



Dragana Lj. Stanojević¹

University of Niš, Teacher Training Faculty in Vranje

Aleksandra S. Jovanović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy

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Teachers' Attitudes towards Using Individualization in Descriptive Assessment

Extended summary

The right to respect individuality and individualized assessment is guaranteed to each student. Evaluation as a component of the educational process requires reexamination and development that will lead to the realization of the principles of individualisation. In the organization of teaching, individualization pushes the boundaries of evaluation, because a student is perceived and respected as an individual and personality in development. To respond to the principle of individualization in teaching, a teacher must possess a wide range of competencies. Primarily he/she has to assess students' achievement in accordance with their abilities.

The individualized evaluation reviewed through the descriptive assessment is certainly a permanent didactic innovation. Individually organized classes in which everyone works according to their abilities, continuous monitoring, recording and giving feedback on students' development, cooperation among teachers, parents, school counselors and educational institutions, and improving the competencies of the teachers are a key requirement for the individualization in assessment.

In this paper we deal with the individualization in the evaluation that we perceived through the process of descriptive evaluation. The aim of our research is to establish whether there are differences in the attitudes of primary school teachers about the implementation of individualization in the process of descriptive evaluation. We examined whether and to what extent individualization is represented in the assessment, for example, in terms of individual

¹ draganastanojevic_vr@yahoo.com

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differences of the students, continuous monitoring of the students development, implementation of individualized teaching, cooperation among teachers, parents, school counselors and educational institutions and the work on professional development. We wanted to determine whether the education about the individualization and descriptive evaluation, teachers' attitudes on training in the application of descriptive assessment, their attitudes on whether the descriptive evaluation is of a better quality than the numerical evaluation, and their opinions whether it is necessary to combine the descriptive and numerical evaluations, influence the differences in teachers' attitudes on descriptive individualized assessment.

We used descriptive method and scaling as the research technique. Five three-step scales were constructed for the purposes of the research: IIRU – measuring the respect of students' individual differences in the process of descriptive grading (23 items), the reliability of .82; PRU - measuring the individualized monitoring of students' development in the process of descriptive grading (22 items), the reliability of .84; INIIO - measuring teaching individualization (35 items), the reliability of .87; SIIO – measuring the cooperation of school stakeholders with the aim of implementation of individualization in the descriptive evaluation (15 items), the reliability of .73; and PRN - measuring the professional development of teachers (6 items), the reliability of .72. Teachers were responding to specific statements with never, sometimes or always. The sample included 144 primary school teachers from the city of Niš in the school year 2012/2013. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively in the program SPSS. The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for checking the reliability scale, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Kruskal-Wallis test, t-test, F test and Scheffe test.

The results showed that teachers with developed awareness of the need for more education about the individualization have more respect for individual differences of students, they follow the development of students, individualize their teaching and undergo professional development. Teachers who believe that additional education in the field of descriptive assessment is needed care more about the individual differences of students. Teachers who declared that the descriptive assessment is better than numerical evaluation monitor more closely the individualized development of students. Individualization of teaching is carried out the most by the teachers who feel that the descriptive evaluation, in some cases, is better than the numerical one. The highest level of cooperation is achieved by the teachers who feel that descriptive assessment is better and of a better quality than the numerical one. Teachers who claim that it is always necessary to perform a combination of different types of assessment carry out a more individualized teaching and aspire to professional improvement in order to implement descriptive assessment more effectively. We conclude that teachers apply individualization in the descriptive evaluation and their attitudes towards the individualized descriptive evaluation are not negative. This research contributed to the understanding of the importance of the application of this principle in teaching and the need for a continuous professional development.

Keywords: individualization, descriptive assessment, monitoring of students' development, cooperation, professional development.

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