
TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IN BULGARIA AND GREECE – THE STATE OF THE ART AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The main goal of education, over time, is to improve the level of knowledge of each student. Given that we are living in a rapidly evolving world, teachers will have to constantly adapt and review their practices based on student results and the methodologies suggested by modern research. Educational staff should tailor their teaching, weighing learning needs, as well as the cultural or social background of students, so that all learners achieve the greatest learning outcomes. In short, the 21st century educational staff will have a very wide range of skills in relation to the past and have access to a rich teaching “repertoire”. One of the measures to achieve adequate solutions to the described situation is the application of assessment of different aspects of the educational activity. Over the past century, these processes have been developing most intensively in the US, with the gradual appraisal of teachers and the teachers' work as a self-contained, scientifically-based practice that keeps the interest of educators and researchers around the world. In this article, we look at how two neighboring Balkan countries that are members of the EU and compare how they assess the work of their teachers.

The Republic Bulgaria and the Republic of Greece are two neighboring countries with a common border and a similar geographic location, with a similar size and. Both are parliamentary, with East-Orthodox Christianity. Currently, they are full members of the EU. The current assessment of teachers in the Republic of Bulgaria has been in force since September 2016. At present, a two-year self-assessment of school organizations is expected to be implemented in Greece, at the suggestion of the authorized Institute of Educational Policy. These two approaches to teacher performance assessment are radically different even though the similarities are a lot more than the differences. In both cases there is a lack of consistency between goals and expectations on the one hand and practical application on the other. In the case of most of the criteria chosen by us to the weaknesses of one country match better solutions to the other. As a basic remark to the Bulgarian version, the serious danger of subjectivism and influence of informal groups in a team on the individual assessment of each individual teacher can be noted. In terms of self-assessment in the Hellenic Republic on the other hand, the strongest impression is that there is a lack of a concrete link between the report drawn up by each specific school and its further utilization by the other instances in the education system. Obviously, there is a need for changes and improvements in both legislations, and solutions from neighboring experiences can be borrowed. In such a direction, a questionnaire on the same issues can be conducted among teachers from both countries, which would lead to a number of interesting conclusions, both theoretical and practical.

Keywords: teacher performance assessment, quality of the educational work, evaluation objectives, climate and relationship of the school

1. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of education, over time, is to improve the level of knowledge of each student. Given that we are living in a rapidly evolving world, teachers will have to constantly adapt and review their practices based on student results and the methodologies suggested by modern research.

To this issue should be added the taxpayer's "sensitivity" to the efficiency of education, the relevance of its investment, and the need for assessment and control by the public should be added to this issue. Here is how relevant the words of the US Commissioner of Education in 1949 sound: " I am definitely in favor of Federal aid for schools, but I want to emphasize that whatever the government does to subsidize education and in whatever form, we should make every effort to protect local control. We want the least Federal control consistent with the proper use of funds"¹⁷.

All of this is reflected in a number of European Union documents and policies. Following the signing of LISBON STRATEGY in 2000 and the formulated educational objectives education and training policies became central to

¹⁷ (McGrath, 1949, p. 1)

the creation and transmission of knowledge and are a determining factor in each society's potential for innovation¹⁸. This is the direction in which the decisions of the Education and Training 2020 framework are headed. The framework sets four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020¹⁹:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

One of the measures to achieve adequate solutions to the described situation is the application of assessment of different aspects of the educational activity. In this article, we look at how two neighboring Balkan countries that are members of the EU and compare how they assess the work of their teachers in order to see what theoretical and practical conclusions we can achieve. For this purpose, we choose as the most common and established term teacher performance assessment and assume that it corresponds to a systematic and organized process in which processes, systems, individuals, tools, frameworks or results of an educational mechanism are assessed on predetermined criteria and means and purposes²⁰.

2. TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IN BULGARIA AND GREECE

The Republic Bulgaria and the Republic of Greece are two neighboring countries with a common border and a similar geographic location - the south-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, with a similar size and population of 111,000 sq. Km. and 132, 000 sq. km.²¹ and 5.204.385²² and 9.904.286²³. Both are parliamentary republics^{24, 25} with East-Orthodox Christianity^{26, 27}. Currently, they are full members of the EU²⁸, but with diametrically opposite socio - economic development and foreign - political orientation after WWII.

2.1. THE BULGARIAN APPROACH

The current assessment of teachers in the Republic of Bulgaria has been in force since September 2016. The legislation has adopted the term "attestation", which means that it is "a process of evaluating the conformity of the activity of teachers, directors and other pedagogical specialists with their professional profile, performance requirements and the strategy for the development of the kindergarten, the school, the center for personal development support or the regional center for supporting the inclusive image process of appeal"²⁹. It is carried out with the following objectives:

1. Establishing the results achieved by the pedagogical specialists;
2. Improving the quality of education of children or students;
3. Motivating the pedagogical specialists for professional development through upgrading of the qualification;
4. Establishing the need for methodological and organizational support of the pedagogical specialist and providing a mentor or mentors' team³⁰.

Teachers' assessment takes into account the professional profile, supported by the relevant professional portfolio and the results achieved in the education of children and students while the personal assessments of each of them serve to:

¹⁸ (COUNCIL, 2004, p. 2)

¹⁹ (European Commission), http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

²⁰ (Δημητρόπουλος, 2010, p. 30)

²¹ (European Union), https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en

²² (Национален статистически институт),

<http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/2981/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%BE-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5-%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB>

²³ (Ελληνική Στατιστική Αρχή), <http://www.statistics.gr/2011-census-pop-hous>

²⁴ (Народно събрание на Република България), <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/const>

²⁵ (Βουλή των Ελλήνων), <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Syntagma/article-1/>

²⁶ (Национален статистически институт), <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/StrReligion.htm>

²⁷ (Βουλή των Ελλήνων), <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Syntagma/article-3/>

²⁸ (European Union), https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en

²⁹ (Министерство на образованието и науката, 2016), Наредба № 12 от 1 септември 2016 г., Art. 76

³⁰ (Министерство на образованието и науката, 2016), Наредба № 12 от 1 септември 2016 г., Art. 76, 4th subpar.

- ✓ Career development;
- ✓ Encouragement of the pedagogical specialists, who received the highest marks in the attestation, with excellence and awards;
- ✓ Guidance on raising the qualification of pedagogical specialists in order to update, supplement or extend their professional competence;
- ✓ Provision of methodological and / or organizational support and provision of a mentor or mentors' team³¹.

The assessment is made by a committee consisting of no more than 5 members. The president is the school's headmaster, where the teacher works. Another representative of the Pedagogical Council, one representative of the Regional Education Center, and optionally up to two representatives of the employer, participate. The evaluation process itself takes place in two stages - self-assessment and evaluation by the commission. 25 criteria are used, merged in 4 directions, see Table 1.

Direction	Subdirections
1. Pedagogical Competencies: Planning, Teaching, Assessment and Class / Group Management	1.1 Planning of the educational process (maximum number of points: 6)
	1.2 Organization and management of the educational process: strategies and methods of teaching (maximum number of points: 8)
	1.3 Assessment of progress of children / students, result orientation (maximum number of points: 6)
	1.4 Group/class management (maximum number of points: 4)
2. Organizational competence: working with stakeholders in the educational process and with interested parties, participation in the formation of educational policies and the implementation of the activities for their implementation (maximum number of points: 10)	
3. Administrative competence (maximum points: 2)	
4. Other professional requirements for the performance of the position (maximum number of points: 4)	

Table 1. Groups of Criteria for Teacher Performance Assessment in Republic Bulgaria (Министерство на образованието и науката, 2016, р. Приложение № 24)

Both the evaluated teacher and the committee assess the teacher's work according to the aforementioned criteria with 1, 1,5 or 2 points. The teacher's assessment weighs in at 25% of the final grade while the committee's is equal to the other 75%. The sum of those numbers is placed in a scale of 5 degrees for the final verbal teacher performance evaluation, seen in

SUM	45 - 50	40 - 49,99	35 – 39,99	30 – 34,99	25 – 29,99
Final Assessment	Exemplary Implementation	Exceeding Requirements	Meets the Requirements	Partially Meets the Requirements	Complies With the Minimum Requirements

Table 2.

SUM	45 - 50	40 - 49,99	35 – 39,99	30 – 34,99	25 – 29,99
Final Assessment	Exemplary Implementation	Exceeding Requirements	Meets the Requirements	Partially Meets the Requirements	Complies With the Minimum Requirements

Table 2. Scale for determining the final grade of teacher's work, (Министерство на образованието и науката, 2016, стр. чл. 85, ал. 8)

In the process of attestation, documents, certificates and materials from the professional portfolio of the respective pedagogical specialist are used.

Upon completion of the attestation, the employer and the appraisal committee carry out the final part where:

1. They prepare an analysis of the reasons for the evaluations;
2. They draw up a plan for methodological and organizational support of the respective pedagogical specialist;
3. They appoint a mentor or mentors to provide methodological and organizational support³².

³¹ (Министерство на образованието и науката, 2016), Наредба № 12 от 1 септември 2016 г., Art. 76, 5th subpar.

In cases where the teacher is placed in the "Complies With the Minimum Requirements" column, a reassessment is carried out after one year, and if the lowest grade is again obtained, the assessed is fired³³.

2.2. THE GREEK APPROACH

According to Greek legislation, teacher's performance assessment is understood as the procedure of evaluating the provided education quality and the degree to which its goals and objectives have been achieved³⁴. Its aim is to improve and quality upgrade all the factors in the educational process and to continuously improve pedagogical communication and relationship with students³⁵.

Currently, a two-year self-assessment of school organizations is expected to be implemented³⁶, at the suggestion of the authorized Institute of Educational Policy according to the internal evaluation or self-assessment is the emergence of the school as the main body of planning and evaluating its educational project. In particular, the implementation of self-evaluation at school:

- It does not aim to control but to improve the quality of the educational project;
- Identifies weaknesses, clarifies problems, creates conditions for initiatives and undertaking innovative actions, creates conditions for improvement of educational practices;
- Provides teachers with the opportunity to realize in a specific way the particular operating conditions of the school;
- It mobilizes all the factors in the educational community, strengthens the relationship of trust and reciprocity among them, promotes the change of school culture;
- Promotes cooperative attitudes, highlights positive educational activities, dissemination practices, disseminates good practices and points to areas for self-education and training;
- It cultivates co-responsibility and self-commitment as it involves teachers in jointly decided actions and binds them to their own plans;
- Supports the upgrading of teaching and pedagogical practices, the promotion of innovation and the development of supportive and offsetting practices;
- It enhances the better management and operation of school units as well as the effective utilization of human resources;
- Contributes to continuous feedback on the design of educational policy and the definition of training and other interventions.

In the first year, the assessment passes through 4 stages:

1. determine the composition of the working groups, the indices on which they will work, see Table 3 and the chronograph for the remaining stages of the year
2. The evidence available in the school for the formation of the overall image of each index (files, printed and electronic, correspondence, minutes, opinions - judgments of teachers, pupils, parents) is investigated. Each Working Group prepares a proposal for a General Assessment of each Indicator, submitted as a suggestion to the Plenary of the Teachers' Association for the final evaluation of the image of the, and a quantitative score is made on a scale of 1 to 4
3. The plenary session for the final evaluation of the indicators and the overall picture of the school. The needs of the school are hierarchy and the action plan to be implemented from the next school year is selected. The title of the action plan and the corresponding indicator are recorded in the school's annual report. The plenary session completes the general assessment process by defining the group that will be responsible for planning the action.
4. A General School Assessment Report is drawn up.

Axis	Sectors
1. Means and resources	1.1: School space, logistical infrastructure and financial resources
	1.2: Staffing of the school
2. Leadership and	2.1: Organizing and coordinating school life

³² (Μинистерство на образованието и науката, 2016), Наредба № 12 от 1 септември 2016 г., Art. 88, 1st subpar.

³³ (Μинистерство на образованието и науката, 2016), Наредба № 12 от 1 септември 2016 г., Art. 88, 4th subpar.

³⁴ (Νόμος 2525, 1997), Art. 8

³⁵ (Νόμος 2986, 2002), Art. 4

³⁶ (Ι.Ε.Π., ΤΟ ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΤΗΡΙΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΕΕ), <http://aee.iep.edu.gr/>

School Administration	2.2: Managing and exploiting means and resources
	2.3: Exploitation, support and development of human resources
3. Teaching and Learning	3.1: Development and implementation of teaching practices
	3.2: Development and implementation of pedagogical practices and student assessment practices
4. Climate and Relationship of the School	4.1: Relations between teacher-pupils and students
	4.2: Relations of the school with parents and collaborations with educational-social institutions
5. Improvement Actions	5.1: Educational programs and innovations, supportive and compensatory interventions
	5.2: Develop and implement action plans to improve educational work
6. Educational Outcomes	6.1: Φοίτηση και διαρροή των μαθητών Studying and leaving students
	6.2: Achievements and progress of students
	6.3: Individual and social development of pupils
7. School results	7.1: Achieving the objectives of the school

Table 3. Groups of indexes for evaluation of the school organization on the basis of the thematic framework for self-evaluation by the Institute for Educational Policy³⁷

In the second year implementation of the action plans.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF THE ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS' WORK IN BULGARIA AND GREECE

In this teacher performance assessment comparison, we use as the criteria the main questions traditionally asked in the study and practical application of such procedures, namely who the evaluator and the subject of the evaluation are, what specific qualities and for what purpose are considered for what period the appropriate procedures are in place and what is the final product of all of this - the form of the concluding assessment and its subsequent use, see Table 4.

Criterion	Bulgarian approach	Greek approach
1. Who is evaluating?	Commission consisting of no more than 5 members	The Pedagogical Council
2. Who is the subject of the evaluation?	Each individual teacher	School organization
3. Which qualities are being evaluated?	Pedagogical, organizational and administrative competencies	The quality of the educational work in the areas chosen by each school according to its particularities
4. Evaluation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing the results achieved; Improving the quality of education; Motivating teachers; 	emergence of the school as the main body of planning and evaluating its educational project
5. Period for conducting evaluation	4 years	2 years
6. Form of assessment	Speech versus 5-level scale and recommended activities	The annual report Evaluation of general school assessment results
7. Using the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career development; Encouragement; Enhancement of qualifications; Methodological and / or organizational support; 	Continuous feedback on the design of educational policy and the definition of training and other interventions

Table 4. Comparison of Teachers' Assessment on 7 Criteria

³⁷ (Ι.Ε.Π., ΤΟ ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΤΗΡΙΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΕΕ),

<http://aee.iep.edu.gr/about/%CF%80%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%83>

3.1. WHO EVALUATES WHOM?

Under Bulgarian legislation, the evaluation by a small committee, chaired by the Chief of the evaluated, and involving a member of the Pedagogical Council, inevitably raises questions such as how much the assessment would be objective, whether there will be over-rewarded teachers with limited opportunities and respectively underestimated or even exempt from work qualitative people. Considering the decisive influence of the leader's personality on the climate in an organization that determines the efficiency and productivity of all employees from this point onwards, in fact the director, with his specific qualities, values and behavior, on the one hand directs the professional development of the subordinates and then has a leading role in evaluating them. Thus, too much power is concentrated in the hands of the school manager, which undoubtedly gives the whole process and its ultimate result subjective character.

In the case of Greek legislation, when the Pedagogical Council is self-assessing and decides the future development of the school organization, prerequisites for creativity and autonomy are created within the fully centralized educational system of the country, which does not allow for such phenomena. On the other hand, it is noticeable that no intervention by any other institution or authority in any form such as monitoring, control, consultation, inspection, reporting, etc. is envisaged. This creates the feeling that this is a rather superficial and improvised procedure.

3.2. QUALITIES AND GOALS

Identifying achievements and raising the quality of education are the best possible goals that can be defined in the normative framework of a modern and European country. The accent on the pedagogical, organizational and administrative competences of the 21st century teacher is also very topical, and it is a recognized fact that today every child deserves a good teacher and society is obliged to take care of it. It could be said that the intentions of the legislator in the Republic of Bulgaria in this aspect are commendable, but when specifying them, as is shown by the other criteria, their relationship with specific procedures is lost and things in the end are shifted in a different direction from the initially defined.

In the case of the Greek legislator, there are plenty of teacher performance assessment objectives, which are periodically complemented in different directions over several years, without any real implementation. In this current revision, the focus is on strengthening the school organization as the primary institution that assesses the quality of teacher work, taking into account the specificities of each particular school. Here are two main remarks. On the one hand, the concept of quality is almost unclear, which would seriously hamper the work of a pedagogical council without giving specific guidance. On the other hand, we are confronted with the controversy mentioned in point 0, where a classical hierarchical structure with centralized management, such as the country's education system, delegates wide rights and responsibility to the individual school, unless this activity isn't given a great deal of importance.

3.3. ASSESSMENT PERIOD

The four-year period of individual assessment in Bulgarian schools is appropriate because it is sufficient for each teacher to reflect his work and goals and priorities in order to be able to plan his activities in the desired direction. For self-evaluation in Greece, the two-year period also seems to be adequately chosen because it makes it often for the members of the Pedagogical Council to officially ask at the sessions the question of the direction the school is developing. In parallel, the constant task of carrying out various activities in this direction could play a unifying role for the individual efforts in the working groups and the collective as a whole, thus further contributing to improving cooperation and communication between teachers, and so also to increase the sense of responsibility, empathy and personal commitment to improving the quality of the educational service offered.

3.4. FORM OF EVALUATION AND USE OF RESULTS

In the Bulgarian approach, the relationship between the form of the assessment, see Table 4 and the use of a result is obvious and justified. The verbal characteristic of a particular scale directly corresponds to the specific recommended measures offered by each evaluated pedagogue.

On the contrary, the Greek approach at the end of each period produces as many reports as the number of schools and kindergartens in the country. The very handling of such a large amount of texts is more of a problem than it is useful to serve as a basis for feedback on planning central education policy and choosing the most appropriate changes accordingly.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE WORK

In the present work, we looked at two radically different approaches to teacher performance assessment applied in two European countries whose similarities are a lot more than the differences. In both cases there is a lack of consistency between goals and expectations on the one hand and practical application on the other. In the case of most of the criteria chosen by us to the weaknesses of one country match better solutions to the other. As a basic remark to the Bulgarian version, the serious danger of subjectivism and influence of informal groups in a team on the individual assessment of each individual teacher can be noted. In terms of self-assessment in the Hellenic Republic on the other hand, the strongest impression is that there is a lack of a concrete link between the report drawn up by each specific school and its further utilization by the other instances in the education system. These documents are most likely to be logged and archived without being seriously considered and analyzed further. Obviously, there is a need for changes and improvements in both legislations, and solutions from neighboring experiences can be borrowed. In such a direction, a questionnaire on the same issues can be conducted among teachers from both countries, which would lead to a number of interesting conclusions, both theoretical and practical.

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