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THE PERSPECTIVE AND CONDITIONS OF PUPIL SUPPORTIVE ASSESSMENT IN THEORY AND EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL PRACTICE

In the literature devoted to didactic measurement, student assessment procedures and the evaluation of their achievements, there is particular scarcity both in the area of a concrete definition of the notion of supportive assessment, as well as a clear indication of constitutive features characteristic of its construction process. An attempt to specify the aforementioned definitional dimension requires referring to the concepts of assessment and developmental support, whose semantic scope comprises in synergy the interpretive meaning of the notion of supportive assessment.

In the simplest terms, what can be referred to as assessment is the evaluation of learning outcomes and communicating them to a student (Stróżyński, 2004, p. 733). The other concept can be defined as a kind of pedagogical activity which consists in creating favorable conditions for education and upbringing, conducive to broadly understood development of the subject of didactic and educational interactions in the person of a pupil (Okoń, 2017, p. 465).

Supportive assessment can be referred to as a process of evaluating the achievements of a student, who, through exposing the level of acquired knowledge and

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skills, provides information necessary to support their comprehensive development. The notion of development should be perceived in its broad semantic aspect, covering both the educational area – in which the influences of didactic and educational activities resulting from the educational school practice are visible – and the social area, in which a system of specific interactions and mutual relations among the participants of school community are clearly visible.

The origins of the idea of employing the school assessment process to support learners' development should be sought within the scope of the didactic measurement dispositional concepts, which suggest that the substantive assessment scope should not be limited only to the verification of knowledge and skills acquired by a student, but also take into account the context of the learning process. The context is equally consisted of: students' achievements, the workload and commitment to ongoing educational activities, the progress made, students' working conditions, as well as their motivation to further work on his or her own educational development. For these factors can measurably determine the knowledge a student possesses and, what is more, their inclusion in the assessment process makes the evaluation both more objective and more functional, as it is not limited only to informing a student about the effects of their work, but also, through monitoring a number of criteria conditioning their learning, creates greater opportunities for orientating them in the best possible direction, thus constituting the essence of genuine support.

The basis for the idea of supporting in the course of the school evaluation of achievements, in addition to the extended substantive scope of assessment, is also the appropriate way of communicating it to students. In the traditional model of assessing school achievements, the message including the evaluation that a teacher addresses to a student, is usually limited to informing the student about the grade he or she has obtained. As far as supportive assessment is concerned, the message takes a more extensive form of the teacher's commentary, which informs the student about the effects of his or her educational activities. On one hand, those areas of knowledge and skills in which the student's actions are characterized by effectiveness and substantive correctness are indicated (Kaczmarek, 2018, p. 192), on the other, what is signaled is the potential problems in those areas in which the student's actions require additional work to eliminate errors and irregularities to achieve substantive correctness. In its functional form, supportive assessment may take the form of a school grade, usually expressed in the form of a digit, which serves to determine the level of a student's knowledge and skills in terms of the accepted curriculum requirements, accompanied by an appropriate commentary concerning the context of the learning process and guiding the student's further actions.

School assessment of student-supporting character has recently become an issue more and more frequently referred to in studies devoted to didactic measurement. There are also determinants or functions that supportive assessment should fulfill. The most frequently mentioned ones are the following: diagnostic, informational, motivational, emotional, cognitive and instructional functions (See Kopaczyńska, 2004; Niemierko, 2009; Sterna, 2016; Śliwerski, 2008).

The introduction of a supportive assessment model into the everyday educational school practice does not require changes to the realized curriculum. First of all, it is necessary to create a positive atmosphere conducive to learning both in the classroom and school environments – for example, by changing the teacher-student relations and transforming the image of the teacher often perceived by students as a distant “master” to a closer “ally.” When introducing supportive assessment, it is also worth taking into account the definition of explicit teaching objectives – with regard to larger parts of material, as well as to smaller units, carried out every day during each class. Students’ awareness of educational goals, both current and those more distant ones, partially transfers the responsibility for the educational process from the teacher to pupils (making them responsible for their own actions, for the final result of the learning and teaching processes and encouraging students to take up educational activities). What will also be conducive to the effective implementation of students’ supportive assessment is defining clear criteria of assessment, i.e. a detailed specification of issues considered in the process of achievement valuation on both the micro (e.g. a single lesson) and macro scale (e.g. a bigger amount of material, the completion of which is marked by a test). Thanks to such solutions students, while preparing for a test, can more easily determine, even on their own, which criteria and requirements they have already met, and which they must devote even more attention to in order to master them better (Wilczyńska, 2018, pp. 170-172).

All the above-mentioned factors and their including in the assessment process depend mainly on the teacher, as it is him or her who determines the evaluation criteria. It is their knowledge of the valuation of students’ achievements that will determine the theoretical orientation, as well as the practical directions of the school assessment process. The above statement, however, needs to be completed. For what will determine the actual existence of a supportive dimension of assessment is, as much as teachers’ awareness concerning the evaluation scope, a set of communication factors and conditions contributing to a category that can be defined as communicating evaluation in the educational process.

At its simplest, as regards the definition, communication can be referred to as a process of transmitting information, assuming the existence of at least one sender and one or more recipients. The transmission can be defined as a formal communication structure, information, in turn, constitutes its substantive element (Retter, 2005, p. 11).

In a number of studies devoted to the problem of linguistic communication the notion of information is used synonymously with the notion of communication, which, in a narrower sense, can be described as a message, whereas in a broader sense as a message complemented by a particular context (Retter, 2005, p. 12).

In the course of transferring information between the sender and the recipient, there is also the aspect of coding, the process of translation oriented towards preserving what is the most important. Coding the information, which is performed by the sender, means attributing the spoken words with meaning. Decoding, done by the recipient, consists in finding the meaning aptly. It is important that in their

communication activities, both the sender and the recipient are not limited to the linguistic aspect of the transmitted information, but complement it with diverse social contexts and subjective intentions and experiences.

Communicating school evaluation can be defined as an act of interpersonal communication that occurs between a teacher and a student and serves to inform the student about the results they achieved, being the effect of the previously measured knowledge and acquired skills. This final stage of the assessment process determines the student's interpretation of the evaluation, deciding about its right understanding and acceptance.

The way in which the teacher communicates the evaluation to pupils has a strong impact on the effectiveness and quality of information perception, influences the emotional attitude to the assessment process, stimulates or inhibits students' motivation for further educational activity, develops the relationship between the teacher and students, as well as those in the student environment.

The diversity of methods of communicating evaluation may evoke extremely different attitudes in students, both towards the assessment process itself, as well as towards the teacher, the school as an institution, and even towards learning itself. The perception of the school evaluation process of students' achievements in the category of an act of communication that takes place in the school environment and whose direct participants are a teacher and students implies the need to find a model of interpersonal communication which could provide theoretical background for the proper process of communicating school evaluation, and the practical implementation of its assumptions would allow to assign a supportive character to the consequences of the impact of this assessment. What may serve as an example constituting the theoretical background for the proper process of communicating the supportive assessment is R. Jakobson's model of interpersonal communication. Among the constitutive, functional elements of this model, the following should be mentioned: addresser and addressee, message, context (which, on one hand, can be understood as the content of the message, on the other, however, as the general conditions in which communication takes place), contact that must exist between the addresser and the addressee, and the code – a system of signs used to transmit information (existing in the minds of the communicating units and in the space between them) (Jakobson, 1989, p. 82).

The structural premises and its functional aspect allow to recognize R. Jakobson's model of interpersonal communication as notable concerning the effective way of communicating the supportive assessment, for at least two reasons.

First of all, according to Jakobson, the effectiveness of communication is determined by: embedding the message in the context of meaning understandable to the addressee (the verbalized ones, or those possible to verbalize), code (fully or at least to a significant extent common to the addresser and the addressee) and contact between the addresser and the addressee (allowing to establish and continue the exchange of information) (Jakobson, 1989, p. 83). In Jakobson's model, the context emphasizing the need for proper understanding of the conveyed information

is reflected in one of the elementary premises of supportive assessment, which is the student's proper understanding of the evaluation he or she is addressed to by the teacher during the act of communication. Therefore, embedding the message in the context of meanings understood by the recipient determines the necessity of communicating the assessment in a way that will make it properly understood by the student. The correct interpretation of the assessment is also made possible by the code, which, within the adopted system of signs and symbols that it is comprised of, should remain as identical as possible for all the participants of the communication act. Looking for references to the process of communicating evaluation, a question can be reflected on whether a teacher communicating the supportive assessment uses in his or her comments the meanings adapted to students' perception capacities and whether they remain consistent with the common arrangements made earlier (curricular requirements and assessment criteria).

Secondly, interpersonal communication, understood as a process of exchanging information between the participants of the communication act according to R. Jakobson (1989, p. 84), has six typologically diverse functions: referential, emotive, metalingual, conative, poetic and phatic, whose implementation may determine the functional effectiveness of supportive assessment being communicated.

The referential function in Jakobson's communication model focuses primarily on the content of the message, the purpose of which is to represent objects and states, and thus a description of the reality and the presentation of actual conditions. Therefore, it remains close to the diagnostic function of the school supportive assessment, the task of which is to determine an actual state of affairs, and then a detailed presentation of the results obtained in such a way (Kopaczyńska, 2004, p. 65). In the traditional assessment models, the diagnostic function of evaluation is limited only to the form of school grades informing about the level of student's mastery of previously assumed curriculum requirements. The process of supportive assessment is characterized by a broader approach to the diagnostic aspect. In addition to the grade, reflecting the level of mastery of the curriculum requirements, realized in the form of a digit, it is the teacher's commentary that provides the student with a set of detailed information describing his or her school achievements. If the comment, perceived as an act of communication, fulfills the referential function of language assumed by Jakobson, then the assumption can be made that it allows effective implementation of the diagnostic function of supportive assessment.

The emotive function (often referred to as the expressive one) focuses on the addresser of the message and his or her direct attitude towards the content of the message that is directed at the addressee. Likewise, in the situation of school assessment, the teacher communicating the evaluation expresses his or her attitude towards the student's achievements subject to prior checking (Niemierko, 2009, p. 112).

The diversification of the process of communicating evaluation, in which the teacher expresses his or her attitude towards the student's achievements, may arouse justified anxiety. For assessment contains a number of elements which do not always

value the effects of students' activities in a positive way. The basic condition to be fulfilled for establishing the process of effective communication of school grades is the readiness to receive a message containing evaluation that should be understood and accepted by the student.

It is exceedingly important to establish the act of communicating evaluation properly since both the assessment itself and the way it is expressed by the teacher decide on the student's satisfaction with his or her own work, determine their place in the school hierarchy and shape their motivation to undertake further activity. What can be observed in the pupils' environment is a regularity characteristic for communication processes, consisting in attentive listening and effective memorizing the content of information, expressing approval and positively evaluating their educational activities. Critical remarks, which a teacher directs to pupils in the form of a message, are more frequently listened to carelessly, and the content is remembered fragmentarily, sometimes being even eliminated from memory or transferred to the sphere of emotions as acts of hostility or even accusations directed at them. The above-mentioned regularity, which is referred to as the serial position effect in social psychology (Aranson et al., 2012, pp. 86-87), sets a certain pattern for correct communication of school evaluation. If the very beginning of a statement containing assessment will make the recipient qualify the message as an accusation or an act of hostility, then it allows to assume that the next piece of information will not be listened to carefully, interpreted properly and remembered by the student. In the process of communicating school evaluation, it is therefore important that the message containing assessment should start with providing positive information, which will be listened to carefully and arouse the addressee's responsive attitude towards the addresser and increase the level of trust in the information he or she provides. What proves to be extremely significant for a student is the expression of the teacher's attitude towards the pupil's achievements while communicating the assessment, mainly in its motivational dimension, as it stimulates the pupil's readiness to undertake further educational activities, largely determines their directions, shapes the teacher's image in the student's consciousness, builds trust and strengthens the quality of communicative perception. The proper use of the emotive function of communication enables effective implementation of the motivational function of supportive assessment.

Appropriate reception and understanding of the content of information is described by Jakobson with the use of the metalingual function. It focuses primarily on the process of coding information, on the very code used by the participants of a communication process and on the identity of meanings that make up the code used by the addresser and the addressee of the message. According to Jakobson (1989, p. 86), "whenever the addresser or the addressee wants to check whether they use the same code, the speech is reduced to the code and takes the metalinguistic function. *I am not sure what you mean* – the addressee says, and the addresser, in order to anticipate this kind of precariousness, makes sure: *Do you understand what I said?*". The meta-language function of interpersonal communication, described in Jakobson's

model, enables the implementation of the informative function of supportive assessment, as it is used to explain the content of the message and to strengthen its informational value (Stern, 2016, p. 29). The aforementioned identity of meanings that make up the language code used by the addresser and the addressee of the message, is reflected in the process of supportive assessment in the sphere of the assessment criteria formulated by the teacher. They should be explained in detail and understood by the student, and the evaluation given by the teacher should refer to the criteria and naturally result from the degree of their fulfillment. Explaining the assessment criteria, along with checking their correct interpretation, as well as the teacher's referring to these criteria at the time of communicating the student's results, support the process of proper interpretation of the assessment, which seems to be extremely important in the perspective of the student's further educational activity.

Communicating supportive assessment is not limited to the teacher's commentary that the evaluation of a student's performance is accompanied with. The reflective nature of supportive valuation of students' achievements and a greater degree of students' awareness regarding the educational process, which constitutes a consequence of adopting and applying the supportive assessment model in the educational practice, lead to a more meaningful, open dialogue between teachers and students in problem situations. The above-mentioned circumstances largely determine the interactive character of the act of communicating the supportive assessment, in which the roles of the addresser and the addressee – played by the teacher and students may undergo dynamic changes.

In its functional assumption, the supportive assessment, thanks to the guideline comment, influences students' further behavior and activities. The influence becomes clearly visible in different problem situations, when the teacher's commentary and the included instructions, which are to compensate for dysfunction, as well as to support in the learning process, are used to guide the student's further activity (Śliwerski, 2008, p. 75). The instructional function of supportive assessment is also reflected in the sphere of language functions that are included in Jakobson's communication model. For the aim of the conative function of interpersonal communication is to influence the behavior of the addressee through the addresser's information. As a consequence, it allows to assume that fulfilling the aforementioned conditions, the teacher's message that accompanies the supportive evaluation, directed at the student, fulfils the instructional function.

The poetic function of interpersonal communication, according to R. Jakobson (1989, p. 86), concerns primarily the content of the message, including the proper use of language, operating signs that make up its meaning system, as well as an appropriate choice of words and focusing on the way of speaking. In the process of communicating assessment, perceived as an act of communication, the poetic function refers basically to the technical aspects of constructing the commentary that accompanies the evaluation. Constructing the teacher's statement in the course of communicating assessment should be carried out so that its effective reception

is possible, and thus taking into account the student's perception, the appropriate choice of vocabulary and terminology, suitable in a particular situation. The use of appropriate linguistic means, which constitute an assumption of the poetic function of communication, enables effective implementation of the affirmative function of supportive assessment (Stern, 2016, p. 29). The use of suitable comparisons, as well as affirmative metaphors with respect to the student, may prove to be important in the process of communicating the supportive assessment, in the perspective of activities supporting the development, such as exposing the student's individual positive features, strengthening the student's self-esteem effectively, as well as strengthening the sense of success achieved by the student in terms of performed activities.

The last of the functions described in Jakobson's model of communication, referred to as phatic, serves to establish and maintain contact, sustain the act of communication and stimulate the attention of the interlocutor. The literature on the subject does not explicitly mention a function of supportive assessment with a corresponding impact, but indirectly it may result from the very essence of the function. Studies devoted to the supportive impact of school assessment rarely emphasize its exceedingly important factor, which is the time perspective. Supportive assessment, as an example of a school internal type of valuating pupils' achievements, constitutes a continuous process of diagnosing, informing and motivating a student, and its consequences can certainly be referred to as long-term ones.

The supportive impact of the commentary accompanying evaluation should not be limited to a single communication situation, in which a student is informed of the level of his or her achievements, mistakes they have made in the course of their education, along with constructive guidelines on how to eliminate them. For the essence of support is, in the light of the definitive approach adopted in the article, creating favorable conditions for education and upbringing, supporting the student's development, understood as a continuous process, the consequences of which appear gradually in the subsequent stages of the educational path. What is revealed in the light of the above-mentioned considerations, is a discounted function of supportive assessment, which consists in building a relationship between the teacher and the student, which is directly to constitute an attempt to orient the student's activity so that it supports their development, and indirectly to gain control over the learning process. Due to its specific nature, for the purposes of this study, the function of supportive assessment described above has been defined as a relational function. The relational function of supportive assessment can be effectively implemented with the use of the phatic function of communication, corresponding to it in the linguistic sphere, which serves, as mentioned above, to establish and maintain contact, prolong communication relations and stimulate the addressee's attention.

To sum up the considerations, it can be assumed that both the components of R. Jakobson's model of interpersonal communication and their functions show a certain synergy of relations in regard to the assumptions of pupils' school assessment of a supporting nature of impact.

In order to maintain an effective dimension of supporting their development, students' school assessment requires, therefore, not only teachers' proper preparation concerning the theoretical aspects of grading students' achievements, but above all, particular conditions that should be met for communicating evaluation. Supportive assessment, apart from the methodological aspects of its construction, is, first of all, an act of evaluation correctly communicated by a teacher to a student. As far as the communication process is concerned, the term "correctly" is concentrated around the interpretation of the meaning of assessment and comprehending it by the student, which, as a consequence, determines his or her further actions. What the category of support, as well as its quality, will depend on is the way in which the assessment is communicated, the construction of the teacher's commentary, which, in fact, constitutes a message accompanying the school evaluation directed by the teacher to the student in order to explain its meaning and guide his or her further activity.

R. Jakobson's model, emphasizing the essence of effective interpersonal communication, which is actually embedding a message in the context of common meanings and therefore making it understandable for the participants of the act of communication, reveals one of the key conditions for the evaluation process that must be met in order for its final effect – assessment to be described as supportive.

While analyzing the aforementioned functions of interpersonal communication and comparing them with the functions that supportive assessment should fulfill as far as the communication sphere is concerned, it can be stated that R. Jakobson's model, referred to in the paper, constitutes an example whose theoretical assumptions and premises could contribute to attributing a supportive nature to the assessment procedure realized in the educational school practice.

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THE PERSPECTIVE AND CONDITIONS OF PUPIL SUPPORTIVE ASSESSMENT IN THEORY AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE OF SCHOOL

Keywords: supporting development, school assessment, educational practice, teacher, pupil

Abstract: Supporting pupil development and educational activity realizes the most important paradigms and values which are present in contemporary pedagogics. The supporting category, as a part of educational practice, exists in the didactic measurement, and in the context of school and its pupils takes a form of an assessment. There is a certain deficit, both in the area of the supportive assessment concept concretisation, as well as among the features conditioning its proper construction. The reflections presented in this article focus on attempts to adopt a uniform approach to a supportive assessment definition and search for actions which can contribute practical implementation of this concept effectively.

PERSPEKTYWA I WARUNKI OCENIANIA WSPIERAJACEGO W TEORII I PRAKTYCE EDUACYJNEJ SZKOŁY

Słowa kluczowe: wspieranie rozwoju, ocenianie szkolne, praktyka edukacyjna, nauczyciel, uczeń

Streszczenie: Wspieranie rozwoju oraz edukacyjnej aktywności ucznia we współczesnej pedagogice staje się jednym z podstawowych oczekiwań działalności o dydaktyczno-wychowawczym charakterze. Kategoria wspierania, obecna w realizowanym w praktyce edukacyjnej pomiarze dydaktycznym, w kontekście szkoły i jej uczniów przyjmuje postać oceny. W literaturze przedmiotu nie brakuje opracowań podejmujących wspomniane zagadnienie, widoczny jest natomiast pewien deficyt zarówno w obszarze konkretyzacji pojęcia oceny wspierającej,

jak również wskazania cech niezbędnych dla procesu jej właściwego konstruowania. Prezentowane w niniejszym artykule rozważania koncentrują się z jednej strony wokół próby przyjęcia jednolitej definicji oceny wspierającej, z drugiej zaś wskazują na propozycje działań, których podjęcie może przyczynić się do efektywnej realizacji w praktyce edukacyjnej szkoły wspierającego oceniania uczniów.