

Introduction to pedagogical diagnostics

A portfolio task – a diagnostic activity in practice

Study programme: English Language for Education

Form of study: Full-time, single subject

School year: Spring 2020

Student's name:

Self- assessment					
5	4	3	2	1	N
Excellent	Above average	Average	Below average	Very poor	Criterion cannot be applied
I use terminology of PD			3		
I select appropriate methods and tools in accordance with the aim of a diagnostic activity			3		
I gather appropriate data			4		
I evaluate and interpret collected data			5		
I formulate findings (diagnosis) and possible measures			4		
Formal layout of the work			4		

Description/Characterization of a pupil

The student is a 7-year-old boy. He attends a primary school in Brno, where he is currently in the 2nd grade. I selected this pupil because I have been tutoring him for my teaching practice, and because he is the only student that I teach who needs anything more than help with revision- this boy will not sit down and concentrate on his homework with his mother, and even I have problems keeping him focused. He has a hard time sitting still for more than 10 minutes, and gets bored very easily. I believe that when he is bored, he does not learn any of the information because his mind is elsewhere, which could be why he is not doing very well at school and why he seems to remember things slower than other children his age. When he is focused, however, his memory seems perfectly good.

The aim of an assessment activity

My main aim is to identify which factors are contributing to the student's difficulties in concentrating and by finding this, help the student and his mother find strategies to help him focus on his schoolwork so he can perform well at school.

The plan of the assessment activity

The assessment activity will be carried out at the student's home, with the student and with the help and feedback of his mother. I generally help the student with reading, writing and spelling in Czech and English, and I visit the student once per week for one hour. The assessment activity will be carried out during these tutoring lessons, over a period of 6 weeks, which will be six hours in total.

I plan to observe the boy's behaviour during the lessons to observe when and why he begins to fail to concentrate, I will also give the mother a questionnaire to see why she thinks her son stops focusing after a few minutes, how she feels we can improve this, and, at the end, I will ask her to answer whether or not she has seen any improvement. Finally, I will interview the student himself to try and discover how he feels at the time he begins to lose focus, and, after we have attempted to find strategies to improve the situation, I will complete the interview by asking him if he feels it has helped.

At least 3 selected methods and tools of a diagnostic activity (their specification, typology) that will help me find out an answer for the set aim

- a) observation
- b) questionnaire
- c) interview

The data gathering and processing (give evidence, e.g. transcripts, observation sheets, filled in questionnaire...)

a) Observation

While observing the student closely, I began to realise that he only tends to lose focus after 10 minutes or less when it is a task he does not enjoy. The tasks that he does not enjoy are reading and writing. When the tasks are more like activities where he can find pairs, join lines or colour something in, he enjoys it and can happily focus for much longer. I had just not realised this before because we usually focus on the reading and writing only, as they are the hardest for him. I also noticed that if the television is on in the background, or if he can hear his siblings playing, see his mother doing something, or his phone is in the room, his eyes start being drawn to that instead of the book in front of him.

To remedy this, I talked to the mother after the lesson and suggested that when the student is trying to study, the distractions should be minimised- TV off, no distracting electronic devices, nothing else to look at or listen to, so that he doesn't wish he could be doing that too. I also attempted to make the reading and writing tasks more of a combination of what he enjoys doing too, so when he would write something or read something, I would ask him to draw a picture of what he had just written and read, and for him, that was a little break from the 'hard stuff'. Even though it would result in me spending a little less time on the reading and writing tasks, it would mean that he remembered the vocabulary better from them because he was more focused.

b) Questionnaire

The questionnaire I gave to the mother was split into 2 parts, one was to try and find out her opinion on her son's struggles, the other was to see if she had observed any positive results after we had worked on some strategies. The questions were open-ended.

- 1) **Are there any specific tasks or subjects where X struggles to concentrate most?**
Yes, he can concentrate better on drawing and subjects he likes and understands better like Maths and Science.
- 2) **When do you think he struggles most to concentrate?**
When he has been doing work for a long time or has just come home from school, especially when he wants to go and play with his brother and sister or watch TV.
- 3) **Does X's teacher report any difficulty in concentrating at school?**
No, but she does say that he is performing better at maths and art than language subjects. I think that he behaves better for his teacher because she is more an authority figure and because he has no distractions at school, as all his classmates are working at the same time.

PART 2

- 4) **Now that X is spending less time at once on a task he dislikes, followed by a 'break' with a task he likes, do you see any improvement in his concentration?**
Yes, he is not tired and bored from doing one thing so he focuses on even the tasks that he doesn't like very much, as long as he doesn't spend too long on them.
- 5) **Now that X is spending less time at once on a task he dislikes, followed by a 'break' with a task he likes, do you see any improvement in his knowledge of the subjects he previously was underperforming in?**
I see a slight improvement, it seems that we need to repeat the tasks less because he focuses on them straight away now, where before, we had to go over the same material multiple times because he wasn't concentrating

c) Interview

I conducted this interview with the student to attempt to find out why he thought he was struggling to concentrate, and then, after some attempts were made to fix it, I continued the interview to see if he liked our new method and if he thought it was helping.

Anya: X, why do you think that you get bored more easily with reading and writing than with other things we do?

X: Because I don't like it.

Anya: And do you not like it because you think it's hard, or because you don't think it's interesting?

X: It's hard AND boring.

Anya: So if we tried to spend less time doing the same activity all the time, do you think you would be able to concentrate more?

X: Yeah.

After making changes:

Anya: So now that we have tried to do lots of activities instead of just the same thing, is it easier for you?

X: Yeah

Anya: And do you think that you remember more as well?

X: Yes and I got a one in English today!

Anya: That's great, well done. And why do you think it's easier for you to learn and concentrate more now?

X: I don't know.

Evaluation and interpretation of the assessment data (analyse gathered data and assess the findings)

It seems that from my, his mother's, and even his own perspectives, it is clear that the student is simply not as interested in reading and writing as he is in creative subjects like Art and other subjects like Maths. The fact that he finds them boring seem to lead to him losing focus, especially if they are done for too long without a break. His loss of focus then leads to him underachieving in those subjects, but if he concentrates, he does not actually find them hard. The fact that he is bored allows him to be easily distracted by anything else that happens to be going on in his vicinity, so it is better to try and minimise possible distractions.

General conclusion for all the applied methods (based on findings sum up a conclusion and the results of the findings)

Based on the fact that spending too long on activities he does not like leads to lack of concentration and learning, and given there are too many distractions in the room, I think that there are 2 things that will help the issue: The first is to not spend more than 10 minutes on an activity the child does not like. It is pointless as he will stop listening anyway. Therefore it would be better to have a break from that activity, and for a few minutes, do a different activity that he finds more entertaining. I believe this will then allow him to concentrate and learn more when we resume the 'boring activity' for another 10 minutes. Another thing is, there needs to be less distractions in the room. If the TV is off and he does not have his phone right next to him, and he has nothing else interesting to look at, he will be more focused on the work he is doing, like he tends to be at school.

The plan of pedagogical support, IEP

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Pedagogical support plan (PSP)

Name and surname of the child, pupil or student ("student")	XXX XXX	
School	Primary School XXXXX	
Form	2nd Grade	
Reasons for creating the PSP	To find out why the student has issues concentrating in certain subjects and to find a strategy to help him focus	
Date of preparation	11.3.2020	
PSP evaluation scheduled for	16.4.2020	

I. Characteristics of the student and their difficulties

(strengths, weaknesses; description of difficulties; where applicable, special-pedagogy diagnostics with the aim of determining adjustments in education; current health condition; other factors influencing setting up support)

Intelligent, enthusiastic in subjects he likes.

Struggles to concentrate on subjects he doesn't like (reading and writing in English and Czech)

II. Setting the objectives of the PSP

(objectives of the student's development)

Help the student focus more on the problematic students and learn more in the process.

III. Support measures at school

(Provide **specific procedures** in the categories of the support measures you use.)

(a) Teaching methods

(specification of adjustments to the methods of working with the student)

Combination of activities he likes more and likes less, for example, instead of spending 30 minutes on reading in English, we would spend 10 minutes on that, then do an activity he likes more for 5 minutes, then either return to the first activity for another 10 minutes or do another activity that he also tends to struggle to focus on.

(b) Organization of education

(adjustments to the organization of education in the classroom or, where applicable, outside the classroom)

-more activities

-less external distractions

(c) Evaluation of the student

(definition of the adjustments to evaluation; how the evaluation is carried out; what is the aim of the adjustments to the evaluation; criteria)

Talk to the mother and student before to try and discover where the issues lie, monitor the students progress over a 6-week period after attempting to make an improvement, consult the mother and student again at the end,

(d) Aids

(textbooks, worksheets, ICT technology, etc.)

Textbooks, colouring books, worksheets on the topic that have more interesting activities instead of spelling and reading, so that he can enjoy but learn at the same time

(e) Requirements for the organization of the teachers' work

I will require that the mother ensures the studying environment is as quiet and distraction-free as possible

IV. Support measures for home preparation

(description of adjustments to home preparation, form, and frequency of communication with the family)

Communication with the family after every lesson to give each other feedback

V. Other support measures

(to respect the health condition, stress the situation in the family or at school—relationship problems, status in the class; in what activities, in what way)

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VI. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the PSP on:

(Fulfilment of the objectives of the PSP)

16.4.2020- The student, his mother and I are all satisfied that the strategies put in place were effective enough to show improved concentration levels and knowledge in the subjects.

Recommendation for an expert examination:

Yes No

PPC SPC SEN Other: Other

Reflection:

I think this task was very useful for me, because it taught me that every student is different and they all have slightly different requirements. It also taught me that anything is possible (from a teaching perspective), as long as we are prepared to make an effort for the student and adjust to the way they learn best. I'm glad that I did this portfolio because even though it was a task that I needed to do, I learned some valuable things but mainly also helped the student a lot. I think now that we have made these adjustments to the tutoring plan, the time I spend with the student will be more valuable as he will learn more, and it will also be more fun for him. I'm also glad that the mother appreciates the work we have done and says she will use the same strategies with him.