

УДК 372.881.111.1

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH IN ASSESSING FUTURE MANAGERS

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Abstract — The problem of implementing a learner-centered approach in the system of higher education is considered. The question of developing professional skills of future managers via offering specific tasks for assessing a learner's progress is discussed. The reasons for introducing and improving self-assessment process are given.

Key words — learner-centered approach, assessment, self-assessment, evaluation, feedback

It is suggested that the organization of teaching-learning process at higher education establishments is extremely teacher-centered. That is why it can be applied that a student has no chance for personal development in the future and little chance to succeed at a work place as he/she does not acquire the necessary skill while studying.

Although some of the teachers understand the importance of involving students in the teaching-learning process and showing them how important it is to be responsible for their own learning [2, 9], there is no coherent system for using such methods. Offering a student to choose the order of the tasks during one lesson does not mean that he/she becomes an active participant of the process [3, 1].

Some studies describe the following areas where student-centered approach does not usually work [4, 1]. These are: the balance of power, the content of the course, the role of the teacher, the purpose of learning and, finally, evaluation. Concerning these points it is assumed that a teacher is still the most important person in the classroom and they tend to show it in all the possible ways while students have no opportunity to present their point of view. Furthermore, teachers never ask the student for their opinion on the content of a textbook, a lesson type or the order of the tasks.

In such situation students do not need to think about the purpose of studying as this has already been done. Sometimes they are told the aim but in most cases the purpose of the lesson or a whole course is just to do the tasks which means no motivation for studying and developing skills. Finally, students tend to think that the evaluation process is just another “must do” thing of their studying which has absolutely no point. In reality this is an extremely important part of the learning process which is implemented as a tool of showing the positive and negative aspects of all the completed tasks. Its purpose is to improve the educational process and the knowledge of every particular student by showing their stronger and weaker points).

As the purpose of the teaching-learning process at a university is to make a student a good professional who possesses all the necessary skills for the future job, our attention should be drawn to the question of assessment. A term “educative assessment” is offered [1, 15], meaning the evaluation of the gained knowledge and the quality of the whole education process using not only the classical grading system. It consists of four steps and presupposes students to be active participants.

That is vital, especially for the future managers as they are people who have to control, check, manage and evaluate other people and their performance. Acquiring the necessary skills while studying would definitely be useful for them while working and possessing those skills would mean that they are more competitive at a job market.

Following the four steps of assessment with the future managers may be compared to organizing a project at a work place.

The first part is forward-looking assessment that is creating the learning content connected with the real life. While practicing lexical and grammar material on an English

lesson the attention of a student has to be attracted to the coherence with a real situation; when they are given a project at work to complete it on time the first thing to do is to make a plan and set up goals. The same is during a lesson. To complete the tasks they have to set up goals (why they need it, what issues would be solved and in which situation they would apply the knowledge they gain). This is the task not for the teacher to present what has been planned, this is the task for the students to be responsible for their own learning, that is to know why they do it and why they need it. It would also show the importance of doing the task (not for the teacher's sake but for the student development). Illustrating a real-life situation would stimulate the interest even in doing ordinary activities.

The next two steps are interconnected; these are self-assessment and setting the criteria. It may seem that the first part is the easiest one, but the reality shows the opposite. A teacher cannot make the students conduct self-evaluation without preparing them, introducing the criteria and guiding the process. As in the real life, for instance, being an employee of a company means that it is not allowed to assess any kind of work basing on personal likes and dislikes. There is likely to be a specific system, some standards which has to be met. The teacher should not set these standards by himself; this is the task for all the participants of the teaching-learning process. When the students start their professional career, they would not be able to use all the materials done by some other people before them (it may not be allowed; the materials may be out-of-date; the system may change and they would need to pay attention to different aspects); they would have the basics which they can improve and standardize. During a lesson the same thing happens. All the teachers and students are different that is why they have to work together to find the characteristic which would be suitable for the both parts. The teacher offers the criteria, explains it, points out to the vital parts and when students start the assessment, the teacher guides them, showing how to do it easier and more efficiently. But

with the era of learner-centered approach, it should be noted that a learner has to take an active part in setting the standard by presenting their ideas, proving them, discussing and adapting according to the needs of all the participants of the project. A future manager obviously learns how to do that in his professional field, so they should be engaged in the same activity during a language lesson as well to make the results even better.

As for the final step, which is feedback, the following points must be considered. A student expects to have a positive feedback in any case, even if he knows that the work is done not well enough. A teacher should always find at least one positive point in the completed task to boost the students' confidence, to awaken the desire to learn and find out something new every day and to show that everything is possible only if you make an effort. Moreover, feedback should be provided immediately or as soon as possible after finishing the task. Some characteristics of the work may be forgotten, and they may appear to be vital. Students have to be prepared that at a workplace they will be given feedback after completing the project, they have to be ready to be praised and to be criticized.

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Тези доповіді надійшли 07 лютого 2018 року.
Опубліковано в авторській редакції