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**EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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Abstract: The definition of quality education is a very complex issue. One commonly used definition is that quality education is the one that meets the educational (developmental) needs of its users, or education that is tailored to the users. It is difficult to measure because there are many factors affecting it. Therefore it cannot be defined uniquely and as independent from the educational environment.

Changes in the educational process are mostly represented by the organization of the learning technology and the assessment of the students. One of the most important questions for the assessment of students in education is related to the efficiency of education or its rationality and economy, what kind of effects are reached, and how much they are appropriate to the given efforts, goals and time.

Every human activity finishes with perception and analysis of the results. In the teaching process, as an activity with particular purpose and tasks, there also appears a confirmation of the results of teachers' and students' joint work, especially for the confirmation of the quantity and quality of the students' knowledge, their relation to work and improvement in a given period of time.

The results themselves are not a sufficient indicator of the quality achieved. The assessment of the achieved level of quality in education should be based on comparing the achievements in a given situation to the previously set goals and standards. The method of assessment logically determines the manner and content of learning to a much larger extent than we are aware of at first glance. Considering the importance of assessment and its impact on the progress in the educational system, it is not surprising that students' minds are adjusting to what teachers assess. They usually do not learn what is not required for the particular test. One of the manners of monitoring and evaluation of the work of schools is through external evaluation which aims to provide a higher degree of objectivity, this paper presents a review of some of the ways of external assessment that are being applied in the educational institutions in the Republic of Macedonia.

Keywords: quality education, external assessment, professional competence, objectivity

**ЕКСТЕРНО ОЦЕНУВАЊЕ ВО УЧИЛИШТАТА ВО РЕПУБЛИКА
МАКЕДОНИЈА**

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Апстракт: Дефиницијата за квалитетно образование е многу комплексно прашање. Едни од најчесто употребуваните дефиниции за квалитетно образование се тие дека квалитетното образование ги исполнува образовните (развојните) потреби на неговите корисници, или пак дека образованието е направено за корисниците. Затоа не можеме да го дефинираме одделно од образовната околина.

Промените во образовниот процес се претставени преку учењето на технологијата и оценувањето на учениците. Едно од најважните прашања за оценување на учениците во образованието е поврзано со ефикасноста на образованието, односно неговата рационалност и економичност, какви ефекти се постигнуваат и колку тие се соодветни за дадениот напор, цели и време.

Секоја човечка активност завршува со перцепција и анализа на резултатите. Во наставниот процес како активност со посебна цел и задачи се појавува и потврдувањето на резултатите од работата на учениците и наставниците заедно, посебно се потврдува количината и квалитетот на знаењето на учениците, нивната поврзаност со работата и подобрување во даден временски период.

Резултатите сами по себе не се доволен показател на постигнатиот квалитет. Оценувањето на постигнатото ниво на квалитет во образованието треба да се базира на споредување на постигнувањата во дадена ситуација со претходно поставените цели и стандарди. Методот на оценување логички ги утврдува начинот и содржината на учењето во многу поголема мера отколку што тоа изгледа на прв

впечаток. Имајќи ја во предвид важноста на оценувањето и неговото влијание врз развивањето на образовниот систем не е воопшто чудно што студентите се приспособуваат само на тоа што оценуваат професорите. Тие обично не го учат тоа што не се бара за одреден тест. Еден од начините на набљудување на оценувањето на работата на училиштата кои целат кон постигнување на поголем степен на објективност што и се објаснува во овој труд преку преглед на екстерното тестирање кое се применува во образовните институции во Република Македонија.

Клучни зборови: квалитетно образование, екстерно оценување, професионална компетентност, објективност

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the educational process are mostly represented by the organization of the learning technology and the assessment of the students. One of the most important questions for the assessment of students in education is related to the efficiency of education or its rationality and economy, what kind of effects are reached, and how much they are appropriate to the given efforts, goals and time.

Every human activity finishes with perception and analysis of the results. In the teaching process, as an activity with particular purpose and tasks, there also appears a confirmation of the results of teachers' and students' joint work, especially for the confirmation of the quantity and quality of the students' knowledge, their relation to work and improvement in a given period of time.

In the last few years in our country we have been speaking more loudly about changes in education. Even though there is an agreement about the need for changes in education, at present, we can hear opposite attitudes about what should be changed and in which direction, how the changes should be made, the dynamics of realization of those changes, priorities, etc. Urgings for changes especially for those of innovative nature do not originate only from the negative evaluation of the present situation, but also from the fact that it is necessary to have developmental educational directions in accordance to the changes in society and the newest scientific research for better education.

Our country, is trying to promote the current system of school assessment in order to improve teaching and learning and to contribute to the optimal progress of each student. It is common knowledge that for years the students have been studying just to get higher grades and not to gain the necessary knowledge; being totally wrong, this inspires us to analyse the whole educational process and try to detect the problems which lead to this. It is obvious that students learn only for grades which they need to enrol secondary school, to get what they want from their parents, or to show their status. No one studies for knowledge itself anymore which will help him/her in future life. After receiving this kind of results from the research made in several primary and secondary schools, the need for different assessment and for finding the causes of inappropriate assessment are growing every day.

That is why the Government of the Republic of Macedonia or, more specifically, the Ministry of Education and Science made changes in the Laws of Primary and Secondary School Education and provided an external assessment for students which is obligatory for primary and secondary school education and the State Graduation Exam taken in three subjects: Macedonian language as compulsory, a choice between English, French and German language, and if the student does not want to choose Mathematics (basic and advanced level) he/she can choose subjects like Logic, Philosophy, History, Geography.

2. EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS

External assessment started in the 2013/2014 academic year. It is done at the end of the school year, except for the IV year students in secondary schools whose external assessment is done after the end of the first half of the school year till February. External assessment of the students' results is done by means of tests prepared by the State Examination Centre proposed by the Department of the educational development and Centre of Vocational education and training. Students have 60 minutes to answer the previously given questions by clicking on the computer the correct answer. These exams are taken by the students beginning from fourth grade of their study till their last year of secondary education. The students are chosen randomly on the subject they are going to have an exam for. The students answer thirty questions given previously to them. As much as the students are concerned with this type of assessment the more concerned are the teachers who are also assessed. This means that if the grade that teacher gives to the student is not same or differs in one grade the teacher will be punished with lowering their salaries. Except the external assessment which is obligatory for primary and secondary school education the state graduation exam, school graduation exam, final exam and the project task are included in the external assessment for the IV year students in secondary school.

3. STATE GRADUATION EXAM

Since 2008 the monitoring and checking of the progress and achieving of the students' success in the Republic of Macedonia is done by internal and external assessment. According to the Laws of Primary and Secondary School Education the student is obliged to be checked and assessed for his/her school improvement.

Internal grading of the students' success is continuously done by their teachers according to standards determined by the Minister of Education and Science proposed by the Department of the Educational Development and Centre of Vocational Education and Training.

State graduation exam is designed for students of secondary and four years' vocational education. Besides being part of a completed secondary education it also aims to serve for selecting candidates for entry into higher education. State graduation exam is taken by special test programmes that are based on the objectives of the curriculum for the relevant subjects included in the list for state graduation.

State graduation includes: a compulsory part, an optional part and projects.

The compulsory part consists of three subjects: Macedonian language as obligatory, a choice between English, French and German language, and if the student does not want to choose Mathematics (basic and advanced level) he/she can choose subjects like Logic, Philosophy, History, Geography. This part of the State graduation takes place in June after finishing with the other two parts that are internal and are done in the school from where the students come. Students are assessed by teachers who have applied for evaluation of the students and they receive results a month after taking the exams.

The optional part is the students' choice of a subject which is relevant for their further education. It is done in the school where the students study and starts after the external exams are finished.

The project task is an integral part of the state graduation, school graduation and the final exam. A project task is a study of a problem that the student selects from one of the subjects or areas they are interested in. A project task as a part of the final exam serves to check the practical ability of students by performing the main points of the subject they deal with. The project task should be finished by the end of March.

Each subject has a syllabus by which students should prepare the exams. It explains which parts will be evaluated and what students should pay attention to in order to get a better grade.

4. SCHOOL GRADUATION EXAM

School graduation is designed for students of secondary education who are not planning to continue their further education. The purpose of this examination is to obtain a certificate for completed secondary education. School graduation is taken according to specific test programmes that are based on the objectives of the syllabus for the relevant subjects that are included in the list of school matriculation

5. FINAL EXAM

This exam is intended for students from four years' secondary vocational education that will take the state exam. The purpose of this examination is to obtain a certificate of completion of a four-year secondary vocational education. The final exam is taken by special test programs that are based on the objectives of the syllabus for the respective subjects. It includes: a compulsory part (Macedonian language), an optional part (vocational subject) and project task.

6. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF THE TEACHERS' DUTIES

In order to improve the educational system the Ministry of Education also made criteria for the evaluation of the teachers' duties which they must fulfil in order to assess the students. The teachers are evaluated in several parts: teaching (planning and preparation of the classes, realization of the classes, keeping pedagogical records and documentation, preparation of the syllabus and didactical equipment, planning and realization of extra classes, evaluation of students, implementation of internal tests, planning and organization of meetings with the parents), other educational duties (obtaining certificates from seminars, courses and symposiums for the previous three years, authors or co-authors of books, professional literature and other articles in journals, participation in projects as external collaborator from the Ministry of Education and Science or Institutions connected with the education, rewards from competitions, contests during the previous three years, participation and realization of projects with the students, planning, organization and realization of extra-curricular and free activities, participation in furnishing cabinets, gyms, arranging playgrounds, and etc.) and taking discipline measures. As much as the students are concerned with the external assessment the more concerned are the teachers who are also assessed. This means that if the grade that teacher gives to the student is not same or differs in one grade the teacher will be punished with lowering their salaries. Teachers are evaluated with different points according to their effort made in all these areas of the teaching process.

7. CONCLUSION

This external assessment which, started in and the School graduation exam started officially in 2008 with one pilot exam in 2007 is in its seventh year of assessing students. As the secondary education became compulsory, with the state graduation the students can enrol a university or a faculty of their choice. This enrolling depends on the subjects they choose to take in the State graduation (if they do not have the appropriate subject for the faculty they have chosen, they lose points). The results have shown that until now students have paid more attention to the other subjects than to the only compulsory one, i.e. Macedonian language and literature, which obliged the schools and students to pay more attention to their native language. The Ministry of Education and Science and the whole nation believes that with this kind of teachers' evaluation and graduation exams a higher degree of assessment objectivity will be provided.

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