

## PROPOSAL FOR A REFERENCE FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS FOR THE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES IN SLOVAKIA

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**Abstract:** The assessment can be considered as one of the most complex entities in educational practice. It includes a number of factors that can affect or distort the actual state of the evaluated area. Assessment is also one of the most sensitive components of school practice, especially as regards the evaluation of teachers' educational activities. In the paper we will focus on the interim results of the four-year research project APVV-14-0446 *Evaluation of teacher competences* which is focused on the development of suitable tools for evaluation of teachers' professional competences in the Slovak educational context. It is the issue that, on both Slovak and European scale, calls for the need for uniform descriptors which would objectivize evaluation parameters of pedagogical efforts of primary and secondary school teachers. Furthermore, such an assessment should have a positive motivational and professionally developing character.

**Keywords:** teacher, professional competence, tool, questionnaire, observation sheet.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The contribution is based on the current needs of Slovak research in the field of education related to measuring and interpreting the results of education and school practice. Currently, a reform is under way in Slovak education, a part of which involves the implementation of the new (innovated) State Education Program. This is also related to measuring and evaluating teachers' professional skills which enable to integrate new requirements into practice. Research objective of the APVV-14-0446 project *Evaluation of teacher competences* can be considered as an immediate response to this requirement by offering to the direct actors entering the evaluation process (head-teachers, their deputies, school inspectors) adequate tools that would effectively and comprehensively measure teachers' professional competences and provide unified reference standards for assessing these competences. In this way, the project builds on the latest trends and researches aimed at designing tools for evaluating teacher competences and

standardizing them (Moreno-Murcia, Torregrosa and Pedreño, 2015; González and López, 2010; Lukas, Karlos, Etxeberria, and Lizasoain, 2014; Gold, and Holodynski, 2015; Gadušová a Hašková, 2016b). Several studies on teacher competences focus rather on standardizing teachers' professional competences (Pavlov, 2013), on professional teacher's assessment in the form of trainings for teachers (Schleicher, 2012; EC, 2012; Kuhn, *et al.*, 2016; De Wever *et al.*, 2016 and others), on measuring the quality and effectiveness of educational programs (Šarníková, 2010; Blömeke *et al.*, 2011; Fritsch *et al.*, 2015; Kleickmann *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, the teacher competences research from the point of view of teacher evaluation belongs to an insufficiently investigated area, especially teacher evaluation by head teacher. It is primarily about tools for assessing the quality and results of teachers' educational activities. We consider the process of assessing teacher competences by head teacher as a key moment in the teacher's work as it can contribute to the educational success of the teacher.

The aim of the paper is to outline the most up-to-date partial results of the aforementioned project. In the first part of the paper we will summarize the most important findings obtained on the basis of the pre-survey related to the mapping of the current state of the evaluation of professional competences of teachers in Slovakia. The second part of the paper is focused on the process of designing the appropriate tools to measure the competences, which the research team is planning to pilot and standardize subsequently.

## 2. DEFINING THE TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES AND PRE-RESEARCH ON THEIR EVALUATION

In order to solve the research task resulting from the focus of our project *Evaluation of teacher competences*, we have been involved in specifying the teacher's education profile through defining ten professional competences. These were later subjected to a pre-survey conducted by means of a questionnaire. In defining them, we were primarily based it on the Pavlov (2013) publication (*Štandardizácia profesijných kompetencií učiteľov* / transl.: *Standardization of teachers' professional competences*) and available tools used by the State School Inspection (*Manuál sebahodnotenia školy* / transl.: *School Self-Assessment Manual*, teacher evaluation sheets, OECD *Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education – Slovak Republic*, Assessment of the System of Evaluation and Monitoring in the Czech Republic, and others)<sup>1</sup>. The aim of these documents is to propose scope and measures to make teacher evaluation more effective at different levels of the education system. In this context, the teacher's professional competences can be classified as follows (Lomnický *et al.*, 2017):

- A) Teacher competences aimed at professionalism, professional development and organizational competences in the teaching process:
  - a) teacher's professional and career development in the context of lifelong learning,
  - b) designing and planning the teaching process,
  - c) school climate;
- B) Teacher competences focused on learning aspects with impact on individuality and pupil's personality development:
  - d) identifying pupil's developmental and individual characteristics,
  - e) developing pupil's personality,
  - f) identifying psychological and social factors of pupil's learning;
- C) Teacher competences focused on the subject-content and didactic-methodological aspects of the teaching process:
  - g) mastery and control of content and didactics of the subject,
  - h) evaluation of the course and results of teaching and learning pupils,
  - i) selection and implementation of teaching methods and organizational forms,
  - j) the use of material resources in the teaching and learning process.

The aim of the pre-survey was to assess the current status of teacher evaluation at different levels of the Slovak education system from the point of view of both the evaluator and the evaluated one. For this purpose, we used the questionnaire, or, better to say, two questionnaires - one intended for teachers (*Questionnaire for Evaluating Teachers' Competences* - intended for teachers) and the other one for head teachers (*Questionnaire for Evaluating Teachers' Competences* - intended for head teachers). Both questionnaires can be considered to be primary tools for measuring the importance of teachers' professional competences in the Slovak educational context. The questionnaires were anonymous. They were filled in by 730 teachers and 146 head teachers from primary and secondary school schools in the period between September 2015 and January 2016.

The questionnaire intended for teachers consisted of 11 items and besides the basic teacher-related data (for example, teacher's gender, number of years of teaching at school, subjects taught, teacher's affiliation to the type of school, and others) it was focused on finding the data on the extent to which teachers' professional competences are important in terms of the success of their teaching activity, ways and course of teacher evaluation. The questionnaire also surveyed the views of teachers about the assessment of their professional competences. The questionnaire intended for head

teachers consisted of 12 items aimed at identifying similar indicators as the teacher's questionnaire but from the viewpoint of the evaluator.

When evaluating, analyzing and interpreting the data obtained from the questionnaires, we focused specifically on these two attributes, or research problems:

- perception of the importance of teachers' professional competences as viewed by the teachers and head teachers, and as related to the degree of the success of their pedagogical activities,
- differences in the category motivating and other teacher evaluation (demotivating, unnecessary, non-objective, and others) depending on the professional competences and finding out which competences support the different categories of evaluation in terms of motivation.

Detailed statistical analysis and interpretation of these research issues is the subject of the papers and studies published within the framework of the project in the past period: *Perception of the Degree of Importance of Teacher's Professional Competences from the Perspective of Teacher and Head Teacher in the Evaluation Process of Educational Efficiency* (Stranovská, Lalinská, Bobořová, 2017) a *Assessment of Teachers' Professional Competences in Consideration of Motivation Factor* (Stranovská, Lalinská, 2017). Here, just the most important conclusions that directed our work when we were later developing the tools for measuring teacher competences are stated.

Given the perception of the importance of teachers' professional competences, we found out that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the importance of the teacher's professional competences, as viewed by the teachers and the head teachers, which may affect the teacher's success in their own educational activities. We tested for which competences specific statistical differences exist and we identified the different perception of the importance of these competences: teacher can identify psychological and social factors of pupil's learning, teacher can plan and realize his/her own professional development, and teacher can use the material resources in the teaching and learning process. The higher importance of these competences was

perceived by the teachers compared to the head teachers. Teachers consider these competences to be more relevant to their own success in educational activities than the head teachers. For the teacher, it is more important to be aware of pupil's individual differences (special needs, learning disabilities, talents, and others), or the impact of their environment (family background, education of parents, relationships with other classmates, and others) to teach the pupil, in order to be able to adapt the teaching process to the specific needs of their pupils. They also consider a more substantial the skill to use material resources in the teaching and learning process. For the head teachers, it seems to be a rather limiting function, that is, time consuming and stressful. They try to follow what is part of head teachers' managerial competences, what is part of their school management work. On the other hand, this may mean that the teacher's perceptions appear in more detail, or narrow categorization in the information processing process (more research on the cognitive style "width of categorization", Sarmány-Schuller, 1992, 2007), and the perceptions of head teachers seems to be more global. The more detailed perception carried out by teachers is supported also by the research conducted by Sokolová *et al.* (2014). They found out that future teachers are more concerned with and focused on interpersonal skills and competences, and the least important for them are organizational and leadership skills and competences. Different perceptions of the importance of teachers' competences as viewed by teachers and school managers are also supported by the findings of the State Institute for Education (2011). The attitudes and believes of teachers and head teachers are different. The most important issue for teachers is to innovate teaching strategies and methods, but the head teachers consider the contents of teaching (the curriculum) to be the most important (Stranovská, Lalinská, Bobořová, 2017).

In the second case, when determining the degree of motivation, the data from our pre-research clearly showed that depending on whether the teachers consider the assessment to be motivating, demotivating, unnecessary or unobtrusive, they perceive the importance of professional competences differently. Teachers who consider their evaluation as motivating aspect of their

work attribute importance to pupil-oriented competences, to competences oriented at the teaching/learning process and to competences aimed at teachers' professional development, whereas the dominating ones are the student-centered competences. It can be said that the evaluation perceived as motivating aspect of teacher's work appears to be one of the decisive indicators of the quality of the educational process. It supports all dimensions of the competences (orientation at pupil, educational process and teacher development), which can be considered as a point of concurrence of the causal and resultant hypothesis of motivation. The teacher's assessment by their supervisor motivates the teacher to deepen their motivation and the evaluation perceived as the motivating aspect of teacher's work encourages the teacher to increase their success in the educational process. In the future we expect to investigate interaction between the evaluation perceived as the motivating aspect of teacher's work and cognitive processing of the evaluation as well as finding reasons why evaluation is perceived both as motivating and demotivating activity (Stranovská, Lalinská, 2017).

### 3. DESIGN AND CREATION OF TOOLS FOR MEASUREMENT OF TEACHER'S COMPETENCES

The most important output of the project is the set of Assessment Sheets of the teacher's professional competences, which, after their piloting, modification and standardization, will be offered to the head teachers of primary and secondary schools and to the representatives of the state school inspection. So far we have created sheets for all ten of the above mentioned competences. For each competence, the research team offers three types of documents:

- Assessment Sheet (designed and intended for observing evaluators - head teacher, inspector),
- Self-Assessment Sheet (designed and intended the observed/assessed teacher as self-reflection of the assessed competence),
- list of questions suggested for the Post-Observation Interview (between the evaluator/observer and the evaluated/observed teacher).

As an example, we provide the indicators and the starting point for the development of the Assessment Sheet for the teacher's competence "can evaluate the course and the results of the pupil's teaching and learning". We realize that measurement of learning outcomes is not straightforward and easy to interpret, because in such context we deal with latent (hidden, discrete) properties. This contributes also to the difficulty of the evaluation process. The teacher not only has to fully know the area (s)he is evaluating, what is closely connected with the concept of a valid evaluation tool, but also chooses an adequate way of measuring and evaluating the area, taking into account various factors that can distort interpretations, and thus affect the reliability (reliability) and measurement objectivity. So how do you assess the ability of a teacher to evaluate their pupils? In connection with the search for answers to this question, we must take into account precisely the same attributes and measurement properties, which should also be taken into account when assessing pupils themselves. These are in particular the following features of the measuring tool: validity, reliability, sensitivity, discriminatory ability of the measurement tool and objectivity.

While solving the research task resulting from the focus of the research project APVV-14-0446 *Evaluation of teacher competences*, we have participated in the development of Assessment and Self-Assessment Sheets aimed at the evaluation of teacher's professional competences. In the process of their design, it was important to define the area of evaluation of the given professional competence and its different items, or to formulate the criteria so as to reliably, sensitively and objectively measure different professional competences. Development of these tools was mainly based on the following documents: monograph written by Pavlov (2013) (*Štandardizácia profesijných kompetencií učiteľa / transl.: Standardization of teachers' professional competences*), *The Teaching Practice Dossier* (Academic training program, Utrecht University, 2016)<sup>2</sup>, *Livret du conseiller pédagogique tuteur* (Académie of Strasbourg, 2012)<sup>3</sup>. The last two documents are part of the evaluation of will-be-teacher training, one in the Netherlands and the other in France. Both documents take into account the continuous development of the teacher's personality during their

school practice. It should also be noted that the experience of the authors' own and colleague-teachers teaching practice played an important role in the development of this measurement tool. The document *Teaching Practice Dossier* (2016) provides the criteria for assessing different professional competences by means of the so-called rubrics. In assessing this competence, the Dutch colleagues identified five levels of assessment.

The *Livret du conseiller pédagogique tuteur* (2012) provided interesting criteria for assessing the competence (Évaluer ses élèves/evaluation of pupils) within the context of Annex 9. The teacher who is competent to evaluate is defined as follows: The teacher can evaluate the progress of the pupils in learning and the degree of the acquired competences they achieved. They use the results of the evaluation to modify the teaching process according to the pupils' progress. They explain and enable pupils to understand the principles of assessment and develop their ability to evaluate themselves, i.e. their own performance. They communicate with parents and inform them about the expected and achieved results of the pupils. Different areas of professional competence evaluation are divided into three groups: *knowledge* (Is teacher aware of fundamentals, ways and forms of assessment of his/her pupils?), *ability* (Can teacher apply this knowledge in his/her teaching?), *attitude to pupils during their assessment*.

#### **4. DEMONSTRATION OF THE ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEET**

When designing our Assessment Sheet and Self-Assessment Sheet, we paid attention to their use and usefulness in practice. So we asked ourselves: What is actually observable during a lesson? How could the evaluator learn about "invisible" aspects of teaching job, planning the evaluation, and awareness about the documents?

The Assessment Sheet is divided into two parts: Part 1 - findings observed and recorded during the lesson, Part 2 - findings learned after the lesson.

In the first part of the Assessment Sheet, the evaluator monitors and records how and how often the teacher provides the pupil with feedback. What matters to us is whether the teacher evaluates in a motivating

way, whether (s)he is tactful, at first sight objective, whether (s)he considers specifics of pupils with special educational needs when assessing them.

The second part of the Assessment Sheet records the findings about the teacher's competence to evaluate learned after the lesson, i.e. during the interview with the observed teacher, while studying the written works of students and the Self-Assessment Sheet of the teacher. The Post-Observation Interview with the teacher increases the objectivity of the facts learned during the lesson, and it also explains to the evaluator the phenomena that were observed during the lesson but may have been misinterpreted without the necessary context. By reviewing the pupil's written works, projects, and the record of grades, the evaluator learns more about the system how the teacher evaluates pupils and about his/her way of grading. Does the teacher use written comments and reasoning for the grades? Does the teacher mention any positives of learner's work in addition to the indicated mistakes and errors in written works of pupils? How does the teacher interpret and evaluate pupils' achievements and what does he use them for later?

The Self-Assessment Sheet serves to achieve two objectives. On the one hand, the inspector gains a more complex view of the teacher's work and his thinking, and, on the other hand, the teacher learns how to know himself/herself better and is made to think about his/her own competencies. From the Self-Assessment Sheet, the inspector learns about "invisible" aspects of the teacher's work, his/her knowledge of school documentation, professional trainings passed, preparation and planning the evaluation during the school year, communicating with pupils, parents, colleagues and special educators, and last, but not least, about the impact of different, even undesirable factors, on the way the teacher evaluates his/her pupils. The questions and the statements we have formulated should help the teacher to self-reflect about his/her competence to evaluate. Later the self-reflection enables the teacher to recognize his/her own qualities and drawbacks, and, consequently, to improve his/her teaching performance.

Now we will provide the list of items included in the Assessment Sheet, the Self-Assessment Sheet as well as list of questions suggested for the Post-Observation

**Table 1**  
**Items which are part of the Assessment and Self-Assessment Sheet and the Post-Observation Interview for the professional competence *Evaluation of the course and results of teaching and learning pupils***

<i>Observation: Assessment Sheet</i>		
<b>Feedback to pupils</b>	1. Teacher provides feedback to pupils during the whole lesson.	yes/no
	2. Teacher uses multiple forms of feedback (gesture, mimics, words, and others) and changes them.	yes/no
	3. The teacher responds to pupils' performance in a supportive/stimulating manner, or through pupils' evaluation (s)he positively motivates them to achieve better performances.	yes/no
	4. The teacher evaluates the performance of individual pupils, explaining their strengths and weaknesses in performance.	yes/no
<b>Assessment of pupils</b>	1. The teacher appropriately formulates the task assignment.	yes/no
	2. The teacher clearly and comprehensively formulates the evaluation criteria and announces them in a timely manner to pupils.	yes/no
	3. The teacher justifies his/her judgments leading to the pupils' evaluation.	yes/no
	4. The teacher uses a descriptive (non-judgmental) language in the assessment.	yes/no
	5. The teacher is aware of the existence of parasitic factors (pupil behavior, his/her attitude to the pupil, previous grading, and grades from other subjects, and others) and minimizes their impact on the evaluation/assessment of the pupil.	yes/no
	6. When teaching and learning the subject, the teacher leads his/her pupils to self-control and self-assessment.	yes/no
	7. Pupils with special educational needs are evaluated/assessed by the teacher in an appropriate form and the specificities of their development are considered.	yes/no
<i>Self-Assessment Sheet</i>		
<b>Types and forms of evaluation</b>	1. I systematically and continuously evaluate my pupils during the whole school year	yes/no
	2. I am well aware and have a good understanding of pedagogical documentation on my subject, educational standards, and evaluation criteria specific to this subject and I use it to draw up my own evaluation tools.	yes/no
	3. As part of my subject, I choose adequate forms of assessment that I alternate and combine with regard to the various stages of pupils' learning, or type of pupils' monitored knowledge and skills (grade, verbal evaluation, self-evaluation, peer-evaluation).	yes/no
	4. I often use an analytical and formative evaluation of the student's learning outcomes.	yes/no
	5. I choose appropriate forms of assessment with respect to pupil's developmental characteristics, special educational needs, language specifics including ethnic and racial.	yes/no
	6. In the case of pupils with special educational needs, I consult my assessment and grading, form and way of their evaluation with a psychologist, special pedagogue or other colleagues.	yes/no

*contd. table 1*

*Proposal for a Reference Framework and Tools for the Evaluation of Teachers' Professional Competences in Slovakia*

<b>Evaluation tools - their development, features and use</b>	1. I can understandably and clearly formulate the task assignment.	yes/no
	2. I systematically lead pupils to be prepared for the assessment.	yes/no
	3. I always clearly formulate the evaluation criteria and I make the pupils familiar with them in a timely manner.	yes/no
	4. In my educational practice I most often (circle one of the options): a) use the ready-made evaluation tools (included in the textbook, or teachers' book), b) appropriately adapt/modify already existing evaluation tools with respect to the specific educational reality, c) create my own original evaluation tools.	yes/no
	5. I can judge the basic characteristics of the evaluation tools I use in my educational practice: a) validity (validity of the tool) b) reliability (tool reliability) c) sensitivity (the ability of the tool to distinguish good pupils from the lower achievers) d) the objectivity of the tool	yes/no
<b>Interpretation of results (level of a pupil, class school, international comparative measurement)</b>	1. I am able to analyze the collected results and correctly identify the causes of pupils' errors.	yes/no
	2. I use the evaluation results in my teaching which follows it, i.e. I select and use remedial activities leading to the improved performance or elimination of errors; I choose more appropriate methods, offer support and helpful activities leading to the deepening and consolidation of pupils' knowledge and skills.	yes/no
	3. I evaluate the results of my pupils' work fairly and objectively. I assess exclusively just their performance regardless of subjective factors (pupil behavior, halo effect, prejudices, stereotypes, contrast and others).	yes/no
	4. In the final grading, I take into account the weight of the individual grades, not only their average.	yes/no
<b>Self-reflection of pupils</b>	1. In teaching, I lead my pupils to self-control and self-assessment.	yes/no
	2. I involve also the other pupils in the class in the pupil's individual assessment.	yes/no
<b>Ways of providing feedback</b>	1. I comment on the performance of individual pupils, explain pros and cons of their performance.	yes/no
	2. I use a descriptive (non-judging) language when evaluating.	yes/no
	3. When providing feedback, I respond in a supportive and stimulating way.	yes/no
<b>Teacher's Approach</b>	1. When evaluating pupils' performance, I highly appreciate their personal contribution, effort, and involvement.	yes/no
	2. By appropriately chosen form of assessment and feedback, I can motivate pupils to improve their performance.	yes/no
	3. I consistently monitor that each pupil is aware of his progress, as well as the other work and effort that needs to be invested to achieve the educational goal.	yes/no
<b>Post-Observation Interview</b>		
<b>Suggestions for questions</b>	1. Which area of your educational work do you consider the most demanding?	
	2. What are the pitfalls and problematic issues you most often encounter in evaluating/assessing your pupils?	

*contd. table 1*

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3. How would you define the term evaluation/ assessment? What is its function?

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  4. What, in your opinion, is the fair and objective assessment of pupils?

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  5. Evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes can be considered to be a kind of a skill. In your opinion, how can one develop the skill of the evaluation/ assessment, or how do you develop this skill?

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  6. Have you ever (in the past) participated in a course, seminar or training that has been beneficial for development of your competence to assess pupils? If so, what was its main benefit for you?

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  7. What documents do you consider to be essential ones for designing your curricula, lesson planning and tools for measuring and evaluating pupils' knowledge and skills?

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  8. Which forms of evaluation and assessment do you consider the most effective/most motivating for assessing pupils' knowledge about the subject you teach and under what conditions?

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  9. To what extent can you analyze the results obtained by means of the assessment and correctly identify the causes of the errors/low level of knowledge/(not)mastering the subject matter/failure or good achievements of pupils?

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  10. How do you take into account the results of pupils' assessment when considering your subsequent classroom activities?
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Interview. The full text of these tools can be found in the textbook written by Boboňová *et al.* (2017) *Aplikácia metodiky hodnotenia kompetencií učiteľa: prípadové štúdie* (transl.: Application of the teacher competence assessment methodology: case studies).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This is the way how the sheets for all ten teachers' professional competences were designed. Some sheets contain more items and it is not always possible neither easy to use them as a whole file in one lesson. Currently the sheets piloting is under way (January - March 2018), which should result in the attribution of qualitative attributes for each item (determination of validity, reliability, objectivity or sensitivity). This offers also the possibility of creating a bank of items that would be available to head teachers, or direct actors of the evaluation process. E-form of such a bank of items is a must. The head teacher or the other evaluator involved in the observation should be provided with the possibility to create their own assessment sheet based on their needs with respect to the indicators and parameters monitored,

taking into account the teacher's professional competence, and the type and form of the lesson.

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## NOTES

1. The documents are available on the web-site of the State School Inspection [www.ssiba.sk](http://www.ssiba.sk)
2. Document obtained during the research stay (I. Boboňová, S. Čeretková, M. Lalinská, E. Stranovská) at the Utrecht University in October 2016.
3. Document available at [http://www.ac-strasbourg.fr/fileadmin/pedagogie/langues/Dispositifs\\_Lycees/ORIENTATION/livret\\_du\\_conseiller\\_pedagogique\\_tuteur\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ac-strasbourg.fr/fileadmin/pedagogie/langues/Dispositifs_Lycees/ORIENTATION/livret_du_conseiller_pedagogique_tuteur_2011.pdf)

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