A RUBRIC PROPOSAL TO EVALUATE SCIENTIFIC REPORTS IN THE SOCIAL WORK DEGREE

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Abstract

The adaptation of Higher Education to the European Higher Education Area has introduced a new model in which the student is a key element in the learning process. In this context, evaluation learning systems have been redefined in order to promote a teaching-learning process in which the student can be the main character.

Because of this modification, new evaluation instruments have emerged, prioritizing formative evaluation. Among them, rubrics are highlighted since their main purpose is to guide the evaluation of work carried out by the students. A rubric is a table composed of two axes. One of them considers the criteria that the teacher will take into account to assess the students’ assignments. The other considers various levels of performance that the student can achieve, such as excellent, good, acceptable, and insufficient. Among the advantages attributed to rubrics, its potential to establish a common evaluation framework stands out, enabling more objective evaluations.

This article presents an experience on the use of the rubric in the subject “Research in Social Welfare Systems” belonging to the Degree in Social Work at the University of Valencia. The objective was to develop a tool that could introduce objective criteria to evaluate scientific and research proposals developed by students. Moreover, it was intended that students become actively in their learning process.

The devised rubric consisted of four levels of performance (excellent, good, adequate and need to be improved) and 6 evaluation criteria to evaluate the scientific proposals. The rubric was administered to the students at two different times: during the planning of the proposals in class, to show the students the evaluation criteria, and before their submission to help the final revision of the proposal by the students.

In order to evaluate its impact on the student learning process, at the end of the course a questionnaire was administered so that students could evaluate the impact that the several tools used in the subject had had on their learning process. Each tool was rated with a Likert scale with 4 levels, where 4 implies the highest and 1 the lowest impact. In addition, in each item, the students could express their reasons for score. This questionnaire was administered to 22 students.

The results have shown that the students scored the impact of the rubric as 3.04 out of 4. Among the advantages attributed to this instrument, the students pointed out that it was a tool that helped to guide them and clarify their doubts about the assignment to be performed. The fact that it showed all the requirements that the work should have was highlighted as a positive aspect. However, among the disadvantages, it was considered that this instrument was very long and extensive and some of the criteria were demanding.

From the teacher's point of view, it is considered that the rubric has been a tool that has facilitated the work of marking scientific proposals, introducing a common framework for the evaluation of very diverse works. This has contributed to greater objectivity in the marking process. From the point of view of the students, it was positively valued because it offered guidance and showed the elements that the lecturer would take into account in the evaluation of their assignments.

Keywords: Educational innovation, rubric, evaluation, social work.

1 INTRODUCTION

The adaptation of Higher Education to the European Higher Education Area has introduced a new model in which the student is a key element in learning process. This model pays special attention to the acquisition of competences, introducing new changes in the role of both in teachers and students with the aim of promoting a significant learning process to students.
Because of this modification, new evaluation instruments have emerged, prioritizing formative evaluation. Beyond traditional exams, the new model of education based on competences is calling for evaluation tools able to enhance the learning process by offering students feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. In this new evaluation framework, the use of the rubric has been extended as an instrument whose main purpose is to guide the evaluation of the assignments and work carried out by the students [1] [2].

Rubrics are defined as an evaluation template that consist of a descriptive scale that defines different levels of achievement in a certain aspect [1]. Rubrics are a table composed of two axes. One of them considers the criteria that the teacher will take into account to assess the students’ assignments. The other considers various levels of performance that the student can achieve, such as excellent, good, acceptable, and insufficient.

There are several advantages attributed to rubrics. In particular, its potential to establish a common evaluation framework for teachers stands out, increasing objectivity in marking. On the one hand, rubrics permit a more objective evaluation between different teachers, increasing the evaluation’s reliability. On the other hand, they allow a more objective evaluation from the same teacher evaluating the same work in different moments. Beyond the benefits for teachers, rubrics are instruments that allow self-assessment in students. Thus, students can reflect and get feedback on their performance in a specific topic by knowing the mistakes or errors that they have made in a project or assignment [3] [4] [5]. Consequently, students are able to learn from their mistakes.

Considering the aforementioned rubrics’ advantages, this article presents an experience on the use of the rubric in the subject "Research in Social Welfare Systems" belonging to the Degree in Social Work at the University of Valencia. This subject is made up of five lessons and, in particular, the main goal of lesson two is to introduce enough knowledge as well as tools and skills to apply for research calls related to the topic of Social Welfare Policy. To this end, students working in groups have to prepare a research project proposal. The evaluation of this kind of assignment can be difficult for teachers. Although students can chose freely the topic of their proposals, proposals are structured in several sections that call for some specific content. As a result, research proposals are long documents in which not only the content but also the clarity of the document and the scientific language are key elements to be considered. From the point of view of students, they usually face many difficulties in developing this kind of task since it can be very complex, as it is the first time they have worked on it during the degree and its content, language and structure is new. Experience from previous years has shown that the mark achieved by students in scientific proposals are lower than other assignments carried out in the subject.

In particular, this experience has a double objective. On the one hand, it aims to develop a tool that could introduce objective criteria to evaluate scientific and research proposals developed by students. On the other hand, it attempts to make students more involved in their evaluation process and improve their learning process and marks by knowing the evaluation criteria that are important in scientific proposals.

2 METHODOLOGY

Taking into account some previous works [3] [6], the rubric devised consisted of four levels of performance according to the score that students need to get in their assignments- excellent [10], good [9-8], adequate [7] and need to be improved [less than 7]. In the second axis, 6 evaluation criteria were established to evaluate the scientific proposals according to the proposals sections, their content and layout. In each criteria, the requirement to meet each level of performance was specified. This design made it possible to obtain a total score per evaluation criteria. As each evaluation criteria had a different value, the final mark of the students work was obtained by weighting their value.

The rubric was administered to the students working in groups at two different times: during the preparation of the proposals in class, to show the students the evaluation criteria, and before their submission so that the rubric could be an instrument to help the final revision of the proposal by the students.

In order to evaluate its impact on the student learning process, at the end of the course a questionnaire was administered so that students could evaluate the impact that the several tools used in the subject had had on their learning process. Each tool was rated with a Likert scale with 4 levels,
where 4 implies the highest and 1 the least impact. In addition, in each item, the students could express the reasons for their score. This questionnaire was administered to 22 students.

3 RESULTS
From the point of view of the students, the results have shown that the students scored the impact of the rubric elaborated as 3.04 out of 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubric 3.04/4</td>
<td>Guide Clarify doubts to know the evaluation criteria</td>
<td>Extensive Exigent criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the advantages attributed to this instrument, the students pointed out that rubric is a tool able to guide and help them to clarify their doubts about the assignment to perform. The fact that it shows all the requirements that the work should have was highlighted as a positive aspect.

However, among the disadvantages, it was considered that this instrument was very long and extensive and some of the evaluation criteria were very demanding.

From the teachers’ point of view, the rubric helped to evaluate the scientific proposals in several ways. First of all, it guided the evaluation of complex work, facilitating the teacher’s. Secondly, it helped to mark all the students’ work in a more objective way, even though the projects were very different from each other. In addition, each work was evaluated in a more objective way.

4 CONCLUSIONS
The adaptation of Higher Education to the European Higher Education Area has introduced a new model in which the acquisition of competences by the students is vital. This model is not only calling for new teaching methods but also for new evaluation tools according to the new requirements. In this framework, formative evaluation has gained importance since it is able to promote learning processes in students beyond providing a single mark.

In this paper, an experience in the subject "Research in Social Welfare Systems" belonging to the Degree in Social Work has been shown, with the double objective of developing a tool that could introduce objective criteria to evaluate scientific and research proposals, and to know students’ opinion about this tool as they become involved in their evaluation process.

The results have shown that, from the teacher’s point of view, it is considered that the rubric has been a tool that has facilitated the work of marking scientific proposals, introducing a common framework for the evaluation of very diverse works. This has contributed to greater objectivity in the marking process when one evaluator has to mark several works (intra-evaluator reliability). This fact ensures that all the assignments have been evaluated considering the same scale. The fact that the rubrics specify the requirements that students need to meet in each level of performance, makes the evaluation a transparent process as other studies have previously shown [1] [2] [3]. In addition, this tool helps to obtain the total score of the assignments.

From the point of view of the students, it was valued positively because it offered guidance and showed the elements that the lecturer would take into account in the evaluation of their assignments.

It is considered that showing the rubric to the students in two different moments has had a positive impact since it has provided orientation and guidance to the students in the line with other studies [5].

Thus, this work has shown that rubrics can have a positive impact on students. First, it has provided orientation and encouraged the self-assessment in students by showing how they can reach each level of performance. Therefore, this tool not only has some advantages for teachers but also for students as it is able to support and guide in their learning process.
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