

# Chapter 12

## Self–Assessment: Preservice Teachers’ Concepts, Instruments, and Practices

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter focuses on self-assessment as a decisive assessment for students’ learning and offers the results of a study done with 72 university students. The authors investigated preservice teachers’ views on self-assessment, the instruments used, and the implications for their students’ learning. The results showed that while preservice teachers appear to understand what self-assessment is theoretically, in practice it is a non-systematic assessment with a planned day and criteria that is invariably quantitative. It appears that it is done because it is legally required and not because teachers believe students need to critically reflect on their learning.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

At a time when the teaching profession’s credibility, identity, and professionalism are under constant attack, it is becoming increasingly necessary to professionally equip teachers with the theoretical, technical, practical, and ethical tools that will allow them to enter the teaching profession without turmoil.

In response to the Bologna Treaty (which created a European Space for Higher Education), to which Portugal was a signatory, initial teaching education was governed by Decree-Law No. 79/2014 (with reference to Decree-Law No. 74/2006 and Decree-Law No. 43/2007), which defines that the Teaching Practicum is a curricular unit of the last two semesters of the master’s degree for teaching, providing preservice teachers with the experience of performing the teaching profession during an academic year.

Higher education institutions establish protocols with a network of cooperating schools (public or private) to host groups of two to four preservice teachers (the teaching practicum group) guided by a

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teacher from the respective school (the school tutor), in collaboration with the faculty tutor, for the operationalisation of this curricular unit.

In addition to a procedural and formative evaluation of the preservice teachers, two formal moments of evaluation are established during the year of teacher training. The first aims to have all those involved (preservice teacher, school tutor, and university tutor) critically reflect on the preservice teachers' learning and on the entire respective learning process, with the goal of identifying and reinforcing their strengths and detecting difficulties to define strategies to overcome them. The second moment, which coincides with the end of the Teaching Practicum, has two goals: to identify skills that preservice teachers have not yet fully developed, providing them with clues to direct their future self-training and to contribute to a final grade. This classification is required for teachers to apply to the annual school placement throughout their careers.

The intermediate assessment is critical between these two moments because it allows us to intervene in the training process of a preservice teacher, adjusting or improving the corresponding training path while focusing entirely on the abilities already obtained and those that need to be taught in a different method, with no place for any type of classification.

## **BACKGROUND**

Assessment, regardless of the form it takes, is one of the most challenging tasks for the novice teacher, as preservice teachers generally confirm in their final reports of the Teaching Practicum. Morgan and Hansen (2007) also identified this difficulty, stating that this is the area competence in which teachers feel less competent in their teaching practice.

Even though these issues persist throughout the school year, they are more focused at the start and are usually explained by the difficulty in articulating what they genuinely want to analyse and how to do it. Additionally, the problems of observation, the unfamiliarity of the pupils' identities, and, most importantly, the frequent use of unnecessarily complex and extensive assessment grids do not facilitate agile and quality data collection.

The preservice teachers' inexperience frequently causes them to apply endless grids, which they created or adopted from the disciplinary group, in which each activity is divided into several technical determinants with varying valuations. Because the sum of parts, that is, the sum of each rated technical gesture, does not direct us to the true worth of the pupils' performance, this frequently leads to an evaluation that is completely different from reality. Due to its decontextualisation and withdrawal of decision-making capacity, this assessment by isolated technical gestures does not indicate the pupils' performance level in the sport in question.

These obstacles are summarised in the final report by one of this year's preservice teachers: *the primary issues in the formative assessment process in the early stages of the teaching practicum were in the coherence of gathering information on the performance of our students, as our observation capacity did not correspond to the quantity of criteria to be observed. Adding, subsequently, that the instruments used in the assessment were designed and authorised by the school's physical education group and that the use of unfamiliar tools made this procedure challenging.*

On the other hand, becoming a teacher at a school where most of the other teachers still see assessment and classification as synonymous concepts and use a traditional assessment system enables preservice teachers to easily fall into the same cycle. In summary, one cannot apply something that one has never

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