



THE FORMATIVE DIMENSION OF SELF-ANALYSIS OF TEACHING ACTIVITY

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Abstract: The educational environment, in its entirety (ethos, environment, educational offer, teacher-pupil relations, pedagogical actions) is oriented towards meeting formally established quality standards in line with the educational needs of the direct and indirect educational beneficiaries. Ensuring the quality of teaching is a concern of teachers, and they are therefore interested in increasing the degree of professional efficiency and, implicitly, their perception and self-perception. This paper, based on qualitative educational research, presents a comparative analysis of ten case studies, based on specific teaching actions undertaken and self-monitored by primary school teachers in Romania, through the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity. In this paper we aimed to explore the triggers of teachers' higher-quality professional performance generated by the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity. As relevant aspects of teaching effectiveness, perceived by the participants in a focus group, following the practice of self-analysis of the teaching activity, we mention the following formative valences of it: use of critical thinking, knowledge of personal and professional identity, identification of answers to self-reflective questions, teaching self-regulation and awareness of dysfunctions in the educational process.

Key words: self-analysis of teaching activity, formative values of self-analysis of teaching activity, educational self-efficacy of teachers.

1. Introduction

The historical period we are going through is characterized by an unprecedented social versatility, which affects, in a positive or negative sense, the functionality of people's fields of activity, in particular the field of education. In contemporary society, the status of schools and teachers has changed substantially, and they are now claimed by new generations of students to be concomitant with their own idealistic projections. This is why achieving quality standards in education, without being accompanied by systems of concrete, adaptable, systematic and self-regulatory practices, undertaken by teachers and monitored by them and by the responsible bodies (Commission for Quality Assessment and Assurance, school inspectorates, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, Ministry of Education), which effectively meet the requirements of the direct beneficiaries of education, may become a utopian concept.

At the level of an educational institution, quality assurance involves three complex processes: internal quality assessment, external quality assessment and quality improvement. Quality improvement in education means continuous evaluation, analysis and corrective action on the part of the education provider/institution, based on the selection and adoption of the most appropriate procedures and the choice and application of reference standards (<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/ro/national-education-systems/romania/asigurarea-calitatii-educatia-timpurie-si-invatamantul>).

The first educational actors who can contribute to improving quality in education are teachers. Any strategy to improve quality in education implies, beforehand, a diagnostic system based on the deliberate nature of teachers' actions. This has the function of confirming or refuting the correctness of the actions taken by teachers and their level of satisfaction with regard to the achievement of the projected educational goals (Opre et al., 2014). At the first level of this diagnostic process, the self-analysis of teachers' teaching activity is positioned, which determines their self-perception of the degree of professional efficiency. The didactic efficiency is ensured in the instructional-educational activities

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through the coherent articulation of informational, methodical, educational, organizational and motivational resources, in order to achieve the educational goals. For example, the impact of effective teacher teaching is revealed through the successful pursuit and achievement of four priorities: understanding content, creating a positive environment, maximizing learning opportunities, and activating deep thinking (Coe et al., 2019).

Self-analysis of teaching activity is defined by Cioloca and Bocos (2023) as an interrogative, prospective and retrospective sequence on the main elements of structure, composition, events, experiences and feelings, accumulated in the educational act with the aim of resolving the dysfunctionality, in order to obtain superior results, from a qualitative point of view. Thus, through the systematic practice of self-analysis of teaching activity by teachers, they can identify their level of professional efficiency, reflected in different levels: the didactic design, the implementation of the National Curriculum, the use of the individual characteristics of students, the volume and difficulty of the contents and learning activities proposed for implementation, as well as the teaching strategies chosen for implementation and continuous evaluation. The practice of self-analysis of teaching activity by teachers requires them to develop non-cognitive skills that encourage their willingness to reflect on their own practices. These non-cognitive skills, according to Opre (2018, p. 18) "support voluntary effort (self-control, persistence, perseverance, development and growth mindset), emotional and social health (empathy, emotional intelligence, collaboration, communication), and reasoning and objective and/or non-conventional decision-making (critical thinking, curiosity, epistemic need for knowledge, problem solving, creativity)". Practicing self-analysis of teaching develops teachers' critical thinking skills, creating meaningful contexts for them to practice a high level of meta-reflection, in which pedagogical information and approaches are consciously processed. In this sense, "investigative procedures are applied through which reality is fragmented, broken down into systems, subsystems, parts, (inter)relations, (inter)determinations and actions, it is statically and dynamically analysed in order to identify all the elements, components, functions, forms, regularities and qualities that may have utility or relevance" (Bocos, 2013, p. 399).

In the same way, teachers practising self-analysis of their teaching activity re-explore their personal and professional identity, based on self-image and self-esteem, with their embedded components. The identity rediscovered in a self-analytical manner outlines their social consciousness, which is always in the process of being reactualized, by being connected to the characteristics of the social environment of which they are part (Vicol, 2019).

Through the self-analytical process, teachers can identify their weaknesses in the instructional process and intervene promptly to improve them, thanks to their self-regulatory skills. Self-regulation, according to Bocoş et al. (2021a), is a fundamental quality of the educational process, strategically engaged in any didactic/educational activity, designed in a curricular sense (Cristea, 1998), in order to achieve self-regulatory and improvement goals in instruction. Teachers ask themselves questions about how the successful elements and the deficient aspects of the didactic event were generated and about opportune didactic orientations in the future lessons carried out (Cioloca et al., 2022).

Teachers' reflections, analyses and conclusions, drawn from the practice of self-analysis of their teaching activity, can form pillars for the selection of in-service training programmes whose targeted content, subsequently appropriated by teachers, will produce positive changes in the classroom. "Both initial and in-service training must be subject to a series of clear objectives, aimed at developing a lifelong learning strategy as a whole, especially one in which the teacher is the one who directly responds to and mediates the problems faced by new generations." (Gutu, 2003, p. 9). Only in this way, through a conscious and active anchoring of teachers in their teaching actions, which can be enhanced by practicing self-analysis of teaching activity, can teachers achieve superior professional performance and, implicitly, relevant school results for students.

2. Research methodology

In the school year 2021-2022 we undertook educational research which involved applying the focus-group method to a sample of participants, primary school teachers in Romania. The sample of participants was selected by simple random sampling. The theme of the focus group activity was: the

valorisation of self-analysis of teaching activity. Following this activity, we proposed to the participants a set of tools, of our own design, to be applied by them (see Table 1). As only 10 teachers, out of the total of 67 participants, showed willingness to complete all the documents requested by us: the SWOT analysis, the self-analysis of teaching activity sheet applied at the end of eight lessons and a self-analysis of teaching activity sheet applied at the end of a learning unit, we carried out 10 case studies, through which we monitored how the self-analysis of teaching activity of primary school teachers was carried out. This paper is a comparative analysis of the 10 case studies carried out, aiming to highlight the formative dimension of the self-analysis of teaching activity.

Table 1. List of research tools and how to use them in benchmarking

Research tool	How to use the instrument in benchmarking
<i>Self-assessment sheet of the teaching activity, which can be applied at the end of a lesson</i>	Exploring teachers' professional expectations and measuring their achievement. To measure the level of participants' self-perceived educational effectiveness.
<i>Self-assessment sheet on teaching activity, which can be applied at the end of a learning unit</i>	Identify difficulties encountered by teachers in their teaching approach and formulate educational recommendations.
<i>SWOT analysis sheet</i>	Identification of the self-perceived formative values of the participants' self-analysis of teaching activity. To identify the self-reported threatening situations that teachers experience in the educational process.
<i>The grid of findings</i>	Measuring teacher participants' engagement in educational research from an observational perspective.

The 10 primary school teachers targeted in the case studies come from different counties and geographical regions: 4 teachers from Satu Mare county (Maramureş region), 2 teachers from Arad county (Crişana region), 2 teachers from Suceava county (Bucovina region), 1 teacher from Constanţa county (Dobrogea region) and 1 teacher from Harghita county (Transylvania region). We thus covered a considerable part of the Romanian territory (see Figure 1), the teachers agreeing to participate in the exploratory study. The comparative synthesis of the 10 case studies is structured according to the following categories of synthetic analysis, with the corresponding variables and measurement scales (see Table 2):

Table 2. Categories of synthetic analyses of the formative dimension of self-analysis of teaching activity

Crt. no.	Categories of synthetic analyses	Variable	Measuring scale
1.	Theoretical-interpretative analyses on the use of self-analysis of the teaching activity of primary school teachers, according to their career stage	Nominal variable: Participants' career stage	1= teaching grade: Definitiveness in pre-university education 2= teaching grade I 3= teaching grade II
2.	Analyses of the differences in the self-perceptive opinions of primary school teachers regarding the influence of threatening situations, felt by them, through the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity, on the quality of teaching activity.	- Ordinal variable: Self-perceived teaching effectiveness - Nominal variable: Career Step - Nominal variable: Teacher-coordinated class	1= not at all 2= to a small extent 3= neutral 4= to a large extent 5= totally 1= teaching grade: Definitiveness in pre-university education 2= teaching grade I 3= teaching grade II 1= preparatory class/ class I/ class II 2= grade III 3= grade IV

In this article we will detail only the first category of synthetic analyses: Theoretical-interpretative analyses concerning the value of self-analysis of the teaching activity of primary school teachers, according to their career step.

3. Theoretical-interpretative analyses on the use of self-analysis of the teaching activity of primary school teachers, according to their career stage

From a theoretical-analytical perspective, we propose to study how the educational effectiveness of primary school teachers can be developed through the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity.

A prerequisite for increasing teachers' self-perceived educational effectiveness is awareness of those teaching approaches that can improve classroom work. These approaches can contribute substantially to ensuring the formative value of self-analysis of teaching activity; therefore, we proposed to formalize them and record them in SWOT analysis sheets. According to the answers given by the 10 primary school teachers, we identified causal links between the intensity of the process of self-analysis of teaching activity and the level of self-perceived educational self-efficacy. In summary, these were organized sequentially, step by step, thus arriving to propose an optimal model for the valorisation of the teachers' self-analysis process of teaching activity (see Figure 1).

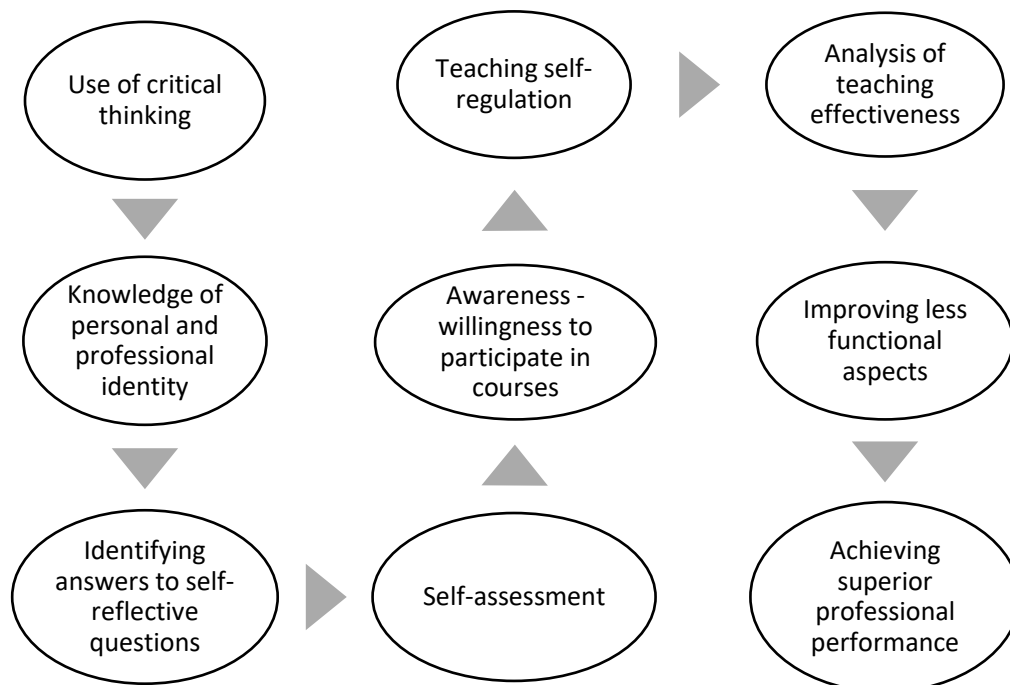


Figure 1. A model for the valorisation of self-analysis of teaching activity, developed on the basis of the causal links mentioned by the study participants

As shown in Figure 1, self-analysis of teaching can begin with the teacher exercising critical thinking in order to gain a more accurate understanding of personal and professional identity. In one of the case studies, teacher M.R. specifies that through this self-analytical process, "you begin to know what you thought you didn't know about yourself". At a higher cognitive level, the mental operation of analysis takes place, which provides answers to self-reflexive questions about the effectiveness of teaching. Following the self-analysis of these answers, the process of self-evaluation becomes imperative to identify the level of performance achieved by the teacher. In general terms, after an initial "anamnesis" carried out by the teachers, through self-evaluation, they can self-evaluate the strengths of their own teaching activity, as well as the problematic aspects that obstruct the smooth running of lessons. In this way, through critical and responsible awareness, teachers can choose to take steps (in-service training courses and programmes, exchanges of ideas and good practice, pedagogical reading, etc.) to adjust their teaching approach. Once they have developed the skills they have acquired as a result of the approaches they have taken, teachers can carefully, critically and carefully review their teaching effectiveness. This

critical-constructive analysis will enable dysfunctional aspects to be improved and, by extension, lead to higher quality professional performance. Looking comparatively at how primary school teachers relate to the use of self-analysis of their teaching activity, according to the nominal variable - career stage of the participants, we have taken the following actions:

- We classified the participants in the study according to the nominal variable: teachers' career step, using the measurement scale: 1 = teaching grade: definitiveness in pre-university education, 2 = teaching grade II, 3 = teaching grade I (see Table 3);
- We operationalized the variable and extracted behavioural indicators, coded on a random numeric scale, from the responses recorded by the participants in the SWOT analysis sheets, as follows: 1= use of critical thinking, 2= awareness of personal and professional identity, 3= identification of answers to self-reflective questions, 4= didactic self-regulation, 5= awareness -desire to participate in courses, 6= self-evaluation, 7= analysis of didactic effectiveness, 8= improvement of less functional aspects, 9= achievement of higher-quality professional performance (see Table 3);
- We expressed the corresponding frequency of each behavioural indicator of the variable (see Table 4);
- We have compiled a contingency table of indicators with a frequency greater than 1% associated with the dummy variable "teachers' career step" (see Table 5).

Table 3. Classification of participants according to the nominal variable: career step

Teacher participating in the study	Value in the measurement scale	Behavioural indicators
<i>C.E.</i>	1	8
<i>N.G.</i>	2	5, 6, 8
<i>G.A.</i>	2	4, 7, 9
<i>I.G.</i>	2	3
<i>M.-R.-L.</i>	2	3, 5
<i>O.M.</i>	2	4, 5, 8
<i>P.M.</i>	2	4
<i>R.M.</i>	3	1, 2
<i>S.C.</i>	2	1, 8, 9
<i>S.D.</i>	2	8

As can be seen, among the participants in the study, one teacher holds the definitiveness in pre-university education, one teacher holds the second degree, and the rest of the teachers, eight in number, hold the teaching degree I. The teacher who holds the definitiveness in pre-university education reports on the self-analysis of the teaching activity from the perspective of improving the less functional aspects of the teaching approach. The teacher who holds the second degree in teaching refers to the self-analysis of the teaching activity, from the perspective of an opportunity to exercise the competence of critical thinking and the rediscovery of one's personal and professional identity. However, to the same extent, teachers who hold the first teaching grade also relate, through the practice of self-analysis of teaching activity, to the same behavioural indicators of the variable: opportunities to exercise the competence of critical thinking and the improvement of less functional aspects of teaching. The only difference recorded, according to the nominal variable: participants' career stage, is given by the process of self-discovery of personal and professional identity, mentioned by the teacher who holds the second degree. The teaching profession is permanently exposed to cognitive, social, emotional, procedural challenges, so that it requires frequent restructuring of the teacher's teaching approaches, empathy towards other educational agents, and all this favours the exploration of the personal and professional self. And this process of exploration can be felt most strongly by teachers in the early years of their careers. Next, we were interested in identifying the frequency recorded by the self-reported behavioural indicators of the participants (See Table 4).

Table 4. Frequency corresponding to each behavioural indicator of the nominal variable

Behavioural indicator	Frequency of behavioural indicator
1	2
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	3
6	1
7	1
8	5
9	2

The highest frequency among the participants' responses is given by the behavioural indicator according to which self-analysis of teaching activity can be used to improve less functional aspects of the educational approach. The lowest frequencies correspond to the behavioural indicators according to which self-analysis of teaching activity can be used for knowledge of personal and professional identity, for the process of self-evaluation and for the analysis of teaching effectiveness. Thus, on the basis of the analysed data, we have extracted the formative values of self-analysis of teaching activity, self-perceived by the participants in the study and expressed with a frequency greater than 1, thus considering them relevant (see Table 5).

Table 5. Contingency table (Weight of the values of the nominal variable)

Behavioural indicators	Nominal variable: Career step		
	Definitiveness in pre-university education	Teaching grade II	Teaching grade I
Improving less functional aspects	1%		4%
Awareness - the desire to improve by attending courses			3%
Self-regulation of the teaching approach			3%
Achieving superior professional performance			2%
Developing critical thinking		1%	1%
Total (N = 10)	100% (N = 1)	100% (N = 1)	100% (N = 8)

The teachers involved in the present study are of the opinion that the process of self-analysis of their own teaching actions allowed them to draw conclusions about the impact that reflective practices had on their own educational approach.

According to the results recorded, both the teacher who holds the definitiveness in pre-university education and those who hold the first teaching degree, are permanently positioned in relation to identifying the most appropriate teaching techniques / strategies to produce improvements in the instructional process. These positive changes, which can lead to higher quality professional performance, targeted by teachers holding the first teaching degree, can be undertaken, through professional development, by attending and completing in-service training programmes. In spite of the vast teaching experience of the teachers participating in the study, they show a willingness to continue training, being aware through self-analysis of their teaching activity, of their real needs for improvement. It is obvious that self-regulation of the teaching approach, a formative valence that can be achieved through the practice of self-analysis of the teaching activity, according to the teachers with teaching grade I, can only be achieved in the presence of a critical thinking of the subjects, an

aspect mentioned both by the teacher with teaching grade I and by the teacher with teaching grade II.

4. Conclusion

The 10 case studies aimed at exploring the formative dimension of self-analysis of the teaching activity of primary school teachers, in order to identify correlations between specific teaching actions taken by teachers and ensuring the quality of the instructional-educational process, allowed the investigation of teachers' willingness to self-analyze, and thus to generate an increased level of educational self-efficacy. Based on the data obtained, we extracted some causal conditions for generating higher professional performance at the level of self-perceived efficacy, namely: use of critical thinking, knowledge of personal and professional identity, identification of answers to self-reflective questions, didactic self-regulation, awareness of dysfunctions and willingness to participate in in-service training, self-evaluation, analysis of teaching effectiveness, improvement of less functional aspects, obtaining higher qualitative professional performance. The perception of the value of self-assessment of the teaching activity of teachers at different career stages: definitiveness in pre-university education, second teaching grade, first teaching grade, in order to increase the quality of the instructional-educational process, shows slight differences. Thus, teachers at the beginning of their careers insist on formative values, such as: development of critical thinking skills and processes of self-discovery of personal and professional identity, while teachers who hold the first teaching degree are oriented towards reflections on previous teaching experiences, identifying the most effective teaching strategies for similar future educational situations.

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