INCREASING AUTONOMY: shifting the educational paradigm

Margaret Gomes[1]

Abstract:

Traditional teaching methodologies which are predominantly teacher centered are still prevalent in classrooms today. The education system as we know it today was first conceived in the mid-19th century, where an academic perspective of education was the underpinning of classroom activities. The system was based around the creation of classes, subjects, timetables and bells, where the only thing students had in common was their age and the only aim was to qualify students to find a job. This system however, was conceived for a different time and bears no resemblance to contemporary society. The way we work, communicate and socialize has changed, yet the educational paradigm remains the same. Teachers' expectations of how students should work and behave in the classroom have not evolved as society has changed. A degree no longer guarantees a job and an educational shift should take place to bring education into the 21st century. According to Sir Ken Robinson, we should be encouraging divergent thinking, in other words, the capacity to be creative and come up with a range of possible solutions to a problem. This paper outlines a set of guidelines which aims to increase awareness as to the importance of increased autonomy and how autonomous thinking can shift the educational paradigm and increase student autonomy, with a view to better preparing students for the workplace.

Key words:

Higher Education. Student. Autonomy. PBL. CBL.

AUTONOMIA: mudanças de paradigmas educacionais

Resumo:

Metodologias de ensino tradicionais centradas no professor são comuns em salas de aula hoje em dia. O sistema educativo atual foi concebido nos meados do século XIX, quando as atividades em sala de aula se baseavam numa perspetiva académica da educação. Neste sistema prevalecia a criação de turmas, disciplinas, horários e toques de campainha, onde o único fator que unia os estudantes era a sua idade e o único objetivo era habilitá-los para exercer uma profissão. Contudo, o sistema foi criado noutra época, que não se assemelha à sociedade contemporânea. A forma como trabalhamos, comunicamos e socializamos mudou, mas o paradigma educativo manteve-se. As expetativas dos professores em relação à forma como estudantes trabalham e se comportam em sala de aula não evoluiu à medida que a sociedade foi mudando. Uma licenciatura já não garante um emprego e deve haver uma mudança na forma como educamos, para trazer a educação para o século XXI. O *Sir* Ken Robinson diz que devíamos estimular o pensamento divergente, ou seja, a capacidade de ser criativo e de desenvolver várias soluções para um problema. Este artigo tem como objetivo o desenvolvimento de um guião que visa aumentar o nosso entendimento da importância da

---

[1] Mestrado em Estudos Ingleses. Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal. E-mail: mgomes@ua.pt.

autonomia e a forma como o pensamento autónomo pode mudar o paradigma educativo e, assim, aumentar a autonomia dos estudantes para os preparar para o mercado de trabalho.

Palavras-chave:
Ensino Superior. Estudante. Autonomia, PBL. CBL.

Introduction

Education is one of the basic premises of the Rights of the Child[2] () and one of the cornerstones of ensuring the development of societies all over the world. The education system we have in the industrialized world today dates back to the mid-19th century at the time of the Industrial Revolution. This paper aims to analyze the traditional classroom, which goes back over 150 years, and present how recent teaching theories and methodologies, including increased autonomy, may be more in tune with today's globalized world and may prepare students better for the workplace.

Autonomy in education refers to the ability a student has of finding the solution to a situation or problem on their own. Autonomy in the classroom was not a prerequisite of learning and did not take into consideration factors such as children's different learning abilities and experiences. The objective of this paper is to give a concrete set of guidelines which can be used by teachers with a view to increasing their own autonomy and that of their students in the context of the higher education classroom. The examples outlined in this paper have been carried out in language classrooms at the Department of Languages and Cultures of the University of Aveiro in Portugal. However, the principles underpinning these experiences can be easily extrapolated to other areas.

The transition between university and the workplace has always been difficult due to the different demands and tasks required in each setting. Wood and Kaczynski (2007) state that 'Few university graduates are prepared for the realities of work, with even fewer displaying the skills necessary for success in gaining employment' (p. 94). Dividing students into groups and targeting teaching content and methodologies to the majority of students enables most of them to pass exams, but to what extent are they ready to overcome the obstacles and challenges of the workplace and how are their specific learning needs

---

[2] Disponível em: https://panww.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf. Acesso em: 19 abr. 2017.

addressed? There needs to be a shift to ensure that we adapt our teaching to all students, regardless of background or competence and that we aim to satisfy the needs and expectations of each and every student so that they can maximize their potential. Ideally this will result in customized rather than standardized education. The fact that educators spend so much time in their academic environment means that they are sometimes unaware of the demands of the current market. In addition, globalization and increased communication requires a different skillset to obtain professional and personal success. This should be reflected in the classroom for the benefit of the students.

Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk on Education in 2006 is stated as the most watched TED talk ever[3]. In it he defines creativity as 'the process of having original ideas that have value'. He adds that schools are not helping to create future professionals because they are killing creativity[4] and that contemporary education is based on a system conceived during the Industrial Revolution[5] He adds that in general, school has one aim; to prepare students to do university entrance exams. A further compounding factor is that universities have based their curricula on the school system, which, if one agrees with Sir Ken Robinson, ends up killing any creativity which is left in their undergraduates.

So what can be done to revert this process and maximize the potential of university students? Clements and Hays suggest that universities should focus on 'forging continuing and mutually-beneficial relationships with industry and community partners' (2012) so that curricula and subjects and/or modules prepare students for what they will have to face in the workplace. This requires open and continuous dialogue among the main stakeholders involved in university education, namely teachers, quality managers and of course the students themselves in order to assure quality in educational practice.

Using the language classroom as an example, Forey (2004) states that there is a

> […] disparity between the extent and range of differences in the way teachers and business people interpret messages. Teachers and others outside the workplace, such as researchers, perhaps tend to be overly sensitive to linguistic choices whereas the business informants, who are directly involved in producing and receiving such texts, appeared to take a far more practical view of the way in which language construes meaning (p. 465).

---

[3] Disponível em: https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239672. Acesso em: 04 abr. 2017.
[4] Disponível em: https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en. Acesso em: 29 abr. 2017.
[5] Disponível em: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U. Acesso em: 29 abr. 2017.

In other words, teachers may not be fully in tune with what is expected of employees in the workplace and focus on areas which are less important in the workplace. Therefore, teachers should look at businesses to see which skills and competences they need to encourage and develop in students an undergraduate level to succeed professionally.

In addition to this, teachers should base their program design on solid models which enhance motivation and encourage students to take control of their own learning. The model underpinning the design of the subjects outlined in this paper is the ARCS model put forward by Keller (2010). The acronym ARCS refers to the ability to increase the students' **A**ttention, show them the Relevance of the tasks they have to carry out, build their **C**onfidence through tasks which are challenging but achievable so that they can gain Satisfaction from their work. In this way, input factors should result in positive output ones which in turn lead into further input factors, and the loop continues. According to Keller, ways of raising attention include perceptual arousal, inquiry arousal and variability. Relevance is shown through goal orientation, motive matching and familiarity. Confidence is built through learning requirements, success opportunities and personal control and finally satisfaction is gained through intrinsic reinforcement, extrinsic rewards and equity (2010). He states that

> […] Motivation consists of the amount of effort a person is willing to exert in pursuit of a goal; hence, motivation has magnitude and direction. Consequently, motivational design is concerned with connecting instruction to the goals of learners, providing stimulation and appropriate levels of challenge, and influencing how the learners will feel following successful goal accomplishment, or even following failure (KELLER, 2017).

Going beyond this production line and standardized testing approach should result in motivated students who are not afraid of trying to find a solution to the challenges they face. In the real world, there is not just one right answer, which can be found at the back of the book, but more or less effective ways to carry out a task. Redesigning programs and increasing the practical dimension of many degrees, providing educational and pedagogical (re)training to teachers and the discussion of best practices in higher education are just some of the ways to bring the teaching community and local industry closer together by creating programs which are appealing. Teenagers are constantly stimulated by computers, cell phones, hundreds of channels on television, access to films, series and music online and they are bombarded with information. Teachers should maximize this new era in technology and communication and use it whenever possible to create a learning environment which is

familiar to students. In this way, teachers can make a leap from the mid-19th century into the present, and with it, start a new age of teaching methodology.

1 Degree description

The creation of this list of guidelines which can be followed in higher education aims to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of increasing student autonomy. The guidelines outlined here were carried out through personal experience and participation in a number of projects which aimed to improve the quality of teaching in higher education. Extensive teaching in a number of different subjects or curricular units across different degrees provided an opportunity to implement a trial and error approach to find what works in the classroom. Although these experiences apply to the language classroom, namely business and translation, it is possible to take these experiences and create guidelines which can be applied to different areas of study.

The methodology used to gain an insight into how autonomy and motivation may be increased and maximized in the classroom was a retrospective, reflective and longitudinal one at the University of Aveiro in Portugal. The University of Aveiro is one of the newer universities in Portugal, and was founded in 1973. From its inception, its focus was to train graduates for the workplace as well as for academia, therefore the degrees taught there were developed with the marketplace in mind.

The Department of Languages and Cultures (DLC) initially offered five-year degrees in Education, which included supervised teaching practice. They focused on improving the students' language skills and developing competences in the areas of pedagogy and didactics. In the academic year 2001/02, the DLC developed a new degree which was totally geared towards the marketplace. The degree was in Languages and Business Relations (LBR), which aims to train professionals to use foreign language skills with knowledge of different areas of business, including Marketing, Human Resources, Organizational Behavior and Economics, as well as ICT. The development of this degree was a turning point in the way the DLC operates in that for the first time, graduates were being trained for real life working environments. The degree was conceptualized taking into account the real needs of the companies in the region of Aveiro. Input was provided by the CEOs, managers and employees

of local companies and these stakeholders played a major role in identifying the desired skills and competences graduates needed, which were then taken into account during the design of the degree program.

As a result of the success of this degree program, in 2004/05, the DLC opened new degrees in Languages and Publishing, and Translation, both of which were developed after extensive research into the local market's needs. That same year, due to a drop in the number of teachers needed in Portugal, the DLC reformulated its existing education degrees and opened a degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

The practical and multidisciplinary nature of these degrees require teachers to go beyond text book learning and develop their autonomy to ensure that their teaching skills create a learning environment which prepares students for the workplace through increased autonomy. Therefore, this paper outlines the process of design, implementation and monitoring of two specific degrees, the First-Cycle Degrees in LBR and Translation and different teaching methodologies can increase learner autonomy and result in future employees with a skillset which makes them better prepared for the workplace. Both degrees have an English component which assumes that students enter the degree ready to start English classes at B2 level and leave at C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Although the students' previous learning experiences are very similar, the profile of future professionals in these areas is very different; therefore the required skillset of each area needs to be taken into account if the teacher is to design area specific content. This is where autonomy is key. Both degrees have English I through to IV in the first two years of their degree program. In year three, the LBR degree students have English V and VI – Communication Strategies, and the Translation students have English V and VI and two translation focused subjects, English Translation Practice I and II. There are clear differences in the third year subjects, but in years one and two, the design of English I through to IV is specific to each degree. As a result, the subjects have the same name but the content is different and the methodology used and tasks required of the students are area specific.

The following sections outline the differences in program design and a seven-step set of guidelines which aim to help teachers become more autonomous in the classroom and thus enable students to work more independently.

2 Program design

Analysis of the LBR and the Translation Degree clearly shows that there are subjects with the same name in the first two years, followed by some overlap in year three. However, the content of each subject is different according to which degree the students are taking. Table 1 shows each English subject for both degrees as well as the content covered in each subject.

Table 1: Content of English subjects in the degrees in languages and business relations and translation

	LBR	Translation
Year 1, semester 1 **Subject: English I**	Describing graphs Opinion writing False cognates / ambiguous / easily confused words Writing concisely Case study: brainstorming meeting	Object description Narrative tenses Building description Case study: guided tour Translation tasks of the above
Year 1, semester 2 **Subject: English II**	Business letter writing / emails Communication in the workplace Basics of negotiations Idiomatic language / business verbs Prefixes and abbreviations in business Writing concisely / avoiding redundancy Verb tenses (as required) Good / Bad communicators Case study: negotiating	Biographies Film synopses Verb tenses Film reviews Case study: presentation of film Translation tasks of the above
Year 2, semester 1 **Subject: English III**	Selecting a Portuguese product and Market research Production of a leaflet/brochure Selling a product - marketing & advertising Benchmarking Adapting products for other markets Product presentation	Short stories Extended reading skills Literature in cultural studies Writing academic papers Translation of excerpts of academic papers Revision of academic papers
Year 2, semester 2 **Subject: English IV**	Letters of introduction Letters of enquiry + response Removing redundancy in writing Writing proactively rather than reactively Introducing improvements and expansion of company/product Case study: meetings	Tourist related texts Extended reading Writing for tourism Translation of tourism texts

Year 3, semester 1 **Subject: English V***	Diplomatic language Making phone calls Socializing in intercultural negotiations Emails, visitors plans, negotiation worksheets, letters, customer circulars, press releases and internal memos Case study:	Contemporary culture in English speaking countries Extended reading skills Opinion language Opinion texts Research tasks
Year 3, semester 1 **Subject: English Translation Practice I**		Advertising Informative leaflets Instruction manuals Development of academic portfolio
Year 3, semester 2 **Subject: English VI***	Website design and creation Vision and mission statements Report writing Marketing plan Case study: presentation of promotional material	Different textual genres Register in texts Form and structure of English in different textual genres Extended reading and research Research project
Year 3, semester 2 **Subject: English Translation** **Practice II**		Official documentation Subtitling Scientific abstracts Development of professional portfolio

* For the Languages and Business Relations Degree, the focus is on communication strategies

From Table 1 it is clear to see that although the number of hours and levels are very similar, the contents covered in each degree is completely different, as teachers aim to teach, guide and create tasks for students which are directly related to what they may have to do in the workplace in the future.

The table clearly shows that despite the similarity in English competence at entry level, the CEFR level students should be at by the time they have completed their degree and the fact that many of the subjects have the same name and the same overarching program, the contents of each subject vary substantially. The teachers of each degree sat down and tailor-made a curricular program which was specific to each degree and to the skillset each group of graduates will need once they enter the workplace. At the DLC, teachers are fortunate enough to be given the autonomy to design and implement their own program, allowing them to create a learning environment which has the potential to motivate students and encourage them to increase their autonomy.

In many of these subjects, there was a clear attempt to incorporate to some extent a PBL, or Problem Based Learning, approach to all the above mentioned tasks. PBL has been

the preferred educational methodology used in many ground breaking universities and provides a real alternative to the traditional classroom. It consists of presenting students with a problem in small teams, where exercises or tasks have to be completed without much input from the teacher, whose role is more of a guide and facilitator than a teacher in the traditional sense of the word. Without the source of the answer, students have to find solutions to the problems through discovering what needs to be learnt and in groups develop ways of finding solutions to those problems in an autonomous way. This approach enables students to develop their research, interpersonal and communication skills, while at the same time be critical of themselves, others and the information they find; skills which they will need later on in life[6]. Thomas Frey, a futurist speaker at the DaVinci Institute in Colorado, USA, has predicted that over two billion jobs will disappear by 2030, about 50% of the current jobs on the planet[7]. This does not mean that there will actually be two billion fewer jobs in the world, but that the youth of today will need to be flexible, creative and innovative in their approach to work and how they carry out their tasks in the various job positions they will probably have during their lifetime. PBL is a methodological approach which may help students develop the skills to help them succeed.

More recently, the concept of CBL, or Challenge Based Learning, has come to the fore. It is similar to PBL but requires students not just to solve a problem but to formulate a set of questions which may be relevant to overcome the challenge which has been presented to them and work together to find possible solutions. CBL, much in the same way as PBL, enables students to learn autonomy, organization and the advantages of collaboration[8]. Although teachers may not be in a position to use PBL or CBL in their classrooms a lot of the time, some of the underpinnings of these approaches may help teachers to think about new and different ways that materials can be explored in the classroom to increase student autonomy.

3 Teaching guidelines

---

[6] Disponível em: http://www.studygs.net/pbl.htm. Acesso em: 30 abr. 2017.

[7] Disponível em: http://www.futuristspeaker.com/business-trends/2-billion-jobs-to-disappear-by-2030/. Acesso em: 30 abr. 2017.

[8] Disponível em: https://library.educause.edu/resources/2012/1/7-things-you-should-know-about-challengebased-learning. Acesso em: 30 abr. 2017.

So, how does teacher autonomy result in increased student autonomy? The following sections outline concrete steps teachers can follow to help their students be better prepared for their future professional careers and lifelong learning.

Step 1: Research the subject

No subject should ever take place in a void. As teachers, our primary objective is to ensure that we are teaching – or enabling students to learn – things which are relevant. As a result, any teaching which is not, at least in part, based on what the student may do once they have graduated, will not allow students to develop any skills they may need in the future. Therefore, getting out there, speaking to the professionals and asking them what they do on a day-to-day basis is key. If the teacher understands the sort of tasks a business person or a translator, or any other professional for that matter, does and tries to emulate those in class, the relevance of the material and the tasks will increase. In turn, if students are able to see that what they are doing in class relates directly to what professionals do, they will be more encouraged to learn and more enthusiastic about the tasks themselves, especially if they are required to carry out a wide range of authentic tasks. This contributes to fulfilling the factors of perceptual arousal, inquiry arousal and variability (**A**ttention) put forward in the ARCS model (Keller, 2010).

Once the teacher has a list of tasks which are expected of people who work in the area, they can think about how they can incorporate some of those tasks into their everyday teaching. Should a whole subject be based around tasks such as these? Not necessarily, but theoretical underpinnings which then lead into some of these tasks will help students to see the connection between the theoretical side of academia and the practical side of the workplace.

Any concern about companies' reactions to teachers approaching them has been unfounded. I have found that people are generally forthcoming with information about the company and its products and/or services. Of course there is the question of confidentiality and it is not usual for them to provide certain types of documentation, there is also a plethora of information which can be found online to fill in the blanks left by company representatives. By giving students realistic tasks, or at least tasks which are all or in part based on authentic situations, it is possible to have clear authentic goal oriented tasks, which in the long run

become a familiar class methodology to them. In this way, the tasks fulfil Keller's goal orientation, motive matching and familiarity (**R**elevance). Tasks of this nature should show clear learning requirements and opportunities to complete tasks successfully, which in turn will increase learner **C**onfidence (Keller, 2010) and motivate students to take more control over their own learning and make more informed educational choices. Finally, the **S**atisfaction gained from this success, especially through internal and external validation of students' work will create feelings of positivity and equity among class members (Keller, 2010). Program design based on the ARCS model (Keller, 2010) will help motivate students to have greater control over what they do, participate more in class and have a deeper understanding of the competences required in the workplace.

Step 2: Out with the old, in with the new

Very often teachers are expected or like to use set books in the higher education classroom due to the way they help to structure a subject and how they live up to the previous experiences and expectations of the students. Set books have a layout which is familiar to students and thus becomes intuitive, both for the teacher and the students. They often come with activity books for further practice and a teacher's book, which gives the teacher step-by-step instructions as to what they have to do in the class. For a teacher who is not very autonomous, wants to teach literally by the book and likes to use a tried and tested format, set books are the answer. That said, set books are geared towards more traditional methods of standardized testing and do not challenge the students in any way – or the teachers for that matter. Therefore, step 2 involves getting rid of the set book and using the knowledge acquired in step 1 to create a program which is tailor-made for the needs of the students and for the job they may potentially do once they have finished their degree.

Step 3: The hard graft

Creating a program from scratch is time consuming and requires a lot of preparation. That said, if students can see the relevance of the tasks which are asked of them, and how they can be applied in professional contexts, they may be more motivated to do them. Ideally, continuity should be ensured by involving all teachers in the program development, as in the case above. In this way, levels are more likely to be coherently linked with just enough overlap to ensure consolidation of previously acquired knowledge and competences and lay

the groundwork for future work without being too repetitive or too monotonous. To avoid this, materials should be as updated as possible and relevant to the students' specific area of study.

Once this has been done, it is time to come up with a specific program for each subject. To do this, it is important to make a list of all of the tasks the teacher wants the students to do (from step 1) and find a way to progress from one task to another in a coherent way so that the whole program looks like a complete unit. Online research will help to find models of the texts and tasks students will have to create. Once that has been done, it is up to the teacher to come up with tasks they want the students have to do and if there are any models that they can use as a basis for conceptualizing and developing projects to do the task which is required of them.

Step 4: Putting theory into practice

Once all the groundwork has been set, it is time to start the teaching itself. Pitching a university subject which is not limited by a course book and which requires students to think for themselves is not easy. Students are generally very familiar with the structure of books, which tend to be topic based and very familiar to them. This structure is a comfort to students and asking them to carry out tasks which require them to think outside the box and beyond their comfort zone is a process which involves patience and adjustment, on the part of both the teacher and the students. However, it is worth it in the long run.

This approach should ideally start with a needs and expectations class, where students outline their weaknesses, strengths, likes, dislikes, needs and expectations with regard to the subject. This can be done orally in class or more formally as a survey. The latter however, does require the teacher to invest time reading the documents and taking notes of what is written. This should then be the basis for the way in which classes are taught, so that all students feel that the classes may help fill the gaps in their knowledge.

The next step is to present the program in such a way that the students understand the rationale behind the content of the course or subject. It is essential at this stage to also explain to students what the workplace requires a range of transversal and transdisciplinary skills to ensure future employees can work competently in a wide range of professional settings.

Introducing such a proposal is crucial for the success of the teaching program. Expecting students to embrace a methodology which is different to their previous experience needs to be explained and justified in terms of positive outcomes. This may include reading

texts and discussion on the importance of autonomy and accountability (especially the difference between responsibility and accountability) in the learning process. This also includes an explanation of role of the teacher and the student in the learning process. Traditionally, the teacher presents information which the students then learn and recite back under test conditions. However, the methodology outlined here requires the teacher to be more of a guide or facilitator so that the students can take on a more active role in their own learning. Tasks should be set which require students to create their own hypotheses and do the necessary research to complete the task. If this is not done, the teacher may be perceived as being uninterested or lazy because they do not conform to the students' perceptions of the traditional role of the teacher.

In addition to individual and group guidance, teachers should give constant support and follow-through and personalized feedback. In this way, the students spend a proportion of their class time working on their tasks and the teacher should go around from student to student/group to group and help them with the work they are doing. As such, each student/group gets help which is specific to the way they have chosen to approach the task at hand and their needs. In addition to this, there is the opportunity to get to know most students a little more and make them understand that they are not isolated members of a class who are expected to listen and learn, but active participants who have something to say and from which others can learn. Making students feel that they are treated as a person, not a number, also further motivates them to play an active role in the learning process.

Step 5: Keeping up momentum and motivation

Any methodology used is only as good as the teachers and students allow it to be. The problem with the hands-on approach outlined above is the fact that students have different learning competences and dissimilar learning speeds. This puts added stress on the teacher to try and push the stronger students to work to their full potential while ensuring that the weaker ones are not left behind. No teacher can keep a class going at an even pace and meet every student's needs and expectations. The use of authentic tasks and/or material should motivate the students, particularly the stronger ones, to carry out the tasks. In addition, it is always important for the teacher to have some ideas for extension work up their sleeve to give to faster students. Another option is to ask them to reflect upon the work they did and how they could approach it differently to come to a faster or more efficient outcome. This

could be done in an initial phased through discussion within or across groups, and perhaps later on in written form, which could take the form of different text types: a journal entry, an essay or even a report. In this way, the stronger students always have something to do and the follow-up tasks allow them to think more insightfully on the task they have carried out. An alternative would be to get the stronger students to support to weaker ones. The authenticity of these tasks should help to keep motivation high and as a result momentum in the classroom, so that there are no periods where students do not have anything to do.

On the other end of the spectrum are students who are not necessarily weaker, but who take longer to carry out the tasks or to think through how best to complete them. This could mean they need remedial work to fill the gaps in their knowledge before they handle the task, so in these cases, the teacher needs to be aware of what the students are finding difficult and ensure that their needs are being fulfilled, the gaps in their knowledge are being covered and their current knowledge is being practiced and consolidated. This can be done with smaller task-related activities such as extra language or skills exercises or with help from peers. This support can be provided during class time but also through tutorial sessions, which are usually part of the teachers' contact hours with students. The latter is a way to help students who need one-to-one or specific help. In this way, all students' needs are catered for and all can achieve their maximum potential.

Step 6: Fair and transparent testing

Any subject requires evaluation of some sort to ensure that content and competences have been acquired. It is important that students are tested on what has actually been covered in the class and that assessment is demanding but not so demanding that it is impossible for some students. Ideally, evaluation should be a combination of a wide variety of tasks, some written, some oral, others created individually and others in different group structures and always taking into consideration each student's role in the classroom, their interpersonal skills, their ability to work in a group and give and receive criticism in a constructive way.

Any evaluation methodology used should be clarified from the outset and use as many different components as is possible within the limitations and time constraints of the teacher. In this way, the students can be assessed on their written, reading, oral and aural skills, as well as their interpersonal/communicative skills and their ability to work within a group structure and their level of flexibility, creativity and autonomy.

This does not mean that teachers should get rid of testing under formal conditions. There is still something to be said about a student being able to work under pressure and produce content which they have learned during class time in certain conditions and without access to other sources of information. However, it should make up a part of the whole evaluation process, which together with the testing of other competences will create a more holistic appraisal of the individual. In addition, correcting work without access to the student's name, correcting the same question for all students in one sitting to enable a fair comparison of the work produced by the whole class and time in a subsequent class for group and/or individual feedback and questions are all essential to ensure that the students feel the they have been tested fairly and in a transparent manner.

Step 7: Reflection, rethinking and redesigning

The final step is one of reflection on the teaching and learning process, both from the point of view of the teacher and the students. Ongoing reflection during the subject is optional, but is a good way to gauge how well the teaching is going and what the students feel. One way of doing this is between a third and half of the way through the semester, where the students are asked to write down two positive things about the classes and two negative ones. In my personal experience, the option to put down their name is optional. Once all of the information has been collated, it is analyzed and the results given back to the students in a subsequent class. It is hoped that the results will generate real discussion which aims to improve what students feel is less positive and reinforce what students like about the classes. This process allows the teacher to get a feeling for what the students feel when there is still time to fine tune some things which are happening in the class and address some of the negative aspects. In addition, it is also an opportunity for the teacher to justify why they have been doing things in a certain way and help the students understand the rationale behind certain tasks.

Most of the feedback however, probably occurs at the end of the semester. Students can give feedback if the teacher desires, in a similar way to the process described above, but there may also be a more formal teacher evaluation tool which students complete. At the University of Aveiro, students have to complete a confidential online questionnaire about each subject at the beginning of the following semester. This covers a wide range of areas and results in a score from one to nine (one being the worst and nine being the best) about the

subject and the teacher's performance. There is also an opportunity for the student representative to leave some qualitative feedback if they wish.

Although these results may be skewed by students who sometimes do not attend class, have failed the subject or have not achieved a mark they feel they deserve, or those who particularly like or dislike the teacher, they do help to give a general overview of how much work they put into the subject and their feelings towards various aspects of the subject and their teacher. The results are, to me personally, a tool which can indicate if I am on the right path when it comes to how I plan, implement and monitor my subjects and what areas I need to work on to improve my performance. They should not be seen from a critical or defensive point of view, but rather as a step to improving what the teacher does in the class every day. From my own personal experience, my marks have increased throughout these last few years as students have to carry out more authentic tasks and increased CBL is brought into my classroom methodology.

There is no such thing as a perfect class, or a perfect lesson, and each group of students has its own set of characteristics and specific dynamics. Sometimes, redesigning a subject means that some things work better, other times some tasks are less effective than we imagined. That in itself is an important lesson, learning what does not work in the classroom is just as significant as what does. Any teaching is based on trying to find the right balance of tasks and teacher to student and student to student interaction to maximize what is done in the classroom. The lesson is that although we know that the perfect class is unattainable, it is important to reflect upon our practices, think about what we have done well to keep on improving.

Final considerations

The limitations of a traditional classroom make the gap between the classroom and the workplace difficult to transpose. However, contact with real businesses may help to equip graduates with the necessary skills to succeed in the labour market. Knowing the needs of the workplace will help teachers design programs which aim to equip students with a wide range of transversal and transdisciplinary competences. Teachers need to have a more overarching

view of the whole cycle of studies, rather than focusing on a curricular unit at a time when designing curricular programs.

They should ensure coherence through continuity from one curricular unit to another, both within and across areas of study and there should be the opportunity to consolidate and apply previously learnt competences, as well as set the groundwork for further tasks, with a view to creating a complete learning cycle which raises the bar and keeps it there. The curricular units should be well-structured and the materials used should be regularly analyzed for their relevance and updated whenever necessary. Topic-specific tasks that recognize the needs and expectations of learners build motivation autonomously through clear instructional workplace-oriented goals and a motivational learning environment. This is turn can drive learner performance, increase their capacity for critical thinking and prepare them for the workplace. If possible and/or appropriate, materials provided by the students themselves in the classroom is ideal.

The methodological approach used should involve combinations of individual, pair and group work involving interaction and constructive criticism. Students should be encouraged to come up with new and innovative ways to overcome challenges in order to increase their autonomy and tutorials should be used as a way of providing customized help. Finally, there should be an opportunity for reflection of past practices, both on the part of the teacher and the students, with a view to improving what is done in the future. The tasks which are used for evaluation purposes should reflect what has been covered in class and should be perceived as fair and transparent.

With regard to practices in the classroom, the teacher should keep the bar high but be approachable in order to facilitate communication. Channels of communication are essential to maintain motivation and increase autonomy. Personal engagement with the students is paramount, where each one feels that they are treated as an individual rather than a number. The more the teacher opens up to their students, the greater the likelihood that the students will open up to their teacher and engage with them. Although the teacher may be perceived as the expert in the classroom, it is important to remember that the dynamics in the classroom create a three-way flow of information where the individual, peers and the teacher are all sources of knowledge and can all learn from each other.

Taking all these factors into consideration should contribute towards creating students and future professionals who not only have a range of transversal skills which are

suitable for the workplace, but which also set increased autonomy in motion, creating the basis for lifelong learning.

References

EDUCAUSE. **7 Things You Should Know About Challenge-Based Learning.** [S.I.]: EDUCAUSE Library, 2012. Disponível em: <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2012/1/7-things-you-should-know-about-challengebased-learning>. Acesso em: 29 abr. 2017.

FOREY, G. Workplace texts: do they mean the same for teachers and business people? **English for Specific Purposes,** Elsevier, v. 23 n. 4, p. 447-469, 25 mar. 2004.

FREY. T. **2 Billion Jobs to Disappear by 2030.** [S.I.]: Futurist Speaker, 2012. Disponível em: <http://www.futuristspeaker.com/business-trends/2-billion-jobs-to-disappear-by-2030/>. Acesso em: 30 abr. 2017.

HAYS, J. & CLEMENTS, M. **Transition: bridging the gap between study and work.** [S.I.]: World Association for Cooperative Education, 2012. Disponível em: <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/226459 >. Acesso em: 28 nov. 2017.

KELLER, J. M. **Motivational Design for Learning and Performance: The ARCS model approach**. New York: Springer, 2010.

KELLER, J. M. **What are the ARCS Categories?** [S.I.]: ARCSMODEL.COM, 2017. Disponível em: <https://www.arcsmodel.com/arcs-categories>. Acesso em: 23 nov. 2017.

ROBINSON, K. **Do Schools Kill Creativity?** [S.I.]: TED Talks, 2006. Disponível em: <https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en>. Acesso em: 29 abr. 2017.

ROBINSON, K. **RSA ANIMATE: Changing Education Paradigms.** [S.I.]: Youtube, 2010. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>. Acesso em: 29 abr. 2017.

SHANDROW, K.L **The 5 Most Popular TED Talks of All Time.** [S.I.]: Entrepreneur Network, 2014. Disponível em: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239672>. Acesso em: 4 abr. 2017.

STUDY GUIDES AND STRATEGIES **Problem Based Learning.** [S.I.]: Cooperative Learning Series, 2017. Disponível em: <http://www.studygs.net/pbl.htm>. Acesso em: 30 abr. 2017.

UNICEF [S.I.]: UNICEF, 2017. Disponível em: <https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf>. Acesso em: 19 abr. 2017.

WOOD, L. & KACZYNSKI, D. University students in USA and Australia: anticipation and reflection on the transition to work. **International Journal of Employment Studies,** v. 15, n. 2, p. 91-106, 2007.