

TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Background

In order to face more readily the future challenges for building prosperous national economies and for enhancement of personal fulfilment and wellbeing of their citizens, European countries have devoted significant efforts toward improving and reforming their educational systems. The grounds for the wide educational reforms have been laid down by the *Lisbon strategy* (EC, 2000) which emphasised orientation towards building a “knowledge society”. The translation of the Lisbon strategy into the area of education was based on five main strands of action: supporting the transferability of educational qualifications by means of the European qualification framework (EC, 2008); introducing the concepts of key competences which should be attained at all educational levels (EC, 2007); establishing the overarching programme for educational cooperation “Lifelong learning program” (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/index_en.htm); building the European area of higher education (e.g. European Higher Education Area (EHEA) <http://www.ehea.info/>); enhancing teacher quality at all educational levels (EC, 2007). The world – wide research informed discussion about quality of educational systems in the last two decades directed the attention of policy makers and other key stakeholders in the education sector to the accumulated evidence indicating that „the teacher quality is significantly and positively related to the student’s attainment and that it is the most important within-school aspect explaining student performance“ (EC, 2007). Recognition of the importance of teachers for high quality education increased the interest for examination of teacher role, teacher competences as well as evaluation of teachers along their career path (Vizek Vidović and Domović, 2013).

Description of the topic

The teacher role and teacher competences become an important topic at the European policy level in the last decade. The European Commission’s communication ‘Rethinking Education’ (European Commission 2012, 15) proposed specifically that Member States: “... revise and strengthen the professional profile of all teaching professions (teachers at all levels, school leaders, teacher educators). Key actions are reviewing the effectiveness as well as the

academic and pedagogical quality of initial teacher education, introducing coherent and adequately resourced systems for recruitment, selection, induction and professional development of teaching staff based on clearly defined competences needed at each stage of a teaching career, and increasing teacher digital competence”.

One of the first documents aimed at development of common understanding of teachers' role in Europe was EC - *Common European principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (2005). The Common European Principles describe teachers as a well-qualified profession; a profession placed within the context of lifelong learning; a mobile profession and a profession based on partnerships. Teachers' competences are defined in three broader categories: the competence to work with others; the competence to work with knowledge, technology and information and the competence to work with and in society which broadly encompasses the above mentioned sets of specific skills.

This common framework has been widely discussed across Europe, encouraging a number of countries to develop new or refine existing teacher qualification frameworks or profiles. National qualification frameworks usually specify learning outcomes, profession-specific standards, entry standards to the profession and elements of profession-related progression (Donaldson, 2011).

The document from 2013 *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* (European Commission, 2013) gives an extensive analyses of the nature of teacher competences, values of frameworks of teacher competences and approaches to implementation of teacher competence frameworks and also presents case studies from five EU countries. One of the key issues raised during the PLA has been the value of frameworks of teacher competences. The outcome of the discussion is the outlines of benefits of devising framework such as: development of qualification frameworks, enhancement of effectiveness of education, achieving the greater accountability in education systems, making profession more attractive and providing for career progression, desire to promote teachers life – long learning, demand for the professionalization of teaching, desire to clarify teachers' roles, the need to assess the quality of teaching. Overview of the approaches to defining teacher competences reveals the wide variety of approaches ranging from a “light touch” to complex description. The comparative analyses of different countries suggests that approaches vary in (p. 21 – 22):

- the level of detail in which teacher competences are described (or not),

- whether competences are described only for initial teacher education, or as competences that are expected to grow and develop over the whole teaching career;
- the policy tools used (legislation, regulation, guidelines, university curricula, specification of learning outcomes, requirements for entry into the profession, teacher certification);
- the actors who are entrusted to implement policy (Government organisations, teacher education Institutions, professional bodies such as Teaching Councils); and
- the aims and uses to which descriptions are put.

It is also mentioned that not all countries have yet defined in detail the competences they require their teachers to possess or develop.

Teacher competence frameworks can be used as tools for (EC 2013): defining benchmarks / baselines in the assessment and evaluation of novice teachers and in the assessment and evaluation of serving teachers; granting or withdrawing licence to teach; the management of teachers' performance and / or professional development; the design of programmes of initial teacher education (ITE), induction and continuing professional development (CPD).

In the document *Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching - A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education* (European Commission, 2015) the topic about teacher competence frameworks is further elaborated and it is emphasised that „ *a coherent competence framework which identifies different competence levels throughout the continuum, strongly supports a teacher's development throughout their career. Through such competence frameworks, policies can create a shared understanding, shared ownership and shared language between stakeholders and between different phases of the continuum.*

Coherent competence frameworks embrace the needs of all teachers including student, novice, experienced and expert or accomplished. If such a framework includes different levels of teacher attainment, it can act as a frame of reference for teachers to identify a 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach reinforces the teaching profession as a profession of continuous growth. „

Competence frameworks can play a similar role as professional standards, but the distinction has to be made between two concepts. The former is more descriptive in their nature offering the set of competences expected from teachers in performing their professional role. On the

other hand, professional standards are more concerned with accountability and quality mechanisms, and are closely linked with the action of institutional and professional bodies (EC 2013), and thus can have prescriptive power. They can be defined as means for describing a consensus model of what is most significant in teaching knowledge and practice and as measuring tools for making judgements and decisions about quality of teacher competences and of providing specifications of their levels of achievement (EC 2013).

The teacher professional standards can have multiple uses (EC 2013, 15):

- information: they can be used as signals conveying information on teacher action and behaviour to diverse social groups
- guidance: as principles directing the action of institutional and professional stakeholders
- modelling: as model examples representing ideals of professional quality and practice for teachers, along different career stages
- management: as uniform measures for relationships/transactions in teaching, teacher education and professional development
- monitoring: as rules to be checked for compliance, by institutional and professional bodies.

Purpose and conceptual framework of teacher assessment and evaluation¹

Although, the teacher professional competences and their implications for quality education have been widely discussed in European and national contexts, the issues regarding teacher assessment and evaluation of teaching have not yet been comprehensively studied at the European level. ²The main sources providing in - depth insights into the topic which might serve as useful starting point for the discussion are related to either global or US perspective (eg. Synergy for better learning, OECD, 2013; MET project - Kane, Kerr & Pianta, 2014).

¹As sometimes there is a risk of confusion between the terms *assessment and evaluation* some clarification is needed. In this paper assessment is understood as diagnostic oriented process used for formative purpose of improving teaching quality. Evaluation is process of summative appraisal of teachers for the purpose of determining the value / effectiveness of teaching as compared to some common criteria or standard.

² Until now the studies on approaches to evaluation of European pre-tertiary education have been carried out at the institutional level with the most recent report: *Assuring quality in education Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe*. (EC/ECEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Until recently, the prevailing policy approach to teacher evaluation has been captured in a rewards-and-punishment paradigm aiming at: measuring the effectiveness of each teacher in order to categorize and rank teachers rewarding those at the top and dismissing those at the bottom of the ranking list. Such a technicistic approach ignores the complexity of teaching, overlooking the core purpose of comprehensive teacher assessment and evaluation which should support teacher professional growth strengthening their knowledge, skills, and classroom practices. The ultimate purpose of effective teacher assessment and evaluation should be improvement of student outcomes through improved teaching practices and teacher professional learning (NEA, 2010; OECD, 2013). The data from OECD study reveal that countries use teacher evaluation outcomes for formal purposes, such as: appraisal of individual teachers upon completion of probation period, teacher registration, regular internal appraisal at school level, appraisal for promotion, and reward schemes.

The OECD study *Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes* (2013) provides useful conceptual framework for the studying teacher evaluation policies and practices globally and for Europe as from 25 participating countries 19 were members of EU. This framework has four interrelated aspects: *governance, procedures, capacity and use of results*. The governance dimension refers to the overall design and organisation of teacher appraisal. Procedures dimension refers to the responsibility of various actors and to the methodological aspects including requirements for the frequency of evaluation, the development of reference standards, the definition of evaluation aspects and criteria, and the combination of instruments to gather relevant information. Capacity dimension refers to the training and support provided to the stake - holders engaged in a appraisal process, to those who are being appraised as well as to those who are supposed to use evaluation results. Use of results dimension refers to the way how the teacher appraisal process is followed up and how results are utilised for further decisions or actions.

The study conducted by Darling – Hammond (2012) made an important contribution to the understanding of various aspects of teacher evaluation. The first important contribution to measuring teacher effectiveness at the conceptual level is the distinction between teacher quality and teaching quality. Teacher quality refers to the mixture of personal traits, skills, and beliefs which teacher brings to teaching, including motivation and readiness to behave in certain ways. Teaching quality refers to instructional effectiveness that enables a wide range of students to learn and achieve learning goals. Teaching quality depends upon teacher

qualities but also is also strongly influenced by the contextual factors. In order to achieve high educational learning goals, in the evaluation of teachers both aspects - the teaching and learning environment as well as the capacity of individual teachers – must be checked. The second contribution is elaboration of key elements that should be taken into account in the development of systemic approach to teacher evaluation and the support of effective teaching. “A high-quality teacher evaluation *system* should create a coherent, well-grounded approach to developing teaching, crafted collectively by state and district leaders with teachers and their representatives. In addition to clear standards for student learning, accompanied by high-quality curriculum materials and assessments, this system should include five key elements:

- 1) Common state -wide standards for teaching that are related to meaningful student learning and are shared across the profession
- 2) Performance assessments, based on these standards, guiding state functions such as teacher preparation, licensure, and advanced certification
- 3) Local evaluation systems aligned to the same standards, for evaluating on-the-job teaching based on multiple measures of teaching practice and student learning
- 4) Support structures to ensure trained evaluators, mentoring for teachers who need additional assistance, and fair decisions about personnel actions
- 5) Aligned professional learning opportunities that support the improvement of teachers and teaching quality” (Darling-Hammond, 2012, 4- 5).

Specific activities and added value for ENTEP

Possible activities:

1. Initiate stock-taking comparative Europe-wide study of current teacher assessment/evaluation systems with a view to developing a conceptual and methodological research model;
2. Initiate discussion about existing criteria and tools in order to arrive at a shared understanding of teacher assessment/evaluation in Europe;
3. Identify approaches to strengthen the capacities of players in the process of teacher assessment/evaluation;
4. Explore ways to link teacher assessment/evaluation to teacher professional development.

Recommended sources (reading list):

Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Creating a comprehensive system for evaluation and supporting effective teaching. Stanford, CA. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Donaldson, G. (2011). Development of national teacher qualification frameworks across five Balkan countries (working paper – ATEPIE project).

EC (2005) Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications.

EC (2007). Key competences for lifelong learning - European Reference Framework.

EC (2008). Explaining the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

EC (2012). Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes.

EC (2013). Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes.

EC/EACEA/Eurydice (2015). Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

EC (2015). Shaping career-long perspectives on teaching - A guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education.

Kane, T., Kerr, K & Pianta, R. (Eds). (2014). Designing Teacher Evaluation Systems. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

NEA – National Education Association. (2010). Teacher Assessment and Evaluation.

OECD (2013). Synergies for better learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment.

Vizek Vidović, V. and Domović, V. (2013). Teachers in Europe – Main Trends, Issues and Challenges. *Croatian Journal of Education*. 15 (3), 219 – 250.

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