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Criteria and Standards for Objective Assessment: How to Avoid Subjectivity

Ochilova Maftuna Doniyor qizi
Teacher of English Faculty, The Department of Innovative educational technologies and methodology, Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Samarkand, UZBEKISTAN

A B S T R A C T
Assessment plays a key role in the educational process, influencing the development of students' skills and knowledge. However, subjectivity in assessment can lead to a distortion of real results and a decrease in student motivation. To ensure objectivity, it is necessary to introduce clear evaluation criteria and standards. In this article we will consider the main approaches to creating such criteria, methods of their application, as well as ways to minimize subjectivity in the assessment process.

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Introduction

Assessment is one of the most important components of the educational process. Being the final phase of control, it is designed not only to reflect the level of training of students in any subject, but also to perform many other important functions: educational, motivational, developmental. But in order for assessment to truly fulfill all these important functions and tasks in learning, it must have several necessary qualities, namely, to be valid, reliable and objective. [1; 2-p.] Objectivity is the ability to judge facts or events based on measurable and verifiable data, without the influence of personal beliefs or emotions. In the context of assessment, objectivity means impartial, fair treatment of all participants in the process, without regard to personal likes or dislikes. Objective assessment requires clearly formulated criteria that correspond to the objectives of the assessment process and exclude the possibility of interpreting assessments based on subjective views. To avoid subjectivity, it is necessary to adhere to a number of principles that promote transparency and fairness of the assessment process:

One of the key factors of objectivity is the clear formulation of the criteria by which the assessment will take place. Evaluation criteria are a set of requirements against which work or performance is assessed. The criteria must be clear to all participants in the process, as well as specific and measurable.

Criteria may vary depending on the subject area, level of education and learning objectives. For example:

Criteria for written work: text structure, argumentation, language, originality of ideas.

Criteria for oral presentation: clarity of presentation, confidence of the speaker, use of visual materials.

Literature review

Using the same evaluation procedures and methods for all participants in the process is an important step

towards achieving objectivity. According to educational methodologist Ralph Tyler (1949), "Standardized tests and procedures offer a reliable means of measuring performance across different groups and contexts." [3] Standardization of procedures minimizes variations in assessments caused by differences in the approaches of experts or teachers. For example, educational institutions often use tests with closed questions, where the correct answers are known in advance, which reduce the possibility of a subjective approach to assessment.

Methodology

The criteria and standards should be according to methodology SMART:

- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Measurable
- ✓ Achievable
- ✓ Relevant
- ✓ Time-bound

This approach helps make assessment more transparent and clear. For example, for writing an essay, the criterion might be: “The student must submit a 1,500-word argumentative essay that demonstrates an understanding of the topic and includes at least three sources, using APA format.”

The assessment process must be transparent and assessment results must be verifiable. The feedback that participants receive allows them to understand based on what criteria and for what reasons they received a particular rating. Methodologist John Biggs (1999) argues that "open criteria and transparent marking schemes promote fairness and reduce suspicion of bias." [4] Transparency helps avoid suspicions of unfairness and unfounded claims against appraisers. It is important that learners have the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification about their assessment.

The independence of the evaluators is another factor that reduces the likelihood of subjectivity. The assessment should be carried out by people who are not personally associated with those being assessed. This is especially important in competitions, exams or when summing up professional competitions. Emotional or social connections can influence an appraiser's decision, even if the appraiser is not aware of it.

To avoid subjectivity, various methods and approaches can be used to make estimates more accurate. Below are some of them.

1. Use of digital technologies: Modern technologies make it possible to minimize the influence of the human factor on the assessment process. For example, computer programs for checking tests or organizing data using artificial intelligence can significantly improve the accuracy and objectivity of assessments. Automated systems can reduce the likelihood of human errors, making assessments fairer and more impartial. [6]

2. Double-blind evaluation method: This method is often used in scientific research to eliminate subjective factors when reviewing articles. Double-blind peer reviews are a common method to ensure that a paper is judged solely on its merit, without the influence of the author’s reputation or background. [5] The essence of the method is that neither the author of the work nor the appraiser knows each other’s personal data. Thus, reviewers focus solely on the content of the work, and not on the personality of the author, which eliminates bias.

3.3. Multi-stage verification system: A multi-stage inspection system allows you to reduce the influence of subjectivity by distributing responsibility among several experts. This can be particularly useful when assessing complex or creative tasks where interpretation is possible. Each expert is given the opportunity to express their opinion, and the final score is based on the average score or discussion.

Despite best efforts, it is difficult to completely avoid subjectivity. During the assessment process, various challenges arise that can influence the results. The main typical assessment errors include:

- *Human factor:* Even with clear standards and criteria, the personal characteristics of the evaluator can influence the evaluation process. For example, *unjustified inflation of grades, transfer of sympathy or antipathy from the student to the assessment (mark), rating based on mood, the desire not to give the lowest and highest marks, transferring the grade for behavior to the grade for the academic subject (a discipline violator will receive a lower grade for an answer of equal quality than an obedient and quiet child).* [2] In such situations, it is important to regularly train experts and provide them with opportunities for professional development so that they can be aware of their biases and avoid them.
- *Cultural differences:* Cultural differences between the rater and the ratees can influence the perception and interpretation of information. In such cases, it is important to consider the context in which the evaluator is working and to ensure that everyone involved in the process is familiar with the criteria and standards.
- *Difficulty of criteria:* Sometimes assessment criteria can be too complex or multi-layered, making them difficult to apply accurately. In such cases, the rating may be subject to subjective interpretation, especially if the evaluator encounters inconsistencies within the criterion itself. To achieve objectivity, it is necessary to minimize the complexity of the criteria, while maintaining their completeness and adequacy.

Conclusion

Objective assessment is an important tool for ensuring equity in educational and professional processes. To avoid subjectivity, it is necessary to apply clear criteria, standards and methods that ensure transparency and impartiality. Approaches such as standardized procedures, the use of technology, and the independence of evaluators play an important role. However, it should be taken into account that it is impossible to completely eliminate the influence of subjective factors, and this requires constant improvement of the assessment system. Thus, in the context of dynamic changes in various spheres of life, the need for objective assessment becomes even more urgent, and its standards must be regularly reviewed and adapted to new requirements.

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