

## PUPIL EVALUATION IN PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses a very delicate matter of pupil evaluation in primary and lower secondary schools and at the same time it reflects the influence of several factors when evaluating pupils. Evaluation deals with every kind of activity and tool used to judge the achievement of pupil's performance. Facts show that some circumstances that can be called subjective factors often impact the evaluation of pupils. Influence of these factors creates some problems which damage a lot the character and function of evaluation. The goal of the research is to prioritize the evaluation of pupils in primary and lower secondary schools, the stands of teachers towards evaluation and influence of subjective circumstances in their general evaluation (assessment). For genuine research of this problem, there are used several methods: descriptive, statistical and comparative methods. As a tool for measuring the teachers' opinion is used a questionnaire designed according to Likert scale compiled from 10 questions and a space for adding a comment. The research was carried out in sample, which included 69 participants, from both primary and lower secondary schools. Results of the research show that there are various subjective factors which influence the final grading of pupils.

**Keywords:** *evaluation, subjective factors, pupils, teachers.*

### **Introduction**

Education is one of the most important areas in every society and system. We live in a changing world where only the people who possess knowledge and skills can make an effective difference. Changes in organization and realization of teaching, which claim the dynamism of teaching forms enrich methodical side of learning, use modern teaching tools, make the integration of subjects and encourage teachers' activity.

Murchan, Shiel, & Vula (nd) found that political, social, economic and environmental changes, as well as the development of science and technology in recent decades have led that any aspect of school to be reviewed and examined, including the evaluation of pupils. Changes in society make teachers to face new tasks in their classrooms. "It is important that the evaluation to be considered as a process of data collection on pupil learning. The more data you have on the pupil learning more clearly you will know the development of their competences as well as

shortcomings in their learning and also it would be more clear on how much pupils reach to progress towards the next important stage of learning” (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2012, p. 81).

Evaluation activity should be valid and evaluate what actually is foreseen to be evaluated. But does such an evaluation take place in our schools? There are a number of the difficulties that accompany the internal evaluation process, at all levels of education, particularly primary and lower secondary education. Pupils' evaluation in our schools is concerning in both semesters. During the first semester, we have "objective" evaluation, with a large number of pupils who get low grades in some subjects, while in the second semester, the majority of pupils fail to significantly improve these grades, which makes us conclude that there is "subjectivism" in the final evaluation.

### **1. Evaluation of pupils in primary and lower secondary schools**

The word Evaluation implies giving an opinion to someone or something; define the importance, usefulness or social value of someone or something; give to someone what he/she deserves; appraise (ASHSH-IGJL, 2002, p.1469). Evaluation may be defined as the process of collecting, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information concerning the pupil's progress and achievements in developing concepts, knowledge, skills and attitudes (Kuteli, 2013, p. 16).

As an accurate evaluation tool on pupil's learning is used the evaluation rate with grades from 1-5, which are sometimes used as incentive tools too. Teachers usually strive to be more objective since the first semester when it comes to evaluation or in having a much higher evaluation criterion toward pupils. During this period, some pupils are evaluated with low grades, with not desirable grades and this could be as a result of their performance in the learning process. In addition, the following factors may affect in the issue concerned as are: the passivity of pupils towards evaluation practices, where only few of them are aware of the criteria used, (Musai, 2003) not successfully organization of the teaching process by teachers as well as insufficient information during the acquisition of knowledge, habits and skills of pupils, the large number of pupils in classrooms which complicates the evaluation process for pupils who are less active, rare application of tests and taking grades from tests as the basis for the final evaluation, evaluation of pupils behaviour, not doing the homework required from teachers, absences of pupils in classes and so on.

The duration of the second semester is longer in comparison to the first one. Pupils and teachers are given greater space of time to realize the curriculum scheduled for this period. Teachers and pupils are less frustrated and their involvement may be greater and more evident. But, does the problem lies in raising awareness of pupils and in their greater commitment during this period, or this is just a continuation of not being engaged and no work of pupils who in the end manage to improve their grades, from 2 to be evaluated with 4 or 5?! It often happens that in the end of the school year the school hallways are full by parents who struggle to score and not for knowledge. They make pressure to teachers asking "encouragement" allegedly not to hurt the dignity of the child or because they need this grade for further education. Such a phenomenon is especially emphasised in the upper level (grade VI-IX) and subject teachers are faced with such problems. In order to prove this fact, the achieved success of pupils in the first and second semester for the school year 2012/2013, for the grades VI-IX, in primary and lower secondary schools is shown in the following table.

	No. of pupils	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Negative grades
First semester	859	366	211	108	9	165
Second semester	861	504	192	135	30	0

**Table no. 1**

The biggest difference to these excellent pupils is observed with a difference of 138 pupils or 15.96% who reach to pass successfully, the number of pupils with satisfactory success is increased and the pupils who had negative marks in the first semester, in the second one achieve to improve them. Such a phenomenon occurs also in other schools of the municipality of Gjilan. In order our sample to be representative as well as at the municipal level, we manage to provide information regarding evaluation from MED in Gjilan for 7175 pupils in grades VI-IX of primary and lower secondary schools. These data similar to the data obtained from schools proves our hypothesis on rising of success at the end of the school year.

**Table no. 2**

	No. of pupils	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Negative grades	Not marked	Repeating the grade
First semester	7175	2785	1716	1212	201	1250	11	///
Second semester	7159	3565	1550	1413	477	122	26	6

If we look at the data presented in *table 2*, all the actors involved in this process, and the community in general, should be happy about the positive results. While at the first semester there were 1250 (17.42%) pupils with negative marks in the second semester were only 122 pupils or 1.70%, in a difference of 1128 or 15.72%.

## 2. Survey results

The research aims to prove the hypothesis raised about the influence of subjective factors in pupils' final evaluation. In addition, we assume that the influence of subjective factors in evaluation of pupils is to a lesser extent in primary school (grade IV) than in lower secondary school (grades VI-IX). For research and study of this problem we have used several research methods such as descriptive method, statistical method and comparative method. The research involved a total of 69 participants from both primary and lower secondary schools of the municipality of Gjilan, out of which were 29 primary school teachers, respectively 42.02% (6 males and 23 females 20.68% 79.31%) and 40 lower secondary school teachers, or 57.97% (18 males and 22 female 55%). Measurements are made by the questionnaire compiled through Likert scale, where we identified opinions, feelings and attitudes of teachers related to a given statement by assigning a 5-point scale regarding pupils' evaluation. In order to conduct a comparison between the two levels, the collected data are presented separately in two columns while in the third are presented the overall data, *table no. 3*.

Table no. 3

Questions posed in the questionnaire	Primary					Subject					Total				
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know
1. Pupil achievements in learning observed by evaluating them often and systematically.	25 86,20%	4 13,79%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	34 85%	6 15%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	59 85,50%	10 14,49%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
2. To evaluate objectively, keep records of pupil progress.	26 89,65%	3 10,34%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	33 82,5%	5 12,5%	2 5%	0 0%	0 0%	59 85,50%	8 11,59%	2 2,89%	0 0%	0 0%
3. The best way to evaluate pupils is testing them trough test.	3 10,34%	21 72,41%	3 10,34%	2 6,89%	0 0%	6 15%	25 62,5%	7 17,5%	2 5%	0 0%	9 13,04%	46 66,66%	10 14,49%	4 5,79%	0 0%
4. Grade is considered an incentive-motivational tool for learning.	11 37,93%	15 51,72%	3 10,34%	0 0%	0 0%	21 52,5%	15 37,5%	3 7,5%	1 2,5%	0 0%	32 46,37%	30 43,47%	6 8,69%	1 1,44%	0 0%
5. Pupils' behaviour in the classroom affects in grading higher or lower.	2 6,89%	4 13,79%	9 31,03%	14 48,27%	0 0%	9 22,5%	4 10%	9 22,5%	18 45%	0 0%	11 15,94%	8 11,59%	18 26,08%	32 46,37%	0 0%
6. When evaluating pupils I rely on other teachers evaluations.	0 0%	0 0%	4 13,79%	25 86,20%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 15%	34 85%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	10 14,49%	59 85,50%	0 0%
7. My mood dictates evaluation of pupils to a higher or lower grade.	4 13,79%	2 6,89%	4 13,79%	18 62,07%	1 3,44%	4 10%	4 10%	5 12,5%	27 67,5%	0 0%	8 11,59%	6 8,69%	9 13,04%	45 65,22%	1 1,44%
8. Social and intellectual status of parents affects the evaluation of pupils.	2 6,89%	2 6,89%	5 17,24%	20 68,97%	0 0%	3 7,5%	6 15%	3 7,5%	28 70%	0 0%	5 7,24%	8 11,59%	8 11,59%	48 69,56%	0 0%
9. Class teachers make efforts in improving pupil success.	7 24,13%	15 51,72%	3 10,34%	4 13,80%	0 0%	11 27,5%	11 27,5%	3 7,5%	15 37,5%	0 0%	18 26,08%	26 37,68%	6 8,69%	19 27,53%	0 0%
10. Parental pressure in the end of the semester affects pupils' final evaluation.	1 3,44%	6 20,69%	10 34,49%	11 37,93%	1 3,44%	3 7,5%	5 12,5%	7 17,5%	25 62,5%	0 0%	4 5,79%	11 15,94%	17 24,63%	36 52,18%	1 1,44%

On the first point: *The achievements of pupils in learning observed by evaluating them often and systematically.*, 59 or 85.50% of the teachers are answered always, while 10 or 14.49% sometimes. To assess objectively, keep records of pupil progress, 59 or 85.50% declared that always keep records, while 8% or 11.59% sometimes and 2 or 2.89% rarely keep records of pupil progress.

On the third point: *The best way to evaluate pupils is testing them through the test.*, 9 teachers or 13.04% believe that the best way to evaluate pupils always is testing them through tests, 46 or 66.66% sometimes, 10 or 14.49% rarely and 4 or 5.79% believe that the best way to evaluate pupils is never testing through test. *Grade is considered an incentive-motivational tool for learning*, 32 or 46.37% always consider the grade as a stimulus tool for learning, 30 or 43.47% sometimes, 6 or 8.69% rarely and 1 or 1.44% of teachers never consider the grade as incentive-motivational tool for learning.

On the fifth point: *Pupils' behaviour in the classroom affects the grading higher or lower.*, 11 or 15.94% of teachers always are influenced by the behaviour of pupils, 8 or 11.59% of teachers sometimes, 18 or 26.08% rarely and 32 or 46.37% of teachers are never affected by the behaviour of pupils in evaluating with high or low grade. *When evaluating pupils I am influenced by other teachers evaluations.*, 10 teachers or 14.49% are rarely influenced by other teachers' evaluations and 59 or 85.50% of teachers are not influenced by teachers' evaluations.

On the seventh point: *My mood dictates evaluation of pupils with a higher or lower grade.*, 8 or 11.59% of teachers are always affected by their mood, 6 or 8.69% sometimes, 9 or 13.04% rarely, 45 or 65.22% are never affected by their mood when evaluating pupils and 1 or 1.44% do not know. *Social and intellectual status of parents affects the evaluation of pupils.*, 5 or 7.24% of teachers are always influenced by social and intellectual status of parents, 8 or 11.59% sometimes, 8 or 11.59% rarely and 48 or 69.56% are never affected by the status of parents.

On the ninth point: *Class teachers make efforts in improving pupil success.*, 18 or 26.08% of teachers think that class teachers always make efforts to increase pupil success, 26 or 37.68% sometimes, 6 or 8.69% rarely and 19 or 27.53% of teachers think that class teachers never make efforts to improve pupil success. *Parental pressure in the end of the semester affects pupils' final evaluation.*, 4 or 5.79% of teachers consider that they always are influenced by parental pressure in improving pupils' final grades, 11 or 15.94% sometimes, 17 or 24.63% rarely, 36 or 52.18% are never influenced by the pressure of parents in pupil evaluation and 1 or 1.44% do not know.

Comments of teachers were different:

- *Evaluation of pupil skills for teachers has been and is still a very important problem since there isn't an instrument that measures the knowledge of pupils, thus we evaluate by tests, in a systematic way, etc.*
- *Even the science on the evaluation - present this teaching segment as the most difficult, so I think that when evaluating we should be very careful.*
- *Evaluation is crucial to be correct. For the first grades it has to be stimulating, while for the other grades it should be evaluated according to the work of pupils.*
- *In my opinion all the written data are true and we should evaluate objectively.*
- *In my opinion evaluation of pupils is not done properly, there is room for improvements.*

### 3. Findings and measures to improve the situation

The results of this research lead us to the conclusion that teachers working in primary and lower secondary schools face difficulties when evaluating pupils. Based on the results of pupils success for grades VI-IX of primary and lower secondary schools in the school year 2012-2013, about 19.21% of pupils had low grades in the first semester while in the second semester they reach to improve their low grades, thus an increase of final success is noted also at the municipal level, where from 17.42% of pupils with low grades, 15.72% of the pupils improve their low grades in the second semester, and we come to the conclusion that teachers do not evaluate objectively, what it means that they are influenced by various subjective factors. Through the survey are identified some of the subjective factors that influence the evaluation of pupils. 53. 61% of teachers are influenced by pupils' behaviour in the classroom and on the basis of impressions created towards pupils behaviour is made their evaluation, where we consider that the evaluation of behaviours should not be confused with the evaluation of pupil's knowledge and skills. 33.32% of the teachers are influenced by their own mood at the time of evaluating pupils, what it means that if the teacher is in the good mood, the criteria for pupil evaluation are low and on the contrary they are high. In such cases, pupils may be rewarded with higher grades or be punished with lower grades. 30.42% of teachers are influenced by social and intellectual status of parents when evaluating pupils, which means that it is created a positive or negative judgment for the pupils because he or she is "the son or the daughter of..." and this judgment affects their evaluation!!! What makes us even more worry about is the influence and pressure of parents in improving pupils' final grades, where 46.36% of teachers surveyed admit this fact. Therefore, based on the factors mentioned above as well as other factors that affect pupils' subjective evaluation, for the improvement of current situation that prevails in our schools, measures are necessary to be taken.

We consider that the MEST should seriously tackle the issue of evaluation and make efforts to sensitize all actors involved in education. Constant training and workshops need to be organized regarding evaluation, and also teachers to be monitored for their application. Teachers must continuously monitor changes occurring in education, making efforts in acquiring and applying them in the classroom - pupils, the latest literature on various issues related to teaching and learning has to be researched and read in order to establish a fairer approach to evaluation.

Teachers should spend more time in assessing the work they have performed and to reflect about it. Implementation of the evaluation based on the competencies defined by the Curriculum Framework will enable teachers and school to be accurate and reliable in evaluating the achievements of pupils at all levels of their education. Evaluation should contribute to the progress of pupils, encouraging them to make reasonable efforts to improve learning. Teachers should not be influenced by parents or subjective factors, current moods, attitude towards evaluation; they need to consider motivation of pupils to learn and not to "fight" for a better grade.

Besides internal evaluation, application of external evaluation would help in increasing the quality in education, care and dedication of teachers in a more objective evaluation of pupils, enhancing accountability at the school level toward mobilization of pupil's potential and the inability of parents to impact the evaluation. We hope that from the findings of this research and the measures proposed in improving the situation would

not only benefit teachers, pupils, MED, MEST, but the whole Kosovo society, being aware and accepting the reality of existing knowledge.

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