EDUCATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR ORGANIZING ASSESSMENT IN DISTANCE STUDIES

Felicija Ivanauskienė

Department of Educology, Šiauliai University
P. Višinskio st. 25, LT – 76351, Šiauliai, Lithuania

Lina Tankelevičienė

Department of Informatics, Šiauliai University
P. Višinskio st. 25, LT – 76351, Šiauliai, Lithuania

Abstract. The paper analyses how computerized technologies of assessment, used in distance studies, correspond to modern educational concepts. The results of questionnaire, which was made to identify students' attitude towards computerized assessment and especially computerized tests are presented.

Keywords: assessment, self – assessment, forms of assessment, technologies of assessment, test.

1. Indroduction

The rapidly changing sociocultural and informational context with ever changing informational society alters students' relation with teaching and educational activities, their attitude towards assessment and self-assessment. Assessment of educational achievements becomes motivating the learners, enabling to control and rule the process of studies. From the aspect of assessment the alteration could be named as follows: from studies for the positive assessment to the assessment helping to study successfully. In the educational environment information technologies are used more and more wider. New possibilities for the assessment modeling appear in distance studies with the aim of maximally appeal to the learners needs. The changes in information technologies are oriented towards mentioned aspects of educational changes:

- It is necessary to adapt traditional technologies of assessment;
- On the other hand, it is important to create new technologies, which suit the purposes.

Used terms:

Assessment – process of permanent accumulating, interpreting and summarizing of information about the learners' results of the assessment process, concrete decisions about learners' accomplishments and progress.

Self-assessment – decisions made by the learner about learners' accomplishments and progress.

Technologies – the whole of the designing ways and developing tools with the aim of achieving certain results.

The aims of the research:

1. To analyze how modern educational concept are echoed in distance studies using technologies of computerized assessment.
2. To analyze students' attitude towards computerized assessment forms as well as computerized tests.

Object of research: Computerized assessment of students' study progress.

Organization of research:

To ascertain students' attitude towards computerized assessment and usage of tests in the process of assessment, in spring term of 2003/2004 the research was conducted. Open anonymous questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was filled by 55 respondents – Siauliai University students who have chosen distance courses.

2. Lithuanian situation

The development of educational thought and practice has rapidly changed in the world. The development of educational system in the context of modern educational and informational dimensions is very important in Lithuania in our days. The modern educatio-

nal conceptions determine all processes of education organization, and assessment of studies among them.

1. The conception of constant studies and the conception of lifelong learning is oriented towards acquiring competency of studies {7} With the repeal development of the amount of information and its development, more and more important become abilities of searching, selecting, interpreting, and transferring information. The evaluation has to assure rapid and good feedback [3, 9]. Independent studies and rising of qualification nowadays is an important precondition for staying in the marked workplace, so every student must develop constant competency of studies and abilities to evaluate his own progress, to learn to evaluate the results in the course.

2. When changes from teaching to learning appear, the students have to remain active in the process of assessment [7, 8]. The aim of assessment is to help a student and maturing of his personality, to motivate the progress, to evaluate the decisions.

3. The development of higher education is oriented towards the paradigm of change from teaching to learning and paradigm of permanent process of studies. In this aspect the conception of the assessment changes radically. As well as its organization clues there are the following types of assessment: standard, criterial, diagnostic, formative, generalizing, formal, informal, inner and outer [1, 2, 8]. The assessment is a structural part of educational process, so the strategies have to be oriented not only toward the assessment of the results of studies, i.e. concrete solution about the progress made, but as well at the constant assessment of education study processes. The following assessment dimension is oriented towards syste-

matic accumulation character. It gives opportunities for students to reach progress of studies, mastering the competences formulated in the course of the studies program.

3. Computerized testing as a form of assessment

A test is the most frequently used form of assessment in distance studies. The cause of its popularity is that they can easily state and assess the results and progress of studies. The reasons why lecturers should not use testing in the course in distance studies [4]:

- Keeping to stereotypes. If it is a distance study course and the system has possibilities for using test – we should use it.

- The usage of tests as demonstration of ones power in front of students.

- The usage of tests for proving to the commissioners, power etc. that the course functions normally.

Computerized tests, as usually used, enable us to evaluate different competencies.

4. Students' attitude to assessment

The results of questionnaire let us decide about the students' activity in what concerns the assessment.

The respondents characterize a wide spectrum of the assessment functions: to assess points of progress, to encourage for independent for studies, to teach, to motivate studies, to develop of interests (Figure 1).
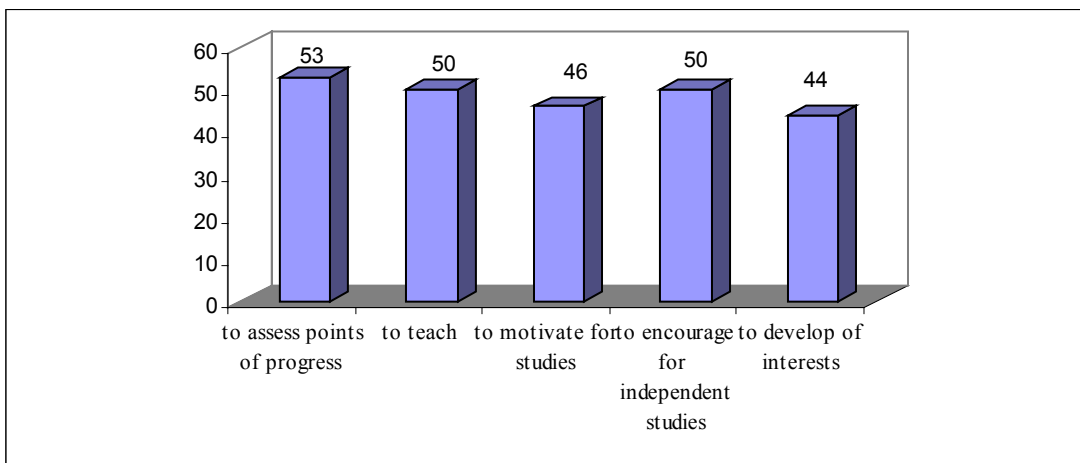

Figure 1. Students' opinion about evaluation purposes

Students' competencies assessment traditions and their attitudes toward different assessment forms are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

The analysis of the research data proves that oral and written examinations are not priorities using infor-

mative technologies. Lecturers often use the following assessment forms: testing (52 respondents), short tasks (21 respondents), discussions (24 respondents) (not only in distance course). In order to get speedy feedback students chose a test (43 respondents) or

accumulative form of assessment, a test and other written task. Oral answer is the mostly used form of assessment.

Table 1. Traditions of students assessment forms

Form	N
Written examination	51
Oral examination	39
Discussion	20
Practical tasks	43
Writing essay	50
Testing	41
Projects	3
Group tasks	12

Table 2. Desired forms of assessment

Form	N
Test (tests)	43
Written task (tasks)	13
Oral answer	4
Test and other written tasks	23
Test and oral answer	10
Test and oral answer	10

When characterizing all the main advantages of the usage of tests in the process of assessment the respondents told apart the concreteness of the tasks (45 respondents) and the speed of the feedback (44 respondents). IT was used in the testing and the respondents evaluated its objectiveness rather critically –

even 27 respondents say that the assessment using computerized tests is not always objective and right.

In the course of research we tried to investigate what problems students have come across in computer tests. The analysis of the research data showed that the main problems are the following the time limits are problem for 33 respondents, the inadequateness of computer literacy – 9 respondents. The influence of this group's problem can be diminished by corrections in the realization stages of planning the tests, their conducting, and feedback realization. The clearness of the variants of questions sent and their monosemantic – they all are expression of the lecturers' competency.

The students' opinion on different types of questions can be cleared too: Yes/No choosing, one meaning of the all choosing, several meanings finding, writing in short texts, matching. The analysis of the results proved that the problem of choosing several meanings and matching questions were the most difficult for students. It is also worth noticing that students consider questions of such type the most valuable, i.e. such questions give more information about the level of achievement than others.

It was important to define what components are necessary for successfull test performance.

The results (Figure 2) prove that students treat the assessment of the test as dependent on the following factors: knowledge of the subject, information abilities and practical abilities of doing a test. There could be a hypothesis that information abilities and practical abilities of doing tests are too mush though of since students are just beginning to use such form of assessment. In future we are planning to prove this hypothesis, carrying out some research on those who are studying not the first course of distance studies.
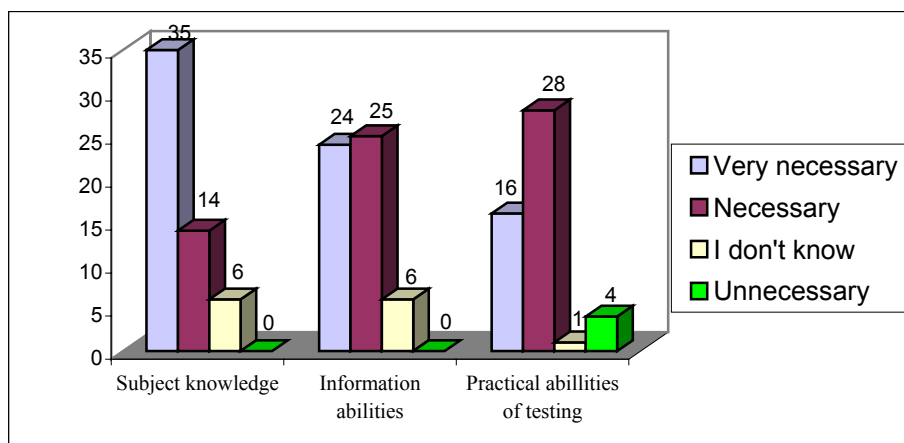

Figure 2. Components for the successful performance of the computer tests

4. Conclusions

1. The technologies of computerized assessment, which are oriented towards making students active in the process of studies and speedy feedback, keep with modern educational conceptions.

2. Modern computerized tests are a form of students' progress assessment, which can be expressed in different ways.

References

[1] **N.L. Gage, D.C. Berliner.** Educational Psychology. *Vilnius*, 1994.

[2] **J. Jensen.** Perfect teaching. *Vilnius*, 1999.

[3] **P. Jucevičienė, D. Lipinskienė.** Educative students enabling to study system in the context of learning paradigm. *Social sciences*, 2001, *no*.2(28).

[4] **W. Horton.** Test and exercise learning. *http://www.designingwbt.com/DesigningWBT/dwbttest.htm*, 2000.

[5] Pupils' progress and achievement assessment conception. *http://www.pedagogika.lt/ugdym2.htm*.

[6] Lotus Learning Space Forum 3.0 release Instructor's guide.

[7] ORCD, Recurrent education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning. *A Clarifying Report*, 1973.

[8] **P. Ramsden.** Learning to Teach in Higher Education. *London: Routledge*, 1992.

[9] Education guidelines. *Vilnius*, 2002.