

What and How to Assess Teacher's Performance? A Proposal Based on the Factors that Support Learning

¿Qué y cómo evaluar el desempeño docente? Una propuesta basada en los factores que favorecen el aprendizaje

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Summary

A proposal is presented to assess teacher's performance based on the aspects that educational research has found as fundamental to achieve students' learning. The proposal is aimed mainly at teachers and people responsible for teacher's assessment programs. After criticizing the traditional way of assessing teacher's performance, it is shown a different way of doing it considering four essential dimensions of teaching: *Knowledge of what is taught, management of didactic aspects, teacher's didactic thinking and teacher motivation, responsibility and self-efficacy*. It is described and justified what and how to assess, suggesting to do it by observing the educational practice. Therefore, guidelines are provided to assess it, pointing out the didactic aspects that are considered essential for students to acquire knowledge. It ends pointing out its advantages and giving some recommendations to apply it.

Keywords: Teachers' performance, factors that promote learning, didactics, effective teaching.

Resumen

Se presenta una propuesta para evaluar el desempeño docente basada en los aspectos que la investigación educativa ha encontrado como fundamentales para lograr el aprendizaje de los alumnos. La propuesta está dirigida principalmente a los docentes y responsables de programas de evaluación docente. Luego de criticar la manera tradicional de valorar el desempeño docente, se muestra una forma diferente para realizarlo considerando cuatro dimensiones esenciales de la enseñanza: *Dominio de lo enseñado, manejo de los aspectos didácticos, el pensamiento didáctico del maestro y la motivación, responsabilidad y autoeficacia docente*. Se describe y justifica el qué evaluar y el cómo hacerlo, lo cual se sugiere hacerlo mediante la observación de la práctica docente; por ello se dan lineamientos para valorarla, resaltando los aspectos didácticos por considerarlos cruciales para que los alumnos

adquieran el conocimiento. Se termina resaltando sus ventajas y algunas sugerencias para poder aplicarla.

Palabras clave: Evaluación docente, factores que promueven el aprendizaje, didáctica, enseñanza efectiva.

Introduction

If the aim of teaching is to accomplish student learning and achieve the established teaching goals (Cross, 1993, as cited in Huba & Freed, 2000; Echeverría, 2011; Hativa, 2000), then teacher assessment should consider whether or not a teacher's actions contribute to achieve this purpose.

Assessing a teacher's work in a fair, comprehensive manner and with educational purposes (i.e. to help teachers to teach better and not only to assess them as a requirement to be complied with) has constituted an important challenge for educational research and for people responsible for applying these programs in different countries. (Rueda, 2001; UNESCO, 2014).

The most common way to do it has been through student-applied questionnaires (Cisneros, Jorquera & Aguilar, 2011; Rueda, 2001). Likewise, it has been used portfolios (Cordero, 2002), case studies (Martínez Rizo, 2011), or teacher assessments based on the results of learning or academic performance of their students in large-scale exams or tests (Calderón & De Oliveira, 2013), or the denominated added value that compares school performance in two moments: at the beginning and end of the instructional experience (OCDE, 2011). All these ways have advantages and limitations (Martínez Rizo, 2011), but coincidence exists that teacher performance should be assessed using different tools (Schmelkes, 2014; Jornet, González & Bakieva, 2012) and not only one way as it is usually done.

We consider that the aim of teacher assessment should be to improve teaching and not only judge the teacher. Therefore, the presented proposal integrates the results of the educational research that have a favorable impact on student learning (Hativa, 2000; Hattie, 2009, 2012 and Schmelkes, 2014), as well as the recommendations deduced from the study of good educational practices (Bain, 2004, Carlos-Guzmán, 2006, 2014). It is aimed mostly at teachers in different education levels who want to teach better and,

likewise, scholars and people responsible for designing and applying teacher assessment programs.

We clarify that we do not intend to review the state of the art of teacher assessment, but offer an alternative to the traditional way to assess teachers. We do not expect to perform an epistemological analysis on this particular subject either, but integrate our knowledge of the best ways in which people learn and use this knowledge as a standard to be considered in teacher assessment. It is a generic proposal that can be used with teachers in different education levels – making the necessary adaptations –, as explained below.

We begin with the fact that to assess a teacher it is necessary to answer two questions: one is to choose *what to assess* during the educational practice, given the wide range of factors that intervene in it, and the other is *how to do it*, i.e. define what type of instruments are appropriate to understand its complexity. To respond the first question we will base on the activities identified as essential by researches on the factors that promote learning and improve academic performance, including what has been found on good educational practices (Bain, 2004; Onrubia and Rochera & Colomina, 2001; Carlos-Guzmán, 2006, 2014; Hattie, 2009, 2012; Ramsden, 2007; Schmelkes, 2014). Based on this, we identify different dimensions, which we recommend to be evaluated using different instruments.

Thus, this article is organized in two parts: in the first part, we provide the foundation of our proposal and in the second part, we describe it. Due to the fact that we consider teaching as a performance, it is better to assess it by observing the educational practice in the classroom, and not through questionnaires as they are considered limited to this end, as we will explain later.

In sum, our proposal considers the dimensions that have consistently demonstrated to have a favorable effect on students' acquisition of school knowledge. We will begin with the definition of what we understand for teaching.

What is Teaching?

Teaching is *an interconnected, purposeful, planned and systematic activity that deliberately seeks student learning*. It is a coordinated and directed by the teacher given that without his/her involvement it would be difficult to achieve teaching goals, as established by Dewey (2006). In Dewey's opinion, teaching means to create an environment where, using certain methods and materials, it is promoted student development in a certain direction, and due to its transcendence, it is not left to chance, but is performed purposefully. Therefore, according to Zabala (2000), teaching comprises three phases: *planning, execution and evaluation*. To carry it out it is taken into account the *subject* (who is learning?), the content (what is it learned?), as well as its purposes.

Teaching is a systematic process because it is performed by following a methodology composed of strategies, methods and didactic techniques that are applied in a sequential, appropriate and organized manner. Teaching uses some means (didactic material, books, ICTs) and happens in a context that can support it or slow its progress. The teacher organizes times and schoolwork, creating a learning stimulating atmosphere. Its aim is to achieve understanding of knowledge and fulfill goals, both short- (have a good specific knowledge of a grade or subject) and long-term (e.g. contribute with student's comprehensive education or have good competencies for life). It is also an ethical activity that seeks a change in people in a desirable sense, both for themselves and for the society which they are part of. Teaching results are commonly evaluated and should contribute with its improvement.

Thus, teaching means that the teacher is responsible for setting the conditions for learning to happen and, at the same time, helping the student to apprehend it. Meirieu (2005) summarizes like this: "Teaching is to organize the confrontation with knowledge and help to make it your own" (p. 24).

Teaching is more than just applying a series of actions (Saroyan, 2001) because it is affected by particular types of teacher's thinking, beliefs,

feelings and attitudes (Carlos-Guzmán, 2006; Goodyear & Hativa, 2002; Monroy & Díaz, 2001; Van den Berg, 2002) and by the way how the different involved knowledge and understandings are integrated: disciplinary, didactic, contextual, experiential, etc.

Critics to the Traditional Way of Assessing Teaching.

Accepting what has been stated before means that the ways of assessing teaching should take into account such complexity, dynamism, diversity and specificity, which are not usually considered. As we said, the questionnaire has been the generalized way to evaluate teaching. Although it has advantages (García & Medécigo, 2014) in the sense that if it is designed correctly and meets the psychometric criteria, gathers the opinion of the receivers of the teaching performance i.e. students, it can be applied massively and quantify its results. However, it shows the following disadvantages (Arbesú & Argumedo, 2010; Cisneros, Jorquera & Aguilar, 2011; Patrón & Cisneros, 2013).

It has an Ample Spectrum.

In designing a teacher evaluation questionnaire, there is a tendency to consider a great number of aspects of his/her work, among them: whether s/he deliver and complies with an academic program, his/her didactic methodology, his/her attitudes towards teaching and students, the way s/he uses supporting materials, his/her ethics and leadership, his/her evaluation methods, the degree of satisfaction of the students with his/her teaching, as well as punctuality and assistance. Consequently, the teacher evaluation questionnaire contains a large amount of items; sometimes, it has dozens of questions, making it possible to gather a considerable amount of information. However, it is unclear the usefulness of such information with regard to whether the measured factors have a positive effect on student teaching. The same applies to accreditation processes; a great amount of information on the administrative and academic aspects of the institutions is gathered, but

only a minimum part of these aspects are significant variables of student academic performance (Loera and Cazares, 2005). If focusing on the key aspects is relevant for student academic progress, then it does not have much sense to stuff ourselves with data and information which perhaps are unnecessary to that end.

Idealized Vision of a Teacher.

Furthermore, questionnaires reflect a position on teaching in the sense of wanting to assess the “ought to be” and the ideal teacher. Therefore, it is common to find that teachers are overburdened with responsibilities and duties; some of them escape from doing what they would have to comply with, confusing what is desired and what is demanded. Thus, teachers are demanded to be an academic leader, an educated person, a promoter of values, a role model, an active participant in their community, a social fighter, and a researcher; to be socially responsible; to work in teams, to design materials; to be a therapist to address the psychological issues of their students and, sometimes, their students’ parents; to be a bully-prevention agent; a manager to obtain materials and support for the school; an administrator of the school resources; a ICT expert; to be innovative, and so on. Do we really think that a person will be able to show all these characteristics in an efficient manner? Although it is desirable that teachers have a good part of these characteristics, we do not think it is possible, realistic or fair to evaluate whether they have all these attributes. Thus, with the choice, and in order to select only the key aspects to favor student learning, we have to demand teachers to be a teaching professional, to be an expert in the processes favoring student learning and to act in an ethical manner. Thus, the evaluation should be aimed at assessing whether the teacher carries out the actions that, as we know, contribute to fully acquire academic contents. This is the most important goal. The rest is secondary, although desirable.

It reflects a Simplistic View of Teaching.

In general, the items in the teacher evaluation questionnaires are linear, rigid, in the sense of conceiving the educational practice as a set of sequential actions that are expressed only in one way and, some of them, in two ways in assessing only the presence or absence of the attribute, not the degree in which it is presented. However, as we described at the beginning of this paragraph, teaching is a complex activity that escapes from this simplistic view for its evaluation. Teaching is a clear example of a heuristic procedure in which in light of a specific didactic situation there are many options to be considered. That is, there exist different ways to respond to the same circumstance, as well as different actions to achieve student learning.

Teacher evaluation should consider these characteristics, but generally this is not the case. Furthermore, as stated by Díaz Barriga (2001), the evaluation items usually reflect a transmissive teaching model, and not an active or student-focused one. For this reason, Andrerucci (2011) affirms that teaching complexity is in danger when is simplified and denaturalized.

Excessively Generalist.

Formulating generalist and decontextualized questions has represented another significant limitation, assuming that all teachers should do them regardless of the type of subject they teach. For example, it is evaluated whether the teacher makes use of ICTs or applies collaborative teaching without taking into account that these activities are relevant for the characteristics of the subject, the type of students or even, the moment of the subject. That is, using these techniques and strategies is inadequate or inappropriate *per se*; their assessment depends on different circumstances, contents and moments. It should not be evaluated as being present or absent, but contextually. It should be determined whether those actions are adequate or inadequate for the moment of the evaluated teaching, i.e. it should be evaluated the interrelationship and appropriateness of the actions, and not if they are performed or not.

In sum, teaching should be evaluated by its complexity, degree of adequacy and suitability of the performed actions. Even though one advantage of teacher evaluation questionnaires is that they are applied massively, they are also limited since they do not take into account the wide variety of ways to teach, and use static categories that do not consider the specific nature of each discipline, degree or level and what each of them assesses or values, that is different for each other. They are not susceptible to individual differences and do not provide information that can be used as a diagnosis (Saroyan, 2001).

Once noted the limitations of the usual way to assess teaching, we will proceed to analyze the dimensions considered as main by academic research in the educational practice. We will describe them by showing their role and importance. They are the foundation of our proposal.

Dimensions of the Educational Practice.

Discipline Domain.

This aspect seems very obvious, but it is necessary to mention it: a teacher should be an expert in the topic, subject or grade that s/he teaches (Darling-Hammond, 2000). It is an indispensable requirement to properly manage the academic contexts that s/he teaches, being either of superior or basic education levels.

What does it mean? The need to show that s/he fully understands the facts, concepts and principles of the taught subject (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

It also comprises the domain of the best ways to organize and connect the ideas, the ability to identify the key concepts of his/her discipline and differentiate them from the secondary ones. (Shulman, 1986 cited in Hativa, 2000). Some teachers incorporate in this domain their knowledge for designing academic programs and integrating their subject into the

curriculum structure to associate it with other subjects, both vertically and horizontally (Posner, 2005).

The discipline domain was highlighted as important by Hernández (1995). It is an indispensable condition, but inadequate, for the educational practice, since the teacher can be an excellent expert in his/her topic, but this does not enable him/her to know how to teach it because s/he can fall into disciplinary blindness as denominated by Nathan and Petrosino (2003), that is when they give excessive weight to the discipline factors, neglecting the didactic aspects or how to teach it, a dimension that we will analyze below.

Management of Didactic Aspects and Classroom Management Aspects.

We will divide this domain in two: the first one to refer to the **didactic part** or teacher's management to make the content to be taught accessible and easy to understand. And the second one denominated **classroom management**, i.e. the use of techniques to organize, direct and coordinate the classroom; it involves the ability to create an atmosphere suitable for learning (Gauthier, 1997).

Didactic Domain

Since the beginning of the 20th century, according to Butsch (1931), *how to teach* or *the didactic ability* is a characteristic that has been constantly identified as essential for the educational practice by students of different educational levels and school principals. Which characteristics are comprised in this ability? We will describe the main attributes of a teacher identified in the research results.

Hattie (2009), after doing 800 meta-analyses of the factors affecting student academic performance, which involved the analysis of thousands of studies and the participation of a little more than a million of students, highlights six key aspects related to teacher quality:

- a) Teachers are one of the most powerful influences on learning.
- b) They need to be directive, influential, caring and passionately engaged in the process of teaching and learning.
- c) Teachers need to be aware of the way each student thinks and knows to design significant experiences and give adequate feedback to help each student move progressively in the different curriculum levels.
- d) They need to clearly specify the teaching goals and the achievement criteria so that everybody know in fact whether they were achieved or not by students.
- e) They need to identify the processes for building and re-building of their students' knowledge so that they dominate the learning principals involved in the contents as such, knowing that the most important thing is not the acquisition of the content as such, but the cognoscitive processes (reasoning, problem solution, creativity, critical thinking, etc.) that are developed in acquiring such content.
- f) The directors and teachers need to create learning environments where mistakes and misrepresentations are welcomed and seen as opportunities for learning, in which students feel safe to learn, re-learn and explore knowledge.

Now, with regard to the act of teaching, one of the key factors for students to understand the taught content is clarity, defined as a teacher's ability to communicate ideas clearly and convincingly (Assaël and Pavez, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000). It is essential to ensure that students have a proper understanding of the delivered content (Hativa, 2000). It involves the ability to present the content in a logical and organized manner; use examples; explain the topic in a simple, entertaining way; teach step by step; adapt the taught content to the characteristics and level of knowledge of students; answer to their questions in an adequate manner; explain in a different way when they have not understood; emphasize or highlight key points of the content to

distinguish the important aspects from the secondary ones; compare different positions; check the degree of understanding of the content by students and stimulate their interest and involvement (Hativa, 2000). Also, the teacher must properly use feedback to correct the achievements of students to have a significant positive impact on their learning (Hattie, 2012; Shute, 2008). And use the barometer, i.e. verify verbal and nonverbal behavior of students and, from this, make immediate changes to their teaching (Hativa, 2000).

Other identified teacher attributes are to establish and communicate their expectations and what they want their students to learn, promote self-discipline, properly manage class time and resources, evaluate the understanding of what was taught, and assign tasks related to the topics reviewed in the classroom (Mcber, 2000). Additionally, to awaken interest by formulating intellectual challenges (Ramsden, 2007) and stimulating students' desire to learn in which they accept the effort that it will take. Finally, it is important to present tasks contributing to the activation of complex cognoscitive processes, and which are not routine, repetitive, and elementary or by rote (Hattie, 2012).

That is, a good teacher is mainly concerned with achieving student learning, confronting them with achievable challenges, providing them with the necessary assistance to resolve them, trusting in their abilities, believing that they are people who want to learn (Ramsden, 2007). Likewise, create an adequate environment for learning, awake students motivation and interest, apply systematized ways to evaluate both the domain level of their students and that of his/her own actions and, based on their results, modify his/her teaching, i.e. emphasize the formative evaluation more than the summative one and, also, the evaluation of his/her acts in order not to fall into conformism or self-complaisance (Bain, 2004).

Good teaching involves also having excellent knowledge of communication skills to present the content in an organized, consistent and dynamical manner. Therefore, it is convenient that the materials and supporting elements used for teaching are clear, appealing and legible,

contain relevant information, summarize the essential aspects of the subject, and show an adequate balance between texts and images, among other aspects (Hernández, 1995).

According to Morton (2009, as cited in Friesen, 2011), a good teacher shares his/her passion and enthusiasm for his/her subject explicitly stating students its importance. It relates the subjects reviewed in class with current topics or issues, looks into students' experiences and uses them in his/her class. S/he asks key questions to point out the controversial points of a field, unsolved problems or existing positions.

Ibarra (1999) found that good teachers order their actions in clearly delimited tasks, have extraordinary knowledge of the contents and classroom management, base their teaching in the type of content to be delivered and the logic of the discipline field. They are consistent with their acts. They gain students' attention, "know how to captivate". Disciplinary and group management measures are used to gain attention and meet the objectives of the topic; these measures are not an aim themselves. Teachers act impartially, use different examples, present cases or problems that they face. They make the class agreeable. They comply with the rules without being authoritarian or imposing themselves. They do not miss classes. They watch the degree of difficulty of the material. They address the taught topics in depth and with accuracy. They do this in a pleasant work environment.

Blanco (2009) found that good teachers were empathetic, able to transmit their interest in teaching, and concerned with explaining their subjects based on daily problems and dialogic activities.

In summary, the most commonly mentioned attributes in the reported researches are that the teacher prioritize his/her students' learning, and to achieve learning is the reason of all his/her efforts. They clearly specify the learning outcomes, motivate students and pose challenges, guide them and provide them with feedback to achieve the established purposes, give examples, and show what they want. It is created an atmosphere for learning

where evaluation is used to identify the real level of learning more than as an accrediting element. Additionally, they apply different teaching strategies in a timely manner. The classroom results, in adequately using the above described attributes, are summarized by Mcber (2000) as follows:

There (the classes), students know what they have to do and why they have to do it. They see the connection of what they previously knew and form an idea of where their learning will evolve. They want to know more. They understand why their work was right and, if not, what they need to improve. They feel confident and motivated due to the respectful environment created in the classroom. They support each other and know when and to whom ask for help, if needed. Teachers pay continuous attention to what their students do. Many of the classroom activities are directed by them, but there is also a frequent interaction between the teacher and his/her students. They create the maximum opportunities for learning and time is not wasted (p. 11).

Classroom Management

One component of the didactic aspects is to manage experiences and activities to create an environment that stimulates and favors learning. Classroom management is understood as “the group of rules and provisions to create and maintain an orderly environment which is beneficial for students and learning” (Gauthier, 1997, p. 176). Management is included in the didactic aspects; although it is not directly associated with teaching of academic contents, it is important because it establishes adequate conditions for learning.

Classroom environment was defined by Mcber (2000) as the result of a teacher’s actions to impact students’ motivation to learn. It is the environment created in the classroom which can be pleasant, relaxing, stressing or fearing (Gauthier, 1997). An adequate classroom environment is characterized by being stimulating, warm, pleasant, fair, agreeable, respectful and where

the aim is to develop good interpersonal relationships to promote learning (Carlos-Guzmán, 2006, 2014).

The importance of taking into account classroom management was established by Shulman (1989) in explaining that when students enter school, the classroom is a very complex, unpredictable, chaotic environment where different events occur at the same time, which are not frequently understood by students who need to carry out a double activity: dealing with academic tasks and demands and, the second one, behaving according to social rules. The work in the classroom involves a constant exchange among participants, where there are explicit and implicit situations that students need to figure out to adequately respond to them. In fact, one of the main reasons for which they present tasks that do not fulfill what was requested is that they did not understand what they were asked to do, or the purpose of the activity, or what they had to do, either because the activities were not explained or clarified or because the student, due to lack of trust and security, did not externalized them and the teacher did not realize this situation.

As part of classroom management, the teacher needs to establish good interpersonal relationships so that students can trust him/her, feel him/her close, turn to him/her to address any doubts knowing that they will have his/her support to solve their academic problems (Carlos-Guzmán, 2014). Good interpersonal relationships will prevent many problems such as indiscipline or lack of respect, and will contribute to students' learning. It is important to remember that teaching is essentially a process of personal interrelation that, in order to succeed, requires knowledge and mutual respect between the teacher and his/her students (Gauthier, 1997).

Every teaching procedure needs order since a chaotic environment complicate – or impede – learning. Therefore, it is necessary to have behavior rules in the classroom. These rules are also required to standardize and predict others' behavior so that the activities have a continuous flow and allow to increase students' opportunities for learning. It is not a blind obedience to rules imposed by others, but the acceptance of the need to

comply with those rules for our own benefit and that of others. They govern students and the teacher.

In order for rules to work and conduct the behavior of the involved participants, it is important that they are clear, specific, understood by everybody and it is essential that they are applied in a consistent, uniform manner, not circumstantially, or there are arbitrary exceptions, or they are no longer used for a while and then, wanting to do it again.

Among the actions to be carried out to manage the classroom properly are clear structuring of the task or activity, proper management of time intended for learning, organization of the physical space and establishment of behavioral rules to maintain discipline and order in the classroom (Santrock, 2002; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011).

One of them is the use of routines so that students understand little by little what type of actions usually occur in the classroom and, thus, the teacher better structures his/her class so that students know what to do in each moment. The intention, besides organizing better the activities and making the class fluent, is that students know what will happen and what is expected of them. As established by Meirieu (2004):

The objective is that the student is mentally available for the work that he will be asked to do, that focuses his/her attention and that, to that end, his/her academic activities are clearly enough organized by rituals that make sense (p. 220).

Likewise, routines are used to reduce uncertainty in the classroom, and allow to efficiently use time and academic activities. Once established, there will be the necessary time to explain in each class what they have to do. Furthermore, routines help teachers supervise the completed tasks in an adequate manner. It was found that the routine is one of the main tools to favor learning (Gauthier, 1997).

Another favorable action is management of time intended for learning. There is evidence that the more time a student spends in academic activities,

the better for his/her academic performance; the opposite will happen if the student does not receive classes or spends his/her time in non-academic activities (Day, 1997). Then, the most important thing is not how much time the teacher has for his/her class, but the quality of the use of time devoted to academic activities. This is called *time committed to learning* (Carnoy, 2005).

According to Gauthier (1997), teachers who manage the classroom properly are those who supervise the development of the activities, are capable of recognizing and anticipating the acts of indiscipline that may contaminate the group and disturb order. The teacher has rules that can function and be used for the educational purposes. This author affirms that efficient teachers assign less time to classroom management and more time to substantial activities, which promote learning.

Tuckman and Monetti (2011) summarize as follows the importance of a proper classroom management by the teacher:

The decision of the moment and nature of the intervention is an important skill of the teacher. Every student, classroom and situation are unique; therefore, trying to apply a uniform perspective to do interventions will only cause frustration. It is not only important to consider the moment and the reason of the intervention, but how it is done. What a teacher says and does has great power in the classroom and can hurt his/her students' feelings easily; therefore, it is important that is/her interventions are done without rage or sarcasm (pp. 449-450).

Teacher Beliefs, Visions and Thinking.

With regard to the factors that affect teaching both positively and negatively, educational research has observed teacher *thinking, meanings, visions and beliefs* about topics typical of their profession (Boulton-Lewis, Smith, McCrindle, Burnett & Campbell, 2001; Goodyear & Hativa, 2002; Hativa, 2000; Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2002; Monroy & Díaz, 2001; Saroyan, 2001;

Van den Berg, 2002). This is justified in the sense that regularly certain type of teacher thinking, beliefs and meanings will produce a determined way to teach and evaluate. For example, it is very different the degree of teachers' commitment and actions if the teacher believes that all his/her students want and can learn (Monroy & Díaz, 2001) and has high expectations of them (Friesen, 2011), unlike another teacher who thinks "that knowledge comes with blood", or that has low expectations of his/her students' abilities or has a low level of commitment to the teaching profession. These "mental frameworks", as named by Hattie (2012), are fundamental in the educational practice.

Teacher thinking is composed principally of his/her vision of or approach to teaching, the teaching purposes according to him/her, his/her personal definitions of learning and what s/he understands for evaluation.

Based on this, it is necessary to identify teachers' visions of teaching, since they determine the used teaching methods, the type of tasks assigned to students, the reasons by which they do this and the selected ways of evaluation, as well as their level of commitment with their work as a teacher (Carlos-Guzmán 2006, 2014).

Students' learning will be badly affected if the teacher thinks that his/her role is to transfer his/her discipline knowledge into his/her students' minds (Kember & Gow 1994, as cited in Weimer, 2002). Or as said by Friesen (2011), thinking that his/her work is only to transfer the class notes into students' notes. Therefore, achieving deep learning or understanding by students will be likely to occur if the teacher has a complex, sophisticated and deep theory of teaching. Also, the educational practice will be less effective if the teacher thinks that s/he poor skills to influence in his/her students' learning, as we will go further in the next item.

There are different teaching models for teachers (Ramsden, 2007; Goodyear & Hativa, 2002; Entwisle & Walter, 2002; Martin, Prosser, Trigwell, Ramsden & Benjamín, 2002; Kember & Por-Kwam, 2002).

One of the most cited is that of Biggs and Tang (2009), who identify three types: 1) transmission of information based on traditional teaching and give more weight to communicate the discipline-related aspect; 2) the one focused on the teacher; in this case, the priority is the teacher's actions: the responsibility of learning is on the teacher and not on what the student does, and 3) the one focused on learning in which the student needs to be an active participant. In this third type, the important thing is students' actions, not so much the teacher's actions; in which it is relevant to put him/her in contact with the object to be learned. Therefore, a teacher's work consists in giving them advice and correct them or help them find a solution to the proposed problems or complete their tasks in an adequate manner. As mentioned by Resnick (1981), "teaching should not be designed to introduce knowledge into students' heads, but to put them in situations which make it possible for them to build well-structure knowledge" (p. 660).

Reaching this level means for the teacher to confront the visions with which s/he was formed, how to believe that the center of every act of teaching is what s/he does or the only important thing is the discipline-related aspect. Whereas, a teacher with a learning-centered vision would act as described by Meirieu (2005):

(In teaching) teachers can no longer ask themselves "What will I tell them?", but "What will I ask them to do?" Of course, without quitting master classes when necessary, but asking themselves one more time "How can my students take the most advantage of the class?", "Which advice can get their attention?", "Which exercises can I ask them to do to prove on a regular basis that my advice is appropriate?" (p. 56).

Motivation, Responsibility and Self-Efficiency of Teachers.

The last dimensions that also have an impact on teachers' performance are the *teaching aspects*, such as their motivation and commitment, as well as feeling responsible for their students' learning (Carlos-Guzmán, 2006;

Goodyear & Hativa, 2002; Hativa, 2000; Hernández, 1995). Good teachers enjoy teaching (Carlos-Guzmán, 2006, 2014).

Since the 90's the study on *teacher's self-efficiency* has emerged more strongly, which is referred to the confidence to solve the problems related to their way to teach, as it was found in many researches that it was a key component of his/her quality. For example, Tschannen, Woolfook & Hoy (1998) defined efficiency as "the degree that a teacher thinks s/he can have an impact on a student's performance". Other authors such as Guskey y Passaro (1994, as cited in Tschannen, Woolfook & Hoy, 1998), conceptualize it like this: "(It is) the conviction (of the teacher) that s/he can influence in how well students learn in spite of having difficult or unmotivated students". Rotter (1966) determined that a teacher will act better if s/he thinks that s/he can have more control of or impact on a student's academic performance or motivation, than the contextual factors or factors external to school.

Teacher self-efficiency means feeling responsible for his/her students' learning; not blaming them for academic failures; keeping motivated in what s/he does in spite of adversities, limitations or difficulties typical of his/her work.

Tschannen, Woolfook and Hoy (1998) indicate that researches show the importance of teacher self-efficiency, since highly self-efficient teachers are open to try other ways of teaching, show a high level of planning and organization, are more tolerant of his/her students' mistakes, and are more willing than others to work with deficient students. They also teach with great enthusiasm, and it is unlikely that quit teaching. At school level, a teacher with such characteristics contributes to improving the work environment, helps decision-making be focused on academic aspects, as well as improving teachers' academic teamwork.

Now, being so important, how self-efficiency can be formed or developed? As it is affected, both positively and negatively, by school factors such as work environment, the principal's support, and the way by which

decisions are made, among others. In this case, it is essential that the teacher feels that s/he has the freedom to make academic decisions. However, s/he is affected negatively by a bad work environment, low salary, and lack of recognition, excessive demands, and isolation. Therefore, the assistance and cooperation provided by colleagues are very important to achieve stimulating teamwork.

The factors that contribute to a teacher's self-efficiency are self-perception of his/her teaching competencies, feeling capable of identifying the requirements of a particular teaching situation and thinking that s/he has the necessary tools to give an adequate solution to a teaching problem. S/he has a cyclical or self-reinforcing nature. Succeeding in a task contributes to better dealing with another similar task. Past achievements give confidence and are a source to properly address future demands. Through this kind of experiences, the teacher develops a set of key ideas about his/her skills.

Some of the strategies to form teacher's self-efficiency are having a facilitator that focuses the attention on teacher's quality, carrying out activities promoting self-evaluation and reflection (Arbesú & Argumedo, 2010), helping them analyze the task, break it down and receive assistance to modify the educational practice. Another way is to question the teacher's assumptions or didactic thinking on teaching since, if his/her role as a teacher is not reformulated, the teacher will probably never change his/her ways to teach. In working to achieve it, it is very important to focus on the teacher's achievements and progress, strengthening the internal locus or the feeling that they can have a more positive effect on students' performance than the factors external to teaching, i.e. it is essential to provide them with a sense of control and responsibility of what they do.

Finally, the authors indicate that it is necessary to study more the factors facilitating or inhibiting the development of effective beliefs. Likewise, it is necessary to do research on how teachers insist on teaching well in spite of the difficulties they face.

Dimensions to Evaluate Teachers' Work. A Proposal.

In this second part, and after analyzing the key aspects of teaching, it is introduced a teacher evaluation proposal divided in two categories: one referred to the instruments recommended for the evaluation or how to evaluate, and the second one gives a breakdown of what to evaluate, analyzing the didactic aspects in depth, since they are the core of our proposal, and because they should be the most important ones to evaluate teachers.

We propose that it is necessary to evaluate the four above-described dimensions by using different instruments and not only one. In Table 1, it is shown the relationship between the dimension of the evaluated teaching and the recommended ways to evaluate.

Table 1.

Ways to evaluate teaching dimensions

Dimension that is evaluated	Way to Evaluate
1. Discipline Domain	Examination and/or essay about the knowledge domain of the subjects or grades which s/he teaches, as well as his or her academic program. Design of a didactic planning.
2. Didactic Aspects	Observation by an expert of the educational practice. Student examination of the taught contents, or bullet points, case study and simulators.
3. Didactic Thinking	Questionnaire ¹ about his or her knowledge, beliefs and thinking about teaching, presentation of cases or bullet points.
4. Motivation, Self-Efficiency and Teacher Responsibility	Questionnaire for teachers, bullet points and cases.

This refers to *how* to evaluate the teacher performance. Now, to illustrate *what to evaluate*, we will focus on showing the way to assess the didactic dimension: the essential part of our proposal and for its degree of generality to evaluate the teacher performance in different educational levels.

¹ Although we have questioned the use of questionnaires to evaluate teachers, we do not discard them since they are useful if they are properly used to assess the aspects in which they really serve to evaluate teachers, such as didactic thinking, motivation, self-efficiency and teacher responsibility.

We think that the best way to evaluate this aspect is by *observing the teacher performance in the classroom and not using a questionnaire*, because they evaluate different aspects: the first one measures performance and the second one measures the recipients' opinions of the act of teaching. To support this option, Schmelkes (2014) is cited:

Planning is tested in the practice; there is where the teacher tests his or her ability to face unexpected situations, where his or her concern about their students learning becomes visible or not, and where the real job of being a teacher is manifested ... learning results are a consequence of various processes, with teaching being the most important (p. 158).

Therefore, observation of the teacher didactic management would have to be evaluated by an expert in teacher evaluation and/or a teacher with wide experience since their expert opinion will be required to judge whether the performed action is appropriate or not, whether it is suitable to achieve teaching goals; to understand the moment in which the observed class is situated; and to justify their assessment. Thus, the evaluation will be much than just verifying if certain attribute is present or absent. For practical purposes of the proposal, we recommend to videotape it in order for this performance to be assessed by a group of experts that would not have to be present in the classroom. Besides, there will be a final product that can be reviewed as many times as necessary. By doing so, a number of problems will be prevented and evaluation costs will be reduced.

With regard to the three remaining dimensions, we only provide some directives for their evaluation, accepting that it will be necessary to broaden them to design *ex profeso* instruments relevant to the subject or discipline, the education level and the type of institution.

We suggest that the observation process would have to take a sample of a classroom and carried out ethically. We clarify that our proposal is not a checklist since it is not about doing everything, but only the ones relevant and suitable for the moment of the observed course. This is what the expert

would consider. Therefore, we give examples of different actions that can be assessed considering the varied ways to teach.

Table 2.

Aspects to Be Evaluated in the Dimensions of the Act of Teaching

Dimensions	Aspects to Be Evaluated
1. Discipline Domain	Show proper management of the contents that s/he teaches, his or her program and grade.
2. Didactic and Management Domain	The applied actions seek to ensure student learning. S/he shows having prepared and planned his or her class. The class is organized. There are clearly defined phases such as start, development and closure. The used didactic strategy is suitable to achieve the purpose of the topic to be taught, and adapted to the type of student and content, as well as academic context.
2.1. Didactic Domain	<p><i>Start</i></p> <p>The teacher identifies the ideas and previous knowledge of students. S/he makes a diagnosis of the level of students.</p> <p>S/he communicates the teaching purposes and the required outcomes to assess if they were achieved. S/he clarifies and points out the importance of the topic; s/he awakened their interest (e.g. s/he established the purposes of the class; s/he proposed intellectual challenges; or formulated a problem; or made an experiment and asked questions about what was observed; or mentioned an everyday life situation; s/he recalled, reviewed the topics addressed in the last class, and so on).</p> <p>S/he contextualized and placed what will be reviewed; s/he related it with other topics and contents.</p> <p>Or s/he did some activity or exercise to introduce his or her subject.</p> <p><i>Development</i></p> <p>S/he taught in a clear manner. S/he did many of these actions.</p> <p>S/he simplified the material; s/he explained following a logical order.</p> <p>S/he used simple language that was easy to understand for students. S/he broke down the topic into small steps. S/he pointed out the main points.</p>

S/he adapted his/her teaching to the level of students' knowledge and characteristics. S/he made examples to illustrate the used concepts. S/he did not repeat unnecessary information.

S/he gave clear and kind feedback to students' performance. S/he fed back in a constructive manner and gave specific suggestions for improvement.

His/her teaching rhythm is not too slow or too fast.

S/he verifies that students are understanding the delivered lessons.

S/he uses the "barometer" or checks the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of his/her students, based on which s/he made immediate changes or keeps doing what s/he does.

S/he makes a "joint construction" of knowledge by dialoguing with student, in which s/he asks questions or proposes problem situations, asks students to participate, corrects his/her students' utterances when they speak in the class and provide guidelines until reaching a synthesis or definition of the concept or principle.

S/he uses collaborative learning properly; thus, promoting both the domain of the contents and the development of psychosocial and collaboration skills.

2.1. Didactic Domain

Proper use of didactic materials or ICTs according to the purpose of the class and the type of student.

Whether s/he applies another type of didactic strategy such as case study, problem solution or by project. They are suitable for the topic, the purposes of teaching and the level of students.

S/he uses them properly following the steps and phases specified in each strategy.

Closure

After explaining the subject, s/he summarizes the most important aspects; emphasizes the implications, advantages or limitations of the addressed subject; or asks students to summarize the reviewed items.

Communication Skills. S/he does many of these behaviors.

His/her tone of voice is audible for all students, emphasizes what is important, and is not flat. Filler words are used minimally.

S/he moves while explaining, makes visual contact with students, uses body language to communicate the topic and shows enthusiasm.

S/he uses the blackboard, presentations and materials properly.

His/her handwriting is clear, well-sized and easy to understand

	<p>If s/he uses presentations, they are a summary of the important things. The format of the presentations is visually appealing and easy to understand.</p> <p>S/he explains the slides; s/he does not read them.</p> <p><i>Strengthening the Understanding of the New Topic</i></p> <p>S/he models the applications of the expounded topics or gives students examples of the type of requested work or outcome.</p> <p>Or s/he uses features to clarify how the requested work should be.</p> <p>Students have the opportunity to practice what was taught, for example ask them to apply it in a case, problem or exercises, or asks for original examples.</p> <p>S/he uses the instrument suitable for the type of evaluated knowledge (declarative, procedural and attitudinal).</p> <p>The evaluation instruments are designed correctly.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>S/he uses the evaluation principally to provide feedback. Students know why their answers were right or wrong.</p> <p>S/he continually informs students of their academic performance.</p> <p>S/he grades students fairly and adequately.</p> <p>Assigned tasks and activities describing in writing the purposes and instructions. Provided the materials to perform those tasks and activities. Communicated how and when they will be evaluated. Timely communicated the criteria and requirements for evaluation.</p> <p>Tasks improve or favor complex cognoscitive processes. They are not simple or by rote.</p> <p>There are rules in the classroom for good coexistence. They are applicable to teachers and students.</p> <p>Use of Routines</p>
<p>2.2. <i>Classroom Management</i></p>	<p>Proper management of time and pacing of the classroom.</p> <p>Most of the class time is devoted to academic activities.</p> <p>There is order and organization.</p> <p>Fluidity of the class. The activities are clearly delimited. They do not overlapped.</p> <p>Physical space adequate for the teaching purposes, making it possible to continuously monitor students' behavior in the classroom.</p> <p>Creates an environment that stimulates and promotes learning. Presence of respect and trust, and students feel comfortable.</p> <p>Good and respectful personal interaction.</p>

Global Evaluation of Teacher Performance	<p>Global evaluation of teacher performance and justification of the decision.</p> <p>Recommendations and suggestions:</p> <p>What is teaching for you?</p> <p>Which are the purposes of your teaching?</p> <p>What is learning for you?</p>
Didactic Thinking	<p>What and why do you evaluate?</p> <p>Which are the qualities of a good teacher?</p> <p>How do you know that your students have learned?</p> <p>Which are your most important actions to stimulate your students' learning?</p> <p>Mention the causes or reasons why you become a teacher.</p>
Self-Efficiency, Motivation and Teacher Responsibility	<p>Which aspects do you consider to be gratifying and ungratifying? Why?</p> <p>If your students do not learn, in your opinion, what is the main cause?</p> <p>Describe a problem that you have had in your educational practice, indicate how you solved it and if so, to what you attribute that solution.</p>

Conclusions

We provided an alternative to the traditional way to evaluate teacher performance. For this reason, we identified from the results of educational research four key dimensions of the act of teaching, and for each of them we proposed suggestions on how to evaluate them. We consider that the advantages of our proposal are: 1) to base on our knowledge about the mechanisms that support better learning and increase students' academic performance. This is why we describe the results of educational research that justify our proposal. 2) To provide clear criteria for a fair, comprehensive assessment of the educational practice, considering its substantial characteristics and not superfluous or unnecessary aspects. 3) To emphasize the academic evaluation, so that the teacher can identify his/her strengths and weaknesses to teach better and use them to design teacher education and updating routes adjusted and relevant to the context in which the teacher works. 4) Clarity of the teacher performance evaluation helps these processes to be fair, accurate

and clear. Thus, the taken decisions on the teacher performance will be based and focused on education and less biased, arbitrary, limited or simplistic. Taking into account these factors has higher value when, based on the teacher evaluation results, decisions are taken for awards and recognitions, as well as admission, continuity or promotion of the teacher.

We explain that teaching is a complex, multidimensional and contextualized activity. It is a controversy to define if it is an activity that shows generalized characteristics that would be used by a teacher regardless of the education level s/he teaches, or if, on the contrary, it is a specific different action depending on the context or the education level in which it is delivered (Gauthier, 1997). We adhere to the generalist proposal and, although we recognize that each education level has particular characteristics, we think there are more shared than specific elements, such as didactic aspects that every teacher must domain regardless of the education level. In fact, many of the researches presented here were obtained from researches made in different education levels, assuming that didactics is essential for teacher performance and the reason to describe with more detail how his/her performance could be evaluated.

Our proposal prioritizes the evaluative judgment for the teacher performance and take into less account the results of the evaluative questionnaires, since we establish that teaching is a heuristic-type procedure which provides various options for a situation. Hence, it is necessary to assess what a teacher would do in a given situation, and observe the effects of his/her actions in the classroom. Therefore, we give so much importance to the expert judgment and recruitment of people with wide experience in teaching and evaluation.

Unlike traditional instruments, it would not be necessary to carry out all the proposed actions, but observe whether the appropriate ones are used for the purposes of teaching, the characteristics of students, the type of contents, the moment and the didactic situation. This is the justification of proposing that the teacher should be evaluated by observing his/her

performance and judged by experts that determine whether his/her actions are appropriate or not.

Due to the fact that the teacher evaluation results are very important, it is necessary to be extremely careful so that this process is done with the highest exactitude and transparency as possible to prevent from being distorted, causing unethical, illegal or even intimidation behaviors towards the evaluators. This justifies the videotaping of the class.

We think this would be the ideal evaluation, but if it is about evaluating a number of teachers, our proposal on didactic aspects could be used to assess the teacher's behavior in a didactic situation through case study or simulators which, if well worked, would be more realistic and suitable than a knowledge examination, as sometimes teachers are assessed.

With regard to the other three dimensions, we provide some guidelines because their specification should be particular and adjusted to the education level, discipline and type of institution. It is essential that all the suggested instruments are completed and make it possible to assess something as complex as the teacher performance in a comprehensive, appropriate and fair manner. As we say on the first pages, the obtained information should be used to provide feedback, correct the teacher performance and help the teacher to teach better.

Turning the teacher evaluation into a process that gives priority to education more than sanctions, that requires to promote at institutional level an evaluation culture (Rueda, Luna, García & Loredó, 2010), accountability and transparency of the activities carried out in schools where priority should be given to the academic aspects, to improve the quality of education and not those of other types. Without forgetting that the sense of this whole process is to improve teachers' performance to help them do better and better this so complex, difficult act that is to get other person to learn.

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