

MONITORING OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract

Formative monitoring, checking, assessment and evaluation of students' achievements are carried out to provide objective and realistic evidence of how the student learns and progresses, what they are doing well, and what they need to improve. His results are used by the teacher to give the student feedback, an explanation, and guidance for further work. Therefore, during instruction, students' achievements are regularly monitored and evaluated, and indicators of their activity, motivation, engagement, and dedication to their work are collected. The collection of this data is carried out through regular monitoring, verification, and evaluation. That is precisely why the goal of our research was to determine how teachers monitor students' activities, specifically, the frequency of directed monitoring, in which a teacher closely observes the activities of an individual student or group of students, and undirected, or general, monitoring. Based on our objective and the problem outlined, we used inductive, deductive, comparative, and statistical methods. For the needs of the research, the survey was used as a technique for collecting empirical data, and a questionnaire for teachers was used as an instrument, in which the teachers' perceptions of how they monitor students' work and activity during the lesson were analyzed. According to the research needs, 210 teachers from seven elementary schools in Tetovo, Gostivar, and Kichevo, were surveyed. It is expected that the results obtained will motivate and encourage teachers even further in carrying out the teaching process to continuously and systematically monitor and assess students' knowledge, activities, and achievements directly, rather than superficially and generally.

Keywords: formative assessment, indirect (general) monitoring, direct monitoring, feedback, student, teacher.

Introduction

Monitoring student achievement should be a continuous process of a variety of activities (observation, inquiry, recording, etc.) by the teacher, in which the teacher collects data to use as feedback regarding student activities and results, as indicators of student achievement. Monitoring is not the same as assessment. During observation, the teacher simply watches what and how the student works or otherwise takes an interest in their development and records analytical descriptive notes. (Поповски, К., 2005: 25)

Teacher monitoring can be *indirect* or *general*, in which the teacher quickly checks across the classroom to see if students are engaged in carrying out the given tasks and active in completing the activity, and *direct monitoring*, in which the teacher closely observes students' activities and simultaneously notes and keeps a record of what they observe. They should carefully record what they observe during the targeted monitoring. This increases the credibility of the data that will be used to assess a particular student's achievements. This indicates that a number of conditions and factors that reflect the complexity of this process are incorporated into the formation of the assessment. That's precisely why we were interested in which form teachers are more inclined to use and favor when carrying out formative assessment during the teaching process.

This paper presents the situation in elementary schools regarding the use of the methods teachers employ to monitor students' activities. That is, through the research conducted, an attempt was made to assess the actual state of the practice of focused observation, in which the activities of a student or group of students are closely monitored, and of unfocused or general observation in teaching practice.

In relation to our interest, we formulated hypothesis H-1, which states: ***Teachers when conducting formative assessment of students' achievements, more rarely use indirect or general monitoring than direct monitoring, in which they closely observe the activities of an individual student or group of students.***

The hypothesis presented was verified based on the responses received from 210 teachers at seven elementary schools in Tetovo, Gostivar, and Kichevo.

The results showed that direct monitoring is reported more frequently than indirect or general monitoring, which supports our research hypothesis.

2. Literature review

Asking a question provides a stimulus to which the student is expected to respond by giving an answer. Instruction that incorporates questions during its delivery is more effective for learning than instruction conducted without questions. The questions the teacher asks support all methods of classroom assessment. Asking questions is, of course, only one way in which the teacher can find out how well the students have achieved the educational goals that were set. Another approach is for the teacher to *monitor the students' work*. This can take two general forms:

- » **Indirect or general monitoring**, in which the teacher quickly surveys the classroom to determine whether the students have completed the task and are engaged in learning, and this can be done several times during the lesson.
- » **Direct monitoring**, in which the teacher closely monitors the activities of a particular student or group of students. Primarily, the teacher conducting focused observation documents what they observe. (USAID, 2008a: 53)

Teachers should carefully record what they observe during targeted monitoring. They can use a checklist or a specification list in which they note with numbers how often a particular behavior occurs. Generally, occasional targeted monitoring can be conducted for each student or group. However, with careful planning, the teacher can include all students in the targeted monitoring once or twice during a semester and record their results. It is recommended that teachers combine monitoring with asking questions. This combination of information needed for assessment enables the teacher to draw more informed conclusions about a particular student's learning than if only questioning or monitoring were used. This increases the validity of the conclusions a teacher can draw about a particular student's learning. (USAID, 2007a: 166-167)

Asking questions is a key component of the teaching process, as they encourage various types of thinking among students. Posing questions before beginning to study the material is a good method for older students, those with higher abilities, and students who are interested in the subject.

One aspect of a teacher's work in using questions as an assessment method is the model of asking good questions. This, in turn, helps students become more adept at formulating their own questions, which will support their learning. Given that questions must be tailored to students' age, educational level, and ability level, knowing all of these elements is an essential prerequisite for crafting adequate questions. Asking good questions isn't easy, because crafting good questions not only requires time and energy but also a special skill. Crafting good questions is a painstaking

and time-consuming task. Given that experience contributes to improving the skill of crafting questions, one must be persistent to acquire the required skill. (USAID, 2008b: 11)

Asking questions that activate more complex abilities can be used as a means of assessing what has been learned. The teacher can:

- » To use questions to find out what students know, understand and can do.
- » To analyze their answers and their questions to find out what they know, understand and can do.
- » To use questions to find out what specific misconceptions students have so that he can tailor his teaching to be more effective.
- » To use students' questions to assess understanding. (USAID, 2007b: 64)

The question arises, how can we pose questions that lead to deep, substantive thinking rather than superficial thinking, and that encourage the development of higher-order thinking skills? *What can we do?*

The kinds of questions we ask affect the atmosphere in the classroom. Questions that require students to repeat only the facts that have been stated give them the impression that their thinking is superficial. Questions that require students to reflect/critically review, discuss, reconstruct, imagine, create, or carefully evaluate their thinking, teach students that their thinking is at a more complex level, and in doing so, they can contribute to the community in terms of greater understanding and trust.

When we talk about oral questions, we can point out that there are many different types of oral questions. They range from closed questions in which the teacher expects a simple factual answer to open-ended questions that encourage a more critical, analytical response and allow for multiple paths to the solution. (USAID. 2008c: 39)

Open questions require expanded answers and encourage more complex thinking processes, such as inference, analysis, and problem-solving. Closed questions require short, „correct“ answers and encourage simpler thinking processes, such as rote learning. Teachers need to maintain a balance between *open* and *closed* questions. Open questions are especially important for formative assessment, because one of the best ways to learn is to give and receive a detailed explanation. (Zenuni-Idrizi, V. , 2020: 78) If students are only asked closed questions, they may not delve deeply into their learning and might simply respond to what the teacher has presented to them.

3. Research methodology and data

According to its nature, the research is empirical, monodisciplinary, and quantitative-qualitative. Based on the research objectives and tasks and the complexity of the problem, we decided to apply the inductive, deductive, comparative, and statistical methods. For the needs of the research, a survey was used as a technique for collecting empirical data, and a questionnaire was used as an instrument for teachers.

According to the research needs, 210 teachers from seven elementary schools were surveyed. Teachers were purposively selected, with the aim of including in the study those with the most experience. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The data from the obtained results were analyzed using arithmetic mean and ranking. Likewise, to make simple distinctions, frequency comparisons were used. The intensity of the use of *direct monitoring* and *indirect or general monitoring* was assessed using a four-point Likert scale: always, often, sometimes, never, where.

For a clearer analysis, each category was assigned a corresponding numerical value, and the results were presented as frequencies and percentages. For more detailed statistical comparisons, in future research we intend to use the chi-square test as well.

4. Results and discussion

Because we were interested in which form teachers are more inclined to use and favor when implementing formative assessment during the teaching process, teachers were asked to express their opinions on how to monitor students' activities. To the question posed, we received the following results:

Table no.1. Teachers' opinions regarding the way student activities are monitored

Mark with an X the intensity of the methods you use when monitoring students' activities!											
Intensity of application:		Always		Frequently		Sometimes (rarely)		Never		Arith metic mean $\bar{X}$	R
Categories of answers		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
a)	Direct monitoring (in which the activities of a student or group of students are closely monitored).	156	74,29	30	14,29	18	8,57	6	2,86	3,6	1
b)	Indirect (general) monitoring	10	4,76	13	6,19	172	81,90	15	7,14	2,09	2

From the data provided, it can be generally stated that the largest percentage of the total teachers surveyed, 74.29 % reported that when conducting formative assessment of student achievement, they always use direct monitoring, in which they closely observe the activities of an individual student or group of students, while 4.76 % always use indirect or general monitoring. A smaller percentage, namely 14.29 %, reported that they often use direct monitoring, while 6.19 % often use indirect or general monitoring. From the obtained data, it can be observed that 8.57 % of the surveyed teachers sometimes use directed monitoring, while a much larger percentage of teachers (81.90 %) are noted to sometimes use undirected or general monitoring. And a very small percentage (2.86 %) stated that they never use direct monitoring, in which they closely observe the activities of a student or group, whereas, conversely, it is noted that a slightly larger percentage of the teachers surveyed, namely 7.14 % never use indirect or general monitoring when assessing student achievement.

All the data presented above and their analysis essentially represent empirical findings that verify our hypothesis, that: ***Teachers when conducting formative assessment of students' achievements, more rarely use indirect or general monitoring than direct monitoring, in which they closely observe the activities of an individual student or group of students.***

5. Conclusion and suggestion

From the results of our research, it can be observed that teachers reported using *direct monitoring* more frequently during the teaching process, compared to *indirect or general monitoring*. This shows that *direct monitoring* of students remains an important practice for tracking their learning progress.

However, it should be noted that the data were collected through teachers' self-reports, so the results should not be taken as highly reliable, and we should be cautious when interpreting them. In the future, we would suggest including classroom observations, specifically during lessons, in similar research and comparing the claims of surveyed teachers with the actual practices in the teaching process.

The results derived from our research can serve as a basis for discussions and for improving teachers' practices in monitoring student achievement, as a formative assessment tool and for enhancing students' learning and overall success.

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