study and learn. For sure, you enjoy and learn (A-3).

In most cases, the teacher is who grades the student:

Yes, it's the teacher who grades (P-3, 6).

The faculty mentions some peer grading and self-grading processes that they applied in their courses.

I looked at their grades and mine. And we also decided beforehand how much that was worth (P-2).

During practical classes, and after checking the entire record [...] I would perform a personalized tutoring session with verbal feedback. It was an interview where I would comment on some aspects and asked them to suggest a grade, a number: What grade would you put yourself? Most of the times it was a high grade; on some occasions I found someone who would not. Then I'd compare that with my records and then we adjusted it... (P-1).

Some teachers comment that they used rubrics to co-assess and they seemed to be satisfied with the results, but others had not found the just point yet:

I discovered that I would prepare rubrics [...] We had made an assessment template among all of us. What aspects seemed more interesting [...] the material has consensus from the entire class and I gather the different grades that each has given to each group and that are warranted for [...] I used the same system as them (P-2).

I do co-assessments also in the presentation of assignments, and we also have guidelines. But I'm realizing [...] that it discriminates a bit (P-6).

Faculty highlights the importance, for the future teacher, of checking the complexity of the assessment and grading:

I think that it is ok that they try to think as the person administering the evaluation, because it is very difficult [...] I don't know if it is so helpful for the grade [...] but it is for them to see what is this assessment all about, which is something very complex (P-6).

But not all the graduate students considered these innovations as good practice:

After all the work I'd done, I had to grade myself! In that case, pay me! (A-1).

b. Coherence between assessment and the sections in the course programs

Students and teachers believe that, in most cases, there was consistency between what was specified in the sections of the course program (content, objectives, etc.) and the assessment system employed.

Yes, there was coherence. Yes, yes (P-3, 4, 5, 6).

Maybe there was a subject that didn't, but in general, there was coherence between the sections of the program (A-6).

Even though some graduate student states that:

I remember some courses where we didn't know about the course program or the objectives, so I cannot really determine if there was any coherence (A-4).

And according to a teacher:

Our programs have always been not explicit enough (P-2).

Faculty states that, in time, there has been a great change in the way and the time for writing and finalizing the course programs.

There has been a shift from having no course program or having one that is too open, to being extremely detailed and unchangeable (even more so in the new Degree over the Certificate), even before starting the course and knowing the students who will take it:

The first time I worked at this institution I was not given any course program. They gave me a box, not with photocopies, but with mimeograph sheets [...] There was no course program and I explained whatever I came up with every day [...] but, lately, we have to stick to a program because the students demand it (P-3).

Before, we knew what we would ask, but we didn't need to have the exact date [...] Now there is a change. The new guides and course programs specify much more (P-2).

But not all the teachers are satisfied or are able to make this evolution towards anticipation and concreteness:

Now the students know better how a course will go when they register for it and it's more complex for the teachers because we have to write it all beforehand (P-6).

Our course programs [...] it is very difficult to detail the exact contents of what we will work, because of how we approach this subject [...] if you look at the program, the objectives and competences are very wide and the contents are not very detailed (P-2).

Regarding the new degrees:

Now, the initial design is much more fine-tuned. But what has always been said can also be done. If there is strike one day, you renegotiate, readjust and that's it. It's not such a drama. A very detailed progression does not imply a constraint rather that you have given it much thought [...] Nothing happens if you change, right? We should assume things as being thought through,

better worked... y shared. And this is very good. Before, the same subject have as many formats as teachers. Now this is being changed. (P-6).

A teacher expressed both fears and advantages regarding prior examples at the time of writing the course program the first time the course is taught:

I'm the newest here so [...] They tell you do what you want, you put it together. I had a panic attack: What do I do with this subject [...]. But then you think: This is my chance [...] I'm free [...] But, if there are two or three teachers and you have previous course programs, this is not like that [...] Some percentages and assignments come to you from ancient times [...] If you suggest any changes they answer you: they have always been done like that! (P-2).

The entire faculty is of the opinion that, in time, the bibliography is what has improved in the course programs in recent years:

Bibliography is one of the areas that has improved more, at least in our area. We have started saying: For the first block of the program, this is the bibliography or these are the articles... (P-3).

The students do not comment so much about the course programs and only consider that in general, they are correct and were followed.

Most courses follow that is written in the program (A-3, 7, 9).

Even though they point out that:

There is a lot of incoherence between what they tell you that you have to do at school when you assess people and how they assess you in college. They say, significant learning and then you check the course program and you see that the text is worth 80% of the grade; it is incoherent. They don't believe it themselves! (A-4).

There should be a little more coherence among departments. The two morning groups, the same subject and teachers of the same department, and the assessment or contents had no connection [...] When a subject is interesting, it should be so with any teacher (A-9).

c. Congruence between assessment and cognitive abilities

Students and teachers do not agree as to what the most evaluated cognitive abilities are. Graduates think that the assessment systems they have received have prioritized memorization and remembering above applying, analyzing, reflecting and understanding, especially during the first two years.

We remember, we memorize (A-5).

In general, didactics courses about application and theory courses about remembering (A-4).

However, the faculty indicates that they always prioritize the other abilities above remembering and memorizing:

For me, reflecting, relating, understanding, analyzing, are fundamental... (P-2).

If I have to choose one, it's applying. But, in order to be able to apply, you need to have analyzed, understood, related, and remembered first... (P-6).

For the students:

Everything changes [...] This is not a final race [...] what we need to receive the most are resources and strategies that we will later adapt and apply in school (A-9).

Teachers suggest some insight regarding the preference for knowing how to apply, something that the students usually mention, and why they insist that their reasons are necessary and important:

I insisted a lot in them seeing and valuing knowing what is behind things. Analyzing some practices [...] and seeing what is and what's not behind them [...] Because if I tell them how to practice professionally, when they finish school, what will they do? Will they come and ask me for advice? I think this is the only possibility for developing their practice creatively later (P-5).

If they do not know why, when they get to the school, they integrate the practice already established and they don't try to change it [...] 'We have always done it like that and we've done ok' should not be an acceptable answer (P-3).

d. Antagonistic and prospective analysis

d.1 Strengths of the assessment systems

For faculty, the number of students in each group and the duration of the course are some of the strengths to take into consideration during assessment:

Reduced groups allow to try different things as opposed to larger groups (P-5).

Courses that last an entire year allow to better know the group and make assessment easier (P-5).

In the case of students, the strong points refer to the assessment tools, class or course typology and the type and grade of accessibility of the teacher.

In a certain course, we learned a lot and we were assessed with education movies and nothing specific about the contents (A-3).

The assignments that we had to go first to the school to visit [...] and they taught you many resources (A-6).

When we organized small discussion groups or debates in class and we talked (A-5).

There are courses where you really receive something; we've had some of those. And the assessment is a real experience and at the end you don't care much about the grade (A-3).

But, there were also some courses where you had to study hard and memorize and they were tough, but you were motivated because the teacher showed enthusiasm and good vibes. And some others showed up with their Power Point and you could tell they had no idea and they were not prepared for class [...] The benefits you obtain from a course depend more on the type of teacher than on the assessment methods used (A-6).

Alumni also consider tutoring sessions as a strong point, also that the faculty is accessible, since this creates a greater support for the students during their learning process.

Tutoring sessions should not take place only when the students have a doubt regarding a specific assignment or to review the test. For me, a tutoring session should be a personal companion to the learning you are making. And I have never used any tutoring session for that (A-3).

The tutoring sessions are very useful [...] Some teachers were very flexible [...] something that you don't find in other departments (A-9).

Not with all, but there were teachers who were difficult to get a hold of for tutoring sessions and those were exactly what we needed the most (A-8).

d.2 Weaknesses of the assessment systems

Regarding the weaknesses, the faculty indicates that the high ratio of students causes the grading time to increase, which generates an increased work load and makes assessment more difficult:

It's more difficult to grade large groups (60 or more) (P-6).

If you have 50 students, you can't. Any comments for 50? That? [...] That is too slow [...]

The problem is that it is very nice, but, tell me, how do we do this? (P-3).

The graduate students think that performing co-assessment and self-assessment are too difficult because they are not properly trained to do that. Actually, there is the belief that self-assessment is a device created by the teacher in order to work less:

Group assignments are ok but it's hard to coordinate with the other members (A-8).

Grading oneself is very difficult, you have a bad time and usually you grade yourself below what you deserve. For me, it would be ideal. If should be normal for us to assess ourselves, but it's not done because we haven't been trained for that (A-3).

I think that self-assessment is a strategy from the teacher in order to avoid checking assignments (A-3).

In connection with the exam, the students believe that this assessment tool is not effective for proper learning of the teaching profession. Some students admit to not remembering the contents of the subjects being assessed by this instrument. They agree that a high ratio of students in class favors the use of the exam, due to its easy application and checking. Similarly, the ratio prevents teachers from providing an individualized instruction to their students.

From elementary through high school, it's a fact that you study for an exam and then you don't remember a thing [...] But, since they have 80 students, the exam is the easiest way (A-4).

If I had to make now some oppositions, I remember more when I have experienced significant learning with portfolios or diaries not because of the exams or similar stuff [...] for memorizing (A-1).

Only a few teachers know who you are by name. You have a feeling that you are a number (A-8).

But not all students have the same opinion regarding individualization, when they can compare it to other studies:

I studied another major some years ago and there you were really a number [...] and the teachers never got to know you. But in this program [...] I've got a feeling that they got to know me pretty well [...] it felt like I was going to school and not to college (A-9).

d.3 Improvement proposals

Teachers are concerned about evaluating numerous groups and mention as proposed improvements, in these cases, achieving a balance between offering different possibilities of assessment tools and the time required to check them:

The problem with assessment when you have more than 60 is [...] the time that you have to spend in that. And then everything has to be focused on providing them many opportunities without burdening yourself with a thousand assignments that you can take on (P-6).

Teachers also believe that a proposed improvement so that students learn to evaluate themselves, might be recording practice sessions conducted by the students and then view them in order to learn how to detect and correct mistakes.

Filming and recording oneself in order to listen to and correct our own mistakes (P-2).

The students consider that for a self-assessment to be effective, the following would be required:

[...] individual conversations, input from the teacher [...] and a good explanation of how

you have to self-assess yourself because it is not easy (A-2).

Also, this group considers interesting encouraging co-assessment among peers when they already have a basis, and not so much of the theory learned but of class behavior and procedures.

I have some friends that are very close and if they say: Hey, the assessment is totally anonymous, so I'd do it. I think that in the third year we are capable enough of grading [...] it is difficult to assess, but I think that it is good that we all assess each other and that the teacher takes into consideration these co-assessments [...] We might not be prepared to assess knowledge of a specific content, but we can certainly assess the attitude and predisposition of our peers regarding the course much better than the teacher, who barely knows the student [...] I've had some classmates that I know are competent enough to be teachers [...] Some other people get good grades but are afraid to be in front of a class so they should never be in charge of a group of children (A-3).

Regarding grading, they don't contribute any alternatives, but they consider that the number grade should be eliminated in this program. The teacher training program shouldn't have any numbers.

I would prefer if there were no numbers but I understand that it is more manageable (A-3).

Things would change a lot if there were no numbers (A-4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As proposed, through this study, a diagnosis has been made regarding the systems of assessment used in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program at UAB; this was based on the voices of two groups involved, faculty and

alumni, and their most relevant aspects are highlighted below.

Regarding the course programs, it can be said that teachers and students mainly coincide in considering that there is coherence between the different sections of the course program, the assessment system used, and the information and transparency with which it is reported. Important aspects are also shown, especially those that should be kept in the course programs for the new degrees, evidencing that it is possible to make them match. However, these results do not coincide with those of another study in which teachers believe, above 80%, that the students are properly informed, well in advance, of the assessment to be performed, while more than 70% of students consider that the assessment is not made explicit or they feel poorly informed (Gutiérrez et al 2011; Martínez et al., 2012.). Also, it is important to note, regarding the course program, that the increased specificity and accuracy of the course programs for the new degrees should not be considered a constraint but rather a confirmation that they have been developed more thoroughly and collaboratively with the entire faculty that will teach them.

Some data obtained in this study show differences in perception between teachers and students, for example, regarding the assessment instruments used. They agree that the most used are: the exam, group assignment and reflective journals, but then differ in that for students next in line are the portfolios and for the faculty are the reading assignments. These data contrast with those reported by Flores and Del Arco (2011), who concluded, based on all the majors offered by a university, that teachers and students agreed that the most used instruments were exams (or written tests), practical tests and assignments, and the least used were: objective tests, peer assessments and portfolios.

The results of the study in initial training for physical education by Gutierrez et al. (2011) and Martinez et al. (2012) agree with this study in emphasizing that the exam type tests are the most used and that the students have a higher opinion regarding the use of portfolios. In this second aspect, it also coincides with Baeten, Dochy and Struyven (2008), Klenowski, Askew, and Carnell (2006) and Martinez et al., 2012. One reason for divergence between studies could be the difference of assessment instruments, according to the typology of some specific professional programs. And according to Martínez et al. (2012), the importance of having and using different instruments to enable the implementation of a system of progressive, diverse, extensive and comprehensive evaluation is pointed out. Assessment tools that promote independent learning, improved academic performance and show the degree of acquisition of competences and learning outcomes of students established in the course programs. But, at the same time, instruments that do not entail an increased workload for the teacher beyond the hours assigned in their teaching plan.

Also, there is divergence of opinions between the two groups of subjects studied in this research regarding the quality of the feedback provided by teachers based on the assessment tools. While the teachers state that they provide extensive feedback, students overwhelmingly deny it. Furthermore, in some studies (Brown, 2007; Costello, Weldon & Brunner, 2002; Ferguson, 2011; Gibbys Simpson, 2004; Weaver, 2006), the students state that formative assessment facilitates learning when feedback is appropriate regarding the instruments used and the time when they are applied. This study agrees with such data, especially concerning the learning portfolio or folder. In the study by Martinez et

al. (2012), 50% of teachers felt that they were informing their students of their learning quite frequently, while 48.5% of students thought they did it only sometimes. Thus, it can be noted that the feedback regarding student learning is one of the key aspects of assessment, something to consider in the EHEA subject-courses. This feedback should be comprehensive, frequent and appropriate regarding the instruments used and the speed with which it is performed after the student submits the learning evidence.

Also, there are different opinions regarding the cognitive abilities that are assessed more frequently. Although differences between didactic subjects and theory knowledge, learners believe that the most valued of these abilities should be to apply, when in fact are memorizing and remembering; while the teachers consider that the most worked on are applying, analyzing, reflecting and understanding. Faculty in childhood education participating in this study coincide with that of the study conducted by Muros and Luis Pascual (2012) regarding degrees on physical education where applying, analyzing, valuing and synthesizing were above remembering, but the cognitive ability that got a 100% in the scale was understanding. The current degree lineup of where one year (60 ECTS) has been added to the initial training of teachers should bring these positions between teachers and students closer. They all point towards the importance of the application. Teachers should ensure that students acquire at the same time they know, remember, understand, analyze and reflect. And students should graduate with both the basic initial "practical recipes", as well as the ability to create new ones with sound arguments that underpin them.

Given that every teacher must also be competent in assessing their students, it is advisable to incorporate self-assessment and

peer assessment systems in the degree courses. Guiding the students, the difficulty along the courses of initial training can be increased, so they can check on themselves the complexity of this task and obtain the bases necessary to implement it safely, efficiently and fairly.

The assessment of future teachers should make students aware of their professional and personal growth. The individual responsible for achieving this should be a motivated and dedicated college teacher, who is a good communicator, accessible, and who mentors and tutors the connection between theory and practice, in a critical and reflective manner. This is important because when this is transmitted to the student, they don't care about the grades. They know they have learned enough and are ready to start their professional life as teachers.

After these results, an effort should be made so that teachers and students coincide in their perceptions regarding the assessments used, although more research is required that collects the views of these two groups in different university degrees, in particular, in the initial training of early childhood education teachers.

We hope that this research will help the university faculty to apply assessments that foster future pedagogical interventions, better supported and appropriate and with similar perceptions between teachers and students.

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